GENDERED LABOR EXPLOITATION:

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION & INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by

ALEXA LEE ARNDT

(Under the Direction of Amy E. Stich)

ABSTRACT

This critical feminist scholarship utilizes Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), a Marxist Feminist theory, to explore the connection between social reproduction and higher education labor. Given capitalism's quest for accumulation, the neoliberal university is an important reproductive site to consider labor exploitation. Social Reproduction Theory reveals the ways women are exploited in their homes as uncompensated providers of gendered care work. Utilizing a post-intentional phenomenology (PIP) methodology, this study invited 11 HEI staff members into conversation to not only explore the phenomenon of interest—gendered labor exploitation—but to also answer the call for additional scholarship concerning an often overlooked yet critical population of higher education workers—staff members. Because it is a site of reproduction, the academy is an excellent venue for political engagement and disruption of the phenomenon.

Findings from this PIP study revealed the insidious ways gendered labor exploitation manifests in two separate but connected sites: the home and the workplace. Women, who are socialized as caregivers to maintain social reproduction in the home, find themselves acting as caregivers in administrative assistant roles within R1 higher education institutions. Meanwhile, various employment structures within the workplace (e.g., insufficient wages, workweek structure, job classifications, institutional hierarchies) hinder women's ability to perform necessary social reproduction in their unique and varied family formations and home configurations. Under the system of capitalism, social reproduction work remains necessary (i.e., the worker must be maintained), yet it is also unvalued. As such, women find themselves under-compensated providing gendered caretaking work in their employment within academia before heading home to complete entirely uncompensated/unvalued labor in their home. With the overt feminist and PIP intention to address social change, individual, higher education institutions, and societal implications are provided. Additionally, several opportunities for future research are provided for those inspired to address gendered labor exploitation within and outside of the academy.

INDEX WORDS: higher education; post-intentional phenomenology; social reproduction theory; labor exploitation; higher education staff; higher education labor gender

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DEDICATION

To those called to nurture seeds yet unable to grow, remember it is the environment that needs to be addressed and not the flower.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL MATERIAL

BRIDLING JOURNAL – MARCH 3, 2023

They say it takes a village to raise a baby. Well, although I personally hope that in the not-so-distant future mothers can rely on communes for support and assistance instead of struggling alone in this current neoliberal disaster, I can say with absolute certainty that this dissertation—this phenomenological text that I have crafted over the past nine months—and more importantly my feminist identity is the product of community. It is stronger, more thoughtful, and simply better because of such communal support. I am so very blessed and grateful to have been enabled by family, friends, scholars, and complete strangers. These kind humans have taken care not only of my physical wellbeing but also my social wellness, financial security, spirituality, and intellectual development not just over the past four years but all along my journey towards Athens, GA. After spending the better part of an entire year devoted to this product, it is very strange—very meta even—to consider my own social reproduction needs.

I cannot help but relate to the feeling I had the first time I read Silvia Federici's *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle.* In her preface she discussed how when she wrote "Wages against Housework" (1975) she imagined the life of housewife "a fate worse than death." Yet she would go on to spend the next almost 50 years thinking about reproductive labor. Although I don't see foresee a housewife identity for myself (I'm more of a *femme sole*, I think), I cannot help but imagine how my thinking concerning

social reproduction could evolve if I am lucky enough to have 50 more years. But first, I would be remiss if I did not recognize those who have been by my side thus far.

Mom, you know none of this would have been possible had you not prepared me to be—and I quote—“practically perfect in every way.” I will be forever grateful that you were so determined to get me out of the charmed childhood you provided me so that I could see the world. Life is a banquet, after all.

Dad, Grammy, and Aunt Shellbell I told you we’d have a doctor in the family someday. I know we used to joke that someone would need to marry one, but I’m so very proud that it’s me instead. I know I lament about the nuclear family more than the average person, but I am so proud to be your daughter, granddaughter, and niece.

To the Kohlers, it’s just another patriarchal construct that afforded me the last name Arndt; know that you are represented in this accomplishment too. In fact, I attribute much of my discipline to Kohler strength, love, and role modeling of strong, independent women.

I know how fortunate I am to have my given family’s love and support, but to also have an abundance of chosen family—I will forever be grateful for their encouragement. These individuals didn’t have to indulge me; they didn’t have to answer the phone, come to visit, open their home to me, schedule a trip, or go out of their way to encourage me. Yet they did, and they continue to still. They listened to me as I worked through my many ideas: new, convoluted, and radical. They sent me care packages and cards as we were isolated. They stayed up late and got up early to advise, assure, and counsel me. Most importantly, they loved me through the many highs and lows that have occurred.

I know I will forget to name someone, and that slight will haunt me (you know it will). Despite this hesitation I must acknowledge the following souls who deserve recognition for their

time, energy, and attention: Abigail & Ryan, Nick, Kelsey, Lindsey, Michael, Becki, Jasmine, Zach, Jamison, Mozilla FireFox Private Browser, Aunt Leanne, Drew, Anne, Chelsea, Mary Grace, Erin, and Mindy. I cannot say thank you enough not just for getting me here but for sticking around.

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The Louise McBee Institute of Higher Education is more than just its students, though. I am incredibly grateful for its staff and faculty. Thank you for exposing me to new theories, ideas, and approaches to understanding one of the great loves of my life: higher education. Thank you to both Drs. Hearn and Cain for their support not only concerning my dissertation but also in the classroom; each of your classes were provocations—if you will—along the path that led to this phenomenological text. Dr. Amy Stich, you know none of this would have been possible without your unwavering support. I am most grateful to have had you as a co-producer throughout this experience because I know I would not have had the courage to tackle these ideas, this theory, or this methodology without you by my side. I can't believe I've had the time and attention of an intellectual rockstar with you as my chair and mentor.

Thank you to my participants; not only to have had your time and energy but to gain your trust was profoundly moving. To every woman staff member who inspired this study, though your words may not be reflected in this text, please know what you have shared with me made this study possible. I told you it took a village! As this mile marker passes just as quickly as it arrived, I am truly humbled to have had the support and love of so many who believe in me.

Finally, to those intellects, scholars, and feminists who had the courage to put pen to paper—thank you for your bravery, conviction, and perseverance. I can only hope that this text shepherds your ideas until future scholars and readers are also inspired to continue this movement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Following the labor disruption caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, Calarco (2020) argued that without a new and improved welfare state to provide societal safety nets—social services and federal policies (e.g., childcare, eldercare, universal healthcare, paid family leave)—women will be forced to continue to provide undervalued and uncompensated care work for themselves and their families. Under the current system of late-stage capitalism, care work, understood as "social reproduction" or the everyday tasks necessary to sustain life (i.e., feeding, sleeping, shopping, nurturing, mending, cleaning, chaperoning), disproportionately affects women and especially women of color (Hester, 2018). Care work can also be considered what Hochschild (1989) coined as "the second shift," where women leave one shift (at their site of their employment where they are compensated with waged labor) to their second shift (at home) where they provide private, uncompensated labor.

Collectively, neoliberal trends and the patriarchy facilitate two forms of simultaneous labor exploitation. Concerning neoliberal trends, while social services are dismantled and underfunded, uncompensated but necessary care work is forced to be provided by individuals in the private home (Calarco, 2020). Currently, such care work is provided primarily by women because of socialized gender norms under the patriarchy (Ferrant et al., 2014). The compounded effect of care work, or social reproduction, performed privately in the home results in gendered labor exploitation which disproportionately impacts women.

The COVID-19 global pandemic provided workers, managers, and institutions the opportunity to acknowledge the invisible, uncompensated social reproduction labor provided by women in the home (Calarco, 2020; Malone, 2022). Although this study was not explicitly concerned with gendered labor exploitation during the global pandemic, recent attention given to the experiences of women throughout the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the normalization of existent gendered labor exploitation.

Problem Statement

Women employed by higher education institutions (HEIs) experience concurrent exploitation—both at work and at home. As one of two connected reproductive sites of exploitation, HEIs "(re)produce" critically thinking, democratically aware, skill-based laborers who upon their graduation and certification populate the workforce. Simultaneously, the home is a second site of (re)production, where "activities that nurture future workers, regenerate the current workforce, and maintain those who cannot work—that is, the set of tasks that together maintain and reproduce life, both daily and generationally" occur (Hester, 2018, p. 345). Although women employed by HEIs receive some wages for one form of labor by their employers, they are uncompensated—and are thus exploited—by their second shift of reproductive labor at home.

Where 341,000 higher education jobs were lost in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the "Great Resignation"—a period that began in 2021 where workers of many industries quit their jobs—has further reduced the size of the higher education workforce (Bauman, 2021b). Online higher education discussion posts, threads, and comment sections on various social media platforms, blogs, and podcasts continue to document in real time the concerning labor trends and conditions affecting workers—particularly those who are women, of color, and younger

(Bauman, 2021a). Not only are higher education employees the subject of discussion, but so are managers and departments (small and large) at a variety of institution types (Lederman, 2021; The Review, 2022; White, 2021).

Overwhelmed, overworked, demoralized, and burned out, higher education labor morale is alarmingly low (Ellis, 2021b; McClure, 2020; McClure, 2021; Pettit, 2021; Stebleton, & Buford, 2021). Though some attention has been paid by higher education leaders and agencies to address both the “mass exodus” itself and the residual effects (Bauman, 2021a; Brantley & Shomaker, 2021; Ellis, 2021b; McNaughton, 2021; Smalley, 2022; White, 2021), legitimate concerns remain for both individual workers and institutions. Calarco (2020) was not alone in her observation that COVID-19 has exacerbated already existing gendered labor concerns; other scholars have observed this gendered inequality of care work within higher education, as well. Such studies, though, typically address a particular segment of higher education workers: faculty (Docka-Filipek & Stone, 2021; Malisch et al., 2020; Malone, 2022). Though important and relevant to the understanding of gendered labor disparities in academe, this emphasis overshadows the experiences of those HEI employees whose labor occurs beyond the classroom.

According to data curated by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2020, 57% of public higher education (i.e., less than 2 years, 2 year, 4 year or above) employees were classified as non-education occupations, as defined by the recently updated 2018 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) human resource categories (NCES, n.d.). Although “education occupations” include instructors, researchers, and public service staff (broadly defined as faculty), all other employees are categorized in contrast to educational (i.e., Library and Instructional Support, Business and Financial Operations Occupations, Office and Administrative Support Occupations). As a proportion of all public higher education employees,

non-education staff have remained consistent at a rate of 57% compared to education occupations (43%) since 2008. Even though "non-education" higher education staff constitute over half of academe's employees, this population is not proportionately represented in higher education studies compared to research concerning faculty.

Prior to COVID-19's exacerbation of labor issues, scholars called for more research across the spectrum of workers in higher education. For example, Sallee (2021) suggested that future studies should investigate "how various populations—further delineated by demographic group and employee level—are impacted by ideal worker norms. Explicitly understanding how these norms operate will help dismantle them" (p. 305). First introduced by Joan Williams (2000), the ideal worker is the model employee willing to dedicate herself entirely to her job, absent of any personal distractions. She is completely devoted and loyal to her work and is therefore prone to exploitation. Though Sallee (2021) explicitly called for future studies of student affairs professionals, such potential scholarship should also broadly concern higher education staff from other institutional divisions (e.g., finance and administration; public service and outreach; academic affairs; advancement), as well.

Sallee's (2021) call for an expansion of higher education scholarship echoed Kezar and colleague's (2019) recognition of often overlooked populations of higher education labor in the Gig Academy: graduate students and postdocs, research-only faculty, and the vast spectrum of staff, all of whom "are indispensable to the functioning of the institution" (p. 16). The authors summarized the impact of the current neoliberal academy on academic employment as follows:

> In the Gig Academy, a growing proportion of faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and staff have quite similar poor working conditions: subsistence wages; lack of benefits, retirement funds, and vacation time; no influence over conditions of work or structures of

> advancement; and constant anxiety over the possibility of arbitrary termination. These trends impact all institutional types, but they are often more drastic at public institutions and poorly resourced institutions such as community colleges. (pp. 36–7)

In conceptualizing the Gig Academy, Kezar et al. (2019) addressed a void left in Slaughter and Leslie's (1997) and Slaughter and Rhoades' (2004) higher education specific theory, Academic Capitalism. Academic capitalism, a prominent and well-cited mid-level social theory within higher education scholarship, addresses the changing relationship between HEIs—primarily R1 institutions—and the larger society in which these institutions operate (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). With the conceptualization of the Gig Academy, Kezar and colleagues (2019) extended higher education literature into the realm of academic labor beyond faculty, which historically had been the population of interest (Gill, 2016; Gill & Donaghue, 2016; Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2008).

In highlighting the dire and exploitative employment practices by HEIs, Kezar et al. (2019) ultimately advised that higher education labor unionization is necessary for workers. In summary, as the authors suggested, "We hope that increased clarity around Gig Academy trends will inspire action among faculty and staff to combat these trends and collectively hold administrators accountable for decisions that undermine student learning and institutional missions" (pp. 145–6). The call for increased clarity can be answered with additional scholarship to enhance both workers' and their employers' understanding of neoliberalism's impact on higher education labor exploitation.

Research Purpose

Although Sallee's (2021) and Kezar et al.'s (2019) recent scholarship concerned higher education labor beyond the classroom—with particular emphasis on staff labor exploitation—the

scholars explicitly called for additional scholarship to address specific staff populations. As a direct response to this call, the purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of gendered labor exploitation in both private and public spaces—more specifically situated in employment within HEIs and homes. Ultimately, this study not only sought to contribute to the limited body of scholarship concerning an often overlooked yet critical population of higher education workers—staff members—but it also aimed to examine the connection between social reproduction and higher education labor.

Research Questions

Broadly, the goal of this higher education labor study was to understand the experience of gendered labor exploitation in two separate but connected reproductive spaces to inform labor reform. As such, the following research questions guided this higher education labor study:

1. What does it mean for women staff to experience labor exploitation in both their homes and their places of employment (higher education institutions)?
2. To what extent and in what ways do women staff imagine institutional support services and policies could be adjusted to address social reproduction equity?

Research Method

A phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study as the goals of this research were to understand gendered labor exploitation situated within the context of higher education employment in the United States, a society where social reproduction work is also gendered. Rejecting the duality of the Husserlian (descriptive) and Heideggerian (interpretive) traditions, Vagle's 2014 post-intentional approach was utilized. As such, it is imperative to note that the phenomenon of interest was not women staff working in higher education's labor exploitation in their employment and home; rather, the phenomenon of interest was gendered labor

exploitation—itself—situated in women's employment as a staff member of higher education and in their home. The population of interest—in this case women staff—was one of various access points to that phenomenon. Thus, I gathered and produced various phenomenological materials to analyze. An imperative form of data analyzed was my digital bridling journal, a hallmark of post-intentional phenomenology (Vagle, 2018).

Though phenomenology has typically been an unpopular methodology for feminist scholarship due to its underlying assumptions of essentialism and gender neutrality, I approached this scholarship with similar motivations to Vagle's when he crafted post-intentional phenomenology (PIP) in 2010. Both feminism, as a philosophy, and phenomenology, as both a philosophy and methodology, are stronger approaches when thoughtfully combined. A feminist approach, which is inherently critical, was applied to Vagle's (2018) non-linear, open, and shifting methodological cycle between five components in PIP. Vagle, himself, recognized and highlighted such opportunities when he uplifted the work of Grumet (1988) and Ahmed (2006). As such, I thoughtfully bridged Vagle's (2018) approach with my feminist-oriented conceptual framework, driven primarily via Social Reproduction Theory.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework used to "think with theory" (Youngblood & Mazzei, 2012) throughout this research was Social Reproduction Theory (SRT). Situated within the larger critical, Marxist, and feminist paradigms, SRT is a mid-level theory that concerns the everyday ways in which capitalism reproduces a unique commodity—labor power. As articulated more poignantly by Bhattacharya (2017), a central question SRT aims to address is who (and what systems) (re)produces the worker or the laborer. Bhattacharya is one of several scholars driving the resurgence of the theory, following a surge of radical feminist and ant-

classist scholarship beginning in the 1970s (Bunch, 1974; Dalla Costa & James, 1972; Federici, 1975; Hartmann, 1979; Vogel, 1983) and dormancy in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Scholars have recently returned attention to SRT as a framework to examine the current "crisis of care" and expansion of globalized labor exploitation (Bakker, 2007; Bakker & Gill, 2019; Bhattacharya, 2017b; Ferguson, n.d.; Fraser, 2014; Fraser, 2017; Mezzadri et al., 2021; Teeple Hopkins, 2017). Some have already explicitly utilized SRT to explore labor exploitation within both K–12 education broadly (Backer & Cairns, 2021; Bates, 2018; McFadden, 2021; Weiner & Asselin, 2020) and higher education more specifically (Greene, 2021; Guild, 2019). Given its attention to neoliberalism's everyday exploitative action against women, the application of SRT to the context of higher education employment not only answers Sallee's (2021) and Kezar et al.'s (2019) call for an expansion of scholarship concerning the Gig Academy but it also centers the site of higher education within a larger sociological context.

Although certain concepts from academic capitalism, such as the neoliberal academy or "gig academy" (Kezar et al., 2019), served to contextualize the study's site of inquiry, ultimately this study's central interest—gendered labor exploitation—was analyzed using SRT. Other relevant concepts to this study concerned heteronormative, nuclear families and Hochschild's (1989) "second shift." These concepts, when considered collectively, framed this study.

Significance & Potential Contributions

This study was significant in four ways. First, although staff are often credited with keeping the institution running and are publicly thanked during institutional occasions (e.g., new student orientation, convocation, commencement), they are seldom the scholarly focus of higher education labor attention. Again, even though higher education staff comprise 57% of public research institution employee appointments, little scholarship considers this vital population

(NCES, n.d.). Instead, faculty and administrative leaders (i.e., presidents, provost, deans) are primarily the populations of interest examined in higher education labor scholarship. Following Peter Magolda's (2016) lead, this study aimed to expand scholarly consideration to an often-invisible population, while directly answering the call from Sallee (2021) and Kezar et al. (2019).

Second, explicitly applying SRT to the site of higher education extended the theory's application in useful ways. In expanding SRT's examination to academia, two connected sites of reproduction were ultimately investigated. Although significantly more scholarly attention concerning various demographics among higher education staff is still needed, this study addressed a large scholarly gap and hoped to inspire more nuanced future studies.

Third, and in keeping with the emancipatory aims of critical, feminist scholarship, this study aimed to ultimately empower individual workers and their managers by drawing attention to the potential ways in which staff members privately struggle. By utilizing Vagle's PIP approach, this study's findings afford scholars, workers, managers, and decision-makers the opportunity to address exploitation, as the phenomenon is "opened up" and reveled via "lines of flight." According to Vagle (2018), "Putting lines of flight to work, as a philosophical construction, serves as a way to discuss and open up complicated movements and interactions, as well as a means to explore how these assemblages encounter the work of post-intentional phenomenological craftwork" (p. 199). By exposing and understanding the everyday, hidden exploitations of workers, this PIP study can support the organization of HEI workers—an outcome suggested by Kezar et al. (2019). With an understanding of gendered labor exploitation, workers can be empowered to demand change.

Fourth, this study benefits not only individual workers but HEIs, as well. Given the alarming anecdotes reported by both higher education workers and news outlets concerning worker morale and employment trends, clearly HEIs are struggling not only to maintain campus operations in the wake of the Great Resignation and COVID-19 but are also operating inefficiently given the tremendous employee turnover costs. Thus, decision-makers within various HEIs benefit from understanding and ultimately addressing the gendered burdens women staff members face. Additionally, as higher education labor unions continue to gain attention and popularity among staff (Kezar at al., 2019), leaders within HEIs are afforded an opportunity to prepare for staff organization. Understanding gendered labor exploitation enhances institutional leaders' abilities to respond to potential labor demands. Finally, since HEIs are sites of human capital (re)production, decision-makers within higher education have the ethical opportunity to role model to students the moral response to a labor phenomenon that exists beyond academe. Addressing labor disparities and exploitation within higher education demonstrates to students—who eventually graduate and go on to manage all other sectors of employment—the possibilities of a more equitable workforce and society. As bell hooks (2000) noted, "An important feminist agenda for the future has to be to realistically inform men about the nature of women and work so that they can see that women in the workforce are not their enemies" (p. 53). This study was one small attempt to address this feminist agenda item.

Ultimately, this study intentionally organized a research design (1) utilizing an emerging methodology, (2) structured around an appropriate theoretical framework, and (3) concerning an often-forgotten population of workers. Carefully arranging this feminist study as such extended not only SRT but also PIP into academia as a site of study. It is this researcher's hope that others

consider labor an important social issue, PIP a valuable methodology, and SRT an eye-opening lens to understand this lifeworld after engaging with this study.

Organization of Chapters

In the following chapter—Chapter 2—I provide an extensive literature review. I review briefly not only higher education labor generally, but also scholarship concerning women employed within HEIs. More specifically, I review separately literature concerning women faculty and women staff. Presenting the literature reviewed in this way further contextualized the post-intentional phenomenon of interest within context of a social issue; this is consistent with Vagle's 2014 approach (Component #1).

In Chapter 3, I complete Component #1 of Vagle's approach by discussing the role of theory, conceptual framing, and theoretical concepts within which I thought about the phenomenon. To "think with theory" (Youngblood & Mazzei, 2012)—a hallmark of Vagle's approach—I present an overview of SRT and provide a brief review of scholarship utilizing SRT situated within the context of higher education.

In Chapter 4, I explain Vagle's 2014 post-intentional phenomenological approach to research. Consistent with Vagle's approach, I expand upon Components #2 and #3, in which I explain the clear yet flexible process used for gathering the phenomenological materials and analysis conducted (post-reflexion plan).

In Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, I engage in Component #4 of Vagle's approach, where I explore intentionalities of the phenomenological material produced to provide a thorough exploration of the phenomenon (i.e., findings). Again, following Vagle's approach (Component #5) I provide thick, rich excerpts of the phenomenological material. Utilizing post-reflexions, a whole-part-whole analysis (Vagle, 2014), and Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) "thinking with

theory," I present productions and provocations of gendered labor exploitation at home (Chapters 5 and 6) and at work (Chapters 7 and 8).

Finally, in Chapter 9, I discuss the study findings (i.e., productions and provocations) as they are related to SRT. Additionally, I present several relevant implications (concerning both institutions and workers), recommendations for future research, and my personal next steps with this specific research (i.e., introduction to this living dissertation).

PHENOMENOLOGICAL MATERIAL INTERLUDE 1

BRIDLING JOURNAL: JUNE 11, 2022 (FIRST ENTRY)

So, it begins! For the record, I hate Microsoft and wish I was doing this via Google, but I understand the security concerns (note to self: remember "View ——> navigation." After a wonderful and supportive two-hour meeting with Dr. Stich yesterday, I feel like it's time to get this incredible undertaking underway.

- Timeline — made.
- Online organization — almost done.
- IRB — next.

The most important musing of the day—participant determination. Here is where I started with my prospectus:

> The population of interest concerns those who self-identify as women (over the age of 18), who are employed by a R1 (doctoral granting - high research activities) higher education institution (HEI) in primarily non-teaching roles. Importantly, this study is most interested in those women who are in non-leadership roles; however, given the inconsistent and varied job classification structures across academic institutions, it is challenging to predetermine which specific roles to include in participant recruitment. Therefore, this proposed study will concern itself with participants who in addition to the criteria listed above are compensated at a rate below President Obama's 2015–2016 salary minimum for overtime-exemption: $47,476.

Things I need to remember:

- This is a critical study; therefore, isn't it imperative to think about those who are MOST impacted. What does most impacted mean though?
    - Those who are exploited the most (e.g., smallest income, most time working?). As Dr. Stich reminded me yesterday, maybe we have to start with what exploitation means?
- But what is exploitation?
    - Marx's economic definition. But actually, we can't because it's too narrow.
    - Merriam Webster: verb — "to make use of meanly or unfairly for one's own advantage"
    - Zwolinski, M. and Wertheimer, A. Exploitation. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
        - Benefit
        - Harm
        - Fairness
    - Tahmaseb, A. (2021). Marx Revised: The Exploitation of Women. *Rerum Causae, 12*(1).
        - CARE WORK: "the real economic value [of care work] is greater than their wage [which is zero]. The value the care-worker produces is greater than the value she/he receives; thus she/he is exploited."
        - REPRODUCING HUMANS: "one is exploited when one produces more value than the value one actually receives. In the case of the

production of labour-force, exploitation remains invisible. On the side of remaining unnoticed by the Marxist account of exploitation, this form of exploitation does not even seem to exist for the general public. The underlying reason behind this ignorance is the view of pregnancy as a natural attribute of women. In other words, as if child-care is primarily a mother's task. Carrying an unborn labour-force is considered an act of love that women perform since it is "contemplated" to come naturally. Thus, the naturalisation marginalizes this type of labour."

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes a review of the scholarship concerning higher education labor with particular emphasis on women's labor. To demonstrate the need for this proposed research, I provide a cascading review of the literature from broad and encompassing to narrow and specific. Though several scholars from a variety of fields have considered and examined women's higher education labor, two substantial gaps remain: these gaps concern both women's social reproduction and staff. To address this gap, I highlight related relevant concepts such as ideal worker norms and the heteronormative nuclear family. Finally, in examining invisible labor in both public and private spaces, I view and understand the phenomenon of labor exploitation through the lens of Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) (Bhattacharya, 2017a). This study's theoretical framework is discussed in the following chapter.

Higher Education Labor

Higher education labor literature broadly considers not only the individuals employed by higher education institutions (HEIs) but also HEIs as organizations that employ laborers. Some have considered higher education a greedy institution that "seek[s] exclusive and undivided loyalty" (Coser, 1974, p. 6). Although such a characterization is often used to describe the demanding dedication expected of faculty, faculty are not the only employees of academia. According to 2020 data from NCES (n.d.), faculty comprise 43% of higher education employment, while staff employ the remaining 57% of higher education jobs. These staff members, who serve in a multitude of roles within and across institutional hierarchies, have

historically been characterized as “support staff,” professional staff, and administrators (Szekeres, 2004).

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) recently recognized this labor evolution and updated their HEI human resource categories accordingly (NCES, n.d.). Despite this recent attention to staff reclassification, librarians, custodial workers, student affairs staff members, groundskeepers, administrative assistants, and IT support (just to acknowledge the vast range of higher education workers) have been and continue to be defined by what they are not: “non-academic” (Sebaji et al., 2012). The distinction between faculty and staff not only lingers in name but also in practice.

One example of imbalanced practice between faculty and staff in academia concerns university governance. Though many HEIs tout shared governance as a hallmark of academia, scant literature explores the (supposed) counterpart to the faculty senate—staff senate/council. As an example of what has been researched, Kiernan Mathews (2020) facilitated a forum with fifteen faculty affairs leaders who nearly all expressed their belief that the faculty senate yields more power than its counterpart. Matthews (2020) reported:

> Even at places with "robust" staff governance, their strength is not enough to erase the power differential between groups, such that staff likely feel less influential in institutional decisions and more compelled to show up on campus when asked. One contact admitted that he does not believe his institution has done a good job of including the Staff Senate in discussions and information sharing as it relates to the pandemic and changing the way they work. He added, "I’m a bit surprised we haven’t had more complaints about it." Another admitted to "in-fighting" among the different senates,

explaining that "the faculty senate sees itself as the senate that matters... and faculty hold a super majority of positions in the [university] Senate." (para. 15)

Though the number of participants was small, and the perceptions shared might be characterized as anecdotal, the above comments made by faculty leader participants both highlighted the structural powers embedded in academia and demonstrated the value of standpoint frameworks in higher education scholarship. These findings were consistent with themes from Annemarie Vaccaro's 2011 study, which utilized feminist standpoint theory to explore intersections between women's group membership (e.g., administrators, staff, and faculty) and their perspectives on feminism. Vaccaro (2011) found that institutional sexism and differential standpoints between women inhibited their ability to accomplish one of their primary goals—supporting other women through sisterhood. Both Matthews' (2020) and Vaccaro's (2011) findings point toward a chasm between two sides of academe: the academic and "non-academic" or everything else.

Because academia functions as a site of (re)production, its future laborers from both realms—academic (e.g., faculty, researchers, lecturers, laboratory supervisors) and non-academic (e.g., budget officers, technicians, institutional researchers, accountants, human resources officers)—are shaped by the norms, practices, and values of academia. Graduate programs across academic disciplines produce future faculty, while student affairs graduate programs intentionally socialize future workers into academe's support services beyond the classroom (Ozaki & Hornak, 2021). As such, it is imperative for higher education scholars to regularly engage in critical examinations of its socialization processes. Reviewing this literature with a critical perspective—as SRT does—encourages scholars to interrogate social constructs that reinforce and uphold higher education's reproduction.

Women Working in Higher Education

Even though it is inappropriate to assume or conclude that all women working in higher education experience and are impacted by gendered labor exploitation in the same or similar ways (given the many intersectionalities—socioeconomic status, race, ability, citizenship, etc.—within the population), three prominent themes were prevalent within scholarship reviewed concerning women faculty and staff employed by HEIs. These three sub-bodies of labor scholarship have been examined, often in some combination, within the context of all women's labor in higher education: the ideal worker, career development, and retention/attrition. Before addressing the literature concerning specific higher education roles (i.e., faculty, staff), the following review of overarching topics characterized women's higher education labor literature.

Ideal Worker Norms

First introduced by Joan Williams (2000), the ideal worker is the model employee willing to dedicate him or herself entirely to her job, absent of any personal distractions. She is completely devoted and loyal to her work. Unfortunately, she is easily exploited and taken advantage of by academia—an institution that some consider a greedy organization. Under the guise of "passion" for one's work or career, organizations (particularly within caregiving professions) turn to ideal workers and ask for more—more time, commitment, and emotional labor—without due compensation (Caproni, 2004). If organizations do not actively resist asking for more and more from its workers, such institutions are arguably complicit in this neoliberal exploitation. Fortunately, with a critical perspective, resistance is possible (i.e., graduate program directors and faculty) and the future labor power of higher education can be socialized into the field with healthier practices (Perez, 2021).

Extant research has examined women as ideal workers in higher education. The ideal worker was originally crafted in the image of white men, as historically men were able to focus their energy and time on labor as the sole income provider for heteronormative, nuclear families (Williams, 2000). With a wife at home dedicated to social reproduction (e.g., cooking, cleaning, caring for dependents), a man in academia could focus all time and energy on higher education work (e.g., preparing lectures, conducting research, attending service meetings). Over time and with the introduction of white women (and subsequently women of color) into the higher education workforce (Lester & Sallee, 2017), women have adopted the role of the ideal worker in addition to their societally prescriptive roles as caregivers and social reproduction providers (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2014).

Arlie Hochschild's (1989) conceptualization of the "second shift"—the gendered labor burdens within both the public workplace and the private home—relates to the ideal worker. While the ideal worker has evolved over time as the entire labor force has broadly diversified, the exploitation of all ideal workers persists. Under capitalism, workers face two impossible choices: perform as an ideal worker or do not. If workers choose to not conform to ideal worker norms, these laborers must then be prepared to lose their job to someone who is willing (Williams, 1989). As discussed in the subsequent sections concerning both women faculty and staff the ideal worker standard manifested in studies concerning women working in higher education; such research generally examined invisible labor, family formation (with an emphasis on parenting), and the intersectionalities of identities.

Career Development

Extant research also considered women—both faculty and staff—working in higher education's career development patterns and trajectories. Both higher education specific and

labor-adjacent scholarship broadly explored four sub themes: (1) various barriers to career development and advancement (Acker et al., 2016; Bossu et al., 2019; Creamer, 2006; Iverson, 2009; Pal & Jones, 2020; Sangaria, 1988; Stage & Hubbard, 2008; Terosky et al., 2008; Ting & Watt, 1999); (2) leadership ascension and styles (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Reay & Ball, 2000; West, 2020); (3) gendered work and roles in the workplace (Alemán, 2014; Drury, 2010; Drury, 2011; Krefting, 2003); and (4) the distribution of women within the gendered hierarchy of higher education (Caminotto, 2018; Ceci et al., 2014; Hargens & Long, 2002; McLean, 1996; Simpson & Fitzgerald, 2014). Generally, this sub-body of literature explored the extent to which women lag men in higher education career development, the experiences of women working in higher education as they navigate barriers to their desired career aspirations, and women's status within a gendered academic hierarchy. Notably, various gendered constructs (e.g., roles, behavior, social reproduction) impact women's career development in higher education employment.

A few studies of note and importance demonstrated the complexity of various constructs relevant to this study. First, concerning barriers to career development, Pal and Jones (2020) explored the experiences and perceptions of 257 mid-level women student affairs professionals at doctoral—granting institutions in their mixed methods study. Through both an online survey and 60-minute semi-structured interviews, their findings demonstrated that career development and aspirations were impacted by the culture and climate of institutions; this was unsurprising given the expectations of employees at doctoral-granting (research) institutions. Interestingly, approximately one third of participants revealed that although they aspired to more senior leadership roles, personal and professional factors unsupported by institutional cultures and climates impacted and "derailed" their career development. Second, concerning gendered

leadership style, Alemán (2014) investigated the increasing managerialism and its gendered effects within higher education through a feminist analysis. She concluded that institutions of higher education may be more sexist and gendered than ever before, after outlining the foundation of managerialism in higher education, describing the discourse of masculinity and tools of managerialism in higher education, and calling attention to the "pink ghettos" within academia. Finally, concerning the distribution of women within the gendered hierarchy of higher education, Simpson and Fitzgerald (2014) examined the location of female staff in the organizational hierarchy of one Australian university; their results indicated that significant gendered segregation existed within and across role level, function, and position title. Findings from each of these studies signaled the impact and importance of both structure and gendered constructs on women's career development in higher education employment.

Retention, Attrition, & Burnout

Considering the above findings concerning women's career development, research interested in retention, attrition, and burnout of women working in higher education across academe was reviewed. These studies attempted to discern factors and explored the experiences that contribute to the retention or departure of women workers from higher education employment (Hebreard, 2010; Jo, 2008; Waltrip, 2012). For example, Jo (2008) explored the effects of workplace policies and practices on the voluntary turnover of women ex-administrators from one Ivy League institution and found that participants left their employment due to either conflict with a supervisor, inadequate advancement opportunities, and incompatible work schedules.

Additionally, five interrelated and often overlapping sub strands of scholarly subjects have been explored and identified as factors concerning women workers' retention and attrition:

(1) stress (Blackburn & Bentley, 1993; Gardner, 2012; Kersh, 2018); (2) burnout (Gragila et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2016; Mistretta & DuBois, 2021; Sallee, 2021); (3) compensation (Azim & Horton, 2010; Bartlett & Sorokina, 2005; Cheng, 2014; Chliwniak, 1997; Hagedorn, 1996; Hunt et al., 2019; Riffe & Barringer, 2021); (4) work-life balance (Sallee & Lester, 2017); and (5) role satisfaction (Blackhurst, 2000; Rush, 2019). Collectively, this body of literature has explored factors that contribute to women workers' attrition from higher education; these same factors influenced the decisions made by women workers when deciding to remain or leave their employment.

The following three examples characterize some of this reviewed literature concerning retention and attrition. First, Kersh (2018) aimed to understand the relationship between stress and health risk for women administrators working in higher education. Using a mixed method approach, Kersh (2018) recruited 192 participants who provided both qualitative and quantitative responses via survey. Not only did Kersh (2018) attempt to understand the relationship between stress and health, but she also explored coping strategies, as well. The author reported that though women administrators successfully employed active coping strategies that "remove, solve, or redirect potential work stressors," participants of this study also faced long-term mental health risks (p. 67). Though this study specifically addressed leadership within academe's hierarchy, it is imperative to consider how any leader's attempt to "remove, solve, or redirect potential work stressors" may create work stressors for another employee throughout the hierarchy. To retain employees, HEI leaders could attempt to eradicate such stressors. The following study examined attrition of student affairs employees—one of the most student-facing employee populations working for HEIs.

Second, Marshall and colleagues in their 2015 mixed method study of 153 former student affairs professionals (121 of whom were self-identified women) who left full-time employment within the past ten years found seven themes as explanations for attrition: burnout, salary issues, career alternatives, work/family conflict, limited advancement, supervisor issues and institutional fit, and loss of passion. Specifically, the authors reported, “Stress and burnout were the factors most frequently mentioned for leaving, followed by non-competitive salary, attractive career alternatives, and the evening and weekend responsibilities in student affairs” (p. 153). These findings complicated the body of literature concerning attrition in student affairs and revealed an interesting dimension concerning “passion”—a key ingredient to the ideal worker’s motivation.

A third piece of reviewed scholarship explored work-life balance from a multidisciplinary approach. Margaret Sallee and Jaime Lester (2017) reviewed available work/life literature in organizational studies, psychology, and higher education studies, specifically. At the conclusion of this review, the author suggested that scholars attempt the following: to reframe and expand work/life research beyond parenting, work/family, and faculty; to go beyond descriptive statistics and instead accurately adopt or apply alternative theories; to adopt robust and innovative methodologies beyond surveys and institutional cases; to create a national repository of work/family scholarship; to network to promote scholarship and knowledge sharing; and to develop evidence-based interventions. These conclusions provide future scholars a sturdy foundation upon which to extend to address retention and attrition. The findings from each of the above three pieces of literature collectively demonstrated how interrelated topics (such as burnout, stress, and work-life balance) interacted as factors concerning employment retention and attrition. In summary, these three themes characterized the reviewed literature concerning women working within higher education—both faculty and staff.

First, some studies concerned ideal worker norms and considered how the construct shaped the experience of women workers in higher education. Second, some literature broadly addressed factors that impacted the realities of women's career development across the spectrum of higher education work. Finally, factors that impact retention and attrition of women as workers within higher education have been explored. More specifically and presented in perceived neoliberal institutional value, the following addresses the above topics by neoliberal population of interest—faculty, first, and staff, second.

Women Faculty

Data obtained from the Fall 2018 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Human Resources survey indicated that women comprise only 43% of all full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members and 54% of all full-time, non-tenure-track professors (Flaherty, 2020). Though women (and especially women of color) are disproportionately represented in the faculty tenure track, women are overrepresented in the less prestigious and lesser compensated adjunct roles (AAUP, 2020). Again, "education occupations" comprise only 43% of all higher education employees (NCES, n.d.). Even though women faculty remain a minority within the academy, a disproportionate and substantial body of higher education research concerns this specific population. The following review of the literature surrounding higher education women faculty summarizes relevant themes.

Stages of Faculty Life

Because individuals enter academia at various points in their lives, it was appropriate to consider the faculty life cycle as opposed to the ages of those who enter academic employment. Regardless of when an individual joins the faculty ranks, one must first complete graduate studies. It is during graduate school that many students enter the faculty life cycle through the

process of graduate student socialization. As a result of such socialization, graduate students are indoctrinated into the values, practices, and norms of faculty work. After securing employment (despite a ballooning labor market which remains challenging for many graduates) and entering the faculty line of work, graduate students and postdocs must decide quickly if they wish to pursue a tenure track appointment. Many factors complicate this decision such as the institutional type of one's employment and preference in prioritizing teaching, conducting research, or a combination of both.

Several studies considered and described the various points of the faculty career: (1) new faculty or "early career faculty" (Mason et al., 2013), (2) mid-career faculty (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016), and (3) tenure-track faculty (Acker et al., 2016; Krefting, 2003; Mason et al., 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). For example, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2016), explored the experiences of participants as both new professors and mothers; their comprehensive, longitudinal study initially involved 120 female, early-career faculty members. During the second phase of the research, the pool narrowed to 88 and ultimately involved 44 mid-career faculty members. These participants were employed by community colleges, comprehensive institutions, liberal arts colleges, and research universities across a variety of disciplines as the authors noted of their findings, "... the study suggests that participants manage to navigate work and home lives to forge successful careers and satisfying lives. Their trajectories, however, may not correspond with what academic institutions hope will happen to create gender equity at senior levels" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016, p. 21).

The literature concerning women faculty also considered and described the lifecycle of faculty following tenure and transition into leadership and/or administrative roles (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2011; Mason et al., 2013; Neumann et al., 2006; Wolfinger et al., 2008). These

scholars have examined the experiences of women faculty throughout the various stages of faculty life have complicated the conception of the ideal worker in higher education. Each of these studies also extend the understanding of women faculty's career development and factors concerning women faculty's retention, attrition, and burnout. This reviewed sub-body of literature concerning stages of faculty life also highlighted one of academe's labor challenges—the incompatibility of the tenure process and a woman's reproductive timeframe.

Intersectionality

Recently, a spotlight has been cast upon the experiences of diverse women faculty with a particular emphasis on women of color in academe. Often guided by Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality where the experiences of women of color are the compounded product of intersecting or cascading patterns of oppression, studies concerning intersectionality have, again, complicated the understanding of faculty women of color's experience working in higher education (Ford, 2011; Mena, 2016; Murakami & Núñez, 2014; Nicol & Yee, 2017; Perna et al., 2007; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001; Turner, 2008). The literature pertaining to the unique experiences of women of color faculty illustrated the recognition by scholars not just to ensure that racial diversity is recognized in faculty scholarship (Ropers-Huilman, 2008), but also other important identities: LGBTQ+ (Patridge et al., 2014; Prock et al., 2019), religious (Delmas & Ivankova, 2018; Freidenreich, 2007), and ability (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2021). Given an increasing priority on matters of DEI (Thomas, 2020), it was unsurprising to see literature concerning women faculty continue to expand. Also unsurprising was the overlap between the experiences of women of color faculty, career development within higher education, retention, attrition, and burnout as this population further complicated previously understood norms of the ideal worker in academe.

Institutional Type

Given the wide array of institution types within the academe, some scholars have explored and considered the experiences of women faculty according to their place of employment. Institutional factors such as resources, prestige, expectations associated with knowledge production, and identity-serving institutional missions each impact the faculty experience (e.g., grant application expectations, teaching load). Previous studies addressed women faculty working at community colleges (Shaw et al., 2008), research institutions (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), non-research institutions (Wolfinger et al., 2008), and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) (Murakami & Núñez, 2014). For example, Ward and Wolf-Wendel involved twenty-nine participants from nine different research institutions in their 2004 study. When justifying the bounds of their participants' employment, the authors noted:

> To capture the variability within the Research Extensive category, we looked at membership in the Association of American Universities (AAU) to identify top tier research universities. Thirteen of the 29 faculty were from AAU member institutions and the remaining sixteen were from other Research Extensive institutions. The purpose in this variation lies in understanding that not all institutions are the same and that factors like location and prestige can make the balance between work and family either more manageable or more precarious. (p. 238)

Organizing women faculty studies according to their site of employment provided great localized institutional context in considering the array of experiences women faculty report as (ideal) workers in higher education.

Given various demands faced by faculty at different institution types (i.e., obtaining grants for research at R1 institutions, teaching loads at comprehensive institutions), it is

beneficial to consider the experiences of women faculty at various institution types. Differentiating scholarship according to women faculty's institution type appropriately contextualizes the multitude of experiences had by women faculty in academe.

Academic Discipline

Just as some literature concerning women faculty could be organized according to institution type, so, too, could literature that examined specific academic disciplines or fields of study. Given science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) priorities for women students (as valued by the neoliberal academy) scholarship concerning women faculty in STEM is also becoming more readily available (Ceci et al., 2014; Grant et al., 2000; Monosson, 2008; Patridge et al., 2014; Stage & Hubbard, 2008). The experiences of women working within the STEM sector were vastly different compared to those within the social sciences (Hermann & Neale-McFall, 2018; Prock et al., 2019; Wolfinger et al., 2008). For example, Hermann and Neale-McFall (2018), in their phenomenological study of ten women counseling faculty, explored the impact of cultural expectations related to motherhood. Their findings revealed that pre-tenure academic work and simultaneous motherhood were increasingly more challenging for women faculty. The authors also noted that incompatibility of both academic and motherhood roles was the result of barriers in academic culture. Interestingly, this study also provided some positive aspects of academic motherhood, coping strategies for success in the neoliberal academy, and suggestions for advocacy efforts to support faculty mothers. Cross-discipline comparisons are useful within the larger body of literature concerning women workers in higher education as different academic disciplines are valued differently within the neoliberal academy; discrepancies in academic value can impact a multitude of matters (e.g., career development, retention, attrition, burnout) concerning the waged labor women perform within the academy.

Parenting & Family Formation

A sizable portion of literature concerning women faculty investigated the experiences, expectations, and realities of women faculty within the context of parenting and partnership. This extensive body of scholarship examined the intersection between Hochschild's (1989) second shift and faculty employment. Studies specifically examined (1) parenting expectations and anxieties (Hermann & Neale-McFall, 2018; O'Brien Hallstein & O'Reilly, 2013; Rice et al., 2000; Sutherland, 2008), (2) effective coping or balancing practices (Grant et al., 2000; Misra et al., 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016), (3) co-parenting experiences (Creamer, 2006), and (4) institutional support (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2011; Neale-McFall, 2020; Windsor & Crawford, 2020; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Another prominent thread of scholarship explored the sexist implications women faculty face as they navigate both tenure and reproductive clocks, which were often in conflict (Armenti, 2004; Colbeck, 2006; Martinez Aleman, 2008; Sallee et al., 2016; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2017; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006).

The above literature generally indicated that women faculty were disproportionately burdened by societal standards as primary caregivers and social reproduction providers; as such, women's career advancement and satisfaction (as related to matters of retention, attrition, and burnout) were impacted. For example, a longitudinal study conducted at the University of California found that women faculty with children worked 100 hours per week between their waged work within academe and social reproduction responsibilities at home (Mason & Goulden, 2004). Another longitudinal project conducted by Kelly Ward and Lisa Wolf-Wendel examined women faculty at various points in their academic career (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016), at different institution types (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006),

and within different academic disciplines (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2015). Interestingly, the authors found that both time (and lack thereof) and ideal worker norms shape what it means to be a good mother and good professor at different institutional types. Importantly, they concluded the idea of ‘‘choice’’ was an illusion (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006).

Invisible Labor

An important sub-body of literature considered in this review explored the invisible labor provided by women faculty within their employment. Attributed to societal norms, women faculty were expected to perform labor that is necessary to higher education but often unrecognized either in compensation or value. Some examples of invisible labor involved advising and mentoring students and other minority faculty, serving as diverse representatives on committees and working groups, and teaching (as opposed to conducting research). While women faculty's time was consumed by this work in addition to the burden of the "second shift," little time and energy remained to publish, which continues to be a central component of the tenure and promotion reward system. Additionally, women (Boggs, 1995; Miller & Chamberlin, 2000; Ruzich, 1995) and particularly women of color (Dukes & Victoria, 1989; Fries & McNinch, 2003; Hamermesh & Parker, 2005) received unfavorable student evaluations compared to teaching evaluations of white men; these sexist evaluations also hindered women faculty's materials for tenure consideration. Various studies examined gendered invisible labor, incomparable workloads, and disproportionate expectations (Bird et al., 2004; Guarino & Borden, 2017; Hamblin et al., 2020; Lester, 2011; Misra et al., 2011; Reid, 2021; Terosky et al., 2008; Turner, 2008; Winslow, 2010). Such unvalued, invisible labor often impeded faculty women's career development. For example, Bird and colleagues (2004) examined and created Status of Women Reports concerning gender issues facing women faculty at Iowa State

University. The reports ultimately recommended ways the institution could address problems associated with invisible labor. The authors referred to such work as "institutional housekeeping," as such gendered labor has served to improve women's status within the institution. Unfortunately, this gendered, invisible labor was inherently undervalued within academia.

Coping Strategies

Although some scholars explicitly utilized post-structural feminist frameworks to address inequitable divisions of labor (Krefting, 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2017), others have explored more immediate coping strategies of women faculty through a variety of studies. A substantial body of literature reviewed examined institutional “family-friendly” policies—particularly as they concern parental leave and tenure (Drago et al., 2006; Drago et al., 2008; Lester & Sallee, 2009; Hollenshead et al., 2005; Shin, 2009). Unfortunately, some scholars have discovered that even if such policies were implemented by institutions of higher education, the policies were often underutilized out of fear of bias (Drago & Colbeck, 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). For example, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) confirmed that the presence of a policy did not guarantee that faculty felt they were aware or able to utilize such policies. The authors found that only a few of the participants in their 2012 study utilized available maternity leave policies. The participants elaborated that the use of these policies was a “mixed blessing,” where “turning back the tenure clock definitely made a difference,” but also induced fear and concern that utilization of the policy “would make me look less serious” or “hurt me somehow.” Within the same study, of the thirty-seven women who could have stopped the tenure clock, only nine (or 24%) participants chose to do so. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) went on to suggest that having tenure-clock stop policies were necessary but not sufficient if women faculty continued to

fear the utilization of such supports. Other institutional coping strategies introduced to women faculty concerned community and support (e.g., mentoring programs) among women faculty (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2011; Grenier & Burke, 2008). Alternatively, some studies considered individual coping strategies as opposed to those provided by institutions (Mena, 2016; Nicol & Yee, 2017; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Most coping strategies often concerned reformative as opposed to revolutionary measures (as feminist poststructuralism would favor); yet given the disproportionate burden women and particularly women of color face, any coping mechanism that improved the lives of women faculty and enhanced their retention of higher education employment was beneficial.

Women Staff

Compared to the literature that concerned faculty, scholarship considering staff—the wide-ranging category of employees who are not faculty—was much sparser. Additionally, it is important to note that of the staff scholarship, most of the literature specifically concerned staff members within the functional area of student affairs, which includes roles situated in residential life/housing, campus activities, Greek Life, etc. An overview of the literature concerning women staff working in higher education follows and is organized first by further subpopulations (e.g., functional area, career stages) and second by relevant themes.

Functional Area

Even though faculty are categorized by academic disciplines, a comparable characterization of higher education staff concerns functional areas. Since the neoliberal academy functions similarly to a corporation, many decentralized departments form under a flat hierarchy subdivided by divisions (e.g., administration and finance, student affairs, athletics, academic affairs). Because HEIs are organized in such a manner, literature concerning women

staff was often designed to study specific populations within functional areas. For example, some staff scholarship concerned women working in HEI information and technology (IT) (Drury, 2010; Drury, 2011; Rogers, 2015). Generally, the literature reviewed recognized the growing gap in the number of women employed by and leading this functional area.

Other staff scholarship concerned women working within student affairs (Anderson et al., 2000; Lee & Karbley, 2021; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Pal & Jones, 2020; Spangler, 2011; Stubbs, 2021; West, 2020; Wolfe, 2016). For example, Nobbe and Manning (1997) examined the experiences of ten mothers who were also employed as student affairs directors balancing the responsibilities of work and family. The authors reported:

> The women gave up things and changed career goals when they added children to their lives. The majority of our respondents reported giving up or putting on hold the pursuit of their doctorates for an indefinite time. The greatest loss that was reported was freedom to seek new jobs and opportunities. (p. 105).

These mothers working within student affairs not only reported motivation and behavior changes as children complicated their family formations, but Nobbe and Manning's (1997) participants also shared that some supervisors and institutions did better than others in supporting working mothers. When asked how participants managed the many demands of their lives, Nobbe and Manning (1997) reported that flexible schedules allowed women to work more efficiently, compromises or alternative arrangements were made by participants so that their commitment to their work was not questioned, adequate support systems were vital, and the support of a partner was critical. Nobbe and Manning's (1997) findings were consistent with themes reported in the above cited studies reviewed; themes such as family planning skills, supportive supervisors and subordinates, flexible work environments, a lack of role models, changing ambitions and career

goals, childcare, spousal support, and improved efficiency and effectiveness emerged from studies concerning women working in student affairs. Though the staff literature reviewed was most populous concerning student affairs, this function area is only one of many within higher education.

Hierarchical Job Classifications

Similar to the reality faced by faculty when entering higher education employment at various points in their lives, it was appropriate to consider hierarchical job classifications of staff members, as opposed to the ages of those who enter academic employment. Depending on job qualifications, some staff roles require a graduate degree, while others do not. For those staff members whose employment was contingent upon credentialing, literature exists concerning graduate school socialization (Bureau, 2011; Perez, 2021; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). For example, Renn and Jessup-Anger (2008) reported on data from the National Study of New Professionals in Student Affairs. In this year-long study of the transition of 90 new professionals to their first full-time job in the field, findings revealed that new professionals struggled with matters concerning creating a professional identity, navigating a cultural adjustment, maintaining a learning orientation, and seeking sage advice from established professionals.

Ultimately, regardless of graduate credentialing requirements and socialization, within the academic hierarchy, jobs generally fit within one of three categories: entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level or leadership. Specific literature concerning general women workers in these three various hierarchical levels was almost nonexistent; few studies considered women workers within midlevel jobs (Fochtman, 2010; Hebreard, 2010; Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004). Tangentially, two specific studies considered the experiences of women workers who transitioned from non-classified to classified jobs (Iverson, 2009; Sallee, 2021). Given larger

labor discourses concerning compensation and invisible labor, this literature was related to scholarship concerning women workers' career development.

Although the literature concerning women staff broadly was meager, scholars of student affairs staff have considered women's career stages in their studies. Specifically, studies and scholarship concerning (1) entry-level roles (Lee & Karbley, 2021), (2) mid-level roles (Pal & Jones, 2020), and (3) senior roles (Anderson, 1998; Wolfe, 2016) provided insight into the experiences of women throughout academe's hierarchy. For example, Wolfe's (2016) study investigated the experiences of five working mothers who rose through the academic hierarchy to the level of vice presidents of student affairs at public institutions. Wolfe (2016) explored how these women scaled "maternal wall bias" throughout their promotion; findings revealed that supportive supervisors, the ability to compartmentalize work and home, adequate planning for maternity leave, the utilization of transformational leadership skills to make effective change for advocating for women, and the awareness of institutional fit (for these participants' at public institutions) afforded these women the ability to scale the academic hierarchy.

At the top of the HEI hierarchy, there is the university president; even though there is only one HEI president at a time compared to the massive number of other staff members with a HEI hierarchy, women presidents have received a sizable portion of scholarly attention (Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2000; Howard & Gagliardi, 2018; Rosynsky, 2003; Touchton et al., 1991). Given women's leadership and career development discourses and the prestige associated with academia's most senior leadership role, it was unsurprising to see much consideration is given to such a relatively small population of higher education employees. However, given the unique experiences individual women have had within academia's job hierarchy, it is noteworthy

that scholarship exploring the experiences of various hierarchical job classifications is relatively sparse.

Stressors & Satisfaction

An explicit thread of women staff literature investigated stressors and other factors associated with job satisfaction. Participants of one mixed method study remained engaged in their work despite an increasing expectation to accept “other duties as assigned” as women staff (Rush, 2019); other scholars explored stress factors such as workload, intensifying student issues, supervisory issues (Kersh, 2018; Scott & Spooner, 1989) and institutional compensation trends (Riffe & Barringer, 2021) to better understand the experiences of this often “forgotten” facet of the higher education workforce. For example, women staff members reported a lack of perceived institutional support in their career development, which impacted HEI employee satisfaction (Castleman & Allen, 1995; McLean, 1996). Specifically, within the student affairs women worker literature, factors like job satisfaction (Berwick, 1992; Blackhurst et al., 1998) and inter-role conflict (Anderson, 1998; Bird, 1984) contributed to the stress levels of women staff working in higher education (Anderson et al., 2000). This literature revealed that a few combinations of such factors ultimately impacted the experience of women staff and was reflected in the literature concerning labor retention, attrition, and burnout.

Ideal Worker

Just as the ideal worker norm impacted women faculty, it also impacted women staff. Margaret Sallee’s (2021) *Creating Sustainable Careers in Student Affairs: What Ideal Worker Norms Get Wrong and How to Make It Right* explicitly various factors that contribute to what the editor argued were unsustainable careers for student affairs employees given neoliberal trends. Even though the scholarship referenced throughout the book was not necessarily explicitly

designed around women, according to CUPA-HR, approximately 71% of student affairs staff members are women (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). As such, readers can glean much information from the various studies even when women were not the sole population of a study's design. Scholars have examined matters such as structure and expectation (Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021), institution type (Ozaki & Hornak, 2021), burnout and compassion fatigue (Mistretta & DuBois, 2021), and emotional labor (Lynch & Kilma, 2021) within the context of ideal worker norms. Additionally, scholars explored how ideal worker norms impacted various identities: LGBTQ staff (Kortegast, 2021), people of color (Jones Boss & Bravo, 2021), socioeconomic status (Ardoin, 2021), new professionals (Lee & Karbley, 2021), and mothers (Marshall, 2021). This collection of literature not only contributed to higher education worker literature, but it also called for additional studies concerning a population that is often overlooked, overworked, and undercompensated.

Parenting & Family Formation

Although not as plentiful as the literature concerning faculty, some scholars have explored the impact of parenting and family formation on women staff working in higher education. Studies have considered how mid-career women student affairs administrators with children negotiate and make sense of their multiple roles and obligations as employees and parents (Fochtman, 2010; Marshall, 2002). Similar to the motivation behind Connelly and Ghodsee's (2011) *Professor Mommy*, these studies concluded that some women can and do successfully navigate what has historically been an incredible burden and offered coping strategies participants utilized to manage multiple roles. Other scholars have studied specifically mothers working in student affairs. Again, studies have considered how mothers who are employed in student affairs positions balanced the responsibilities of work and family (Nobbe &

Manning, 1997), the perceptions of women concerning the balance of personal and professional roles (Spangler, 2011), and how women vice presidents of student affairs were able to scale the maternal wall bias through their continued promotion up the academic hierarchy (Wolfe, 2016).

Summary

Higher education scholars have considered, explored, and examined women's higher education labor both broadly and specifically concerning faculty and staff separately. Predominantly, the literature reviewed has addressed ideal worker norms, career development, and retention, attrition, and burnout. Specifically, ample literature concerning women faculty members has addressed the various stages of faculty life, intersectionality, institutional type, parenting and family formation, invisible labor, and coping strategies. Literature concerning women staff was sparser but specifically considered the various hierarchical and functional areas in which women staff were employed, stressors and work satisfaction, ideal worker norms, and parenting and family formation. Yet as Sallee (2021) and Kezar and colleagues (2019) suggested, additional research should concern higher education staff and ideal worker norms. Again, this study sought not only to enhance HEI staff scholarship, but it also examined the connection between social reproduction (private) and higher education labor (public) through the critical, feminist lens of Social Reproduction Theory.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL MATERIAL INTERLUDE 2

BRIDLING JOURNAL: JULY 10, 2022

Am I living in some kind of dystopia? It really feels that way. Today I went to a pro-abortion march with Mom. How is it even possible for women to lose rights in the United States of America in 2022? I was born with rights I no longer have. Cool. Cool cool cool. Even though I feel like I'm free-falling, I spent time this afternoon and evening reading [*Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* by Sarah Jaffe].

The following knocked the breath out of me:

> "The tension at the heart of nonprofits remains that they are funded by the proceeds of an inherently unequal capitalist system, yet this system requires—indeed cannot exist without—humans who must be fed, housed, clothed, and cared for. In doing that caring work, nonprofits grease the wheels of that system; if they aim to stop its rolling, they may have to turn from work that allows the system to reproduce itself. This presents a difficult choice when that work is necessary for people to survive." (Jaffe, 2021).

This is SRT 101! The inherent contradiction of capitalism: it needs workers to be reproduced!

This chapter just keeps on giving; a definition of burnout that may be helpful down the road:

> "The World Health Organization characterizes burnout as "feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or

cynicism related to one's job; and reduced professional efficacy." Such a definition, of course, assumes that one had a mental connection to one's job and positive feelings about it to begin with; only the "exhaustion" part applies equally to all workers. Burnout, in other words, is a problem of the age of the labor of love, and it's no surprise that it is often discussed in the context of nonprofit or political workers. These workers are expected, like Ashley Brink was, to give their lives over to the work because they believe in the cause; but it becomes harder and harder to believe in the cause when the cause is the thing mistreating you." (Jaffe, 2021, p. 144)

MELTING FACE EMOJI:

"The expectation to work long hours for little money isn't just coming from the top—the culture of "movement" work also tends toward self-sacrifice. The assumption that "activists" are a different type of person, more committed than the rest of the world, replicates the old division between the volunteer service worker and those whom they served. The professionalization of the nonprofit sector has now made it more acceptable a workplace for men, but it has also made it relentlessly middle class. The influx of men has added a new inflection to the tradition of feminine self-sacrifice already embedded into the history of the NGO sector: the "cowboy mentality" that comes from political and labor organizing, that values the toughest work, the biggest commitment, as a mark of dedication to the cause. Work-life balance is something that these workers choose to give up, missing the way that their choices quickly become job requirements—something that only shows up later, when they want to take time off. Both gendered tendencies produce

burnout, and those who do burn out are judged as insufficiently committed or insufficiently radical." (Jaffe, 2021)

Note to self: maybe ask participants about their credentialing?

Can I make the same argument for HE? Because this is what I think is happening...

> "At the last count, there were some 12.3 million workers in nonprofits in the United States, which amounts to over 10 percent of total private-sector employment. At the same time, there were over 800,000 people working in the charity sector in the United Kingdom. This is a massive workforce, and though some of these staffers are well-educated professionals bearing graduate degrees in "nonprofit management" or something similar, most of them are workers lower on the rungs who got into the work because they believe in it. Many of them are laboring under something like the conditions Ashley Brink described. "The working conditions of nonprofit workers, whether in direct service, community organizing, health care, or education, represent the value of that service and advocacy work," wrote Chicago organizer Ramsin Canon at Jacobin. "When they are exploited, overworked, and when turnover is high, the implication is that the value of that work is low." It is not surprising, then, that many of those workers have turned to unionizing to protect themselves and improve their conditions." (Jaffe, 2021)

TLDR: "Overworked, burned-out workers are not simply extra-passionate: they are exploited." (Jaffe, 2021)

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study was driven primarily from a single theory supplemented with contextual elements that concerned the two connected sites of reproduction: the neoliberal academy and the home. It is within nuclear families that women experience the second shift. Specifically, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), this study's theoretical framework, was the lens through which I "thought with theory" (Youngblood & Mazzei, 2012) to produce findings. Social Reproduction Theory, coupled with the phenomenological material produced, myself as a budding researcher, and generally my positionality, convene in what Youngblood & Mazzei (2012) referred to as "the threshold"—a middle space that connects two passageways. Before presenting the data produced by this study in Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, SRT is described below.

Social Reproduction Theory

SRT, situated within a larger critical, feminist paradigm, is a middle-level theory that concerns the everyday ways in which capitalism reproduces a unique commodity under capitalism—labor power. The theory is currently experiencing a resurgence led by scholars such as Bhattacharya (2017) and Ferguson (2017), following its initial emergence in the 1970s and dormancy in the 1990s and early 2000s. The theory clearly draws from both Marxist tradition and feminist critique.

Within the tradition of Marxism, SRT concerns itself with workers. All workers or laborers—to some extent—have a capacity for labor, whether such labor is compensated or not.

Marx (1867) defined labor power as the "mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description" (p. 199). But how are the mental and physical capabilities of the human being, the laborer or worker, maintained? The answer, according to SRT, is social reproduction.

Even though Marx had little to say about the reproduction of labor and social reproduction largely, SRT scholars recognized this void (Backer & Cairns, 2021; Bhattacharya, 2017c; Cammack, 2020; Ferguson, n.d.). A more poignant question raised by Bhattacharya (2017) concerns who produces the worker? A myriad of social institutions plays at least a partial role in "producing" humans, who through their own reproduction, become laborers, and eventually exercise their own labor power. Under a neoliberal system, the burden of social reproduction is tasked to the kin-based, (typically heteronormative) nuclear family. Historically, labor has been "produced" in other ways and by other means (i.e., slavery, immigration, migrancy) (Bhattacharya, 2017a; Davis, 1981; Fraser, 2017). However, in the current neoliberal U.S. context, this dissertation research recognized the nuclear family and the home as the private and primary site of social reproduction of the laborer.

Though food, water, shelter, oxygen, and sleep are basic physiological human needs that workers need to regenerate and reproduce physically, social reproduction considers education, health care, emotional connection and support, "downtime," vacation, and even leisure as reproductive needs. Within the workplace the above are considered "benefits," structured within compensation agreements; these often-overlooked forms of (social) reproduction also rejuvenate and regenerate the worker

Feminists, and Marxist Feminists in particular, concern themselves with matters of social reproduction because women, and to some disproportionate extent men, are often the primary

individuals responsible for handling social reproduction responsibilities of the nuclear family. Though the nuclear family has both expanded from the heteronormative model and the traditional partnered norm, women are primarily still socialized as caregivers. They are expected to grocery shop, cook meals, clean homes, nurture infants, care for toddlers, arrange childcare, provide transportation, coordinate activities, engage in children's schooling, manage elderly care, and practice "self-care" within the confines of their private home. This gendered work (when conducted for oneself in one's own home), this unwaged work, this second shift of unpaid labor is necessary to sustain life, develop the future workforce, and maintain the current labor power.

For those laborers with enough wealth and expendable income, each of the above social reproduction tasks can be outsourced. Craig Guild (2019) explained:

> The commodified version of socially reproductive labor has also taken on a racialized and geographic quality as Black and Latino women in the United States take on a disproportionate amount of domestic work, childcare, and healthcare roles; essentially taking care of everyone else's families before they are able to go home and take care of their own. (p. 267)

Unsurprisingly under neoliberalism (a system that requires a hierarchy), capitalism has commodified social reproduction work into gendered, racialized, and classed labor (Bhattacharya, 2017b; Duffy, 2007; Ferguson, 2019; Vogel, 1983). Both women who cannot afford to outsource social reproduction and "domestic workers" who do others' social reproduction before returning home to complete their own are subject to the toll of Hochschild's (1989) "second shift." These women, according to their class, and subsequently their race, are positioned somewhere toward the lower end of the social hierarchy. Already financially burdened by uncompensated labor, what earned wages they do obtain from the workplace are

exchanged for commodities and services needed to sustain their own life and the lives of those for which they are responsible. Women located at the top of the social hierarchy rely on the financial insecurity of women located at the lower end of the hierarchy; a cascading effect occurs as the social reproduction work of those at the top of the hierarchy is shouldered by women located below. As noted by Fraser (2017), "Social reproduction is an indispensable background condition for the possibility of economic production in a capitalist society" (p. 23). Social reproduction is the fuel that keeps the capitalist machine running, rewarding those who own the means of production and exploiting those who keep the machines running.

Trapped within a constant feedback loop, the worker earns wages that are in turn used to maintain or reproduce their welfare to return to work and continue to earn wages—a production that repeats. Social Reproduction Theory highlights and identifies the contradiction of capitalism and capitalists as follows: the worker can only be exploited to a certain point before they can no longer serve (through the contract of selling their labor power) capitalism. Social reproduction theorists recognize capitalism's quest for unlimited accumulation undermines and exploits its own life source—labor power (Backer & Cairns, 2021; Fraser, 2017).

As a critical theory, SRT not only conceptualizes the relationship between labor power and capitalism, but it also seeks to challenge the status quo. Bhattacharya (2017) explicitly noted of SRT's intention to "make visible labor and work that are analytically hidden by classical economists and politically denied by policy makers" (p. 2). Furthermore, Kincheleo and McLaren (1994) elaborated that a well-developed critical theory uncovers the structures and processes that maintain domination by certain groups (i.e., capitalists) and examines ways that the oppressed can become emancipated. Susan Ferguson (n.d.) captured both tenets of a well-development critical theory when she noted:

> SRF further reminds us that what capitalists truly need and want is not labour or labourers, but alienated labour. At the same time, the fact that they can't get this without its human packaging is their biggest problem. It means that, always and everywhere, the bodies and minds of workers can and do push back against the dehumanising dynamic they are part of. (para. 11)

Ferguson identified not only the relationship between capitalists and laborers but also recognized the emancipatory potential of SRT.

This critical theory has both a rich history to draw upon and an exciting future to yet develop in the pursuit of the dismantling of capitalism's oppression. Applying SRT to the neoliberal academy allowed for the expansion of SRT's emancipatory potential to a specific site of reproduction. In what follows, I offer a brief history of two SRT traditions before discussing the application of SRT to education research.

Brief History

Social Reproduction Theory is one of two traditions within a larger social reproduction framework. As identified by Backer & Cairns (2021), two streams emerge from the same Marxist source: social reproduction in education (SRE) and social reproduction feminism (SRF). Although both traditions draw from Marx, each emphasizes different concepts. SRE is concerned with the outcome of reproduction (e.g., intergenerational cultural capital inequities), while SRF calls to attention the labor of those doing the reproduction (Backer & Cairns, 2021). Before addressing Backer & Cairns' (2021) proposal to integrate the two traditions, a historical overview of both streams is provided.

Social Reproduction in Education (SRE).

First associated with Bourdieu and Passeron (1964/1979) and Louis Althusser (1971), SRE historically considered inequalities relative to symbolic capitals in French higher education during the 1950s and schooling as a state apparatus that perpetuated capitalist social formation (Ferguson, n.d.). In time, scholars such as Katz (1968), Bowles (1972), and Jencks (1974) integrated Marxist concepts in U.S. education scholarship. A noticeable shift occurred in 1977 with Paul Willis' "resistance theory" and in 1983 with Henry Giroux's "critical pedagogy." Both scholars' contributions to the SRE tradition continue to influence education scholars today (Calarco, 2018; Carter, 2003; Cipollone & Stich, 2017; Naidoo, 2018; Reay, 1998). Again, with an emphasis on and interest in the product of social reproduction, SRE centers schooling as a site of social reproduction and concerns the outcome of reproduction.

Social Reproduction Feminism (SRF).

Though social reproduction feminist (SRF) theorists recognize education as one site of social reproduction, they also recognize several others throughout society (e.g., the private home, healthcare, childcare, eldercare). This broader and more expansive understanding of social reproduction is rooted in socialist feminist activism of the 1960s and 1970s. Activists such as Dalla Costa and James (1972) and Federici (1975) were instrumental in the Wages Against Housework campaigns, which aimed to draw attention to the fact that domestic work is undervalued since it is unwaged yet critical to the maintenance of capitalism (Backer & Cairns, 2021; Malos, 1980). The forward momentum of the women's paid and unpaid labor activist movement waned during the 1980s, as scholars attempted to work through the challenges of theorizing patriarchy and capitalism (Barrett, 1980; Nicholson, 1985).

Two specific schools of thought emerged during this time. First, Hartmann's (1979) "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union" introduced a "dual systems theory," where both the patriarchy and capitalism were understood as two separate systems that share a history (Arruzza, 2014). Second, and in contrast to Hartmann (1979), Lise Vogel's (1983) *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* suggested a unitary theory of patriarchy and capitalism versus a dual theory. Twenty years later Arruzza (2014) clarified within a unitary theory, "gender oppression and racial oppression do not correspond to two autonomous systems which have their own particular causes: they have become an integral part of capitalist society through a long historical process that has dissolved preceding forms of social life" (para. 79). For the past forty years, Socialist Feminists and Marxist Feminists have continued this theorizing debate but with little forward progress.

Renewed energy concerning SRF emerged, though, as neoliberalism globalized the "crisis of care" (Backer & Cairns, 2021; Bakker, 2007; Bakker & Gill, 2019; Bhattacharya, 2017c; Ferguson, n.d.; Fraser, 2014; Fraser, 2017; Guild, 2019; Mezzadri et al., 2021; Teeple Hopkins, 2017). Illustrating this development, Ferguson and McNally (2015) utilized SRF in their scholarship concerning migrant workers in Canada, a "disposable" workforce within the Global North, who send their earnings to their families in the Global South. In reviewing Ferguson and McNally's (2015) scholarship, Backer and Cairns (2021) underscored and stressed that social reproduction not only concerns gender and class exploitation but also racism and imperialism.

Given that SRF is a tool for historical materialist analysis, it is imperative to note, as Guild (2019) has, that SRF has evolved through three distinct epochs over time: first, where reproductive labor began to produce invisible but necessary labor; second, where social welfare

centers as sites of social reproduction were developed by states to sustain the longevity of capitalism (as preferred by Socialist Feminists); and finally, today, where neoliberalism has dismantled many of the second epoch's state supported sites and instead insisted upon the creation of a cascading system of privatized social reproduction. As Calarco succinctly noted in an interview, "Other countries have social safety nets. The U.S. has women" (Peterson, 2020, para. 43). SRF's emphasis on and interest in the social reproduction laborer shifts attention away from SRE's social reproduction outcome as the primary outcome of interest.

SRE & SRF Integration

Following recent attention and interest in SRF, Backer and Cairns (2021) extended the evolution of SRT. The authors proposed an integration of the two streams—SRE and SRF—to link the primary site of SRE's focus (schooling) with the primary population of interest of SRF (laborers). The scholars acknowledged that this integration would expand upon the traditional understanding of education's primary workers and caregivers—teachers—to also include the administrators, cafeteria workers, janitorial staff, bus drivers, and students. Students, who are often cast aside as objects of care and dependents of social reproduction, have more agency than historically recognized according to some scholars (Ferguson, 2017; Rosen & Twamley, 2018). Backer and Cairns (2021) recognized Erickson's (2015) work concerning the reproductive labor of mothers and teachers in the neoliberal epoch. Erickson (2015) noted, "Instead of liberating mothers and teachers, [neoliberalism] has further strapped them with the obligation to compensate for the state's failure to provide basic public services and blaming them when—due to structural reasons—they can't" (p. 179). According to Backer and Cairns (2021), additional scholarship that continues to integrate these two social reproduction traditions will amplify the

connections and relationships across various social reproduction sites, whether in the private or public spheres. This study is an attempt to do just that.

Application of SRT to Higher Education Research

Few scholars have explicitly utilized SRT within higher education studies. As noted by Backer and Cairns (2021), SRT—and primarily SRE—is prominent within K–12 scholarship (Bates, 2018; McFadden, 2021; Weiner & Asselin, 2020). However, four recent publications within the higher education research realm applied SRT as a theoretical framework. First, Guild (2019) considered the academic library as a unique site for social reproduction labor within the larger higher education enterprise; using the SRF tradition he considered the labor of librarians and their advocacy potential with other higher education workers. Second, Sarita Ford (2020), within the SRE tradition, examined potential differences between married college graduates who attended the same institution compared to those who attended different institutions. She concluded, "Educational homogamy contributes to social stratification by consolidating the educational and social advantages of the individuals and same-university marriages make up a significant portion of these partnerships" (Ford, 2020, p. 254). The third application of SRT, in the tradition of SRF, to higher education scholarship was conducted by Jayasuriya (2021) and considered state regulation of Australian higher education within a neoliberal, capitalist economy in the wake of COVID-19. Finally, Julie Greene (2021), in the tradition of SRF, examined the challenges faced by higher education faculty that have been exacerbated by COVID-19. Although it is possible that scholars have conceptualized and designed other studies with SRT concepts, the above studies explicitly cited Bhattacharya's (2017) scholarship concerning SRT.

Despite a limited body of higher education application and given Backer and Cairns' (2021) integration, SRT—as an explicit critical and feminist theory—was an appropriate

theoretical framework to "make and unmake" (Youngblood & Mazzei, 2012) this study's phenomenon of interest, gendered labor exploitation both within the home and higher education employment. As Ferguson noted, "Households are not merely units geared toward feeding the capitalist system with labor. And by extension, women are not mere breeding machines, spitting out future laborers for capitalists to exploit" (1999, p. 6). Backer and Cairns (2021) extended Ferguson's theorizing when they stated, "We want to suggest that the same can be said about schools and the people who labor within them. Reproductive labor is necessary to producing and maintaining a workforce, but the work of caregiving cannot be entirely reduced to the functioning of capitalism. Nor can the work of teaching and learning" (p. 11). Applying Backer and Cairns' logic, the utilization of SRT in this research—centered within academia—extends this theoretical strand. Because social reproductive labor is essential to capitalism (as a precondition to labor), it is also a potential site of resistance in the anti-capitalist struggle.

Social Reproduction in the Neoliberal Academy

Critical studies recognize that higher education institutions (HEIs), fashioned by the societies in which they were constructed, are not only racialized, classist, and ableist institutions, but they are also gendered (Acker, 1990; Costello, 2012; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Reay, 2004; Simpson & Fitzgerald, 2014). Even though many intentional efforts have been made over the years to recognize multiple truths, increase access, expand inclusion, and incorporate diversity, higher education's exclusionary history looms over corrective attempts. If students are to take cues from institutions of higher education, as model organizations, academia must reevaluate its enacted values given those it espouses.

Summary

Considering the call by scholars discussed in Chapter 2 to contribute to the scarcity in the higher education staff literature, Social Reproduction Theory was a timely and appropriate theoretical framework to utilize when "thinking with theory" concerning reproduction into academe. In the next chapter, I discuss this study's research design and methods. Although "thinking with [Social Reproduction] theory" was one feature within Youngblood & Mazzei's (2012) conceptualization of "the threshold," methodological decisions were also paramount. In Chapter 4 I discuss the methodological considerations for this post-intentional phenomenological study.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL MATERIAL INTERLUDE 3

INITIAL POST-REFLEXION STATEMENT

Ever since I was a child—maybe seven or eight years old—I have had a paralyzing fear of death. I can remember looking at my mom sitting on the couch in our living room as the bright sunshine filtered into the space as I realized that she had no answers for me when I asked what happens to us after we die. I remember the dismay I felt (and still feel) in that moment when I recognized that not everyone walks around constantly thinking about the fact that humans have no idea what happens when we die. I remember feeling upset in my stomach; panic started to rise through my chest. I remember burying my face and head into her stomach as I clawed onto her body as I sobbed. How could this be? How could I exist in that moment with full consciousness of myself, my life, the world in which I was living and yet not know what would come next?

Once or twice a year I wake up in the middle of the night with the same panic: wide-eyed, rapidly conscious with adrenaline coursing through my veins. Although I'm thirty-one years old now, and because I live away from my mom since it was her mission to "get me out of the nest so that I can see the world," I inevitably get up out of bed (alone), start shaking out my arms as I pace the dark room, and begin muttering something along the lines of, "Oh my god, oh my god. How can this be? How am I here right now but someday I won't be? Someday I won't be. What in the actual fuck?!" And then I remember a combination of what my therapist, Alison, counseled me to do in these moments and prior experiences in calming down: sit down on the edge of the bed, become aware of as many sensory observations as possible (e.g., the warm spot where I was just laying, the brightness of the moon shining through the window, the coldness of

the hardwood floors, the timed rain sounds my phone is surely playing to remind me without opening my eyes that I don't need to be awake yet), take some deep breaths, and remember that sometimes we can be unexpectedly delighted with the way things turn out (even after we've dressed rehearsed for the absolute worst-case scenario.) In case you're wondering, I think the worst-case scenario about death is that we just lose consciousness and become worm food. Not that I'm opposed to our bodies obviously breaking down and replenishing the earth in some kind of beautiful circle of life, but aren't most people buried or cremated? I clearly don't know enough (probably because I avoid thinking about these things) about modern burial practices. But if I had to guess, I assume we don't just bury people in the ground because of disease contamination? Or more likely it has something to do with capitalism.

But more importantly than what happens to our bodies, what happens to our consciousness of my soul? What happens to the strong, independent, funny, responsible, old soul that I know as myself? I go to sleep every night assuming that my body won't fail me and that I even in my slumber, I'm still there. I'll be there in the morning when I wake up from my sleep. The voice memos I send my friends before I'm even fully awake some mornings are proof of the vivid dreams that my consciousness remembers even when my body is idle. This is what scares me the most: knowing that at some point, my body will fail me. I will die. I will not exist as I currently do. I understand this fact. But I don't like it. And to make matters worse, no one can tell me what's next.

How am I supposed to enjoy this moment when I have no idea what lies ahead? Are we reborn? I hope so! I hope that I have lived many lives (which is why I'm such an enigma of a soul), and there are many more ahead of me. I hope, as the agnostic person I've become, that there is something bigger than humanity out there. I say "out there" because, despite every

documentary or book I've ever read, I continue to be unable to conceptualize the fact that we're floating on a giant, spinning rock that just floats in an infinite "space." I hope that this human experience is one of many options available to us as souls. Perhaps, there is a great amusement park full of rides or thrills available, and each soul gets to decide which they'd like to enjoy next? Perhaps this is all just a simulation? I'm not unconvinced of that yet; again, we get to choose which human experiences we "experience" in such a possibility.

I share these thoughts, dear reader, as the three-to-four-minute trailer or "behind the scenes" preview for the film you are about to experience. This particular film—my dissertation—is scripted, directed, and (co)produced by me. Think, for example, of when Tom Cruise came onto the screen at the movie theater right before *Top Gun: Maverick* played. He essentially sat in an actor's chair and explained that the aircraft stunts in the film were both actually done and filmed by the actors, themselves, from the cockpit of the aircraft used. Presumably, you know some things about Tom Cruise given his celebrity status (e.g., he's a Scientologist, once married to Katie Holmes, has a daughter named Suri, is known for doing wild stunts for his action films). As such, you may accept more readily what he's saying to you on the silver screen.

But you probably don't know me (unless you're a member of my committee or a loved one committed to understanding what I've been working towards for the past four years). You don't know my history, my controversies (I'm not a scientologist, but I am fascinated by the practice.), my life story. Therefore, I present this initial post-reflexive statement to communicate not only a brief autobiography but also my assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives related to this phenomenon that has manifested itself to me (Vagle, 2018). *Cue the dimming of the lights and voice-over...*

Born a white, cis-het, able-bodied female on December 16, 1990 in Youngstown, Ohio, I came into a pretty charmed life. As the first grandchild on both my mother and father's side of the family, I—an only child—was doted upon by grandparents, aunts, and uncles in an affluent suburb of a dying town within the Rust Belt. My mom, an insurance agent who would go on to own and manage her father's business, was a college graduate and fierce advocate of raising me to be an independent woman. She would say, "the point of parenting is so that the child does not need the parent someday." My dad, a steel mill foreman, has been working within the industry since his high school graduation. When I was six years old, they divorced. Although I believe this situation significantly shaped my life, I would nominate them for "model divorce," as I have come to witness many others since. As such, my mom and I continued to live in the same house in which I was brought home from the hospital in, while my dad went to live with his mom, my grandma, just the next town over. I'd see him on the weekends. He was in a long-term relationship with a woman who was never legally my stepmom but who would play that role for twenty-plus years. Again, all things considered, I experienced a wonderful childhood. We were a middle-class, Catholic family (meaning Mom and I went to holiday masses; I also was confirmed in the Catholic church). I was a "high achieving" student who was able to engage in extracurriculars while my mom worked a typical 10am–5pm workday. As an only child, I made many friends, some of whom would go on to become pseudo siblings.

Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I can think of many instances or conversations where my identity as a woman began to take shape. "Anything boys can do, girls can do better;" "GIRL POWER," "Alexa and Aron sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G. First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes a baby in the baby carriage." These memories are just a few of the many conflicting messages that I would (continue) to receive.

The best example, though, that I can recall from my childhood involved my grandma (the one who took my dad in after my parents' divorce). She explained to me (probably after Thanksgiving dinner when all the holiday ads were a part of the local newspaper and the grandchildren were given markers to circle what they'd hoped Santa would bring them on Christmas) that the JCPenny catalog was like life. Flipping through the book, she'd say "First, there's the women's section [as she'd linger on the women's jewelry section full of engagement rings], then the men's, then home. Finally, there is the kids' section. This is how life is supposed to be." Only now do I look back at that memory and giggle at JCPenny's brilliant marketing strategy of catering to gendered scripts of the 1950s. But at the time, I really thought I was destined to fall in love with a dreamy man, get married, have kids, and move into a beautiful home like the ones in the catalogs all by the time I was thirty. It never occurred to me that any other outcome was possible. Meanwhile, my mom and dad were divorced, my mom was rocking the Lorelai Gilmore role before *Gilmore Girls* was ever popularized, all my grandparents were either divorced or widowed already, and my blue-ribbon, small, conservative-leaning town was offering counseling classes for children of divorce. The nuclear family (one I never had since I was without siblings anyway) as I knew it existed only on tv and in movies; it was a construct I never connected with or related to. Maybe because I've always felt outside of the nuclear family it's been easier to reject the ideas of marriage?

My understanding of myself as a woman, and eventually the roles I would play in this world, would continue to be shaped throughout high school, my undergraduate experience at The Ohio State University, graduate school at Indiana University, my time living and working at the University of Mississippi, and currently at the University of Georgia. I think it's important to highlight that each of these experiences involved education and academia. Academic spaces

(even when working as a professional as opposed to studying as a student) have been a constant environment and ecosystem for me my entire life (as my mom had me in pre-school so that she could go to work). As an incremental process, each educational advancement from pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school, through my undergraduate degree, master's degree, and finally toward my doctoral degree, has served as the motivator of my life. “Only with good grades are you going to be able to x, y, or z.” I think because I've always been looking towards the credentialing and personal development horizon, I may have missed out on some other educational opportunities.

Notice that I didn't list “being in love,” “my first heartache,” “a significant romantic relationship” as an experience that shaped my understanding of myself as a woman. I haven't listed any such event because I've never been in a romantic relationship as they're presented to little girls. I've not had the kind of relationship that made me want to alter my life as I have always known and experienced it. In fact, I'm now at a place in life where I look around at my friends, family members, acquaintances, and even strangers and wonder what they're doing! It's not that I'm anti-love, anti-relationship, or anti-intimacy. I simply continue to observe others' relationships (e.g., “situationships,” marriages) and the outcomes of such relationships affirm my understanding of the nuclear family as a site for capitalism to hold individuals hostage.

That escalated quickly. Let me backtrack. I think I assumed that if I adopted or embodied this extraordinary identity as a mysterious, high achieving, highly independent, cool, empathetic woman with a strong work ethic (think Anthropolgie or Free People as opposed to JCPenny...) that men would be falling over themselves to want to be with me. But that hasn't happened; it still hasn't happened. So instead of lamenting over this “missed opportunity,” I simply devoted more of my time and energy into “falling in love with myself.” Although one particularly

upsetting professional incident was the grain that tipped the scale, ultimately, I decided that a terminal degree is what I needed to complete my look. Note: at age twenty-seven, I still was convinced that I would surely be wooed, courted, and married before too long (the countdown to thirty was on!).

Meanwhile, the United States of America is self-imploding (a possibility I was warned of when a high school teacher recommended Cullen Murphy's (2007) book *Are We Rome? The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America)*. Hillary Clinton had lost her presidential run for election (despite her obvious professional qualification and experience), and Donald John Trump assumed office. The patriarchy was particularly oppressive during this time.

I moved to Athens, Georgia as a single, twenty-eight-year-old woman who knew no one and had no familiar or friend support nearby. Thankfully, I could afford a really quaint apartment for myself and my four-year-old cat, Rayna James. In August 2019, I began the imposter-driven experience known as graduate school all over again (if you know, you know). But this time, how could I ever expect a global crisis to turn everything I thought I knew upside down? I need not lament here my incredulous outlook on the handling of the COVID-19 crisis.

But I do think it is important to note that I turned thirty years old while quarantining in my mom's home convinced we were all going to die within the year. In December 2020, nine months into an obviously failed response, not only was I having an existential crisis as a human living through a pandemic, but I was also utterly distraught by my failure to live up to the societal script of who and what a thirty-year-old should be. Did you ever make a pact with a friend in middle or high school along the lines of, "If we're still single by the time we're thirty, we'll just get married"? Because I did. I can remember where I was, who I made the pact with, and why I did it. (Note, the friend with whom I made this pact was already married by the time

we were thirty, so I had an out from this misguided and childish promise made out of fear). As if failing to live up to society's "standard" wasn't difficult enough, I was isolated—you guessed it—in my childhood, unconventional nuclear family home. (Not that I would have it any other way, Mom! Thanks for always making sure to keep us alive!) This meant that my carefully curated group of friends and pseudo-siblings were physically kept distanced from me, accessible only by phone, text, or video calls. Don't misunderstand me. I am incredibly grateful for and aware of the technological capabilities that kept me as connected as I was to my support system. We were already isolated from many of our dearest connections out of care for one another's health; I experienced an additional layer of isolation as I navigated this milestone birthday relative to society's script. It was rough. I am not proud of some of my behavior during the months leading up to and following my thirtieth birthday. I was simply disheveled. Even though I tried to grant grace to myself the way I would others, I couldn't even grant grace to others during this time.

Fortunately, because of an offhanded conversation with my major professor, Dr. Amy Stich, I stumbled upon the writing of Tithi Bhattacharya, a Marxist Feminist scholar. The first of Dr. Bhattacharya's books I devoured was *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto,* co-authored by Cinzia Arruzza and Nancy Fraser. Let this be a reminder of the "lollipop leadership" (see Drew Dudley's TEDtalk) moments we all create for others; how could either Dr. Stich or I know that that recommendation would serve as a gateway into an intellectual world that would alter my life? But it did. During the Spring 2021 semester I was enrolled in a "Capitalism, Feminism, Resistance" course hosted by the Women's Studies department so that I could learn more about Marxist Feminism. I've been captivated ever since.

There has been no facet of my life that hasn't been impacted, touched, or (re)examined with this identity I now proudly wear. Shoutout to both my therapist, Alison, and Dr. Stich for walking by my side and holding space for me as I grappled and rumbled with my various relationships with and understandings as I observed them through an entirely new lens. Yes, I do believe that capitalism is the root of all evil. Yes, I do believe the patriarchy continues to oppress us all. Imperialism, colonialism, racism—each of these constructs rooted in power holds interact with one another, resulting in compounded oppression for millions of humans on this planet! (As a reminder, if your feminism isn't intersectional, it's bullshit.)

Why am I worked up and upset about such oppression? Because we don't know what happens when we die. This might not be a simulation. Maybe we aren't reincarnated into a better life. Maybe this is the only human experience each of us will ever get. Not only for myself, but for the billions of humans currently on the planet who are exploited as well as the billions of humans who will come (assuming we don't ruin Earth in the meantime).

Yes, I am a liberal (dare I say leftist), woman who believes in Arruzza, Fraser, and Bhattacharya's (2019) eleven theses. I do not accept this world as it currently is; I want to challenge the everyday norms that we, as a society, have seemed to simply accept. I believe that although change is surely too slow, it is possible. Although I may not live long enough to see the change, I believe that I can nurture seeds that have already been planted by great thinkers such as Alexandra Kollontai, Silvia Federici, bell hooks, Judith Butler, Kristen Ghodsee, and of course, Tithi Bhattacharya (a non-exhaustive list of women who have contributed to my own understanding of the complexities of the patriarchy and capitalism). I believe that it's my responsibility to work to make the flower bed in which these seeds grow more hospitable to increase the likelihood that they bloom.

I understand this dissertation, presented through the analogy of a film, to be one of what I hope will be many contributions to preserving and nurturing ideas that could bloom into norms that can one day make this world one with less oppression, less exploitation, and more joy. In case this life is really the only one we have, I'd like to use my soul and consciousness, the awakening I've had, and my many privileges to good use. *And action!*

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS

This study explored gendered labor exploitation in both public (higher education employment) and private spaces (home). Ultimately, this study sought to contribute to the limited body of scholarship concerning an often overlooked—yet critical—population of higher education workers: women staff. Honoring critical feminist calls for resistance and reimagination (Arruzza et al., 2019; Bensimon & Marshall, 1997; hooks, 1989; hooks, 2000; Thomas & Davies, 2005), this post-intentional phenomenology (PIP) elicited rich, thick description of the phenomenon from the following research questions:

- What does it mean for women staff to experience labor exploitation in both their homes and their places of employment (higher education institutions)?
- To what extent and in what ways do women staff imagine institutional support services and policies could be adjusted to address social reproduction equity?

These research questions attempted not only to capture women's experiences within two sites of social reproduction (both public and private), but they also attempted to draw out solutions from the population of interest. Considering policies and practices that may rectify perceived gendered labor exploitation from the perspectives of women staff is consistent with the critical and emancipatory aims of feminist methodologies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Research Design

Because qualitative research seeks to understand experiences and perceptions, explores often ignored populations, and cannot be done experimentally for practical and ethical reasons, it

was an appropriate genre to utilize given the above research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall, 1985; Marshall, 1987; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Situated under the qualitative research umbrella, this study utilized a PIP design (Vagle, 2018) supported by feminist philosophy.

Phenomenology

A phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study to understand gendered labor exploitation of a specific population (women staff members employed by institutions of higher education) in the lifeworld—the world of human experience. First conceived by Husserl, also known as the founder of phenomenology, the lifeworld orients our understanding of the original, pre-reflective, pre-theoretical natural attitude of everyday life.

Phenomenology, broadly, is both a philosophy and methodology concerned with the study of phenomena. Phenomena, however, are not unique to phenomenology. Nested within and in alignment with other qualitative approaches, phenomenology:

> is not concerned with generalizing, quantifying, and finding. It is not rigorous in the experimental sense of having precise, objective measures that can be quantified and proven. Its aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday ("obvious") phenomena. (Vagle, 2018, p. 11)

To "gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday phenomena," phenomenologists must first observe an occurrence. As described by Moran (2002), such occurrences or phenomena could "belong to the physical, mathematical, cultural, aesthetic, religious, or other domains" (pp. 4–5). The author further elaborated:

> The phenomena of phenomenology are to be understood in a deliberately broad sense as including all forms of appearing, showing, manifesting, making evident or "evidencing,"

> bearing witness, truth-claiming, checking and verifying, including all forms of seeming, dissembling, occluding, obscuring, denying and falsifying. (Moran, 2002, pp. 4–5)

Clarifying phenomena manifestation, Vagle (2018) noted, "When we study something phenomenologically, we are not trying to get inside other people's minds. Rather, we are trying to contemplate the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world" (p. 23). As such, it is imperative to recognize that the unit of analysis in phenomenological scholarship is not the individual experiencing a phenomenon; the unit of analysis is the phenomenon, itself, in the lifeworld. Individuals who experience phenomena, though, are one of many access points to the manifestation of phenomena.

Individuals experience phenomena through "human consciousness" when they are thinking, perceiving, or even daydreaming, though such consciousness is always incomplete or lacking. As Katherine Soule recognized in a published conversation with her major professor, Melissa Freeman:

> phenomena have a reality and truth that extend beyond our perceptions of them. In phenomenology (unlike in positivism), the world and/or phenomena cannot be reduced to our perceptions of them (Heidegger, 1927/1998; Husserl, 1936/1970; Merleau-Ponty, 1964). As we could never examine (or even encounter) each and every manifold of a phenomenon's identity, some understanding will always be lacking. (Soule & Freeman, 2019, p. 861)

Accepting that one's understanding of a phenomenon will always be incomplete, phenomenologists turn attention to "intentionality"—a distinct phenomenological concept that signifies "the inseparable connectedness between subjects (that is, human beings) and objects (that is, all other things, animate and inanimate, and ideas) in the world" (Vagle, 2018, p. 58).

Human consciousness does not exist in a vacuum; instead, consciousness is always in relation. To be clear, intentionality, in the context of phenomenological approaches, is not to be confused with the common semantic concerning one's choice, aim, or plan.

Different phenomenologists have conceptualized and described intentionality with various analogies, such as Merleau-Ponty's (1947/1964) "invisible thread" that connects humans to their surroundings or Sartre's "bursting forth" toward the world (Soule & Freeman, 2019). Intentionality is an imperative phenomenological concept that differentiates various phenomenological approaches within the philosophy and methodology. Over the past one hundred years, phenomenology and its philosophical concepts have evolved; three distinct evolutions are of note.

First, for Husserl (1900–1901/1970), phenomenology was introduced as a critique of Descartes, a French philosopher often considered the founder of modern Western philosophy and the positivist philosophy (Soule & Freeman, 2019; Vagle, 2018). Husserl's initial iteration of phenomenology conceptualized intentionality as the way essential structures of a phenomenon were revealed. Soule illustrated Husserl's conception with the following analogy:

> Imagine that the core of the onion is the thing in-itself and each layer is some cultural, social, or theoretical facet of "onion" that distorts what the onion is in-itself. By peeling away preconceived and learned meanings of the object, one might reach the fundamental meaning (or the essence) of the phenomenon, or that which does not change as the layers are peeled away. (Soule & Freeman, 2019, p. 860)

Within the Husserlian tradition, phenomenologists utilize "phenomenological reduction" or a modern scholarly practice known as "bracketing" to reveal the essence of a phenomenon. To reveal such an essence, Giorgi (1997), in keeping with Husserlian practice, instructed:

> to enter into the attitude of the phenomenological reduction means to (a) bracket past knowledge about a phenomenon, in order to encounter it freshly and describe it precisely as it is intuited (or experienced), and (b) to withhold the existential index, which means to consider what is given precisely as it is given, as presence, or phenomenon. No work can be considered to be phenomenological if some sense of the reduction is not articulated and utilized. (p. 240)

Bracketing—a hallmark of descriptive, Husserlian phenomenology—is a distinct practice that has been challenged as the methodology evolved; evidence of such challenges are described below.

The second of three phenomenological approaches is attributed to and associated with Heidegger, another German philosopher, former student of Husserl, and eventual critic of the philosophy's founder. The Heideggerian—or interpretive tradition—diverges from the Husserlian one in its conception of intentionality, where phenomenological modes of being are constituted within particular contexts (i.e., historical and cultural assumptions that shape everyday existing) (Soule & Freeman, 2019). Heidegger (1927/1998) understood the work of phenomenology "to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself" (p. 30). Vagle (2018) elaborated that "Heidegger's phenomenology stressed that phenomena are lived out interpretively in the world, and hence the world should not be bracketed but fully engaged in the phenomenological inquiry" (p. 9).

Rejecting the practice of bracketing was a significant shift from Husserlian practice, which continues to be debated even today. For example, Dahlberg (a modern Swedish phenomenological scholar associated with the reflective lifeworld research approach) introduced a practice known as "bridling" in 2006. Vagle (2018) described bridling as:

> Like tightening and loosening the reins when riding a horse, the phenomenologist tries to do the same with their judgments. […] the idea of "suspending" one's judgments is not the goal of bridling; rather the focus remains on becoming much more familiar with one's judgments so they do not compromise one's openness to the phenomenon. (p. 14)

Dahlberg (2006) elaborated, "Neither researchers nor anyone else can cut off one's pre-understanding, that little vexation that constantly has occupied philosophers as well as researchers, but it can be 'bridled' from having an uncontrolled effect on the understanding" (p. 128). Bridling, as a practice, continues to be encouraged by phenomenologists such as Vagle, the scholar associated with the third iteration of phenomenology: post-intentional phenomenology.

Post-intentional phenomenology, as an encounter, a way of living, and a craft, is Vagle's (2018) contribution to the ongoing evolution of the philosophy and methodology. Dissatisfied with both the descriptive and interpretive approaches, Vagle rejected the duality associated with the two primary phenomenological approaches before crafting his dissertation in 2010. Rather than "[...] invoking either/or logic to 'define' what phenomenology 'is and is not' and what post-structuralism 'is and is not,' post-intentional phenomenology aims to serve as a space in which post- ideas and phenomenological ideas can be put together to see what happens" (Vagle, 2018, p. 124). In doing so, Vagle shifted focus from the "individual and their intending to the phenomenon as a social apparatus" (p. 148). For Vagle (2018):

> Post-intentional phenomena are conceived as circulating through social relations—and, again, are produced through the dynamic entanglements and intensities (Deleuze and Guattari) among direct lived experience, discourses, habits, policies, practices, contexts, histories, language, art forms, popular media, politics, objects, etc. (p. 148)

Situated within and morphing through social constructs, post-intentional phenomena evolve over time. This is an important development of thought concerning the philosophy and methodology. As Sokolowski (2000) critiqued, phenomenology (broadly) has had little to say concerning social politics and social change. Vagle (2018) acknowledged this void and highlighted two "phenomenological craftspeople who have gone ahead and put phenomenology into play, or interplay, with more disruptive, politically oriented theories/methodologies" (p. 132). Both Grumet (1988) and Ahmed (2006) put feminist and queer theories in dialogue with phenomenology in arranging feminist and a queer phenomenologies respectively. Both are examples of Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) "lines of flight." Vagle (2018) elaborated:

> How Grumet sets up phenomenology and feminism opens up wounds. It brings both phenomenology and feminist thinking to bear on the matter of teaching. It draws out opportunities for phenomenological resonance with lived experiences and serves as a catalyst for feminist political possibilities. (p. 133)

Deleuzeoguattarian "lines of flight" are useful to the post-intentional phenomenologist craftsperson in three ways. First, lines of flight direct attention away from any stable, final, and singular "essence" of a phenomenon—that is, *what things are*—and instead direct attention towards *how things (i.e., ideas, beliefs, goals, phenomena, people, and objects) connect* through unstable, partial, and ever-changing intentionalities. Second, lines of flight also connect embodied intentionalities (that is, the ways in which the gendered human body accesses the lifeworld via various body politics). Such embodied intentionalities are then constantly made, remade, blurred, and disrupted. Finally, lines of flight also conceptualize intentional relations among things, relations, ideas, theories, and experiences as multiplicities. Each of these three uses of the Deleuzeoguattarian concept afforded me the opportunity not to determine what is the

essential structure of a phenomenon but instead to see what the phenomenon might yet become (Vagle, 2018).

Bridging together the edges and boundaries (and strengths and limitations) of phenomenology and feminism, the potential for something greater than individual parts emerges. As Shabot and Landry (2018) recognized in their defense of feminist phenomenology as a philosophy:

> feminist phenomenology goes beyond classical phenomenology insofar as it also criticizes inequality and injustice in gender relations and scrutinizes the constitution of gender within the history of ideas and socioeconomic and political systems. Hence, "feminist phenomenology is a phenomenological philosophy in a feminist perspective." (p. 105)

Fisher (2000) supported Shabot and Landry's (2018) above observation when she noted, "Where there has been some phenomenological acknowledgment of feminism, it has invariably been on the part of someone who would likely identify herself as a feminist; in other words, a phenomenologist, but also, and in this case importantly, a feminist" (p. 5). As someone who identifies herself as a feminist, I followed the conceptions and inspirations of De Beauvoir (1949/2010), Grumet (1988), hooks (2000), and Young (1980) despite the hesitation, concern, and even critique that feminism and phenomenology are inherently incompatible (Shabot & Landry, 2018). As bell hooks instructed, "To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality. A primary strength of contemporary feminism has been the way it has changed shape and direction" (2000, p. 110). This study is my contribution to the continued shape and direction of

contemporary feminism. In the tradition of PIP, I thoughtfully interplay feminism with phenomenology “to see what happens.”

Again, fusion between feminist and phenomenological thought has historically been unpopular. This is because of two particular feminist critiques of the phenomenology (Fisher & Embree, 2000). First, feminists have taken aim at phenomenology’s fundamental assumption with “essence,” which was a prominent point of feminist contention during the 1980s and 1990s (Shabot & Landry, 2018). Specifically, essence—as a lived experience in the body—inherently is both sexed and gendered. Because phenomenology has often ignored the particularities of women’s experiences, feminists have been critical of the methodology (Fisher, 2000). The second critique concerns phenomenology’s general absence of gender or sex in analysis; this void is in turn assumed to be phenomenology’s acceptance of “gender neutrality” at best and masculist or male-biased at worst. Failing to account for the sexed body is a significant issue; however, other methodologies have faced similar critique.

Instead of dismissing phenomenology entirely, more critical approaches could be taken to account not only for sex and gender but also for any number of important identities to critical scholars (i.e., race, ability, socioeconomic status). Such critical approaches have already been applied by scholars to several other research methodologies. Why not also phenomenology?

Though Shabot and Landry noted that, “A politically relevant and socially critical feminist phenomenology is therefore not a ‘pure’ phenomenology in the classical sense; its goal is to express as well as potentially transform experience through action” (2018, p. 20). As previously stated, this study intended to inspire and ultimately empower individual workers and their managers by drawing attention to the potential ways in which staff members privately (and unnecessarily) struggle. Like Vagle's (2018) own rejection of phenomenology’s historic dualistic

approach, the PIP approach was an appropriate methodology to pair with critical feminist theory. A non-linear, open, and shifting cycle between five components was the basis of this study's research design (Vagle, 2018):

> 1. Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue;
> 2. Devise a clear yet flexible process for gathering phenomenological material appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation;
> 3. Make a post-reflexion plan;
> 4. Explore the post-intentional phenomenon using theory, phenomenological material, and post-reflexions; and
> 5. Craft a text that engages the productions and provocations of the post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue. (p. 139)

In what follows, I more specifically address each of Vagle's (2018) components in relation to this study.

1. Identify a Post-intentional Phenomenon in Context(s) around a Social Issue.

Concerning the first malleable component, Vagle (2018) instructed:

> state the research problem; complete a partial review of the literature; identify and discuss theorists you want to think with (Jackson and Mazzei 2012) relative to the research problem; articulate the phenomenon and the accompanying research questions; situate the phenomenon in the multiple, partial, and varied contexts in which it tends to manifest; and select the research participants. (p. 140)

Already summarized at the beginning of this chapter and discussed throughout Chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Literature Review), and 3 (Theoretical Framework) this research addressed the phenomenon of gendered labor exploitation—a feminist social issue. Social Reproduction

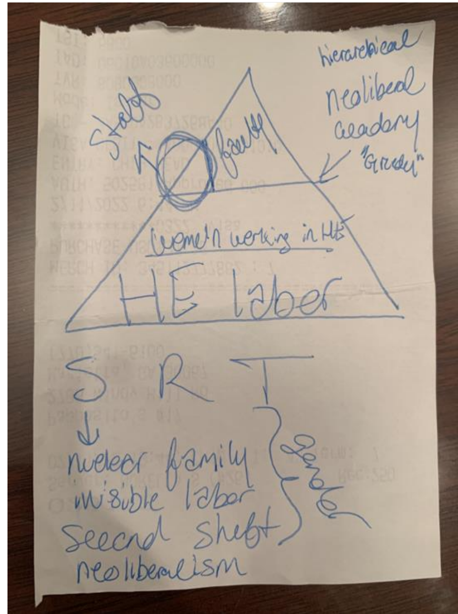
Theory (SRT), particularly the thinking and writings of Bhattacharya, within the context of ideal worker norms, career development, and retention, attrition, and burnout "situated" within the neoliberal and gendered U.S. academy (as identified in Chapter 2), was the primary theory with which I "thought."

Figure 1, below, manifested after a particularly challenging conversation with an academic during which I struggled to communicate my thoughts concerning my identified phenomenon contextualized around a social issue. Out of sheer frustration, I reached into my purse and grabbed the only piece of paper available (a receipt) and quickly sketched a triangle (i.e., the "greedy," hierarchical, neoliberal academy) that rests upon SRT. The academy is supported by all higher education labor, some of which involve women. Even though over half of higher education employees are classified as staff as opposed to faculty, the literature is dominated by research specifically concerning faculty. As such, a gap or hole exists. At the time (February 2022), I understood SRT as the theoretic framework or lens in which I would make sense of gendered labor exploitation occurring within the academy. Given the higher education literature I was absorbing, I anticipated that gendered concepts concerning the nuclear family, the "second shift," and invisible labor were involved somehow.

Though I initially outlined and identified a theory to think within multiple and varied contexts concerning the identified phenomenon, I was prepared to be flexible in expanding or shifting theories as the phenomenon appeared in new contexts. This commitment was important to post-intentional phenomenological work as Vagle (2018) once understood context as a means in which the phenomenon is "situated" as opposed to a later understanding that PIPs are "shaped, produced, and provoked by context" (p. 145). This evolution of thought is a great example of the methodology's fluidity, which Vagle (2018) acknowledged may be intimidating for some

Figure 1

Back of the Receipt Conceptualization



phenomenological craftspeople. The final aspect of this first component concerned participants; below, I outline my approach to recruit participants, who were access points of lived experience concerning the phenomenon.

Participants

A primary source of insight into the phenomenon of interest involved those who have experienced the phenomenon. Again, the unit of analysis in a PIP is the phenomenon itself, though, individuals who experience phenomenon are an important access point into the lived experience of said phenomenon. When determining participant criteria, Vagle (2018) instructed:

> Select research participants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation, whom you think will be able to provide a thorough and rich description of the phenomenon, and who collectively represent the range of multiple, partial, and varied contexts that you have identified. (p. 147)

Given this loose framework and approach, a "magic number" of participants needed was not prescribed. Instead, Vagle (2018) encouraged PIP craftspeople to remember "'the phenomenon calls for how it is to be studied.' Practice openness as it has been discussed throughout this book" (p. 82). Heeding this advice, I reviewed the PIP studies highlighted by Vagle (2018) in his book's "resource dig." After receiving IRB approval (Appendix A) I utilized a criterion-based, purposive sample (Patton, 2002, p. 238) to recruit 11 participants (Appendix B). Eligible participants concerned those who self-identified as women, who were over the age of 18, who were employed by a R1 (doctoral granting—high research activities) higher education institution (HEI) in "clerical, secretarial, or administrative" roles. Again, this study was most interested in those women who were in non-leadership roles. However, given the inconsistent and varied job classification structures across academic institutions, it was challenging to predetermine which specific roles to include in participant recruitment. Throughout the recruitment advertisement period, I received numerous questions and inquiries as to which roles met this study's participant criteria. Ultimately, 11 participants agreed to participate (Appendix C); a summary of participant details is available in Table 1.

The above set of criteria were intentionally both specific and flexible, as it addressed a population absent from existent literature without constricting the participant pool from a multitude of important identities (e.g., race, age, partnered status, parenting status). Given the lack of research and literature concerning this population, a broad and inclusive participant recruitment approach was utilized; future studies can and should address more specific identities of women staff workers at more specific sites of HEI employment (i.e., comprehensive institutions, liberal arts institutions). This approach was consistent with Youngblood and Mazzei (2012) approach to "emphasize difference within" while thinking with theory (p. 4).

Table 1
Participant Summary

	Demographics				Private Sphere		Public Sphere			
Name	Age	Sexuality	Race	Socioeconomic Status	Partnership Status	Dependent Experience	Region	Department Type	Institutional Type	Union Membership
Beth	30	Pansexual	White	Working Class	Dating	-	Southwest	Student Services	Public	-
Cher	42	Heterosexual	White	Middle Class	Dating	-	Southwest	Academic	Public	-
Imogene	52	Heterosexual	White	Lower Middle Class	Married	Children	Southeast	Academic	Public	-
Jennifer	30	Heterosexual	Asian	Middle Class	Single	-	Southeast	Academic	Public	-
Liz	45	Heterosexual	White Hispanic	Working Class	Married	Partner; Child	Midwest	Academic	Public	-
Melody	45	Heterosexual	White	Middle Class	Married	Children; Parents	Southeast	Academic	Public	-
Morgan	31	Bisexual	White	Working Class	Dating	Elder	Northeast	Academic	Private	Previous
Priscilla	46	Heterosexual	White	Middle Class	Single	Elder	Southeast	Academic	Public	-
Ruth	55	Heterosexual	White	Middle Class	Married	Child; Parents	Northeast	Academic	Public	Current
Sam	26	Queer	White	Working Class/Low Income	Married	-	Southeast	Academic	Private	-
Shelby	49	Heterosexual	White	Middle Class	Married	Child; Grandchild	Southeast	Academic	Public	-

Participant recruitment was conducted entirely online throughout the month of August 2022. First, emails were sent to personal professional contacts to spread the recruitment opportunity. Second, I utilized social media—specifically higher education Facebook groups and Twitter—to market the call for participants utilizing hashtags such as #HigherEducation, #Highered, #Research, #AcademicChat, #AcademicTwitter, #Academia, and #SAPro. Finally, I emailed or contacted all listed state chapters of the American Council on Education's (ACE) Women's Network to promote this research opportunity. Several state networks sent the call through their various networks (e.g., email listservs, LinkedIn groups).

2. Devise a Clear yet Flexible Process for Gathering Phenomenological Material

Although many qualitative scholars describe the process of collecting "data" via four primary means (i.e., participating in the setting, observing, in depth interviewing, analyzing documents), Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) challenged the concept. Instead, Ramazanoğlu and Holland stressed and utilized the concept of "data production":

> The term "data production" implies that information gathered by the researcher is produced in a social process of giving meaning to the social world. This is distinct from "data collection," which, at its simplest, can imply that "facts" are lying about waiting for the researcher to spot them. There is some tension here between theories of social construction that imply that some human agent or social force (for example, the knowing subject, a discourse, patriarchy) is producing the data, and those versions of postmodern thought that see the researcher's knowledge as produced through repeated practices of imagining and constituting "data." (p. 148)

Consistent with feminist approaches, this study initially utilized the language of "data production." However, to be consistent with a phenomenological approach, I opted somewhere

mid-data production to intentionally replace the term “data” with “phenomenological material.” Ultimately, I understood the process of collecting data as producing phenomenological material.

Concerning a clear yet flexible phenomenological material gathering plan, Vagle (2018) emphasized, “Although unstructured interviews and lived experience descriptions are the most often used sources of phenomenological material in phenomenology, the post-intentional phenomenon can be studied in many ways [...]” (p. 150). Initially, I had planned to conduct loose semi-structured interviews and engage in my online bridling journal. However, I was also prepared to heed the following advice from Vagle (2018):

> As a general rule, plan to gather more material than you might need. Remain open to changes and adjustments you might need to make along the way. Also, slow down a bit and take the time to practice. It is often good to conduct a short pilot study in order to try out various gathering techniques. (p. 151)

Ultimately, remaining open to changes and adjustments in the earliest of phenomenological material production stages afforded me the unique opportunity to reframe my vision of the planned semi-structured interviews, as well as the production of two additional sources. At the conclusion of the study, four types of phenomenological materials were produced: a series of semi-structured conversations, participant-generated daily schedules (via reflective activity), a collection of participant job descriptions, and my own bridling journal.

In addition to altering phenomenological material production plans, I further followed Vagle’s (2018) instruction and piloted phenomenological material production, which provided me the opportunity to refine my semi-structured conversation guide and explore the multiple, partial, and varied contexts that could manifest given the initial participant criteria. The following briefly addresses each of the four phenomenological materials produced throughout

this study: semi-structured conversations, participant-generated daily schedules (reflective activity), participant job descriptions, and the researcher's online bridling journal.

Semi-Structured Conversations

A hallmark of qualitative—and specifically phenomenological—research, interviews have several strengths as well as limitations as a means of phenomenological material. Proponents of interviews recognize that interviews foster interactions with participants; are useful for uncovering participants' perspectives; facilitate collection/production in natural settings; allow for immediate clarification; can sometimes facilitate non-verbal "data" collection; facilitate the discovery of nuance; and encourage cooperation and collaboration (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). However, interviews also have several limitations: reliance on participant trust and comprehension of the researcher's questions; necessitate excellent researcher communication, interpersonal, and interpretation skills; are time consuming; cannot obtain participants' unconscious thoughts; and cannot be generalized (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Although there are various interview strategies, Vagle (2018) recognized when conducting post-intentional phenomenologies, the "unstructured interview is the most popular for it tends to be the most dialogic, open, and conversational" (p. 86). After conducting two pilot interviews, I realized that what manifested during both pilot interviews were unstructured, dialogic, and open conversations—not interviews. Though I asked specific questions that guided the hour-long sessions from a semi-structured interview guide, what ultimately transpired was a conversation between two women concerning the phenomenon.

Given the rigorous academic community's hesitation of unstructured interviews (let alone conversations), I utilized Vagle's (2018) suggested practices to audio-tape (and back up) the interview; to "manage your expectations of how the first interviews will transpire; during the

interview listen slowly, thoughtfully, and carefully; take some notes, but not too many; and let the participant talk—redirect her or him toward the phenomenon when you find it necessary" (pp. 88–9). Beyond these practical suggestions, Vagle also amplified an excerpt from Tina Fey's *Bossypants* (2011) as a helpful reference for those looking to conduct PIP: "I think these same rules, with some slight contextual adaptations, serve the phenomenological craftsperson well as we work to attain the open, wondering, curious, uncertain, and reflexive mindset this work requires" (Vagle, 2018, p. 89).

The first rule—*Agree. Always Agree and Say Yes*—is a reminder that as a researcher we are to agree with whatever the participant shares, "so that we do our part in opening up the lived, felt, sensed nature(s) of the phenomenon" (Vagle, 2018, p. 92). The second rule—*Not Only to Say Yes, but Yes, And (You are supposed to agree and then add something of your own)*—demonstrates the philosophical assumptions underlying this philosophy and methodology. Practicing this rule supports Vagle's (2018) observation that, "all of us as researchers and participants are entering into what Heidegger referred to as a 'conversation with the phenomenon'" (p. 92). This second rule aligns with Ramazanoğlu and Holland's (2002) understanding of "data production" as opposed to data collection. The third rule—*Make Statements (Don't ask questions all the time)*—underscores Vagle's (2018) idea that the researcher needs to be confident in leading and facilitating a dialogue, as it is appropriate to utilize purposefully open-ended questions at times and to utilize specific and pointed questions prompted by responses provided by participants. The final rule—*There Are No Mistakes (Only Opportunities)*—underscores Vagle's (2018) commitment to "honing one's craft" as a phenomenologist. Vagle clarified:

> Although others who write about how to conduct phenomenological interviews might disagree with me, I think it is incredibly important to view moments in which (1) we miss an opening to go deeper with the participant, (2) pose a follow up question that leads the participant on a presumably irrelevant (to the phenomenon) tangent, or (3) we do not redirect the participant back to the phenomenon as quickly as we might, not as mistakes but as opportunities. (2018, p. 93)

This outlook reinforces Vagle's understanding that such moments are inevitable as phenomenologists; to truly embrace openness in phenomenology means to accept the notion that there can be no mistakes. Instead, Vagle (2018) encouraged such situations to be reframed as opportunities.

Though Vagle (2018) suggested that multiple interviews should be conducted with each participant, a specific number was not provided. Instead, Vagle proposed that practitioners of PIP use "honest, humble appraisal" of initial interviews to inform subsequent interviews (2018, p. 89).

Despite Vagle's (2018) preference of unstructured interviews, a loose conversation guide was crafted to provide a practical structure while affording much flexibility in accordance with Fey's (2011) rules. Initially, the first conversation guide draft was organized temporally, where the first of three conversations focused on participants' past experiences with the phenomenon; the second on present experiences; and the third a combination of both the past and present consciousness. Ultimately, the final conversation guide (Appendix D) was organized accordingly: first, gendered labor exploitation at home; second, gendered labor exploitation at work; and finally, solutions to gendered labor exploitation. To test the conversation guide, two

pilot conversations were held to gauge the anticipated conversation flow. This phenomenological material production was designed according to Seidman's (2006) three interview approach.

Again, all phenomenological material was produced online. Conversations were held via Zoom given the technical advancements (i.e., recording, transcription, accessibility) (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020). Every attempt was made to conduct each of the three conversations within a three-week window. Unfortunately, a few rescheduled conversations resulted in phenomenological material production occurring on a rolling basis over the course of six weeks.

Scheduling

Given the critical and emancipatory intention of this study, I was cognizant of both the availability and burden for potential participants to take part in this study (Pasque, 2013; Sprague, 2016). Therefore, in an intentional effort to be respectful of participants' labor (one of this study's primary research concerns), all interviews were conducted according to each participant's preference and availability. This meant that some participants were "on the clock," while others were at home during phenomenological material production to reduce sampling bias. This also meant, however, that some participants were located in physical spaces where we discussed sensitive and critical thoughts, ideas, and reflections. Although only one participant excused herself momentarily from our conversation to ensure that her door was closed for privacy, a limitation of this phenomenological material production concerned a participant's scheduling and subsequently their comfort in speaking freely about their experiences in either or both sites of reproduction (i.e., the home, workplace).

Compensation

Even though the appropriate nature of participant and researcher interactions have been debated, I enthusiastically approached participants in a manner that was "ethical, non-exploitive, sincere, and genuinely interested in free and open dialogue" (Roulston, 2010, p. 19). As such, I considered participation in this research as labor, and thus compensated each participant $20 per interview for their time and engagement (Head, 2009). Digital gift cards of the participant's choosing (e.g., Amazon, Walmart, Etsy, Starbucks) were delivered electronically following each conversation. As all 11 participants engaged in three conversations each, a total of $60 was provided to each participant.

Reflective Activity

Consistent with Vagle's (2018) encouragement of "lived experience descriptions," to start the first of three conversations, participants engaged in a reflective activity. Inspired by post-intentional phenomenologies showcased by Vagle (2018), I provided participants with an adapted portion of the University of California's "Faculty Work and Family Survey" (Mason et al., 2003); the original survey is provided in Appendix E. Generally, I was interested in the survey's first question, "What is the average number of hours per week you have spent on each of the following activities: professional work, housework and home maintenance, and caregiving?" Asking participants to reflect upon their daily activities afforded the opportunity to engage in (or introduce) the conception of social reproduction.

Specifically, I crafted a Google Sheet workbook (similar to an online, Excel workbook) that provided participants a structure (much like a worksheet) to reflect upon their daily activities in 30-minute increments (Appendix F). An individual sheet was created for each of the 11 participants and was shared via Zoom chat after general introductions were made. I afforded

participants anywhere between 10–15 minutes to engage with the workbook, answering questions or making small talk according to each participant's preference.

Incorporating this reflective activity into the first interview was consistent with other phenomenological material gathering approaches taken by post-intentional phenomenologists: think-aloud (Kennedy, 2016); written lived experience descriptions (Pazurek-Tork, 2013); technological pedagogical content knowledge framework identification (Benson, 2012); and journaling (Kumm, 2011). Although the activity's product was not phenomenological material analyzed, it served as a helpful means for both myself and participants in reflecting upon, articulating, and ultimately examining the phenomenon of interest-gendered labor exploitation.

Job Descriptions

A third source of phenomenological material contextualized my understanding of the phenomenon—participant job descriptions. Just prior to the commencement of the second conversations, it occurred to me as I inquired into participant perceptions of work conducted beyond their job duties, that access to one's job description could be beneficial for review. Therefore, at the conclusion of each participant's first conversation, I asked if they would share a digital copy of their most recent job description with me. At various points throughout the second and third conversations, references were made to job duties. Although Vagle (2018) did not explicitly comment on document review, both Vagle (2018) and van Manen (1990) argued that any source of phenomenological material that provides insight into the phenomenon is valuable.

Just as any data collection method has limitations, document analysis has certain benefits. Though many qualitative scholars utilize material culture or document analysis to facilitate analysis, validity checks, triangulation, and the relative ease in categorizing and quantifying data

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016), these matters are less important to the phenomenologist. Instead, document review is simply additional phenomenological material that may reveal a phenomenon. Material cultures also have limitations, though. This data production method, first, introduces the opportunity both for researcher fixation on and misinterpretation of details as they were intended or originally written, and second, is difficult to replicate from one site to another given the availability of materials (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Again, because phenomenology broadly is not concerned with generalizability, it matters not to the post-intentional phenomenologist that comparable materials are available to supplement each participant. Any phenomenological material that contributes to the manifestation of the phenomenon is beneficial to the study.

Bridling Journal

Further addressed in the following section and third component—Make a Post-Reflexion Plan—briefly, my online, bridling journal was an important source of phenomenological material as my own thoughts, questions, prompts, and feelings shaped this process and final product. Vagle (2018) noted that it was imperative not only to begin this bridling journal early in the research design process (which I did prior to IRB submission) but to also ensure that each entry was dated. Doing so made it possible to track my "thinking [with theory] in a temporal sequence" (p. 155). Although more is outlined below as part of the larger post-reflexion plan, my online bridling journal was the fourth source of phenomenological material produced while accessing the phenomenon of interest.

Phenomenological Material Management

To both uphold the ethical considerations of human subject research and enhance the trustworthiness of this proposed research, secure phenomenological material management was imperative to maintain. Protecting the identity of participants was a priority, as sensitive

information was disclosed during conversations. As such, I utilized the University of Georgia's secure data management systems—OneDrive and Zoom—to store and protect all phenomenological materials produced throughout this study. Such materials were only accessible to both myself and my committee chair behind two-factor authentication systems.

3. Make a Post-Reflexion Plan.

Conceptualized by Vagle (2018) as an "outgrowth" of bracketing and bridling (Dahlberg et al., 2008), a post-reflexion plan captures the exploration of a researcher's "prior knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs about the phenomenon" before, during, and after phenomenological material is gathered (p. 153). As I immersed myself into so much thick, rich phenomenological material, I realized quickly that it would be imperative to focus attention on specific thoughts and ideas. When practicing reflexivity, Vagle (2018) suggested that PIP craftspeople consider:

> 1. Moments when they/we instinctively connect with what they/we observe and moments in which they/we instinctively disconnect;
> 2. Our assumptions of normality;
> 3. Our bottom lines, that is those beliefs, perceptions, perspectives, opinions that we refuse to shed; and
> 4. Moments in which they/we are shocked by what they/we observe. (p. 154)

Embracing these four commitments, I spent considerable time and thoughtful energy practicing Vagle's (2018) suggested self-reflexive activities. Specifically, I engaged in the following practices.

First, as previously noted, I created a post-reflexive journal; this online bridling journal served as temporal evidence of my musings, thoughts, frustrations, confusions, insights, contradictions, theories, to-do lists, reflections, etc. Using Microsoft Team's online Word

software (situated within my secure OneDrive university account), I created a single, running word document. Each new entry was dated and designated as such with a new heading. Accessing eight months' worth of ideas and thoughts all in one document, I frequently employed the digital "search" feature to recall specific words or phrases. This extensive and detailed record allowed me to capture many initial ideas—many of which ultimately inspired this study's findings.

Second, prior to phenomenological material production, I set aside a significant amount of time to write an initial post-reflexion statement. Found as a prelude to Chapter 4, my initial post-reflexion statement provided space to "describe [my] role as a researcher, [my] assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives, and [my] background—especially as all of these relate to the phenomenon" (p. 226). Such a statement recognizes qualitative research's inherent critique that its research is biased and aligns with the standard qualitative practice of a subjectivity statement. What makes an initial post-reflexive statement unique to PIP is that such a statement occurs only at the beginning of the research process; that there is an initial post-reflexive statement foreshadows the reality that others follow.

Third, and finally, Vagle (2018) explicitly instructed: "Your post-reflexing never ends—even though you must stop writing and submit your work" (p. 227). Since Vagle (2018) suggested that PIP craftspeople regularly revisit and rewrite post-reflexion statements throughout phenomenological material production and analysis, a post-analysis post-reflexion statement can be found in Appendix G.

Practicing post-reflexivity served several purposes throughout this research. First, transparency was provided at the forefront of the research process. For example, given this study's critical, feminist approach, I signal the standpoint of the disadvantaged; ground my

interpretations in my interests and experiences; maintain diverse discourse; and attempt to create knowledge that empowers the disadvantaged (Sprague, 2016). Such critical feminist motivations are evident throughout my post-reflexive materials. Second, in over 75 bridling journal posts and two post-reflexivity statements I committed to what Vagle (2018) described as "radical reflexivity." Doing so enabled me "to uncover underlying, shifting, changing knowledges that are at work in all intentional relations, and [to] begin to embrace post-structural arguments such as all-knowing being partial and fleeting" (Vagle, 2018, p. 154). Practicing post-reflexivity in this way prevents the PIP craftsperson from crafting an overly autobiographical text. Instead, my post-reflexion practice enabled me to "question [my] understandings, the traditions [I am] operating within, and the history [I am] launching from—while carefully examining the participants' experiences, the theories [I] chose to think with, and the contexts at play" (Vagle, 2018, p. 225). In attempt to bridle as much of my own experience with the phenomenon, I engaged in the same three conversations with my chair as I did with my participants. Such practices enhanced the validity of this research; I elaborate further on the concept of validity in the following section.

4. Explore the Post-intentional Phenomenon Using Theory, Phenomenological Material, and Post-Reflexions.

Post-intentional phenomenology's fluidity and nonlinear process manifested throughout phenomenological material analysis. Once phenomenological material was produced (i.e., at the conclusion of my first conversation), I simultaneously began analysis (Vagle, 2018). Embracing Vagle's (2018) four analysis commitments—"1. A whole-parts-whole process. 2. A focus on intentionality and not subjective experience. 3. A balance among verbatim excerpts, paraphrasing, and your descriptions/interpretations. 4. An understanding that you are crafting a

text—not merely coding, categorizing, making assertions, and reporting" (p. 110), I engaged in Vagle's (2018) suggested three analysis practices: deconstruct the wholes of the phenomenological material; think with theory; and analyze one's post-reflections. In what follows, I elaborate on each of these three analysis practices and conclude with thoughts concerning validity and triangulation.

Deconstruct the Wholes of the Phenomenological Material

To deconstruct the wholes, first, I engaged in a holistic reading of all phenomenological materials. For example, concerning conversation transcripts, this first holistic reading occurred as I simultaneously corrected the 33 transcripts generated through the web-based transcription service Otter.ai. Instead of taking notes concerning the conversations, I simply reacclimated myself with the rich phenomenological material produced over the course of six weeks. Second, I completed a first round of careful line-by-line reading of all phenomenological materials; because all materials were digitally stored in Microsoft software, notes, comments, and highlights were made concerning any excerpts that I believed could be meaningful. As materials (e.g., conversation transcripts) were read through carefully during the first line-by-line reading, follow-up questions were crafted for subsequent conversations. Vagle (2018) stressed, "The questions should be designed to clarify intentional meanings that one predicts, at the early stages of analysis, might be important to describe/interpret/represent the phenomenon" (p. 111).

A second line-by-line reading occurred next, where I began to make meaning "based on the markings, margin notes, and the follow-up with research participants" (p. 111). Conducting this analysis in the web-based version of Microsoft Word allowed me to timestamp various comments, which demonstrated my evolution of thought. This process continued with each individual transcript until I believed analytic thoughts were available for each participant. At the

conclusion of each participant's three-series conversation, I developed an individual Venn diagram (using Google's Jamboard feature) not only to visualize all three participant conversations (i.e., exploitation at home, exploitation at work, solutions) at once but also to conceptualize the overlap (social reproduction) between both sites of interest to this study: at home and at work. As seen below, Figure 2 is a redacted example of this effort.

Color-coding phenomenological material relative to the site of gendered labor exploitation, organizing said material beyond the initial template (i.e., Venn diagram), and clustering the material in intentional ways enabled me to play with or open up the phenomenon of interest. In addition to each individual Venn diagram, a truncated participant profile was crafted to synthesize the above depictions. A redacted example of a participant profile is available in Appendix H.

As each individual participant analysis concluded, all remaining analyses concerned the participant collective. "Subsequent readings [involve] reading across individual participants' phenomenological material, with the goal of looking for what van Manen would most likely call 'themes,' Dahlberg 'patterns of meaning, and Giorgi 'meaning units' and then 'invariant structures'" (Vagle, 2018, p. 111) occurred. Naturally, as I continued each line-by-line reading, I started to notice both similar and different participant experiences across several topics. Some examples included commuting and parking on campus, childhood hoarding environments, breakups, and confrontations with supervisors. As such themes, patterns of meaning, and invariant structures manifested across participants' phenomenological material, I continued to utilize not only my bridling journal to document this analytic evolution but other online tools (such as Google's Jamboard), as well.

Figure 2.

Examples of Participant Venn Diagrams

For example, I began to “puzzle on the floor” (a practice shared with me by my advisor) where I would write a theme on a post-it note and cluster subsequent post-it notes with examples

of phenomenological material. I moved back and forth and rearranged at least a hundred post-it notes into various configurations across iterations of my sensemaking as productions and provocations emerged. Further discussion concerning productions and provocations prelude findings in Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8. Figure 3, below, demonstrates my final redacted sense made when analyzing across phenomenological material. In the analogy of this research as a film that I created, directed, and co-produced, consider "puzzling on the floor" the wall in the writers' room where the screenplay is written. Deconstructing the whole of my phenomenological materials was intentionally completed with the practice of thinking with theory in mind.

Thinking with Theory

After completing the whole-parts-whole process, Vagle (2018) noted, "the task is to bring one's careful reading of these phenomenological materials in dynamic and playful dialogue with

Figure 3.
"Puzzling on the Floor"

the theories one has chosen to think with (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) and the post-reflexing that one has engaged" (pp. 156–7). Though SRT was the theory in which I initially anticipated adopting, throughout this entire research project—while waiting for IRB approval, recruiting participants, producing phenomenological material, and analysis—I continued to read about and consider other theories that could open up the phenomenon of interest: gendered labor exploitation. I created Google alerts to notify me of any new publication that concerned either "Social Reproduction Theory" or "Tithi Bhattacharya" to ensure that I was aware of how others utilized the theory. This practice was consistent with Vagle's (2018) instruction to spend time sitting with the theory in its entirety without cherry-picking certain theoretical concepts. Returning to Youngblood and Mazzei's (2012) conception of the threshold, I spent the better part of 16 weeks sitting in the various thresholds between phenomenological material produced and analytical thinking with Social Reproduction Theory. This practice was the second of three outlined by Vagle (2018).

Analyze Post-Reflexions

The third and final practice suggested by Vagle (2018) concerned post-reflexions, which can be understood as access points into one's preunderstandings, assumptions, and connections/disconnections. As suggested in the previous section, wrestling with post-reflexions was imperative as such post-reflexions impact both the interpretation of phenomenological material and thinking with theory. Though post-reflexions were listed as the third practice of analysis, Vagle (2018) noted that this process is iterative.

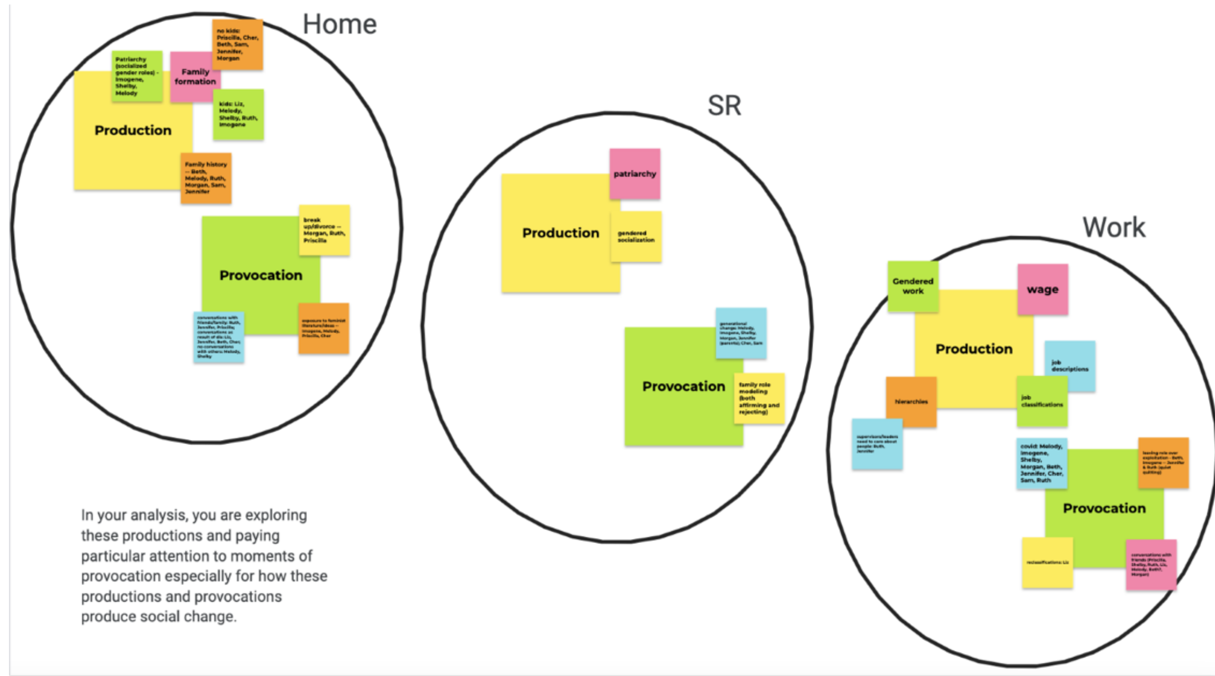
Specifically, I searched phenomenological materials for "productions" and "provocations" that produce social change. Though difficult to "tie down" (Vagle, 2018, p. 232), the following descriptions are provided. First, provocations are intensities or catalysts. In my

brief scholarly experience, I know I have encountered a provocation when a lightbulb suddenly goes off or I get a burst of energy following a thought, comment, or experience. Such provocations (as experienced by the phenomenologist or by those who are speaking of a phenomenon's manifestations) are brief yet impactful moments of note. Such brevity is to be expected given the incomplete, multiple, and partial manifestations of any phenomenon. Second, productions are the "ongoing ways in which a phenomenon is shaped over time" (Vagle, 2018, p. 292). Productions capture the ways in which intentionalities are made and constantly remade. Conceptualizing productions as one of any number of moments along some kind of time spectrum reminds us that phenomena are observed always "in the middle." In other words, productions reveal the ways in which a phenomenon continues to be made. It should be noted that I understand provocations to be important "intensities" that contribute to a production. Although some phenomenologies attempt to describe or interpret, Vagle (2018) pushed the conceptualization of phenomenology with the additional complication of intentionality. Because PIP assumes that intentionalities are in a constant state of being made and unmade, their fleeting, partial, and sometimes unstable permeabilities and connections must be recognized in various contexts over time. To capture such malleable intentionalities, Vagle (2018) returned to inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Again, further discussion concerning productions and provocations prelude findings in Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, a final Google Jamboard is provided to demonstrate the continued analysis of all phenomenological material in Figure 4 below.

Validity & Triangulation

A brief note concerning validity or "trustworthiness" is necessary. As qualitative research is inherently subjective, scholars have advocated for approaches that increase readers' confidence in the rigor of qualitative research. For example, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007)

Figure 4.
Productions and Provocations



suggested, "Increasing rigor and trustworthiness of the findings from qualitative data is accomplished through three different procedures: (a) using more than one type of analysis, (b) assessing interrater reliability, and (c) member checking" (p. 575). Vagle (2009), however, disagreed; he suggested that validity in phenomenological research should focus on the concept of intentionality:

> Validity is elusive. At the same time, validity is not futile. This is another dualism I resist. In other words, to take up a multiple, partial, and endlessly deferred validity seriously would require one to value validity so much that one would spend countless hours pursuing it. The reason the pursuit is not futile is because the researcher is the primary agent. De-centering validity takes place as we, in our subjectivities, find ourselves in intentional relationships with other subjects in the world. We will never — ever — be

> removed from that which we are studying, and we can never lose ourselves in this pursuit. Hence, the intentionality of validity is the bursting forth toward pursuit of an elusive validity that can never be futile. (p. 603)

Bridling as a post-reflexive activity, then, was the best course of action I could take as a post-intentional phenomenologist to address concerns of validity.

Another common practice of validity or trustworthiness in qualitative research concerns triangulation or "the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point," (Marshall & Rossman, 2014, p. 479). Unsurprisingly, Vagle (2018) generally did not support triangulation. He admitted that though the concept has some applicability to phenomenological research, in practice multiple phenomenological material producing opportunities over time are rich and plentiful enough to not warrant triangulation. So, while I have produced and analyzed four phenomenological materials, it would be inconsistent with Vagle's (2018) approach to cite triangulation as a practice in which I intentionally engaged.

5. Craft a Text that Engages the Productions and Provocations of the Post-intentional Phenomenon in Context(s), around a Social Issue.

Vagle (2018) offered great leeway concerning the final product when conducting PIP. He shared that PIP scholars are free and encouraged to play with text form given the multiple sources of phenomenological material, post-reflexive material, and theories utilized. He elaborated, "When you are in the writing phase, this will be a long and involved process. It will be intertwined with your analysis and will include varying combinations of your interpretations, theorizing, and post-reflexions of your phenomenological material" (2018, p. 160). I can attest that the writing phase was indeed a long and involved process.

Though I anticipated that my writing would be organized by theme, which is associated more so with interpretive phenomenologies, Vagle (2018) also noted that post-intentional texts could be organized by invariant structures (typically associated with descriptive phenomenologies). Again, this is another great example of the ways in which Vagle (2018) refused to choose between the duality of descriptive and interpretive traditions. Similarly, as my initial "findings" chapter grew in descriptive length, I decided that reader clarity was most important. Therefore, I utilized a web search for recent PIP publications, taking inspiration from the creativity of other post-intentional phenomenology craftspeople and their text's organization. Ultimately, the text I have crafted engages productions and provocations concerning gendered labor exploitation (a social issue) is organized and succeeds this chapter as follows: Chapter 5—Productions at Home; Chapter 6—Provocations at Home; Chapter 7—Productions at Work; and Chapter 8—Provocations at Work.

Summary

In summary, this research utilized a post-intentional phenomenological methodology to explore the phenomenon of interest—gendered labor exploitation. Acknowledging the feminist critique of the philosophy and approach, I argued that the two philosophies can be bridged thoughtfully in a way that enhances both traditions. Utilizing Vagle's (2018) non-linear five-step approach, I produced phenomenological material from four sources: a series of semi-structured conversations, participant-generated daily schedules (via reflective activity), a collection of participant job descriptions, and my bridling journal. In analyzing these four sources of phenomenological material, I have made meaning of the phenomenon of interest and demonstrate my understanding in the following four chapters' findings.

Thus far, I have presented the producer's pitch of this research—to continue the analogy of filmmaking and dissertating. I have provided a teaser or trailer (Chapter One), presented history and comparable research (Chapter Two), and described the behind the scenes—or methodology—concerning this PIP (Chapter 4). Given the many decisions that needed to be made concerning research design, it is nerve-wracking to unveil in the following four chapters the product of a total of some thirty-six hours of phenomenological material production (read: film) and countless hours of analysis (read: crafting or production).

Again, Vagle (2018) encouraged PIP craftspeople to indulge in the freedom possible given the various forms of post-intentional phenomenological material available. Though what follows could be presented in numerous ways by various "directors," what I have chosen to present are phenomenological materials that open up, explore, and demonstrate gendered labor exploitation following my extensive analysis conducted through whole-parts-whole analysis, thinking with theory, and post-reflexivity.

This is the part of your experience—dear moviegoer/reader—to get comfortable as the lights dim and the surround sound is tested. Prepare to be thrown into the middle of what I must present. This is an opportune moment to remind you that you are entering the middle. Remember, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) first shared, we, as media consumers and intellectuals, always enter into the middle of anything. It is a Deleuzeoguattarian perspective that one does not start with a stable subject and try to follow that very subject's linear path in the lifeworld. All subjects, constructs, and phenomena are constructed but are also continuously remade repeatedly.

I remember when I first encountered this perspective, I was relieved more than anything, as I have continued to wrestle with the tension within Marxist Feminist communities in tracing

the root origins of women's oppression. When I first considered Marxist Feminist scholarship, not only was it overwhelming to view the world in an entirely new color, but it was also exhausting to trace, follow, and ultimately engage in decades of debate concerning the topic among scholars (Hartmann, 1979; Vogel, 1983). However, after embracing this Deleuzeoguattarian idea—just as most characters in any movie have experiences that we, the audience, do not witness prior to the opening credits—I was relieved of my own internal pressure to "get to the bottom" of women's oppression.

Let this serve as a final reminder that each participant has experiences that could not be depicted within this PIP. As with any PIP, I can only present a partial depiction of this study's phenomenon of interest—gendered labor exploitation. Therefore, to assist in understanding the scope of participants, refer to Table 1 (Participants). Given the spectrum of family configurations within this study's participants and the adoption of Youngblood and Mazzei (2012) approach to "emphasize difference within" while thinking with theory (p. 4), this table is a feature to re-orient yourself to the various configurations of identity represented in this study.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL MATERIAL INTERLUDE 4

BRIDLING JOURNAL: SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

Today, I spent quite a bit of time at Meigs Hall with Dr. Stich during the newly formed writing group on Wednesdays. Although I was only cleaning transcripts in preparation for tomorrow's interviews, I chatted briefly with Dr. Stich about what the experience of conversing or interviewing my participants—all women—has been like. I know in at least one memo I've commented on how easy it has been to converse with these women. Although some speaking proportions are off (meaning, some participants comment more generously than others), generally, the conversation flows pretty evenly. I rarely am aware that an hour has passed or only become aware of that fact as I near the end of my list of semi-structured conversation guide. At first, I was so nervous about this methodology; How can conversations be a rigorous enough form of data production?

However, with the assumption that it is impossible for reflexivity to be set aside, I buy into the notion that data is being produced. One way that it can be produced is through conversation. I also started thinking about/considering that maybe it's been so easy to converse with my participants because women are socialized into excellent communication and soft skills. So, when I think about how I relate to women, or how I get to know women, or how I make friends, it's interesting to consider the ways in which women have been doing that their whole lives. Perhaps this is why I feel so close to my participants, why some of my participants have referred to me as a therapist or a new friend. The ways in which women relate to one another is

something that I think needs to be thought about more. And now I'm considering how conversation, as a tool for data production, assists that.

CHAPTER 5

PRODUCTIONS CONCERNING GENDERED LABOR EXPLOITATION IN THE HOME

The first of two connected sites of gendered labor exploitation explored in this study concerned the home. Three productions concerning this phenomenon were revealed in identifying intentional relationships. These findings were revealed primarily throughout three conversations with each participant. As seen in the conversation guide (Appendix D) each participant was prompted to consider three tenets of exploitation. First, participants were asked if the work or chores (i.e., social reproduction) they were responsible for in their homes was fair; second, participants were asked who benefited the most from their social reproduction efforts; finally, participants were asked what, if any, harm was done if they perceived their labors to be unfair. In what follows, I introduce productions concerning gendered labor exploitation at home, provide rich descriptions to illustrate the phenomenological construct, and identify ways in which the production relates to social change.

Three productions revealed themselves through the phenomenological material produced: family formation and residential configurations, patriarchal socialization, and family history/role modeling. Each of these three productions addressed the ongoing ways in which the phenomenon (i.e., gendered labor exploitation) manifests over time. More specifically, and as discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 9, analysis utilizing Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) revealed lines of flight between the impact of gendered labor exploitation in the home on women's employment in higher education.

Family Formation & Residential Configurations

The most prominent production that emerged concerned family formation and residential configurations. All eleven participants spoke to some capacity of gendered labor exploitation—whether they explicitly recognized the phenomenon or not. As a reminder, two of this study's eleven participants were single at the time of phenomenological material production (i.e., one lived alone in her own home and the other lived with her parents and sibling). Three were partnered, meaning they were involved in some kind of partnership regardless of their cohabitation status (i.e., living alone or with a roommate separate from their partner). Six of the participants were married, and of those six married participants, five had children. The ages of the children ranged from eight to twenty-eight. Finally, five of this study's eleven participants had some experience with eldercare by the time of phenomenological material production. It was striking to quickly recognize the spectrum, range, and various combinations of (nuclear) family formations and how all formations—regardless of gender composition—revealed gendered labor exploitation in the home.

Single Participants

Both single participants in this study clearly articulated and identified ways in which they or the elder, primary caregiver of their home (i.e., their mother) were exploited in social reproduction work. For example, Jennifer wrestled with the tension between fairness and equity concerning social reproduction work in her home:

> I think that it's hard because I tried to think, *what's fair?* But also, *what's actually equal*? I feel like it's not fair. I guess it's not fair. But I definitely feel it's not equal. Like, if I were just to measure objectively, if I were to say *this is what my sibling contributes*, and *this is what my mom contributes,* I'd say Mom contributes the most. I'm second, and then

> my sibling is third. Ideally it would be equal. We'd all equally contribute, [and] it would be the same amount overall; it wouldn't fall on one person. But then I try to think about *what's fair* [since] my sibling has a job where they can't take any time off. I have two remote days; my mom is retired. The time is different. So, then my mom should probably do more because she has more time. But when you're weighing those factors, it's hard because my mom is much older; she's in her 70s or something. Maybe it hurts her back to do this type of chore. So, I tried to think about all those complicated layers.

Jennifer recognized not only her own exploitation (i.e., tenet of fairness), but also the generational (re)production of her mother's labor exploitation in this unique family living situation. This awareness was striking as she identified her household as "very traditional." Jennifer elaborated:

> I think my mom's always been the type to constantly do for others, and she's very action oriented. She doesn't show her love in other ways. She's just the caregiver, and that's what I've always associated [her] with. I see it more now because I'm an adult, and I understand more. She's exhausted; she's just so tired. She's doing work and taking care of other people all the time. I tried to take care of myself, but she's a full-time caregiver for my dad. And especially now that he's recovering from the surgery, it's even more than usual. But my dad's already the type, though, who doesn't really contribute at all. He does nothing. He has a very skewed image of what he thinks he's contributing by ordering us around, or telling us what to do, or hovering and explaining how we're doing things wrong. So, I think that also really exhausts and frustrates her and puts a strain on their relationship.

Such exhaustion and strain were clear and obvious harms (with little benefit afforded to her mother). As a result of this awareness, Jennifer went on share that because of witnessing such gendered labor exploitation in her family home, she had reservations about entering a significant relationship: "[There's] hesitation to get into a relationship with men because I feel I would want an equal relationship. I would want to be respected—the complete polar opposite of my father." This notable comment addressed both the production over time and Jennifer's anticipated future as a single woman. She concluded firmly:

> I'm not willing to settle. I'm independent. I can take care of myself. So, I'd only be willing to consider a relationship with someone if I feel like there's someone who respects me, and we can grow and work on a relationship together and just be better people together. I don't want to be with someone who is just one more chore or one more person I have to take care of, like in my mom and dad's relationship. I do get some satisfaction, of course. I love to help people; I'm working in education! But I can't do both all the time. If I'm giving in the workplace, and I'm giving at home 100%, I just burn out. I just can't. I need someone who could help. It would be someone who could also help take care of other people. We'd help each other. I haven't found someone like that, and I haven't been in a relationship. And [I have] hesitancy to try to get into a relationship with someone who I feel couldn't meet those standards.

Such a decision to remain single, as opposed to entering a relationship that resembled that of her parents', was an example of Jennifer's intentional effort to address social change. She was willing to continue a single lifestyle and diverge from "traditional" nuclear family formations—a production of gendered labor exploitation in the home—as a means of disruption. At the time of our last conversation, Jennifer planned to pool financial resources with her sibling to co-own a

home (a status marker valued by society); this was an important marker of financial independence and security for Jennifer given her choice to remain single.

Jennifer was not the only single participant committed to a single lifestyle. Priscilla, already a single homeowner, also intentionally chose not only to remain single but to enjoy the peace that she had found in this specific family formation. Though she believed that as the sole resident of her home, it was fair that she was the only beneficiary of her social reproduction work, Priscilla did articulate the financial burden placed on those single individuals who pursue homeownership:

> I have thought about getting a roommate, and [during] times when it was really tough financially, I gave it serious consideration because that would really boost my monthly... everything. That would really help me a lot. But again, I enjoy my peace so much, you know? There are so many pitfalls with roommates.

Here, Priscilla articulated the financial strain single individuals face given single-income family formations. Interestingly, home ownership was articulated by eight of this study's eleven participants as a desired indicator of financial success or status.

More specifically, home equity, financial independence, and home security were the secondary motivations behind this major financial investment. It should be noted, though, that six of the eight participants were married to partners who contributed an additional income stream to afford home ownership. Additionally, four of the eight participants were either gifted a home or land from family or given a reduced rate for a home or land from family.

In summary, single participants, partially because of their singleness and family configuration, positioned (or were in the process of positioning) themselves to make social change beyond the norm of partnered, nuclear family homeownership. Though not married,

Jennifer and her sibling planned to enter a financial partnership to own a home and hoped to receive the financial benefits of such ownership. Priscilla was already the only single participant and homeowner at the time of phenomenological material production. The financial burden of homeownership on a single person (with a single income) cannot be overstated. However, the burden of housing was not limited to single participants. Just as Priscilla alluded to the possibility of needing a roommate above, partnered participants—the next family formation configuration considered—also discussed the financial realities social reproduction necessitated.

Partnered Participants

Three participants—Beth, Cher, and Morgan—considered themselves to be partnered at the time of phenomenological material production. This means that they were each in a committed partnership; yet it is interesting to note that none of the three resided with their significant other at the time of phenomenological material production. Instead, two of the three—Beth and Morgan—lived with roommates (both also women), while Cher resided alone in a condo that she previously owned but later sold to her parents. As administrative assistants, located toward the bottom of the academic hierarchy, a significant (approximately 50%) portion of single and partnered participants' wages were used on housing—a substantial cost of social reproduction.

Beth and Morgan discussed the financial motivations behind their decision to reside with a roommate. Beth disclosed her financial situation as follows:

> Our current price for rent is $1,407 and then all the additional utilities. Thankfully, [those] are split. My most recent income was $1,210 biweekly, so practically half of my month's paycheck would be going towards rent if I were to live alone. Even then, because

> I just looked this up recently, the first place that I moved into—the current rent for a one bedroom is over $1,500. For a two bedroom, it's over $1600.

A roommate who could split the various costs that accompany rent clearly eased Beth's financial burden as she transitioned from living alone to residing with roommates.

Morgan also clearly articulated the value of having a roommate, as a second form of income within a housing unit. She noted, "Having a roommate is good because you split the bills. But once I move it'll be tough. Once I live alone, I will need to budget a lot more." Both comments spoke to an interesting line of flight concerning potential social change. Not willing to live with their partners but needing a secondary income from a roommate, a potential line of flight emerged concerning these two manifestations.

Cher, who recognized her privilege of a lower rent thanks to her parents' ownership of her condo, criticized her institution's wage allocation decision making during a town hall meeting by posing the question to her institution's senior leaders, "When are you going to give staff raises enough so that we can afford to live here? I can't afford to buy a house in the city that I work in." As a partnered person who also lived alone at the time of phenomenological material production, Cher also contemplated how to navigate the financial realities of homeownership while maintaining a relationship outside the construct of marriage:

> What I would like to do is buy a house, and then [her boyfriend] comes and pays me some rent because I don't want to buy a house with him. I don't think that's a good idea if you're not married because if you break up, it makes it very difficult to split a house, you know, because you don't legally have stuff.

In her ideal world, Cher would have relationship security (i.e., legal contract) with her partner to co-own a home. This comment spoke to the tension individuals face when they are not yet

married but are considering home ownership. Clearly, Cher was considering not only how she could best protect herself and her financial well-being but also how to facilitate the progression of her relationship with her boyfriend (and potential roommate). Though additional persons or roommates afforded participants financial relief concerning housing costs, the introduction of additional persons in one's residence increased the social reproduction burden—or gendered labor exploitation—as well.

Two of the three partnered participants—Beth and Morgan—lived with women roommates at the time of phenomenological material production. Both shared that they felt the amount of social reproduction work they provided to their household was unfair at one point or another. Though both also felt that they each benefited from their social reproduction labor, they recognized some amount of harm that resulted from such exploitation. For example, Beth shared that because her roommate neglected to take care of the dishes (as was agreed upon), when it was time for Beth to cook for herself, she was unable to do so within a certain window of time because the pots, pans, and dishes were continuously unavailable. As a result of her roommate's repeated negligent behavior, Beth resorted to eating prepackaged food that allowed her to eat more quickly but at the cost of nutrition—a harm that impacted her well-being.

Morgan was also able to articulate the harm or outcome of her gendered labor exploitation at home:

> It's easy to become resentful of somebody. If it feels like I'm doing more work, […] I think it's easy to become irritated at each other, have little fights, and things like that. It doesn't happen frequently. But I come home from work and there's trash, I'm like, *fuck,* I'm so irritated […] at little annoyances and inconveniences. [I] kind of feel like, *ugh more work!*

Even though both Beth and Morgan's roommates were also women, both examples provided reveal complex insight into the exploitation of women in their home given their family formation and residential configurations. Clearly, just as single participants made intentional choices given their income and housing costs, so, too, did partnered participants. As if the burden of social reproduction was not oppressive enough for an individual, increasing the number of inhabitants in one's residence complicated the amount of work required, which disproportionately fell onto participants of this study. The socialization of such gendered work is discussed in the following production subsection.

Married Participants

More than half of this study's participants, six in total, were married and living with their spouses at the time of phenomenological material production. Five of the six participants also had children and therefore are represented in the following subsection. Therefore, what follows are exceptional examples of spousal relations. The first example, concerns Sam, who self-identified as both queer and more femme presenting. Sam recently wed their spouse, and the couple, newly homeowners, moved into their first home together. I present an excerpt from our first conversation not only to illustrate the organic flow of conversation but to also reveal Sam's insight into the three tenets of exploitation: fairness, benefit, and harm:

Alexa: Do you think the work that you do at home is fair?

Sam: We're probably uneven; therefore unfair.

Alexa: How so? What thoughts [were] you having as you were deciding on that answer?

Sam: I mean if we're tallying up do I do more? Yes. Is that always fair? No.

Alexa: Okay, so who benefits the most from the work that you do at home?

Sam: Probably myself just for my sanity, but equally both to some extent just because if I unload the dishwasher, it benefits them just as much. But if they don't put [dishes] in the dishwasher, then it benefits me.

Alexa: Is there any... when I say harm, are there negative consequences or tradeoffs that stem from the fact that you're doing more work? What are the negative consequences as a result of that?

Sam: I would say usually frustration causing tension especially when you want to confront the unfairness of things. Then you bring it up, and it's like, *oh, I didn't mean to do it that way.* You don't mean to do anything, but you're still doing that. It's still happening; it's still harming. […] It's still creating more expectations on the other person, which I think can be a form of harm.

Alexa: I want to go back to the expectations part. What are the long-term, short-term consequences of that?

Sam: Of expectations? Short-term? Added pressure because you feel like you have to do all of the extra things, which creates additional pressure—like feeling you have no time, being overwhelmed, or overworked. That overwhelming feeling can result in harm in other ways like less sleep. It causes anxiety; it triggers anxiety. It makes you feel upset, and it just kind of spirals from there... especially when it's not an expectation that you've readily taken on. I think that there's a differentiation between taking on things that you're expected to do and then expectations that have built from actions that have just happened. So, let's say, they don't do the dishwasher. I keep doing the dishwasher; they expect that I'll just do it. So, there is no longer an expectation that they will do it. That's my easy example of the day. That's probably a long-term implication of continuing the cycle. But I think when we think of gendered exploitation, that's probably a pretty traditional thing that's happened. You think, *1950s housewives—they do all the housework* because that's the expectation; that's what society says is the expectation.

Sam's articulation of harm in the form of expectations created was one that manifested in several other participant comments to follow. Not only did Sam's revelation above point toward the increasing complexity of social reproduction work as women gain spouses, but it also revealed Sam's awareness of the societal and systemic nature of gendered expectations. Again, additional analysis concerning the socialization of gendered work is discussed later. Such caregiving

expectations resonated with forthcoming production of gendered labor exploitation within higher education employment presented in Chapter 7.

Two other tangible and revealing examples of gendered labor exploitation among married partners in the home came from Imogene. Imogene's awareness, first, of the extent of social reproduction labor and, second, of the resulting burden was articulated in the following response to the question of how the division of labor came to be in her home:

> We just kind of naturally fell into it. I mean I was aware, and I knew at the time that it didn't have to be that way. But the way that both of our strengths were, I felt comfortable doing those things, and he felt comfortable doing the other things. Now there were the finances, which neither one of us really wanted; he wanted me to do it, and I wanted him to do it. I did it for a while, but I really am not very good at it. I also noticed while I was doing the finances, I noticed the things that I do I have to do every day or several times a day. Like cooking—you do it three times. The things that he does like mow the lawn—once a week; they were less than every day. So, I was like, "You need something to worry about on a daily basis!" So basically, I gave him the finances because I felt like he needed something to worry about on a more daily basis, and I needed like a little bit of relief from the dailiness of it all. He's been doing the finances ever since.

Imogene's realization concerning the frequency of her gendered social reproduction work around the home prompted her to allocate other social reproductive work—managing finances—to her spouse. This was an excellent example of awareness motivating social change within a single household.

Shifting the burden of household finances was not Imogene's only resistance to gendered labor though. Imogene also illustrated clearly in the following example not only her own

realization of gendered labor exploitation in her home but also her spouse's reaction to her rejection of expectations that come from repeated labor exploitation over time:

> It kind of started when the kids got older because a lot of the stuff that I was doing, I was doing because we had small children. I wasn't planning to keep doing it for the rest of my life! I was doing it because I wanted to set a good example for the kids. […] At one point I was doing all the laundry, and I would just give the laundry baskets of clean laundry to the kids and make them fold it. The kids called a family meeting and said, "We hate folding the laundry; if we each just did our laundry from beginning to end, could we just be each responsible for our own laundry?" And I was like, "I guess that's fine!" At that point in time, I was like, *well I guess the kids are both doing their own laundry.* I didn't really say anything, but I just started doing only my own laundry; I didn't do my husband's laundry. I just quit doing it, and I didn't say anything. But I still did the sheets and towels still. I think it took him a little while to notice. He was like, "Where's my laundry?" And I was like, "Oh, I forgot, I forgot to tell you I quit." So, from that point in time, he did all of his own laundry. I do all of my own laundry plus the sheets and towels. Now that he's retired, whoever notices that the sheets or towels need to be washed does them.

Again, because Imogene wanted to "set a good example" for her kids, she perpetuated a gendered expectation that the mom and wife of the home completed not just the occupants' but also the communal laundry, a time-consuming social reproduction task. Her children's intervention disrupted the cycle of continued laundry expectations, which enabled Imogene to also disrupt the gendered expectation that she would complete her husband's laundry. Imogene

went on to complicate this manifestation with the observation that her spouse's retirement had positively impacted her social reproduction workload:

> I feel like it's more fair now than it ever has been—being empty nesters. I feel like I have reached a point of fairness. I feel like part of it happened naturally; a part of it took a lot of emotional labor on my part to get there. It was hard prying! The kids went willingly off when Mom provided laundry labor. Prying the husband off? It was a lot harder when he realized that I was providing reduced services. A lot of times along the way, the kids were happy at each stage where they were doing for themselves because it meant they were growing up. I feel like my husband along the way, when he realized that I was providing reduced services, he felt it was a measure of how much I loved him. The kids felt I was letting them have more independence. I think my husband sometimes felt I was reducing the amount that I loved him by taking those services away. But for me, it was never my plan to provide that level of service for my [husband]. I'm not raising a four-year-old for the entire rest of my life! It was my plan that my services were going to diminish as they were no longer needed.

That Imogene understood her spouse's perceived "reduction of services" as a signal of reduced love in their relationship was a striking moment for me. Additionally, her comment that she was unwilling to "raise a four-year-old for the rest of her life" revealed not only something about gendered socialization (which will be addressed again in the next section) but also Imogene's approach to resistance at the time. Imogene's comment also addressed the varying level of unfairness in her relationship with her spouse over time; she noted that once her spouse retired, he became more engaged in social reproduction work around their home, which ultimately reduced to some extent her gendered labor exploitation.

Further concerning retirement, another manifestation involving married participants involved Ruth. Ruth was divorced from her first spouse in her twenties and had since remarried. When asked who benefited the most from her social reproduction work at home, she noted, “It's equal because we each do our thing to make it work. I don't see it as either one of us doing more than the other. I think it's fair because I would definitely notice if I felt if it felt unfair; it would stand out to me, and it really doesn't.” Ruth was one of two married participants who could not articulate any harm that resulted from unfair social reproduction tasks around the home. Ruth also made several comments concerning her observations of other couples—particularly those in their second marriages. She noted, “I find it interesting when you talk to other couples, and you see what they do. The ones that seem to get along better are the ones that seem equally balanced with what he's doing, she's doing.” Finding and maintaining a balance in social reproduction work around the home seemed to shift throughout this study’s participants’ life cycle (i.e., retirement from the workforce, the introduction of children into the family configuration, eldercare beginning or ending). In recognition of the complicated burden of additional persons (e.g., children, elders), the following subsections address larger family formations and residential configurations.

Participants with Children

Five of eleven participants in this study had children at the time of phenomenological material production. Though three participant’s children were grown adults, two still had minor children living in their home. One participant welcomed her grown son and his toddler child (her granddaughter) into her home prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of children into the family residence not only increased the amount of labor performed by women but also complicated participants’ reflections on social reproduction work at home.

All five participants quickly articulated the challenges of raising children and maintaining a household. Stories and experiences concerning cooking, cleaning, transportation, maintaining schedules, laundry, and school were plentiful throughout each conversation. What follows, though, are interesting manifestations identified by participants as they considered and described the burden of social reproduction while parenting. It should be noted that four of the five participants with children were partnered except for Ruth, who identified as a single mother for most of her son's childhood. The following comments are presented with increasing family configuration complexity.

Ruth, who remarried only after her child was grown, reflected on her experience raising a child as a single woman: "It was a lot being a single mom: working, going to school functions, shopping, doing all that was a lot. […] It was a lot of work being a single parent, and doing all it was a lot of work." Though raising a child as a single parent was challenging, Ruth shared that her neighboring parents provided childcare as opposed to enrollment within a childcare center. Multigenerational or extended family support clearly eased the burden of social reproduction work on Ruth. She was not, however, the only participant to live next door to elder relatives.

Shelby, a married mother of two, raised her children next door to her mother-in-law. In fact, Shelby and her husband were one of the previously mentioned couples who were offered property by her husband's family. Though her children were both grown adults at the time of phenomenological material production, Shelby and her husband welcomed their son and his child into their home recently. She reflected on this home configuration adjustment:

> It was quite a transition. Baby gates went back up; all that kind of stuff. Nothing is left out sitting around anymore. That was a pretty tough transition. But, you know, he needed

to come home, and she's part of it. There's a lot more good than there is bad. And I wouldn't even really say it's bad. It's just changing the way you do things.

Despite a significant transition around the house to accommodate a toddler, Shelby and her husband were “happy to help” their son and granddaughter. Given this significant family configuration change in her household, Shelby described her role in managing the social reproduction work at home as follows:

> I feel like I'm responsible for making sure everybody is where they need to be, everybody has everything they need [but] not necessarily doing it for them or assisting always. But making sure that everything's going the way it needs to go. […] I take care of everything except the yard work unless it's the fun stuff like planting flowers or whatever! My husband and my son help out. But I have to say, “Can you do the dishes? Can you wash the towels?" […] Sometimes I'll [think] just to myself, *why isn't anybody just seeing this and just picking it up? Why does it not bother everyone else that this cup has been sitting here for two days?* […] I think that stems from before I started working; I was a stay-at-home mom for a long time.

Shelby’s reflection indicated some level of frustration at her family’s unmatched labor in her home. However, Shelby also reflected that she believed that the social reproduction work she provided in her home was fair:

> I think it's fair because I don't have to do anything that I don't want to do. I don't want to mow the yard; I don't want to weed; I don't want to take the trash out; I don't want to change the oil in my car. I'm not going to pay someone if I have two able-bodied people who know how to do it, so it's more like a tradeoff for me.

The sentiment of not having to perform certain (gendered) social reproduction work (e.g., mowing the lawn, taking out trash, car maintenance) was acknowledged by at least four other participants. This "tradeoff" or compromise was interesting to further consider in relation to Imogene's reflection that the (gendered) social reproduction work she performed occurred with more frequency than the (gendered) social reproduction work four other participants readily accepted in their homes. That some participants were more accepting of socialized, gendered social reproduction activities than others revealed a potential line of flight concerning the possibility for social change of this phenomenon.

Other participants with children, though, were or were becoming very aware of their social reproduction expectations and exploitation. For example, Melody—mother of three (one of whom was still a minor at the time of phenomenological material production)—reflected on her experience completing the reflective activity during our first conversation:

Melody: In doing the schedule, it's interesting because I don't feel I do enough, as odd as that sounds. Because I'm like, *oh, well from 7–10pm, I could be doing more things. I could be.* It made me look at what I'm not doing rather than what I am if that that makes sense.

Alexa: Can you come up with an example of something you're not doing?

Melody: Maybe not what I'm not doing but what maybe I should be doing? Should I be outside with my kid? Should I be helping with homework? But she's pretty smart; she doesn't need my help. Should I be reading more? Should I be off the TV more? Should I be doing more things around my house? Maybe my house would look better! I'm trying to exercise every day; should I be forcing my husband to go for a walk because he doesn't exercise? I don't know, just those kinds of things. What else could I be filling my time with instead of watching TV or scrolling on my phone?

Alexa: All the examples you just gave were these ideas of productive things that we could be doing with our time. Did it ever cross your mind that one of the things that could have gone on your list of things that you could be doing is resting? Taking a nap? Rest and relaxation?

Melody: There are no naps in my life. I'm trying to balance in my head, *well that looks like a lot of rest. That looks like a lot of "me time."* It's balancing what is wasteful versus what do I need for myself? […] Now, it's not bad to be lazy. I think we work full-time jobs, and we have a family, bills, and life. I think you have to be lazy sometimes or you're going to die of exhaustion.

Melody's attempts to find balance in "what is wasteful versus what [to] need for [herself]" revealed tension that participants articulated between tending to their own social reproduction needs while caretaking and managing the social reproduction of others. Concerning the management of others' social reproduction needs, Melody was clear:

> I'm not going to—no, I'm going to—throw my husband under the bus. I take responsibility for creating monsters in my household. I am a certified control freak and not in the areas that it's important. I'm a control freak in general, which, if you want it done right, do it yourself, which is a horrible mentality because then you get overwhelmed. Then you're like, *why doesn't anybody help me?*

Melody clearly recognized that her controlling nature contributed to the unequal division of labor in her household. Not only did her reflection "why doesn't anybody help me?" resonate with Shelby's comments concerning the lack of bother by her husband and child, but it also resonated with Sam's reflection concerning the dishes, as well. Melody went on, however, to further explain her sensemaking of her gendered labor exploitation at home:

> Then you're like, *I don't need your help; you suck. I'm all powerful! I am woman; hear me roar!* kind of thing. It's a horrible little cycle, but I created that. So yes, I still get mad at my husband for not pulling his weight. But also, after 27 years, it's like he's never had to [pull his weight]; it's like teaching an old dog new tricks. Even my kids... the mom guilt—they go to school all day, and they need to be kids. I really never made them do

> any chores either. So literally nobody helps me, which is why I just do the bare minimum of what I can do while working a full-time job. […] If the bare minimum is okay with the people live in my house, then I'm not doing any more than that. They can step up.

This honest and moving reflection from Melody demonstrated her powerful insight to her identity as a woman, wife, and mother. She clearly wrestled with the implication of her actions (i.e., a lack of chore enforcement) and the consequences of that practice over time. When she noted that after 27 years, she did not expect to be able to change her spouse's behavior, this was interesting compared to Imogene's experience—whose spouse's retirement did impact social reproduction behavior. Such differences revealed a potential line of flight concerning the potential for social change. Beyond her reflection concerning her family's lack of involvement in the household's social reproduction activities, Melody provided another example of her spouse's failed action in relation to her parenting decisions:

> I asked [her husband] to pay a toll ticket he got on [the highway]. That was like the one thing I asked him to do, and he didn't do it. And so, I'm like *I'm done. I'll just do it all myself*. Part of me feels very independent and strong. Like I said, I am a woman; I can do all this! I don't need other people, or I don't need a man! That's a really good feeling, and I want to instill that in my kids; they're all girls. But the other side of that is it does get overwhelming at times. I want them to see that Mom needs help. You see the dishes, go do them. Or you see the trash, go do it! *Why are you asking me? We all see the same thing*. Even the cat—I'm the one who feeds the cat, and gives him water, and changes his litter box. He knows that; he doesn't go to anybody else in the house. He comes to me. It's a balancing act.

Again, peppered with comments proudly acknowledging her feminist identity, this passage from Melody demonstrated a conflicted, almost defeated, outlook towards the social reproduction activity in her home. An interesting line of flight, though, was revealed through Melody's comments. Even though Melody admitted that she wanted her girls to see her own independence and strength, at the same time she lamented that that her fellow residents did not assist her in social reproduction work. This manifestation related to a forthcoming production: family history/role modeling.

Melody's above reflection that even the family's cat knew that only she was responsible for its wellbeing resonated with me. I remember feeling "the invisible thread" of connection to Melody in that moment. Because we were having a conversation as two women, there was some unspoken connection or intentionality passing between us. Even though I am not married, nor do I have children, I somehow understood the sentiment she expressed. I also experienced a moment of shared understanding with Liz during another conversation.

Liz was both a mother to a child with a disability and the wife to a spouse with a disability. Her articulation and understanding of her gendered labor exploitation was complicated by these realities. Moreso than another other participant, Liz described not only how the division of social reproduction labor in her household was imbalanced but also how she made sense of this inequity:

> Sometimes, do I get frustrated now? Yes. But at the same time, I also feel like I kind of knew what I was getting into, where I don't know if other couples necessarily think about the dynamics of their relationship and responsibilities the way [her husband and she] had to.

Liz's comment revealed an interesting awareness that she and her husband, compared to other couples, had intentional conversations concerning the partnered dynamics involving social reproduction given her spouse's disability. Liz further elaborated that because her husband was unable to participate in many social reproduction activities, she outsourced many labors, such as lawncare, home maintenance, etc.; this practice was a stark contrast to Shelby's. Though some other participants of various family configurations also outsourced social reproduction activities (i.e., house cleaning services, pest control, lawn care), Liz's caretaking responsibilities were particularly salient given her child's and husband's abilities. Children and spouses were not the only relatives in need of care by this study's participants, though; elders were an additional responsibility for some.

Participants Responsible for Eldercare

Though no participant was engaging in full-time eldercare at the time of this study's phenomenological material production, five participants had experienced varying degrees of caretaking responsibilities of elders. Some participants were just beginning to think about eldercare given their parents' age. Morgan previously experienced eldercare as a teenager when she was primarily raised by a grandparent. Two participants (Ruth and Melody) experienced eldercare caregiving within the past two years; both participants had also recently lost the parent or extended family member in which they were caregiving.

All but one participant experienced eldercare in the elderly member's private home; only Priscilla experienced the caregiving of an elderly member residing in an assisted living facility. Even with 24/7 professional care, Priscilla spoke of the exertion she experienced while caring for her aunt:

> Physically it's just hard. When a person gets old and can't do it for themselves, it takes a team of people; it really does. The few times I had to help give her a shower, and this and that, it [was] physically very demanding. If you don't know what you're doing, it's really hard physically and mentally, as well. I mean, you love the person, but it was never her choice to be there. So, it was tough mentally.

Priscilla's comment revealed insight into both the physical and mental toll that caregiving for her elderly aunt caused throughout her time serving in the caregiving role. Perhaps because eldercare is uncomfortable for those responsible in providing such caregiving, elders often appear to be forgotten or ignored; certainly, capitalism values this population less and thus discards this generation of laborers. Therefore, it is imperative that critical scholarship remembers the elderly when considering the possibility of social change. As a result of her experience, Priscilla shared that she had already prepared for her future needs:

> Someone who hasn't been through this, as a caregiver, has no idea what it takes; it takes a team of people to take care of an elderly person or someone who is sick. […] It's not something you think about unless you have been there, and it has completely changed the way I think about my own retirement years and the plans that I'm making. It has really opened my eyes.

Priscilla was the only participant to discuss her eldercare needs. Perhaps this was because she was one of only two single participants in this study; when one does not have a nuclear family to rely on, the burden of preparation for end-of-life care falls upon oneself. When considering which employment benefit was most valuable to her specific family configuration (i.e., singleness), Priscilla shared:

> The benefit that means the most to me is retirement because I don't have a family. I don't have a husband; all my family members are older than me. [A] lower salary made the retirement benefit that working for the state offers worth it. If you're here for long enough, you get the full benefit, which I plan to be.

Priscilla's keen awareness that her singleness would impact not only her eldercare needs but also her financial retirement planning clearly related to her wage and benefit, another forthcoming production identified. "If you're here for long enough, you get the full benefit, which I plan to be." This awareness from Priscilla concerning the financial incentive from employment benefits revealed an important connection between one's family formation and employment.

In summary, the most prominent production that emerged from all eleven participants concerned family formation and residential configuration. Two of this study's eleven participants were single at the time of phenomenological material production, three were partnered, six were married, and five of the six married participants had children. Additionally, five participants had some experience with eldercare. The intentionalities revealed between participants' various manifestations of family formation, residential configuration, and gendered labor exploitation in the home was striking and will continue to further open up lines of flight throughout the following findings.

Patriarchal Gendered Socialization

A second prominent production that emerged from all participants concerned patriarchal, gendered socialization. Each participant—both explicitly and implicitly—spoke of the ways in which both women and men are socialized into prescribed gendered roles responsible for gendered work conducted in the home. This production continued to influence over time the social reproduction that both woman and men do in the home. To demonstrate the many ways in

which this production manifested, I provide three noteworthy sub-productions: manifestations of women's mental or invisible labor, perceptions of men's socialization, and implicit examples of women's socialization.

Manifestations of Women's Mental or Invisible Labor

In addition to the gendered social reproduction examples provided thus far from participant manifestations (i.e., laundry, caregiving for elders, dishes, house cleaning), participants also disclosed a recognition or awareness of mental or invisible labor. Such depictions of invisible, gendered labor exploitation at home further revealed the ways in which women (and men) are socialized in this lifeworld. Eight of the eleven participants articulated specific examples of invisible or mental labor performed in their home. Melody mentioned this concept at the end of our first conversation concerning gendered labor exploitation in the home:

> We didn't get to talk about the mental load that women have—especially working moms. It's something I complain [about] to my husband; he doesn't get it. Quick questions, like *how much is our health insurance every month?* He has no idea. *How much life insurance do we have?* He has no idea. *How much do I pay for my car every month?* He has no idea. This is why he just gives me his paycheck. But once again, I can't let him be in charge of that because I need that control to know it is taken care of, to know that it's done correctly.

Melody expressed not only her inherent frustration with the "mental load" women endure but also complained that her spouse "doesn't get it." Recall Melody's frustration with her husband for not paying his toll violation.

Other examples shared by participants concerned other "invisible" daily activities, such as grocery list planning, cleaning when no one was at home to witness what had once been a

mess, and errand planning and organization. A more specific example of such daily invisible social reproduction activities was reported by Beth. She reported that her roommate often left dirty pots and pans in the kitchen sink that attracted various bugs. Even though she would have preferred to leave the mess for her roommate to clean (which she felt would be fairer), ultimately, she cleaned the pots and pans herself to avoid attracting bugs:

> I'm anticipating a future problem, and so I'm going to do what it takes now, even though it's unfair. Because in the end, I will still benefit from the fact that we won't have ants at least—preventative problem solving.

Beth's recognition of "preventative problem solving" did benefit both herself and her roommate, but the energy expended not only to anticipate the future problem but to also do the work required to avoid a later problem was just one of the many ways in which participants experienced invisible gendered labor exploitation. Though Beth's roommate was also a woman, this manifestation only complicated the reality that Beth found herself in an exploitative home configuration.

Other manifestations described were more consequential such as elder caregiver planning or reminding adult children about insurance eligibility deadlines. Each of these examples were shared out of frustration, as participants expressed their irritation with their cohabitants (regardless of gender or family relation). For example, Liz further lamented, "There's not an appreciation for the time, thinking, and arranging […]. It takes mental and physical time to manage things." A lack of appreciation from others for this invisible or mental labor was apparent in several participant comments. Given this frustration, it was interesting to also observe the next sub-production: participant perceptions of men's gender socialization.

Participant Perceptions of Men's Gender Socialization

A second sub-production concerning patriarchal gendered socialization concerned the ways in which this study's participants were aware of men's socialization regarding social reproduction activities. Five of eleven participants explicitly examined their observations (or lack thereof) of men's socialization or identified the socialization of men as a potential solution to address gendered labor inequity. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from a conversation with Morgan:

Alexa: Do we also need to socialize men in a different way?

Morgan: Yeah.

Alexa: Can you say more about that?

Morgan: I don't know if I can! I don't really have an ... I didn't grow up with men at all. So, I don't really know how they're being socialized, but it's not good! They need to figure it out. […] I don't think that men think or care as much about certain things or notice because it is traditionally women's work. They don't know how, or they don't know that it was a thing until it's a big problem. I think that's why there's a lot of marital issues when living together.

Though she admitted to minimal exposure throughout her upbringing, Morgan clearly communicated that whatever socialization happening with men "isn't good;" this comment revealed her discontentment with the product of men's socialization.

Similarly, Cher expressed her dissatisfaction with the reproduction of the patriarchy. Acknowledging men's power within a patriarchal society, she shared:

> I think that men have really screwed things up. Because they are the ones who [are] in control for [such] a long time, they're the ones who set all these stupid rules. They taught their sons how to treat women; then they taught their sons. It's [been passed] down and down that women are second-class citizens, and we're not.

Cher's obvious understanding that men have built a system that reproduces itself through the socialization of young men revealed not only her awareness of women's status within such a system but also a line of fight towards social change. Some participants were able to comment more specifically about the gendered socialization of men in their lives.

One of the two participants who reflected on their individual experiences concerning gender socialization was Imogene. Imogene not only considered the comparable socialization experiences of men and women, but she also implicitly recognized the normality of the patriarchy:

> I think women get socialized. I don't know if boys do. I think in early upbringing, there's a difference in how you expect girl children to be aware and take care of other people. I think men and boys, I don't think they're unconcerned. But I think their concern doesn't get as detailed, and there's a lot of things where probably girls might also be unaware of if it hadn't been socialized into them in [their] upbringing and interactions. Somebody telling [little kids], "You look at their face. Notice! Look how they're feeling!" I think girls get that a lot more than boys do. "Can't you see that your friend is upset? Look at their face!" I don't think people tell boys that as much. I think as they get older and grow, there's just a lot of detail that [boys] overlook or just haven't been conditioned to see like paying attention to other people, how they're reacting, and what's going on.

Both Imogene's belief that women are socialized and her questioning of men's socialization spoke to the power of the patriarchy; only the oppressed need to be conditioned to the environment in which they are inferior. Imogene was not, though, the only participant to consider men's socialization.

Liz, the second of two participants, reflected on why her own spouse was not as involved as she would like him to be in the social reproduction work of their home. She theorized that perhaps her spouse's familial role modeling played a role in his behavior at the time of phenomenological material production:

> In my husband's family, his mom really did everything. His dad was away a lot for work, and so it was just natural. So, for him, I think even with things that he's able to do and conversations that we had—such as taking care of my son and things that he should be showing him and teaching him—were just really foreign concepts that a dad would do that because a lot of that fell on his mom.

Here, Liz considered how her spouse's socialization was impacted by the role modeling he observed in his home throughout his childhood; just as one's family configuration impacted social reproduction at the time of phenomenological material production, Liz's comment reflected this study's third production concerning gendered labor exploitation in the home—childhood role modeling/family history, another potential line of flight.

Although the above four participants (Morgan, Cher, Imogene, and Liz) reflected on their own observations of and experiences concerning men's gender socialization, one participant explicitly recognized patriarchal gender socialization as a potential means or opportunity to address gendered labor exploitation. Melody was the only participant to consider children's socialization—regardless of their gender—as a site of resistance:

> I think it's very important, though, if you decide to have kids or anybody decides to have kids, what we're teaching that next generation. If you have boys, what you're teaching them about women and if you're having girls, what we teach them about their role in society. To help make that next generation see the importance of people and who they are

more so than where they come from, or dollar signs, or anything like that. I think discussions like this and making sure that the next generation is trying to follow those footsteps of equality, and equity, inclusion, and living life when you can, and helping those who can't—I think that's the only thing we can do. Go to the voting booth if you have the ability to make change, go for it! But also, we've got to teach this next generation to make [society] better than the last.

Melody understood that even under a (binary) system where men are valued more than women (i.e., patriarchy), it is possible to socialize those who have power (i.e., men) just as those who are devalued (i.e., women) have learned for generations their subordinate status. Melody's sentiment was an excellent example of a line of flight or opportunity to disrupt this production so that over time, what today is considered patriarchal socialization could be different; what we know now could be fleeting and impermanent. In what follows, this study's participants commented on other ways in which they, as women specifically, have been socialized under the patriarchy.

Implicit Examples of Women's Socialization

Just as some participants commented on men's gender socialization, other participants shared implicit examples of the ways they were socialized as women. Each of the following five comments revealed interesting insight into the ongoing socialization experiences that continued to impact this study's participants. First, Imogene described not only the division of social reproduction labor in her home with her spouse and newborn but also provided an explanation as to how said division came to be:

Imogene: I stayed at home. I was nursing the baby. He worked full-time. I would get up in the morning with him, and I would cook breakfast for everybody. Let's see; it's been so long since—I would pack him a lunch. Then he would go to work, and I would just be at home with the baby all day and doing the house […]. I would be nursing, reading a book when the baby would sleep. I would sleep, and I mean I kept a decently clean house. But I wasn't spotless, or obsessive, or anything. I did

all the shopping, all the meal cooking. He did—we had a pretty just traditional division of labor. He did the yard work, the carport. Everything outside was his, and maintenance, and repairs. And then the inside work—cooking, most of the cleaning, all of laundry—all of that was mine.

Alexa: How did it come to be this way? Did you talk about it or did it just you naturally fall into it?

Imogene: We just kind of naturally fell into it.

Imogene's admission that her and her spouse's "traditional" division of labor was something that they "naturally fell into" was a notable example of implicit socialization. That Imogene did not have to explain that under a patriarchal society women were expected to stay at home and nurse children, prepare meals, and keep a home even relatively clean while a man worked full-time spoke to the acceptance of gendered roles. Imogene, though, was not the only participant to share implicit examples of socialization. Three others—each of whom were single or partnered (but not married)—also shared revealing manifestations concerning women's socialization to "women's work."

Specifically, caretaking, cooking, and cleaning emerged as three social reproduction activities in which participants were implicitly socialized. Regarding caretaking, Jennifer shared the following reflection concerning her and her sibling's relationship:

> Ever since I was young, I was always the one who would go up and order food at the counter at the fast-food chain because my [sibling] was too shy. Or I would talk to other people or confront other people because they were too afraid to talk to them. Then it was naturally becoming a role where I was always taking care of them and acting like the mom or hen. It kind of felt like a natural pressure to do that especially because when they're focused on work, they don't take care of their health very well; they've fainted

> before from not eating or not staying hydrated. It's like if I don't meal prep for both of us or I don't pack something for them, they just forget.

Again, beyond the dynamic of mother or wife, Jennifer described the "natural pressure" to not only think about her sibling's well-being (i.e., invisible labor) but to also then prepare meals for them both, as well. Evoking the term "natural," Jennifer's sentiment revealed, just as Imogene's above, her socialization into a caregiving role. Jennifer was not the only participant to address nutrition—an obvious tenet of social reproduction.

Cher, a partnered participant, specifically articulated her preference for equality within her partnered relationship concerning activities such as cooking (i.e., gendered social reproduction labor) with the following comment:

> I'm always like, "Cook with me! I don't want to do this by myself. You have to help me." I like doing that together. That doesn't mean that I wouldn't make the food myself one day. I mean, that's fine. I just wouldn't want it to become a pattern where I'm cooking meals every day. Because I hate cooking, and I don't want to be the one responsible for it. […] I want it to be equal and be each other's rock. […] I don't want to be the one more responsible, but I also don't want to make you be the one more responsible. I want us both to be equal.

Social reproduction equality was clearly important to Cher not just in the above remark but throughout our conversations. However, her specific comment "I wouldn't want it to become a pattern," indicated Cher's awareness that under a patriarchal society, it has become a pattern, habit, or condition that women are responsible for such social reproduction. Assuming Cher has communicated this awareness to her partner, she has rejected the perpetuation of this gendered work. Such resistance is a line of flight that resonated with Jennifer's aforementioned

commitment to an equal partnership. To demand equality within a partnership despite patriarchal gender socialization promotes social change.

Although both Jennifer and Cher implicitly spoke of women's socialization towards cooking, Morgan reflected on her awareness of another form of gendered social reproduction work: house cleaning. When asked if she engaged in any gendered stereotypes at home, Morgan shared the following:

> [My boyfriend] used to stay here a lot. I would be very embarrassed if he came here and noticed that the bathroom was dirty, or the kitchen was filthy, or there was stuff everywhere. I know that no one else is going to take care of it, so I have to. I mean, my roommate's a girl too. So, we both don't really want to have guests see a messy space. I think I'm a little bit more on top of that stuff, but it's gendered. I think if I was a guy, I wouldn't really care. I would never think to get a house cleaner. I would just be like, *who cares? It's fine.*

In the above comment, Morgan's admitted embarrassment revealed a way in which women are shamed by their failure to meet certain social reproduction work standards. Her reflection also provided insight into her comparative perceptions between men and women's social reproduction work socialization. Morgan was not the only participant who actively reflected on the concept of patriarchal gender socialization, though.

Finally, Priscilla shared a revelation of awareness that occurred between two conversations that took place during this study's phenomenological material production. In what follows, the excerpt demonstrated not only the impact of a three-series conversation but also the awareness Priscilla gained concerning gendered social reproduction socialization:

Alexa: I'm kicking off [this conversation] the exact same way I started last time by asking if you've reflected at all about our conversation. Have any of these things

that we've talked about or ideas lingered with you even after we were done chatting last time?

Priscilla: Yes. Something did occur to me. I found a new podcast I've been listening to. It is a feminist—it's sort of self-help—and that's not my normal genre. I can't remember who suggested it or where I read about it, but I thought—and also because of the name—I thought *I'll give this one a chance.* It's got a bad word in the name. So, I hope I don't—I don't want to offend. On the actual podcast, you can't spell out the whole word. But it's called, "Unfuck Your Mind." I listened to—I'm looking it up, so I can see who does it. But I listened to just one episode, [and] I liked it. It was talking about these gender roles that we learn from an early age, and it was talking about how some of those are instilled in us by our mothers and female role models in our life. That occurred to me that that had happened to me.

Priscilla's realization spoke to the power of ongoing growth and awareness, as she returned to our conversation with new insight regarding her own socialization. The feminist podcast episode caused Priscilla to reflect on her own socialization; specifically, she recognized a significant source of such gender socialization—childhood role modeling.

The second prominent production that emerged from all eleven participants concerned patriarchal gendered socialization. Each participant described at least one of three sub-productions: manifestations of women's mental or invisible labor, perceptions of men's socialization, and implicit examples of women's socialization. As a second prominent production, such manifestations of patriarchal gender socialization began to reveal intentionalities with previously identified productions such as family formation and residential configuration.

Family History/Role Modeling

A third production—family history/role modeling—manifested during conversations with seven different participants. Although some participants experienced "traditional" nuclear families with "traditional" gendered roles, others were products of more unique family situations.

For example, Morgan was raised by her grandmother; Imogene by her grandparents. Jennifer was adopted. Shelby, Ruth, and Cher each characterized their upbringing as stereotypical with a mother and father present in the home. I was surprised to learn that two participants—Morgan and Beth—experienced to some extent hoarding in their childhoods. Each of these seven participants made connections between the conditions of their upbringing and their perpetuation or intentional disruption of similar roles and behaviors. What follows are manifestations of acceptance and rejection concerning gendered labor exploitation given various childhood family histories and role modeling.

Priscilla, for example, observed her childhood household to be "traditional." At the time of phenomenological material production, Priscilla's singleness and childlessness rejected the "traditional" role modeling she observed from her childhood. Here, Priscilla reflected on the role modeling she observed from her parents:

> I watched my mother in a traditional marriage do all the cooking, all the cleaning, all the laundry. I've always kind of thought, *that will never be me. If I ever did have a partner or husband, they will do their part.*

Priscilla's blatant aversion to perpetuating or reproducing her mother's social reproduction labor role modeling as an adult in her own home was a unique example of the ways family history served gendered labor exploitation as a production over time. The rejection of gendered labor exploitation seemingly manifested in Priscilla's active decision making to remain single—a production in and of itself that also contributed to her gendered labor exploitation.

Although Melody was raised in a household of four (mother, father, and sister), her "traditional" nuclear family practiced non-traditional roles. Melody reflected on the source of her self-identified independence (coupled with her comments documented in the sub-production

“Participants with Children”) given her mother’s social reproduction experience while she was a child:

> My mom was not, even though she was a stay-at-home mom, not submissive. She's—bless her heart—was not the cook. So, Dad cooked a lot more, even though he worked the 40-hour job. She did the housework; I don't recall my dad doing housework growing up. But as mom got slower, he does laundry. He did the dishes. […] There was never any kind of dynamic there that would ever make me think my dad didn't think my mom wasn't equal. Now, money I think was tight, and sometimes that was tough. He's the only one bringing money in, and she's not. But I never felt that inequality between them. Never saw it. My dad never said anything; Mom never said anything about it. So, I'm not quite sure where [Melody’s independence] came from. I can't pinpoint it. I just always have been that way. I think it's gotten worse as I’ve gotten older, though. I think you see things more now how women are treated [and viewed in general] in society and what they're valued for. I think as I've gotten older, that stuff bothers me a lot more than it did when I was 20.

Although Melody described a home environment where her father participated in social reproduction activities, Melody’s self-identified independence or “control freak” nature dictated her burden of gendered labor exploitation in her home at the time of this study’s phenomenological material production. Instead of following her parent’s role modeling of shared social reproduction activity, Melody shouldered such burden alone. Though Priscilla and Melody reflected on their childhood home situations primarily in terms of their mothers, two other participants commented primarily on their fathers.

Both Ruth and Jennifer reflected on the ways in which their fathers' behavior impacted their understanding of gender socialization, family formation, and social reproduction labor. However, their appreciation of their fathers' behavior differed dramatically. Related to the second production— patriarchal gender socialization—Ruth reflected on her parents' acceptance of her "tomboy" socialization in her home and among peers:

> In the neighborhood, I grew up with all boys. I was a tomboy just because I loved playing all the sports with them. I'd play football and hockey. My brothers hunted. My dad was a hunter, and I would just do things with my dad. I'd go out with him—just go rabbit hunting and stuff. I would go with him for certain things. But it was never discouraged. [Her parents] let me do whatever I wanted. They never ever said, "No, you can't do that!"

Although Ruth seemingly appreciated her parents' acceptance of her behavior as a child, Jennifer did not receive the same appreciation and acceptance from her father. Because of this, Jennifer made several decisions, similar to Priscilla, that shaped Jennifer's single status. Jennifer described some of her father's gendered behavior in their home as follows:

> My dad would literally be sitting on the couch watching TV with his feet up, and he'd just be like, "Make me a sandwich," or something. And then I would just kind of be like, "You can make your own sandwich. It's really not that hard." I would notice that he wouldn't eat, or he wouldn't do things unless my mom did it for him. Then I started to notice anything I did to try to contribute, my dad would always be there telling you how to do it or being like, "You're doing it wrong," which it would be simple, like, loading the dishwasher, or how I dry the dishes—the direction I'm moving the towel—and just small

things. I realized it felt really suffocating, and that's what my mom must feel like all the time having someone telling her what to do. But it's her responsibility.

Jennifer further revealed how she understood the impact of her father's behavior on her lifestyle:

> There's definitely been a lot of resentment towards my father [as a] male figure and putting himself in a place where it's like, "You listen to what the man tells you to do!" Very traditional, really conservative. "You live under our roof, so you have to do what I tell you to do!" It's not just about roles in terms of like cleaning; it's his traditional views on what a woman should be, too. Like, the way I dress, or the types of makeup I wear, or if I'm wearing a red lipstick or something. He'd say, "You know, a modest woman shouldn't wear lipstick like that;" those kinds of statements. I think that has impacted a bit on my view of the woman's role in the household.

Such descriptive illustrations of her father's gendered outlook toward social reproduction clearly impacted Jennifer. Her observations of her childhood family's formation, coupled with gender socialization clearly resulted in her own outlook on her future family formation:

> I think [her ideas about gender at home and work] must have come from my dad because I don't have a lot of male figures in my life. I haven't been in a relationship. I think that there's also probably a little bit of concern or I guess hesitation to get into a relationship with men because I feel like I would want an equal relationship. I would want to be respected—the complete polar opposite of my father. […] I'm not willing to settle, and I'm independent. I can take care of myself. So, I'd only be willing to consider a relationship with someone if I feel like there's someone who respects me, and we can grow and work on a relationship together and be better people together. I don't want to be

> with someone who is just one more chore or one more person I have to take care of like in my mom and dad's relationship.

Jennifer's rejection of the role modeling she witnessed and experienced in her childhood home manifested in her approach to dating. Perhaps this was why Jennifer remained intentionally single at the time of phenomenological material production; her standards were set in a way to avoid reproducing a family formation and culture that exploited women doing social reproduction work.

Although Jennifer's rejection of her father's outlook was obvious, a potential line of flight manifested during the conversation when she offered the following explanation of her father's attitude. She theorized:

> I think it's also because there's a big generation gap because my parents are older. I was adopted. They're in their 70s, so Baby Boomers. My dad has a very conservative view of what gender roles are. He came from a pretty big family; I mean he had five siblings, and his dad was abusive. I think that impacted his view on the way women are, and the way men are. His mom was the one who took care of the family, so I think that's part of how he sees it. I also think that he wants to be loved or receive attention; like he didn't get enough attention from his mom because she had to take care of his five other siblings.

Jennifer's theory that her father's own childhood experiences (i.e., being one of five children, having an abusive father; coming of age in the Baby Boomer generation) impacted his understanding of gendered roles in a traditional, nuclear family. It was interesting that her father presumably wanted to use his nuclear family—once he was the head of such a construct—as a site of reproduction of gendered constructs. Jennifer's rejection, however, of these gendered roles and work disrupted this production. A thread of "generational change" manifested

throughout several conversations; through gender socialization and family formations, the opportunity to address social change is abundant.

In summary, a third production—family history/role modeling—manifested during conversations with seven participants. Closely related and connected with both previously identified productions, some participants came from traditional nuclear families, while others were products of more unique family situations. Participants revealed interesting intentionalities between their upbringing and the perpetuation or disruption of similar roles and behaviors (many of which were connected to the productions of patriarchal gender socialization and current family formation or residential configurations).

Conclusion

Three productions—family formation and residential configuration; patriarchal socialization; and family history/role modeling—reveal the ongoing ways in which gendered labor exploitation is maintained. Although each of the given examples provided throughout Chapter 5 demonstrates to varying extents gendered labor exploitation, collectively they begin to uncover the periphery or silhouette of the phenomenon of interest. Remember, the fleeting, partial, and multiple intentionalities revealed as productions in this chapter are constantly in flux—being made and unmade. Conceptually, such morphing movements, when viewed through the lens of SRT (where women are primarily responsible for and burdened by the necessary but contradictory provision of social reproduction labor in a patriarchal society), exhibit the contours of gendered labor exploitation.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERLUDE 5

BRIDLING JOURNAL: OCTOBER 11, 2022

Today was my second interview with Dr. Stich. Even though today's conversation focused on my previous work life, it was a considerably easier experience for me for whatever reason. Is it because work seems like a more public space, therefore it's easier to talk about, while home is a more private experience? I'm not sure. But I left today's conversation feeling nowhere near as emotional as I was after our first interview. In fact, in some ways I felt like I was energized while opening a can of old worms!

In some ways it felt really cathartic to share a succinct and collective narrative—presumably due to my intentional interview protocol—concerning my many work experiences at the University of Mississippi. I feel like I often talk about all the things that I talked about today, but I usually talk about them separately—not all in one setting. I don't know that I've ever had the opportunity to address the collective of experiences and issues during my four years in Oxford. Even now an hour after we wrapped up our conversation, I do have some lingering icky feelings. I'm sure they're just because I talked about a lot of icky things that I've worked hard over the past three years to heal and grow from. Of course, I feel like I could have spent another hour and a half talking about even more concerning matters of gendered work, labor exploitation, my identity, etc. But I feel like for the sake of this project that I was able to speak my truth and get some things off of my chest in a way that hopefully will bring continued clarity to my dissertation.

Again, today's conversation flowed more easily. I'm not sure if it's the familiarity that Dr. Stich and I have with one another or if it's the ease and confidence that I was able to talk about these matters. Of course, from counseling and therapy I have talked about these matters at length, so in some ways while I didn’t feel as rehearsed when answering the questions, I think maybe I have a little more natural polish and ease in talking about some of my experiences because I've been talking about them since they occurred.

I am giggling at the fact that Dr. Stich admitted that she has more notes from today than she did after our last conversation. But all along I have felt like I am personally more invested in the home as a site of exploitation through the lens of SR. And whether this is true or not, I have perceived that Dr. Stich is energized by the flip side of the coin—the workplace. An interesting thing that I’m reflecting on in this moment is the eagerness I have in seeing her thoughts; I’m wondering if this is the same eagerness my participants have communicated in their desire to see my final project! Related, I'm starting to get nervous about deciding what to include in my report—what if I want to comment or reflect on something participants won’t like? Is Dr. Stich experiencing that as she shares her comments/reflections of our interview? We shall see...

Okay and something that I’m really wrestling with today is the challenge in how home affects work and work affects home. They are inseparable! And not just for parents who are constantly worried about their kids. Single people have things on their mind too—grief, dates, etc.

When listening back to my final interview with Morgan, I was processing some thoughts and ideas mid-conversation. For example, I questioned if in a similar way that we ask faculty to determine early on if they are going to be tenure track or not, I wondered aloud in my interview with Morgan if in a less obvious and blatant way we ask women if they're going to be married to

their job or not early in their career. Also, I do feel really shitty for saying that becoming a parent becomes someone's entire personality. I'm sure not everyone is like that, however my experience is simply an observation of how consuming the role of parent, and in particular mother, becomes.

Amy's Notes on Alexa Interview 2 — Work

Our conversation today felt slightly different from the first. Alexa seemed somewhat less rehearsed though it was also clear that responses were ready to be communicated out loud. Like the first interview, it seemed as though Alexa had been thinking about her own responses to the interview questions as she has been engaged with others. Again, I feel like this was time well spent.

Alexa reflected upon a previous position (one held not that long ago so memories seemed to hold a place nearer to consciousness). I did note that I had more notes today than from the first interview. I am not sure why — I think it could be, in part, that I was less familiar with the details of the conversation (the actual job itself, trying to wrap my head around the restructuring and repositioning, the various people involved that helped shape Alexa's experience). And it was indeed a complicated knot of a story to tell someone else — especially someone who hasn't worked outside of the faculty role in higher education. The complicated knot also holds trauma, and this alone will help keep a memory fresh. To get myself organized, here are some big things that stand out to me after our conversation today:

In fact, I believe I wrote down the word trauma at least 3 times during our conversation (just the word "trauma" floating on my page, "childhood trauma" and "trauma bonding"). That's a lot of trauma. But that's part of exploitation, isn't' it? Trauma is built into the everyday (something akin to microaggressions that add up like a thousand cuts over time). I could relate to this in many ways (even in my current position), but I didn't feel like it was worth talking about.

Even outside of the voice in the back of my head that always says "just listen" during an interview, something else was holding me back. I am currently exploring this (though I know holding back or not speaking up usually originates with my own childhood trauma).

Gendered roles at work. I was blown away by the strong use of family and dominant gendered roles at Alexa's former workplace. The story surrounding the use of "mom" and "dad" was a little alarming (interestingly, one of my advisees referred to me as his "new mom" today and I died a little inside. I think I should also explore this?). Though right there on the surface, identifying this — the roles and traditional family dynamics — is an incredible insight. This is all part of the institutional/social/cultural script. This makes me think about how institutions speak about phenomena (because we breathe life/discourse into them, but also because they embody scripts too).

Alexa communicated the very exploitation she is seeking to understand. She has lived it and is conscious of it. But there was something to unpack here — amidst the explicit exploitation, there was "pride" in holding the position/identity even while aware that it was "all—consuming" and "addictive." I was also thinking about the role of mentors and leaders who reinforce the script and the exploitation through modeling/reproducing the structures.

I was particularly tweaked by our conversation surrounding the expectations of single people or those without children to take on more because it is (for me) assumed that they have less of a life or fewer obligations. I don't know that I have felt that in a while, but I used to feel this a lot both at work and from my own family.

Final thought—I really hope this is cathartic, and in some way, helps Alexa to heal from some trauma.

CHAPTER 6

PROVOCATIONS CONCERNING GENDERED LABOR EXPLOITATION IN THE HOME

The first of two connected sites of gendered labor exploitation explored in this study concerned the home. Three provocations revealed interesting intentionalities behind this phenomenon. Such findings manifested throughout three conversations with each participant. As seen in the conversation guide (Appendix D) each participant was prompted to consider three tenets of exploitation. First, participants were asked if the work or chores (i.e., social reproduction) they were responsible for in their homes was fair; second, participants were asked who benefited the most from their social reproduction efforts; finally, participants were asked what, if any, harm was done given any unfairness. In what follows, I describe three provocations concerning gendered labor exploitation at home, provide rich descriptions to illustrate the phenomenological construct, and identify ways in which the provocation relates to social change.

Three provocations (realizations and altered approaches to partnership, exposure to feminist ideas, and conversations with other women) revealed interesting intentionalities concerning this phenomenon. Each of these three provocations served as a catalyst of gendered labor exploitation. Again, as discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 9, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) helps to illuminate lines of flight between gendered labor exploitation in the home and women's employment in higher education.

Realizations & Altered Approaches to Partnership

The first of three provocations concerned realizations and subsequent changes toward partnerships. Three of this study's eleven participants experienced some realization following a

breakup or divorce, which ultimately impacted their attitudes and practices concerning partnership. Though only one participant (Ruth) was at the time of phenomenological material production previously married and divorced, two other participants (Morgan and Priscilla) spoke of the experience of breaking up or separating from their partner as provocations. Each participant uniquely described their breakup or divorce as a catalyst not only in their understanding of partnership but in their decisions concerning partnership practice. Ruth, for example, characterized the period following her divorce as one that was challenging. She elaborated:

> Probably because I was single for a long time before [her second husband] and I got married, and we—I—just had to do my thing, you know? For my son, I was mother-father; it was never just the mother role. I was doing both. I think being single for a long time, you have to be independent and take care of all your things. I think [her second husband] is the same way; we're both very independent people, so we make it work that way. I always feel like we're equal or equals, and we just do our things.

Not only did Ruth allude to the caretaking burden she faced while serving the roles of two parents, but she also described the nature of her relationship with her current spouse and second husband. Equality was an important condition of this second family configuration for Ruth; she spoke of the dynamic at some point during all three conversations. This resonated with both Jennifer's and Cher's previous comments concerning partnership expectations, as well. Ruth's appreciation for the balanced nature of her second marriage manifested in comments concerning financial security, fiscal management, and effort into home maintenance. It was clearly important to Ruth to experience balanced partnership following her divorce as a once independent, single

mother. Two other participants experienced significant breakups or changes in partnership status.

Both Morgan and Priscilla ended relationships over matters concerning gendered labor equity. Morgan described the dissolution of her relationship as follows:

> I was in another relationship, and I didn't like nagging him to do things. There was, for sure, a lot of gendered labor exploitation in that relationship. I just didn't want to repeat that. […] I think that if I [were] to move in with a boyfriend again, I would need a separate bedroom, a separate bathroom, and a house cleaner—which is the situation that I have with my roommate right now. I think that those ideas [concerning gender equity] have, especially after living with my ex, have stopped me from wanting to do it again.

Morgan clearly attributed gendered labor exploitation to her relationship's end. What was most revealing, though, was how impactful such exploitation was concerning Morgan's subsequent relationships and her family configuration following the abovementioned separation. Though Morgan was dating at the time of phenomenological material production, she shared that she did not plan to move in with her partner—despite his desire for the couple to reside together. Instead, at the conclusion of her current lease with her roommate, Morgan planned to live alone unless she financially could not afford to do so—a situation like Priscilla's.

The desire to live alone was not the only similarity between Morgan and Priscilla; both participants had been in relationships with partners who did not meet their expectations of partnership. Priscilla shared the following reflection concerning the end of her relationship:

> I think my relationship with [her ex-boyfriend], gave me a taste of some of the things I might encounter in a relationship with a man with more traditional views on things. You know, maybe he would have come around. But I don't want to have to be the one to teach

> him; I'd rather just do what I want. […] Now that I'm in the place in my life that I'm at, I would not even tolerate half the crap.

"The crap" that Priscilla referred to concerned gendered labor exploitation and gendered roles. Priscilla's clear articulation, "I don't want to have to be the one to teach him," not only resonated with ideas concerning men's gendered socialization but also indicated her resolve in her choice to live alone. Though the breakup significantly impacted Priscilla's family configuration at the time of phenomenological material production, she shared a certain degree of willingness to consider a different future:

> Maybe when I'm closer to retirement and ready to start the next phase—it's not that I've closed myself off. I'm open to meeting, open to dating. But honestly at this point in my life, I have no desire to start getting to know someone and go through all of that. I would rather go home, and have a quiet evening with my dog, and talk to my friends. That is what makes me happy these days.

Clearly Priscilla's breakup concerning social reproduction equity around the home impacted her; her home ownership status, identity, and financial security was greatly influenced by the decision to remain single. Each of these manifestations of this provocation revealed nuance concerning gendered labor exploitation. Not only was the harm and impact of gendered labor exploitation great enough to warrant the end of two relationships (Morgan's and Priscilla's), but gendered labor exploitation was exacerbated when partnerships end (Ruth).

The first of three provocations concerned altered approaches to partnership given reflection following previous partnership experiences. Three of eleven participants spoke of realizations following previous relationships stemming from significant breakups or divorce. Not only did such manifestations concerning partnership and family configuration impact each

participant in unique ways, but each manifestation revealed interesting intentionalities with previously identified productions (e.g., family formation, patriarchal gender socialization). Such lines of flight reveal the edges of the phenomenon of interest; one outlet for resistance to gendered labor exploitation manifests through changes in partnership status.

Exposure to Feminist Ideas

Though women's implicit socialization has already been identified as a production of gendered labor exploitation in the home, the introduction of feminist thought manifested during conversations with four participants. Exposure to feminist ideas served as a catalyst—and second provocation—for participants concerning social reproduction equity at home. For example, Imogene shared:

> I was reading way back when we were first married this book... I can't think... It was called *The Women's Room?* It was called the, *The Ladies' Room!* But they had scratched out "Ladies" and written "Women." I can't remember who it was by, but I think it was from the feminist movement in the 70s. It was talking about the labor expectations for men and women. And there's another book, too, that I read. I can't remember... Famous feminist... Iconic. Betty? *The Feminine Mystique!* I was reading *The Feminine Mystique.* Both of those, and then thinking about [and] watching my parents and the women in my family.

Not only did Imogene admit that family role modeling impacted her ideas concerning gendered labor in the home (a production previously identified) but so, too, did feminist literature. Exposure to critical feminist literature as a newlywed clearly impacted Imogene's behavior in her home. However, literature was not the only delivery method for feminist idea exposure.

Three other participants reflected on their exposure to feminist ideas. Other forms of media such as blogs, TikToks, television shows, and podcasts were mentioned throughout conversations. Two participants specifically recounted exposure to new feminist ideas concerning the home via social media. One example has already been reported; Priscilla spoke about her encounter with the "Unfuck Your Mind" podcast, a recommendation she discovered in a women's-only Facebook group. This example was interesting not only because social media was the vehicle to share ideas with an audience but also because Priscilla encountered the recommendation in a women's-only space. As a potential line of flight, it was interesting to consider the intentionality between a women's-only virtual space curated by women for women and the podcast of note. Priscilla, who admittedly otherwise only listened to true crime podcasts, accepted the "self-help" podcast given the strong recommendation. She recounted:

> Someone said, "Whoever suggested this podcast, it's changed my life. Thank you." So, it's all a bunch of women suggesting things for each other. I'm 99% sure that is where [she saw the post], and I thought, *well, gosh, if it's changed her life, maybe I should give it [a listen]*, you know?

Priscilla's willingness to consume material she otherwise would not have were it not for the recommendation from this specific group on Facebook spoke to the potential of possibilities. Participants, regardless of their age, socialization, life experiences, and family formation configurations have the potential to learn about and try on different ideas. In this case, feminist content delivered via a podcast resulted in Priscilla's return to our conversation with an evolved perspective on the production of gender socialization. The introduction of new feminist ideas extended beyond the realm of social media, as well.

Television also served as a mechanism for provocation. Cher attempted to connect with me during one of our conversations over the show "Rick and Morty:"

Cher: Have you ever watched Rick and Morty before?

Alexa: No.

Cher: So, it's a cartoon show. It's funny. There's an episode where there's a planet where these dudes have arms sticking out of their heads, and they're cave manny on their planet. They show a ball coming out of the sky, and the guys reproduce into the balls. Then the balls go back up into... whatever. Well, it turns out there's this civilization of women that live in the sky, and they're all super peaceful. They all get along, and they're all really smart. They take the babies that are produced in those little balls, and they take any little boys and just fling them back to Earth. [But] they keep the little girls and raise them. It's funny because whenever they see each other, their greeting is, "I hear you," and "I'm here for you." It would be lovely if we could have a society of just women because women are great. I mean, of course, just like there are great men, there are not great women. But everybody can learn, or most people can learn. The younger you are, I think the better you are at learning.

Cher's reflection and description of this television episode conveyed not only the impact of the episode (as she remembered in the first place) but also demonstrated her willingness to accept the possibility of a reimagined society. Her belief that "people can learn" (especially when younger) resonated with the production of gender socialization. Again, how that production and this provocation are in *fuite* (i.e., flee, elude, flow, leak) revealed interesting intentionalities concerning social change. This example from Cher demonstrated the impact of creative outlets and potential to share feminist thought.

Media consumption served as a mechanism for feminist idea exposure for three participants; a fourth participant shared a more formalized knowledge transaction. Sam, whose conversation concerning ideas about fairness, harm, and benefit as a married person has already been detailed with the "family formation" production, suggested that their awareness of gender

exploitation was shaped by their post-secondary education at a women's centered college, which according to Sam "focus[ed] quite strongly on the importance of strong, hardworking, feminine identifying people." Sam's formal education—a mechanism of social reproduction—provided Sam with a specific, critical perspective (as a Women's and Gender Studies minor) to recognize and understand gendered labor exploitation. Though Sam's exposure to feminist ideas was the most formalized, all four participants shared interesting lines of flight concerning feminist thought. Such lines of flight, again, help to reveal outlets for social change. With more exposure to critical feminist thought, individuals can evaluate their individual situations and demand social change.

In summary, a second provocation revealed itself through conversation with four participants. In relation to the production of patriarchal gender socialization, the exposure of feminist knowledge was an important provocation identified. Whether exposed via literature, blogs, TikToks, television shows, podcasts, or formal education, some participants experienced an intensity that helped to reveal gendered labor exploitation.

Conversations with Other Women

Though more prevalent as a provocation of gendered labor exploitation at work (see Chapter 8), four participants described interesting intentional connections concerning gendered labor exploitation at home. Specifically, three participants (Jennifer, Ruth, and Priscilla) reflected on their interactions with other women. Such conversations enabled participants opportunities to reflect, vent, accept, and realize elements of gendered labor exploitation. A fitting example of such connection occurred between Priscilla and a friend of hers, as they discussed Priscilla's last relationship:

> My ex-boyfriend and I, a lot of our conflict... Actually, I was talking to my friend about this recently because she had seen him over Labor Day, and [she] was telling me, “You really dodged a bullet there!” I was like, “I know!” But we got to talking about how a lot of the conflict was just that; I think it was hard.

Priscilla’s recollection that she and her friend “got to talking” about Priscilla’s previous relationship compared to her current family configuration (i.e., singleness) revealed insight into the powerful nature of women’s relationships. To be reassured by a friend and other woman that Pricilla made the right decision to end her relationship with her ex-boyfriend was comforting to Pricilla. She was not the only participant to share how valuable conversations with other women have been after experiencing gendered labor exploitation.

Both Jennifer and Ruth also expressed their comfort in engaging in conversation concerning gendered labor experiences at home with other women. Specifically, Jennifer noted, “With other women, it's super easy. I feel comfortable talking about [partnership expectations]. But I think with men, [it’s] not that much of a regular occurrence.” Jennifer’s comment revealed an interesting detail concerning her level of comfort in discussing this phenomenon: gender. She explicitly noted that it was easier to speak with other women than it was with actual potential partners. Perhaps there was a certain level of comfort or familiarity for Jennifer in speaking with other women; or perhaps because of different socialization practices (i.e., a production previously identified), women understand partnership expectations differently than the men with whom Jennifer interacted.

Jennifer also engaged her mother (another woman) in conversation concerning her participation in this study. When asked if she had thought about ideas of gendered labor exploitation between conversations, Jennifer recalled her conversation with her mother:

I was like, "In this interview, I was being asked about our family roles. I'm thinking about how we've never sat down and discussed who does what and what the chores look like." My mom was like, "Yeah, no, we never did that. Only when you were really young kids, we had that sticker chart [where] you had to do certain things in order to be able to watch TV or something like that." Then I was like, "Oh, okay." [But] I was thinking, *maybe we should do something about that. But I'll table that for another day because that's a lot of work; I'd have to get the printout. Maybe I'll just find a chart online or something to figure it out.*

Jennifer's reflection revealed her thought process as she engaged in this study's phenomenological material production. Not only was she reflecting upon ideas we had discussed (e.g., invisible labor, gendered labor, caretaking) and shared them with a woman in her immediate life, but she was also connecting these ideas to her current family formation and residential configuration in a critical but practical way. To suggest to her mother that the family reimplement a chore chart was a practical way to redistribute labor. Jennifer was not, though, the only participant engaged in conversation concerning practical labor distribution with other women. Ruth also utilized such conversations for more practical idea-sharing concerning her current marriage or family formation.

Ruth shared how, given her divorce and her experience as a self-identified independent, single mom, she actively spoke with other friends who were also divorced and remarried. She reported that she intentionally asked these individuals how they handled certain partnered social reproduction practices (e.g., finances). Such conversations afforded Ruth the opportunity to reevaluate her and her current spouses' financial practices. This manifestation revealed ways in which women supported one another through knowledge-sharing via active conversation. Ruth's

example further revealed interesting elements of this provocation and resonated with Jennifer's above reflection concerning her mother.

As an excellent line of flight in relation to previously identified productions such as family history/role modeling and gender socialization, consider the following excerpt from Imogene. Imogene recalled memories of her aunts in conversation in the kitchen when they thought they no one was listening:

> I come from a family that was very divided by gender. I was raised by my grandparents, and everybody would come to our house. […] Almost every weekend all the aunts, and uncles, and cousins would come over on a Friday evening, and a lot of them wouldn't even leave until Sunday morning! But the men would be playing poker all night, all day, and all night. The women were all in the kitchen laughing, gossiping, and making a hot tamale assembly line around the whole entire kitchen. Then the kids—all the cousins—we were outside. But I was always interested in what the grownups were talking about.
>
> So, I would sit on the back stairs and pretend to read a book. But I could hear the women talking in the kitchen, and that's how I did all of my finding out the things that the adults don't tell the kids that are going on. I was just really interested in stories and what's going on. The women would always have very frank discussions about all the gossip in the family because the kids were out from under their feet, and the men were busy playing poker. So, you got the real lowdown on everything.

Although Imogene was not an active participant in such conversations among her aunts, she was an active observer to the dynamics among women as they were conversation while engaged in social reproduction activities (e.g., cooking). Again, this provocation manifestation clearly

related to previously identified productions (e.g., family history and role modeling, gender socialization). It also underscored the power of conversation between women—something that resonated with this study's intentional phenomenological material production design.

In summary, four participants described an interesting fourth and final provocation concerning gendered labor exploitation in the home: conversations with friends or other women. Participants described specific conversations with familiar women contacts (both friends and family) where participants were able to reflect, vent, accept, and realize elements of gendered labor exploitation. Interesting lines of flight opened up the phenomenon of interest when this fourth provocation was in relation to other productions (e.g., family formation, family history and role modeling, patriarchal gender socialization) and provocations (e.g., change in partnership status). Conversations with other women clearly have the potential to serve as mechanisms to address social change concerning gendered labor exploitation.

Conclusion

Three provocations—realizations and altered approaches to partnership; exposure to feminist ideas; and conversations with other women—reveal intensities concerning gendered labor exploitation. Although each of the given examples provided throughout Chapter 6 demonstrates to varying extents gendered labor exploitation, collectively they continue to expose the periphery or shape of the phenomenon of interest. Again, the fleeting, partial, and multiple intentionalities revealed as provocations in this chapter are constantly giving shape to the phenomenon of interest. Conceptually, such intense moments, when viewed through the lens of SRT (where women are primarily responsible for and burdened by the necessary but contradictory provision of social reproduction labor in a patriarchal society), exhibit the contours of gendered labor exploitation.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERLUDE 6

BRIDLING JOURNAL: NOVEMBER 18, 2022

I am in a full-blown panic about potential harm for folks who can hear interviews—both at home (Beth, Ruth, Imogene) and work (Priscilla, Melody).

I'm well aware of the reality that difficult decisions must be made when conducting research. It seemed like a no-brainer to me, though, given the pandemic that the virtual space would need to be the setting in which conversations with participants occurred. Not only would I be able to expand the potential participant pool with folks from across the country, but I also hoped that the recent acceptance of virtual accessibility would increase participants' availability to chat at times that were most conducive to their schedules.

What I didn't anticipate, though, which—of course—now seems obvious, was that participants would likely be in one of two physical spaces while chatting with me: home or work. The implication of this decision hit me like a ton of bricks when one participant abruptly stopped speaking during our first conversation, leaned closer to the computer screen, and whispered, "Let me make sure my door is closed; sorry." It was in the heartbeat after she stopped speaking that I realized that I was asking participants to share potentially upsetting comments about the very people in which they were in close proximity! Cue my internal meltdown.

In the twenty seconds in which this participant turned off her screen and walked away, I experienced a full-body panic attack. I could feel the heat wash over my entire body. I remember putting my hand to my forehead and brushing back my hair as the anxiety coursed through my veins. Somehow in that brief amount of time, I managed to ask (read: scold) myself: *did I put my*

participants in potential harm by setting them up to critique the very people they spend the most time with; how did I not anticipate that they could have complaints about their exploitation in the very space they are speaking in; how could I be so irresponsible? Of course, once these damning thoughts entered my consciousness, it was incredibly challenging to maintain not only my composure for the remainder of the conversation but also to not fixate on any potential harm.

My thought spiral was disrupted, though, when the screen turned back on, and my participant reappeared. I remember plastering on a sympathetic, apologetic smile before she jumped back into her comment. I know Vagle (2018) says that there are no mistakes—only opportunities. However, I should have offered, "We can find another time to chat if that's best for you!" But instead, I just let her continue. You would have thought that this experience would have been upsetting enough for me to address this potential harm, but what could I really do? I was already underway with a pool of participants spread out across the country; I had no choice but to meet with them virtually at this point. I felt the only solution I could implement was to simply ask as soon as participants signed on to verify, "Is now still a good time to chat," and trust that they understood their own situation well enough to determine that for themselves. Though four additional moments would occur throughout the other thirty-two conversations, I still harbored great guilt and shame for asking participants for their truth—truth that may have been overheard by others.

Just writing about this experience in hindsight is upsetting. It's been over a month since some of these moments, and I am still annoyed and disappointed in myself. *There are no mistakes, only opportunities. There are no mistakes, only opportunities. There are no mistakes, only opportunities...*

CHAPTER 7

PRODUCTIONS CONCERNING GENDERED LABOR EXPLOITATION AT WORK

The second of two connected sites of gendered labor exploitation explored in this study concerned participants' employment at HEIs. Productions that open up and explore manifestations of the phenomenon of interest—specifically in the public space—are outlined below. Five productions revealed intentionalities concerning this phenomenon.

Primarily during the second of three conversations, job descriptions were referenced as participants reflected upon ideas concerning gendered labor exploitation. Also in the second conversation, participants were asked if they considered their work as administrative assistants to be fair; who benefited the most from their labor at work; and what, if any, harm was done given their employment labor. In what follows, I introduce the production concerning gendered labor exploitation at work, provide rich descriptions to illustrate the phenomenological construct, and identify ways in which the production relates to social change.

Five productions revealed themselves through the phenomenological material produced: gendered labor, job descriptions and classifications, the wage and benefits, hierarchies, and the workweek structure. Each of these five productions addressed the ongoing ways in which the phenomenon—gendered labor exploitation—manifests over time in the workplace. More specifically, and as discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 9, Social Reproduction Theory is a useful framework to demonstrate lines of flight between gendered labor exploitation in the workplace and home.

Gendered Labor

The first prominent production concerned participants' awareness of gendered labor in their roles as administrative assistants working at R1 higher education institutions (HEI). Eight of eleven participants identified ways their labor was gendered at work. Within this production two sub-productions manifested. First, seven participants spoke both explicitly and implicitly of caretaking as a function of their role in their employment. Second, four participants observed an interesting line of flight concerning leadership and gender; more specifically, two participants spoke to their observation that women leaders perpetuate and redistribute gendered labor onto other women staff, while the other participants observed that leadership was inherently gendered, meaning that men hold more leadership roles than women. Finally, five participants wrestled with the tension between their observations of administrative assistants and the gendered nature of such roles.

Caretaking at Work

Given this study's findings concerning gendered work in the home, it was interesting to consider the unique ways in which seven participants spoke of gendered work in their roles as administrative assistants within HEIs. Some comments were brief and matter of fact: "I'm just the only office person, so I take care of all the day-to-day tasks," "[There's] this expectation [to] constantly give, give, give," or "More and more lately, it's a situation where I'm aware [that] the female typically gets tasked with taking the notes or the odds and ends." Each of these three comments revealed the mundane, everyday gendered labor that participants found themselves performing at work. When prompted to describe her job duties, Melody shared:

> I take care of him first and foremost. I take care of that man right there [points to portrait of senior leader on the wall]. He makes it easy, but he comes first and foremost—

> whatever he needs. I handle his calendar. I handled his travel, his reimbursements, meetings. You name it, I take care of him first and foremost.

This striking description of Melody's day-to-day assigned tasks demonstrated the caretaking nature many participants experienced as administrative assistants. The proud conviction in Melody's voice when she proclaimed, "I take care of him first and foremost" resonated immediately with the devotion expected of caregiving in the home.

Caregiving in the workplace, though, manifested slightly differently among participants. For example, Morgan provided a detailed account of her work, which spoke to several caregiving tasks:

> Anything that was not research fell to me, which is often like, "I need a place to stay," "Can you book me a hotel?" "I need dinner tonight. Can you make a reservation?" "Come with me to class because I need you to help me carry stuff." Or expectations of me going to class in case anything went wrong, and I needed to call IT or whatever. You wouldn't expect a man to do those things. You wouldn't tell a man, "Hey, I need you to book me hotel," genuinely because you wouldn't trust that they would do it or do it well! Also, there's a lot of emotional and personality management that goes on. […] You just have to make sure that everybody is feeling safe; they're getting what they need from their employees; nobody's feeling hurt; the wrong thing is being said or done; or they're being exploited.

Being tasked to manage not only emotional labor among colleagues but also to handle matters concerning lodging, dining, and class attendance, Morgan experienced gendered labor to such an extent that her colleagues (some of whom were older than Morgan) called her "Mom" around the office. This admission indicated other higher education staff members' recognition of the close

alignment in a mother's caregiving (despite different settings) and Morgan's role. Morgan was not, however, the only participant to identify with a work role associated with the home.

Two other participants (Imogene and Liz) related family-oriented identities to their workplace. During one conversation Imogene realized she understood her work role as a "work wife." She described not only her experience with emotional labor (i.e., intuiting), but Imogene also provided her comparative experiences concerning gender among administrative assistants:

Imogene: There's a lot of gendered labor that just goes with that type of role. But I did notice that in the very few instances where we ever had any young men assistants, they did the job differently.

Alexa: Can you give me an example?

Imogene: [For] a lot of women in the kind of administrative assistant roles, it's very intuitive to know how to take care of people and intuit their needs. When I would see young men in that role, they felt kind of affronted by people expecting them to intuit their needs. Like, if somebody had an expectation, they thought, w*hy didn't they just tell me they wanted that?* All the women, they're like, "Well, that's part of the role. You're supposed to know that." But [the men administrative assistants] had never been required to know anything like that before. That's the main difference, I think. A lot of the women in those roles intuitively know how to anticipate other people's needs. […] I'm thinking about when he's out doing his job, what are the obstacles that he's going to run into, anticipating them in advance, and then doing what I can do to take care of them or make it easy? I keep saying "he" because all my department heads have been men so far.

Alexa: Does it sound... what you just described to me sounds to me like a wife.

Imogene: Yeah, like a "work wife." That's what it felt like. That's kind of what it feels like being an assistant to a person—it feels like being a wife [given] the kind of stuff that you have to anticipate.

Imogene, as a wife, shared her realization that one of the ways in which women perform at work related to the construct of family formation in the home. Not only did Imogene's comment harken back to the previously identified production of family formation and residential

configuration, but it also spoke to the influence of another production—gender socialization. Her comment was not the only one, though, that connected a line of flight between both gender socialization and caretaking at home and gendered labor at work.

Liz also made the connection between the production of caretaking in both the home and workplace. Liz and I, in discussing the reflective timesheet activity, engaged in conversation about the ways in which we spend our time. When prompted to consider what she would want if there was additional time in the day, Liz expressed:

> It'd be definitely a mental break. [A mental break] would give me an opportunity to just be me. I think I spent so much of my day being an employee, a mom, a wife. You know, “me time” would just be me and the things that I enjoy that I don't get to do. It would be kind of a mental break from things.

Liz quickly identified “me time” (i.e., a component of social reproduction) as a personal need given her caretaking demands as “an employee, a mom, [and] a wife.” Again, Liz’s recognition of the caretaking demands upon her reveals the connection between both sites of interest to this study. It also highlights how social reproduction activities (e.g., rest, rejuvenation) at home are imperative to the laborer and their capacity as an employee.

Similarly, Beth, in describing the educational background and credentialing of her colleagues, explicitly connected her perceived expectation to “take care of things” as care workers within HEIs: “[We’re] counselors, or [we’re] social workers. [We’re] very much this caring profession. […] I think there's just this expectation that we will clean things up—take care of things.” Beth’s comment revealed an undercurrent throughout each of the above comments—the recognition, if not total acceptance, of implicit caretaking within an administrative assistant’s

role. One participant, though, actively critiqued this gendered idea of caretaking as administrative assistant.

In stark contrast to Melody's dedication to her supervisor, Jennifer shared her disappointment in both her supervisor and overall employment. Here, she described her role and shared her outlook on caretaking performed by administrative assistants:

> I think [caretaking] does go according to the stereotypes of serving someone in a higher role or position and being a helper—almost like a caretaker to somebody else. […] Honestly, if I had to boil it down, I would say I feel like I'm just her personal assistant, her servant basically. I don't really feel I have any ability or flexibility to be a leader or to take on projects. […] When I first interviewed for the role, I thought it was going to be more of a project management position. But to be honest, [her supervisor is] an extreme micromanager. So, I don't really have any growth opportunities in this role.

Jennifer's comment not only served as a glimmer of resistance toward this sub-production, but it also revealed another line of flight: the connection between caretaking and hierarchy, a forthcoming production of gendered labor exploitation at work. But first, consider the tension shared by participants as they grappled with the realities of gendered work codified in the responsibilities of their job.

"Is It Gender or Just the Job?"

During our first conversation, before I transitioned from the obligatory opening script to the conversation guide, Imogene shared and ultimately questioned:

> I was just wondering because a lot of the things that typically are read as gender exploitation when you're in an admin support role is just the expectation of the job, and it's not exploited like it would be if it were asked of a faculty member or a higher level,

senior person just because they're a woman. But when you're in an admin support role, I think it's not exactly the same thing. Because some of the things that would be asked of women, because they're women that are not their job, actually are the job. So, I'm just curious about how... I guess that will be revealed through the questions.

I remember my anxiety increasing with each passing moment during this portion of the conversation because I, too, was reflecting on this manifestation. What about gendered work that is explicitly written into a job description? Imogene and I were not the only participants to question such manifestations.

Four other participants (Cher, Liz, Shelby, and Priscilla) also considered this possibility. Cher first complicated this tension with the following reflection:

> I think that, honestly, men don't want to do administrative work because it's "women work," because it comes from this—"the receptionist, the secretary." I think it has kind of evolved from there. And people—guys—I think, think, *this is a woman's job; I don't want to do it.* And that's not to say that there aren't men admins.

Cher reflected that over time administrative work has been tethered to socialized gender practices (just like gendered labor practices in the home). This was a notable example of an (post-) intentionality evolving over time and across contexts: "It has kind of evolved from there." Cher was not the only participant to consider the impact of time on this phenomenon. Liz noted:

Liz: The title "Administrative Assistant" still has connotations of a female.

Alexa: How so?

Liz: I feel like it's just the glorified version for "secretary." It's just the PC term. I don't think the expectations have changed.

Liz's comment revealed her perception (conscious or not) that I (the other participant in this conversation) understood and recognized said unchanged expectations. Reflecting on this "unspoken" knowledge Liz and I shared, I considered how though titles may evolve, lingering expectations of administrative assistants may remain. Other manifestations need not concern "unspoken" expectations; some were quite explicit.

For example, Shelby, after comparing the 2012 and 2022 versions of her job descriptions of the same job, utilized a historical and cultural television reference, *Mad Men,* to convey a reflection concerning gendered labor:

Alexa: I was looking at your job description, and I noticed it's a 2012 version.

Shelby: Oh, that made me laugh so hard. It was like, "Make transparencies! What?! What are... with what? Our overhead and our vis a vis markers?" I thought that was too funny! […]

Alexa: I mean the fact that [the job description] even says "Administrative/Secretarial!"

Shelby: I know! Isn't it insane? I was like, *gosh, where is Don Draper? What year was this?* That's what I felt like.

Shelby's seeming dismay that her 2012 job description resonated with a television depiction of a 1960's office environment demonstrated the tension concerning the impact of gender in the 2022 higher education workplace. She went on to share later in conversation:

> If there was a man that [did] the same job as I do, I think he would still have to plan a graduation party; I think he would still have to do the orientation, buy the food, and make the cute little Canva invitation. So, I think—I don't know that it's necessarily a gendered thing as much as it is just to being, you know, just the role that I'm in.

This second excerpt from Shelby pulled on the same tension Imogene introduced: is the work of an administrative assistant gendered, or is it the expectation of the role?

Although some participants (I.e., Imogene, Shelby) were aware of the absence of men in administrative assistant roles, other participants considered such an absence for the first time during our conversation. Priscilla, for example, shared:

> My immediate work environment is all women. Now in the [department] as a whole, I still don't think there are any male admins here. I'm trying to think. I don't think there are, as a matter of fact. I just kind of thought about that. I can't think of a single one that's a male actually. So, there's that. There's a lot of female professors, and the students are actually more female than male. But come to think of it, I can't think of a single admin assistant who is a male here at the [department].

Priscilla's realization—"I just kind of thought about that"—revealed the gendered acceptance of the role of an administrative assistant within a socialized society and employment field (i.e., HEI). Her admission of this realization demonstrated in real time the power of reflection concerning gendered employment and another forthcoming production, conversations with other women.

Thus far, several examples provided have revealed the gendered nature of labor performed by this study's administrative assistant participants at work, the first of five productions identified. More specifically, two sub-productions—caretaking at work and the questioning of embedded gendered labor into job descriptions—revealed interesting intentionalities among women administrative assistants and their gendered labor exploitation in the academy. The second production identified—job descriptions and classifications—further demonstrated ways in which gendered labor exploitation was reproduced over time.

Job Descriptions & Classifications

The second of five productions that emerged concerned both job descriptions and job classifications. Seven of eleven participants spoke of at least one of these constructs, if not both in relation to one another. Within this production three sub-productions manifested. First, three participants identified "hidden labor," meaning work expectations that are not accounted for in their job description. Second, two participants shared experiences and perceptions concerning job classifications; the implications of hourly, salaried, and contract roles were also considered. Finally, two participants discussed how job descriptions have been useful in different ways during points of job transition, the third sub-production identified.

Hidden Labor

Three participants (Morgan, Imogene, and Shelby) either explicitly or implicitly reflected on their experiences performing labor beyond what was conveyed in their job description. Recall Morgan's previously reported description of her perceived gendered labor when she was asked to make hotel and dining reservations, carry materials around campus, and ensure that "messes" were cleaned in classrooms. She further recalled while reviewing her job description with me:

> Liaising between my manager, other leadership, and students... there's nothing here [in the job description] about planning events, doing catering, and things like that. [But] I do all of that. There's nothing on here about planning trips for the team, planning trips for individuals on the team—I do all of that! Some of that, maybe, is because I was hired during the pandemic? Sure. But it's definitely not on here.

Morgan's recognition that perhaps the pandemic contributed to what was an outdated job description did not discount the reality that she was performing labor beyond her written duties

as assigned. Such hidden labor resonated with sentiments expressed by participants as they described "invisible labor" in the home.

Even more explicitly, Imogene described the hidden labor she performed as an administrative assistant as she reflected upon the three tenets of labor exploitation—fairness, harm, and benefit:

Imogene: I think it goes back to the very first thing you asked me at our first interview: "How do we talk about gender roles when the work inherently is gendered?" Right? I think that's what you're saying just now, as well. The role of an administrative assistant is to do all of the things that the other person can't do. So, you're following—it's a bad analogy—but following behind them as they leave a trail, right? And you're picking things up behind them and anticipating their needs, taking things that they don't have the capacity to do. So, you start off following behind them, and then once you learn [how to follow behind them], you start trying to get out in front of them [or] anticipate what are they going to do. *What are they going to cook up that's going to be a problem for me?*

Alexa: Did it bother you to play that role? Or in your mind were you comfortable with doing those tasks because that's what the job description says to do?

Imogene: Yeah, it didn't bother me. I just felt like I was just so socialized to do that. It didn't occur to me until I saw other people who... basically, when I would be trying to train somebody else to do that role—that made me realize all the unspoken labor parts of [the job]. There's the job description, and you train somebody to do just that part. But then when you're starting to tell them, "Well, you're going to have to watch out for this and watch out [for that]." […] When I was preparing to leave my role at the university, I realized "Oh, my god," all the events that we would have on campus, like the banquet and stuff where [her supervisor] had to make a speech, I had all these drafts of speeches that he had previously made. People would give me the list of names to plug in for the day. [Her supervisor] would not do any kind of preparation. He would just walk up to a podium, and I would have laid his speech on the podium beforehand. I realized when I was preparing my replacement, *oh, my god, [the senior leader] is just going to walk up to a podium and expect a speech to be lying there. If I don't tell this assistant to do that, he's going to walk up to a podium expecting the speech to just be there because it has [been] for six years. He's going to walk up to an empty podium with no speech on it, and he's not going to know what to say.*

Alexa: So, Imogene, was it fair that you were doing some of this hidden work, if you will, that wasn't on your job description? Was it fair that you were expected to do that at a certain point?

Imogene: No, probably not. Because like the other department heads didn't expect that of their assistants. The other department heads kind of participated at least in writing their own speeches.

Alexa: And so, who benefited the most from this as it played out?

Imogene: Oh, the department head.

Alexa: And what harm was done in the end?

Imogene: It was like, I had to crunch all of that in between the actual duties of my job. So, it just made my job bigger and heavier.

Not only did the hidden labor Imogene acknowledged above resonate with similar reflections concerning the gendered expectation for women to intuit others' needs, but such comments also revealed Imogene's understanding of the resulting impact of hidden labor. Imogene reflected that her provision of hidden labor was unfair and thus resulted in certain benefits for her department head and personal harm to her.

Hidden labor also revealed itself as a burden to one final participant. Shelby, while reviewing her 2012 and 2022 job descriptions, was asked if she felt that the work she performed was captured within her most recent job description. She noted:

> Yes, I think so. You can put special assignments on that one, too, because I just do whatever we need to do when stuff needs to be done. Because I'm the office person—the one. So, you know, I mean, I'll usually have a student assistant; I have to hire another one now when I have time to do that.

"I just do whatever we need to do when stuff needs to be done." This comment struck me immediately during the conversation, as Shelby was one of the only participants who believed

her work was fair. However, that "special assignments" as an expectation was missing (and thus needed to be added to her job description) underscored the acceptance of hidden labor associated with the administrative assistant role, regardless of one's gender. Just as hidden or invisible labor burdened women in the home, such necessary labor also was shouldered by those in gendered administrative assistant roles. Though the job description certainly impacted the extent to which some participants recognized hidden labor and labor exploitation broadly, the second sub-production—job classifications—also revealed manifestations of the phenomenon.

Job Classifications

Job descriptions were relevant to manifestations of gendered labor exploitation not only because of what was missing (i.e., hidden labor), but also because such formal human resource (HR) documents served as markers when classifying roles. As HEIs employ their own HR employees to categorize several types of employment, the implications of such classifications were identified as manifestations by this study's participants. Two participants (Jennifer and Sam) shared experiences and reflections on the implications of job classifications in relation to their gendered labor exploitation. First, Jennifer described the upsetting experience of several job classification changes, which ultimately resulted in a brief unemployment situation:

> I went in with this hourly position without benefits or time off. I thought it was a foot in the door, and they gave me promises of, "We'll hire you full-time, permanent." I kept operating thinking, *oh, if I work harder, that'll come to fruition.* Eventually, I did get a "permanent" position, but "permanent" as in it was only a year contract. Then when the year was almost up, I reminded them: "What's going to happen now? It's been a year now. Are you going to renew it? Is that possible?" And no one would believe me. I kept being like, "Can you check? Don't you have it in your records somewhere?"

I'm organized, so I looked through my files, and I found I had the letter with the date on it. It was literally a couple of weeks until my contract was ending. I was like, "What are we going to do? Am I going to be unemployed?!" Then they're like, "Oh, my gosh, what do we do? We messed up!" I was unemployed for a week and a half. When they brought me back, I was back in that hourly position again. So, it added to that feeling of *why am I doing this? Why am I working so hard? I don't even get vacation time. I don't get benefits. I'm getting paid $15 an hour, and I have this degree; where is it getting me?* I started at that point rethinking how much effort and energy I put into giving to people without having fair compensation.

Jennifer's experience revealed the impact of job classification upon one's employment. From an hourly to contract and then back to hourly employee, Jennifer experienced the implications of both job classifications. In the following excerpt, she further described various job classifications and ultimately connected the harm of hidden labor, a previously identified sub-production, as "other duties as assigned:"

Jennifer: There's different classifications of jobs. OPS is that hourly position where you don't get benefits. It's not union. My current position isn't either; it's called ANP. [They're] contracts, so they can get rid of you whenever they want to. You can't unionize. The only position I think that is [unionized] is called USPS […].

Alexa: Did you know anything about any of these different kinds of job classifications before you found yourself at [institution]? Did you understand the implications of those different classifications before taking...?

Jennifer: No, I had no idea, and honestly, I don't really agree with OPS, which was originally created for transitions for when people left; it was only supposed to be a couple months, but they turn into positions where people stay in them for 10 years or something!

Alexa: And what does OPS stand for?

Jennifer: I don't know what it stands for. Actually, let me look it up. I'm curious now. OPS stands for Other Personal Services. Reminds me of... what are, "the other duties..."

Alexa: "Duties as assigned?"

Jennifer & Alexa: [at the same time] Yeah.

This exchange between Jennifer and I ended with a defeated sounding, "Yeah," as we both connected our mutual understanding of "other duties as assigned" with the sub-production of hidden labor. To learn that although originally created with some intention, OPS roles were still hourly ones used at the time of this study, was upsetting; to learn that Jennifer (a recent master's degree recipient) was in such a role, when she clearly did not fit the intended criteria for OPS roles, was also upsetting.

Not all participants, though, were disappointed with their classification as hourly employees. Sam reflected on the benefit of holding an hourly appointment:

> I often feel that if you're not hourly, people take advantage of that because they can call you any time of day; your work hours don't end. My co-workers know I'm hourly, so they try very hard outside of my working hours, unless it's an emergency, not to reach out. But I do pull a good chunk of overtime. A lot of my salaried coworkers are at work all the time. They feel like they don't have any work life boundaries. I get [work life boundaries] a little bit more than they do—especially the other admins. They feel like they're on call all the time.

Sam's comments revealed two important perceived benefits of hourly employment (compared to the benefits of salaried employment): work life boundaries and the potential for overtime work/compensation. The classification of one's role as hourly or salaried had significant

implications. Though Sam did go on to articulate a perception that hourly employees were not as valued the same as salaried employees, the benefit of hourly employment could be appealing "if [the university] paid enough:"

Sam: Because I'm hourly, I'm still not yet valued quite as much as an employee.

Alexa: But do you want to be a salaried employee? Or do you like being able to turn [working hours] off?

Sam: I mean, if they paid me enough to make it worth being a salaried employee, maybe. But I do like being able to put my boundaries down. It's nice because I'm not about to be on call at like 10 o'clock at night. I'm not going to do it.

Although Sam clearly expressed contentment for hourly work, it was important to consider how both participants recognized the ways in which job classifications impact employees. Though job classifications served over time as productions, a change in classification also severed as a forthcoming provocation of this phenomenon. Jennifer was not the only participant to experience a change in job classifications; additional examples are identified in the forthcoming provocation section concerning job reclassifications.

Job Transitions

Two participants (Priscilla and Beth) identified the job description as a valuable tool in the context of job transitioning. Both Priscilla and Beth articulated three different instances where the job description served as a useful mechanism to workers: when onboarding superiors, during one's own onboarding period, and when transitioning out of a role. Priscilla reflected upon the first two situations as follows.

First, Priscilla articulated the value of her job description upon the arrival of a new supervisor. She explained that her new supervisor used supervisee job descriptions to orient herself both to the team's roles and scope of work:

She wanted to meet with each of us, look at our job description, just go through it, and try to understand what all we did—each of us—and also what she needed to do [in relation to the work of her supervisees].

This was an excellent example of appreciated supervision (the contrast of which is demonstrated in several forthcoming productions and provocations). Priscilla's supervisor not only took the time to meet with each of her new supervisees, but she also quickly learned the scope of their role in relation to her own. This action was a healthy example of onboarding or training in a new role; it also was a great manifestation of intentionality. Unfortunately, prior to this supervisor's arrival, Priscilla experienced an unhealthy transition period herself.

The second example of a job description's utility during a job transition also involved Priscilla. She explained that according to her job description, she was required to allocate her time to various tasks in specific proportions; she theorized that this was the result of a predecessor's performance in the same role. Unfortunately, the tasks she felt least confident in were the same ones that also were supposed to receive the smallest proportion of her time. Here, Priscilla shared her reflection on the situation:

I'll tell you something funny I did. Well, not funny. It's kind of sad actually. […] Just to get myself up to speed, I came in at five o'clock [in the morning]. I remember our custodian caught me coming in because I felt like I couldn't get myself up to speed as fast as I needed to. So, when I first started, I came in before the workday even started, and I kept it a big secret. Looking back, I'm an idiot for even doing that. But I kind of felt like that's what I needed to do. You know?

"[…] it kind of felt like that's what I need to do;" this admission from Priscilla weighed heavily on me well after our conversation ended. The job description in this second instance was a

hindrance to Priscilla's overall onboarding into this new role. To feel adequate in performing her assigned duties, Priscilla snuck into her office during hours in which she knew she would not be questioned. When asked how she understood the three tenets of exploitation concerning this experience, she recalled:

Alexa: Did you perceive that it was fair, at any point in this, given this one example, that in a time where you felt you didn't receive the training you needed, you didn't have the resources and tools to get up to speed? Was that fair? You thought that you were limited to those hours when you were trying to learn something. Is that fair?

Priscilla: No, I did not think it was fair at all.

Alexa: Would you say there was any harm or negative consequences that resulted in that?

Priscilla: The cost of harm to me was not only [that she was] just stressed out, [but] I really wanted this job. I knew it was going to be a great job if I could ever just figure it out! The fear of w*hat if I can't figure it out*, and *what if this job doesn't work out?* […] Also, when I came in here at 5am because I felt like I needed extra time to do this, I lost sleep and that sort of thing. So, I think the harm was to me, personally, and a little bit to the [department], as well. I think it didn't harm the [department] necessarily, but I think if I could have gotten up to speed faster and knew what the heck I was doing a little bit sooner. I don't think it was really any harm to the [department]. But I don't know, maybe? Maybe things could have gotten done a little faster and smoother in the beginning if I had gotten the proper training.

Alexa: So then, who benefited from that? Who was the beneficiary of this?

Priscilla: This [points around office]—the [department]. […] But also, I benefited myself, too, since I was forced to learn things for myself; I'm good at it now. I'm really good at it now! I can answer anybody's question. So, I think although it did harm me, in the end I've benefited from having to learn at all.

Pricilla's understanding of this experience revealed the complicated relationship between those who are exploited and the HEIs workers serve; she was aware of the problem and still found a positive aspect on which to hold.

Not only did the job description manifest as a tool for workers during their employment, but it also proved to be useful for those who were transitioning away from a role. Beth described how she met with her replacement and encouraged her successor to utilize the role's job description as a boundary-setting tool:

> I even met this past Friday with my replacement and kind of walked her through areas, which by the way, that's not part of the job description. For me, it was wanting to make sure that this individual was set up for success—not necessarily trying to support anyone else besides her and making sure she knew how to advocate for her wellbeing. The biggest part that I wanted to give her [was the] information that public salaries are available on the web; she can see how much all of her coworkers make and set her up to have that information. But I think she doesn't even have a grasp of what is going to be expanded beyond just this document.

Beth's consideration for her replacement was remarkable. Because she felt so exploited in the role in which she was transitioning out of, she went above and beyond to ensure that her successor was equipped with the knowledge to combat the same exploitation Beth faced. This example was one that demonstrated resistance to the cycle of labor exploitation. Beth's usage of the job description as a warning and tool for the benefit of others was an uplifting moment throughout a heavy conversation that centered the reproduction of labor exploitation. Such thoughtfulness could be considered an act of resistance and social change.

In summary, job classifications and classifications were a significant production of this study; seven of eleven participants spoke of at least one of three sub-productions that manifested throughout phenomenological material production. Not only did participants identify "hidden labor," beyond job descriptions, but participants also revealed interesting insight into the

implications concerning job classifications. Finally, considering the ways in which productions evolve over time, two participants discussed intentionalities between job descriptions and job transitions. Both of which have the potential to be utilized to further expose and combat gendered labor exploitation as a means of social change.

Institutional Hierarchies

The third of five productions that emerged from participants concerned (gendered) HEI hierarchies. Six of eleven participants addressed this production. Within this production, two interesting sub-productions manifested. First, three participants broadly addressed institutional hierarchy as a mechanism that produced or resulted in stratification. Second, four participants shared experiences and perceptions concerning gendered leadership within an institution, which complicated this third production. Importantly, one participant acknowledged hierarchies among HEIs.

Stratification within an Institution

Regarding the first of two sub-productions, Cher was clear in her understanding of priorities among staff members within an institution's hierarchy. She shared:

Cher: I have always said that the higher up you go, the less [you] actually care about the students. Because we care! We want them to do well. My boss cares and her boss cares, but then the [senior leader] is like, "Do this!" I don't think he always thinks through everything. I think that they, at least superficially, care about students.

Alexa: What does the [senior leader] care about?

Cher: Money. Money.

Alexa: What kind of money; can you be more specific?

Cher: Donor money. You know, we just renamed the building that I'm in […]. Everything's named after something. I think money is a big part of higher education, and a lot of the decisions are based on money.

Cher’s comment that donor money was a priority for senior leaders, as opposed to student needs, revealed an interesting line of flight. If motivated by different priorities throughout the hierarchy, the opportunity for tension among staff members working towards different goals becomes possible. Prioritization or motivation, though, was not the only manifestation of hierarchy among participants.

Imogene broadly recognized institutional hierarchy when she shared the following reflection concerning a topic which many higher education staff members lament—on-campus parking. Here, Imogene described a relatable manifestation that clearly demonstrated the implication of hierarchy among employees:

> People who are in upper administrative roles—if they're a vice chancellor—they are able to have the first pick; it's reserved parking. Our parking department has general parking where they oversell, and if you get there early, you can find a space—maybe not in your preferred lot. But there's reserved parking, where they only sell as many spaces as they have. The way that it works is based on how many years you've worked at the university and also on your position. So, all faculty and staff are in the same are category, and if you're faculty or staff, it just depends how many years you've been at the university and what your position on the list is. But if you have an administrative appointment—you're a department head, associate dean, or something like that—that puts you in a higher category. You can ace out somebody who's just faculty staff and does not have an administrative appointment.
>
> One of the professors—he's been at the university for thirty years, and there's this coveted parking lot. He had me check for him, and he was number one on the list to be next if

anyone vacated that lot. Then our college made a whole bunch of new associate deans. Every single one of those associate deans applied for the [reserved parking spots], so they were in the higher category then. They knocked him down on the list. That's how it is. The university is just kind of hierarchical by what your position and category is.

This description from Imogene revealed not only her awareness of institutional hierarchy and job classifications but her apparent acceptance of it. However, it is worth noting that Imogene also shared that the male professor referenced above would regularly ask her to call the parking office (more specifically her friend/colleague in the parking office) to inquire on his status; why he could not obtain this information himself remained unclear. Another participant also described a manifestation of hierarchy centered around another contentious topic—work from home.

Sam, after describing her daily workflow, advocated for continued work from home arrangements as the COVID-19 pandemic endured. She reflected:

Sam: They wanted somebody at the desk all five days. I'm like, "I can't do that and get everything done. I need the flexibility—at least some semblance of work from home one day a week. It's fine; I can make that work […]. But [leadership] is trying to set the precedence of four days in the office and one day remote. That's fine. I get that. It would be easier if [her supervisor] followed the example of being in the office four days a week, which she does not do. This week is an exception, I think, because she has kids. But..

Alexa: Why does she get to not? Why does she get to be the exception?

Sam: Because she thinks she's above everything.

Alexa: Is she above everything?

Sam: Nooo. She's the Chief of Staff, so [she] probably has that pull.

Alexa: Does it bother you?

Sam: To some extent, yeah. But it bothers a lot more than just me.

Alexa: When you say that, do you mean other people are bothered?

Sam: Yeah. It's—stuff gets said about it. They're like, "I don't understand why she's not here managing X, Y, Z." Even in other departments, it's been mentioned especially given their push for being back in office. It's kind of a hypocritical practice if you're pushing people to come back in and then you're not here.

Sam theorized her supervisor's status within a hierarchy as the production that enabled such hypocritical behavior. An interesting line of flight emerged as Sam acknowledged her supervisor's family formation; Sam believed that her supervisor's status as a mother contributed to her absenteeism from the office. Other participants were also critical of women leaders within institutional hierarchies, as well.

Gendered Leadership within Institutional Hierarchy

In addition to Sam, Morgan, and Jennifer also shared experiences and beliefs concerning women they perceived to take advantage of other women. Morgan introduced this manifestation with her comment, "I think especially women who are in high-level roles are afraid of being exploited, but then the management of their needs goes on to people below, which is how work happens, right?" This comment from Morgan mirrored the idea of gendered labor exploitation in the home. Not only do privileged women "outsource" social reproduction labor at home, but according to Morgan's reflection, privileged women also do so at work. Morgan reflected on her experience as the supervisee of a woman supervisor:

> I recognized a lot of the things that she did came from a place of comparing herself to men or having to be smarter, be louder, be more on top of her game than the men around her did. But I definitely also realized that her anxiety around anything going wrong would fall into me. That was a really toxic relationship that we had. I was her longest assistant ever because people just couldn't work for her because of the level of anxiety.

> […] I think that as women, you make concessions for other women because you're like, *I can see why she is so anxious about things going wrong,* or *I know that she'll be judged more harshly than the men around her at the level of work that she's doing. So, I want to support her on this.* But then it gets to a point where now I'm hurting, and I don't have anyone to push this off onto.

Morgan's comment captured not only sentiments concerning the productions of gendered labor and gender socialization, but it also revealed the cascading effect of exploitation; she was willing to shoulder some of her supervisor's excess labor request until "it gets to a point where now I'm hurting, and I don't have anyone to push this off onto." Cascading exploitation eventually falls onto those at the bottom of the hierarchy; in a HEI context, administrative assistants are the bottom of the pyramid. Morgan was not the only participant, though, to identify issues concerning women's leadership within institutional hierarchy.

Jennifer also observed women in leadership roles who reproduced problematic behavior upon those in which they supervised. She reflected:

> I don't see women in leadership positions as much as men. But then I feel the women who do end up in senior leadership positions, they almost always feel like they have something they have to prove. Or they are married to their job, or they're single. I've always had respect; I thought maybe one day that would probably be me. But then I noticed that they tend to be more of the types like my boss, where it's almost like they have to prove something. Then they take it out on their employees, or they end up being micromanagers or something like that. They make it really hard in the workplace. They talk about a culture of care, but I don't feel like anyone feels cared for.

Jennifer first recognized that although fewer women were afforded the opportunity to serve as institutional leaders, when they were in such positions of power, unfortunately, such opportunities were sometimes at the expense of those who supported them; this recognition was similar to Morgan's above.

Again, the cascading burden perpetuated by women leaders demonstrated the impact of labor exploitation in academia. While discussing the three tenets of exploitation (fairness, benefit, and harm) at another point in conversation, Jennifer expanded:

Alexa: What do you make of stereotypical ideas about administrative bloat and folks who are paid large sums of money? You have a seat to witness what they are and aren't doing [as an administrative assistant]. You presumably can safely assume that they're being compensated significantly more than you are?

Jennifer: Oh yes.

Alexa: So, what do you make of that?

Jennifer: It definitely leads to a lot of feelings of bitterness. It's not just thinking, I *need to be compensated more to close the gap.* I think about the university as a whole and how there's such large pay gaps between the people at the top versus the people at the bottom and how they're struggling to fill these roles at the bottom. If you just cut just a little bit from these people at the top and try to even out and make the gaps not so large, I think that would help a lot. Because one senior administrator's salary could probably pay five or six entry level positions.

Alexa: Let me close the gap. Things aren't fair because while you believe you're being compensated financially enough, you're not fulfilled in other ways. So, what's the harm then?

Jennifer: I think it affects my self-worth. It makes me feel like I'm not even a person, and I feel dehumanized. It's like I'm just a robot or a cog in the wheel, and you can replace me. Honestly, my boss just adds to that because she forgets my name all the time. She called me her previous assistants' names or other people's names.

Hearing Jennifer's experience with her supervisor was upsetting. Both her perception concerning her self-worth and her choice of words like "dehumanized" invoked strong feelings in me that

lingered beyond our conversation. Such reflections concerning gendered leadership within HEI hierarchical relationships revealed important intentionalities that should be further explored with the aim of addressing social change.

Although it was upsetting to recognize the perpetuation of exploitation of women by women, it was also apparent that some participants did not have any women in leadership roles to observe within HEI hierarchy. Two participants (Beth and Liz) specifically noted the absence of women in academia's hierarchy. Beth, for example, observed, "Be it nepotism or any number of reasons, male individuals would get the promotions, and especially in a couple situations where they would get the senior level or the manager level, while there were more females that did better work." Similarly, Liz reflected:

> I think I work in such a female environment, and the handful of male staff tend to be around IT and director level positions for somewhat unique areas; I'm thinking of marketing and diversity. But all the other functions for [her school] are pretty much done by women. That's just my experience in [her gendered field] including my time at [another R1 institution].

Liz's observation that men (although fewer in number) tended to serve in leadership roles within gendered academic fields (where women are clustered in greater frequency) demonstrated the continued impact of gender bias at least within Liz's certain academic discipline. Such reflections revealed the extent of work that still needs to be done—first, to ensure that more women ascend to leadership roles, and second, once women are installed in such roles within the hierarchy, they disrupt perpetuated patterns of cascading labor exploitation. This is an obvious place for potential social change.

Stratification among Institutions

Although each of the above comments concern within-institutional hierarchy, one participant commented on an important higher education context: the hierarchy of HEIs. Sam, in reflection concerning her career trajectory, shared:

> I think I'm underpaid now?! I know it was ten times worse when I was at [a lower—ranked R1, state institution]. I worked two-or three people's jobs at [institution], was vastly underpaid for months, and they kept saying, "Oh, we're going to hire you on as a senior team leader." Even when they did that, I was still underpaid.

Sam's comment revealed an important recognition that not all R1 institutions have the same resources. It is important to acknowledge that even under-resourced R1 institutions are often better resourced than other institution types. Though decision-makers at any institution can make intentional choices concerning employee wages, Sam's comment alluded to the presumption that if an institution had more resources (such as her current employer), decision-makers could compensate staff at higher rates. This is an important reflection as future scholars consider other potential sites to explore the phenomenon of interest—gendered labor exploitation.

In summary, academia's hierarchy was revealed as a third significant production; more specifically, six participants described two sub-productions concerning gendered labor exploitation. First, participants broadly addressed hierarchy as a mechanism that perpetuated HEI stratification. Second, participants shared experiences and perceptions concerning gendered leadership. Both sub-productions revealed on-going ways in which the phenomenon of interest reproduced itself over time. Additionally, one participant acknowledged the comparative

institutional hierarchy; such context was a reminder that hierarchies within hierarchies exist and ultimately contribute to additional stratification.

The Wage & Benefits

The wage, also a production of capitalism broadly, was an objective measure of gendered labor exploitation that all eleven participants reflected upon throughout conversations. As the mechanism that afforded their social reproduction, participants had much to say about this production. First, it was notable that several participants emphasized their employment as state employees, meaning that they recognized certain perceived tradeoffs that result from state employment. Second, one participant (Sam) not only contextualized the wage for administrative assistants during a time of high inflation but also reflected on the harm incurred to families because of low wages. Third, reflections concerning the insufficient wages necessary for social reproduction were discussed by four participants; specifically, two participants (Jennifer and Melody) shared their perceptions of the relationship between educational credentialing and insufficient wages. Fourth, one participant, Ruth, considered the benefit and harm concerning vacancies within her department's staffing structure; this manifestation related to a forthcoming provocation. Fifth, three participants (Cher, Liz, and Imogene) considered the implications of merit raises. Finally, five participants (Liz, Imogene, Melody, Jennifer, and Sam) provided manifestations concerning employment benefits—specifically sick leave—which are associated with compensation or the wage.

The Wage

First, participants noted that although wages were reported to be lower, paid time off and holidays were more plentiful and job security (i.e., furloughs because of COVID-19) more likely in public sector roles. To contextualize the disparity between these sectors, consider Imogene's

account of her experience transitioning between administrative assistant work in the private and public (e.g., HEIs) sectors. When asked if she felt she was compensated appropriately, Imogene shared:

> God no. I mean, the university is notoriously low paying for the amount of work that you were doing. […] I've seen what executive assistants in the private sector. They could make $60–$100,000. I was working at that level. But it's a university job with the university pay scale, and you don't get paid to that level.

Imogene's reflection represented an overall accepted reality by participants who expressed frustration over low wages. Jennifer also provided an excellent example of the frustration concerning wages among the staff hierarchy. She shared:

> In an assistant role, I get to see what kind of decisions [senior leaders] are making. I've been really disgusted with how much I disagree. Like [concerning] entry level people, say the difference [in salary range] is between $36,000 and $40,000. They're like, "Oh, we'll just offer $36,000, and we'll put that extra $1,000s to something else." I'm like, *so you do have the option; you can offer those funds.* Then I'm the HR person, and when I'm hiring I have to go back to [the person being offered] and tell them, "Compensation says we can't like give you more—it's not in our budget." It's just the lies and lack of transparency!

Jennifer's proximity to this decision making and subsequent knowledge "behind the scenes" in this example relates to another production noted within this study—institutional hierarchies. Her frustration with perceived unfair wages was noteworthy as she went on to discuss how a $1,000 difference mattered to those whose social reproduction costs were greater (e.g., single mothers). Other participants shared additional thoughts and perceptions concerning the wage

Note both the explicit and implicit connections to (gendered) social reproduction in the following reflections. First, Sam contextualized the economic realities participants faced at the time of phenomenological material production when she addressed harm resulting from gendered labor exploitation:

> Historically, we're in a time of the worst inflation since the 80s. It's getting harder and harder to afford things. It's harder for people to maintain families; it's harder for them to have families; it's harder to buy homes. You especially can't buy homes in the [institution] area because a two—bedroom home with one bathroom, those are in the half millions, if not more if they're well maintained. No one can afford to live close to work. Then you're paying a lot of money for gas. It's just a constant cycle of that financial harm, I would say. Then, when you get overworked [which could also result from stress at work], that bleeds over into your health, that bleeds over in your personal relationships.

Sam's identification of financial harm (given low wages) to workers and their subsequent families relates to the production of family formation. Although the majority of this study's participants were in a relationship (e.g., partnered but not married; married) and/or responsible for dependents, Jennifer (one of two single participants) also recognized the specific connection between one's wage and ability to afford one's own (let alone others') basic social reproduction needs:

> Of course, the compensation is usually not fair. [Jobs are] master's preferred with three or four years of experience, but "We only pay you $36,000 a year." That's a little bit crazy to me; you can't really live on that! I feel like it needs to at least be enough where you could sustain yourself, pay for an apartment, and feed yourself.

Jennifer's comment, "You can't really live on [$36,000]," spoke to the stress most participants shared giving the cost of living at the time of phenomenological material production. Recall that Jennifer was a single person living with her sibling and parents; her belief that one's salary working in higher education should be able to "sustain" (i.e., housing, food) oneself harkens back to the production concerning family formation and residential configuration. With such a low salary, despite her master's degree, Jennifer knew she would not be able to sustain or reproduce herself as a single person. This is why she was house searching with her sibling; with such a low salary, Jennifer was aware that she would need a second income to afford basic social reproduction needs, such as housing. Jennifer was not the only participant to consider the impact of a master's degree and one's earnings.

Melody also shared her reflections on specialized, formal education to increase one's salary. She shared:

> You know, before [her husband got his most recent job], getting my master's was like, *okay, this is where I can make more money and help out more.* But now that he got his job, that pressure is off me to have to: *okay, you got your degree, go find the job now*— whether I was ready for it or wanted to move out of what I'm so comfortable with and what I know. So, I don't have to.

Melody, a wife and mother of three, shared how she intentionally obtained her master's degree— while employed as an administrative assistant—to be eligible for higher-paying jobs. That pressure, though, was recently alleviated when her husband secured his own higher earning job. Melody was relieved that, because of her husband's job security, she would not feel pressured to leave a role that she enjoyed. Again, one's family formation and the subsequent financial

security of a “dual income household" afforded Melody less financial stress. Unfortunately, not all participants shared such financial security.

An excerpt from a conversation with Liz clearly illustrated the anxiety and stress felt by several other participants. Prompted to reflect on exploitation’s three tenets—fairness, harm, and benefit—Liz shared the following:

Liz: People would have less issues with home life balance if they were compensated properly.

Alexa: Do you think you're compensated properly?

Liz: I don't. I think based on the work that I do and my level of experience, I probably should be making at least $10,000 more than I am. I think that's accurate for most people that I work with. The lower half of the people that I work with easily should be making $10,000 more.

Alexa: If you're not being compensated fairly by your estimate, who benefits from that?

Liz: The University and the people who are overcompensated. There are definitely employees who when you see what they're making, I'm thinking, *that's ridiculous.* A) No one needs that much money. B) I've seen their work productivity, and it's horrible. Or they don't do sufficient work; everyone else has to pick up the pieces. So why are they making the most amount of money?

Alexa: So, the university is benefiting by your estimate; who's harmed then?

Liz: The employees who are doing the work.

Alexa: In what ways? What is the actual harm that's being done, though?

Liz: The harm is it's providing stress; it's providing a negative work environment. There are a lot of those people who are making $30,000. That's just not enough to live off of as a one income family, and they're having to have a second job. There are way too many people who have second jobs who work a 9am to 5pm job.

Liz’s thoughts concerning who benefited from her labor exploitation (i.e., the university) and the harm incurred (i.e., stress, negative work environment, insufficient wages) to employees was

revealing. The connection Liz made concerning the cost of social reproduction resonated with both Jennifer's and Melody's in that one's family formation and residential configuration was an important production that interacted with one's salary or wage. Again, Liz stressed that $30,000 was an insufficient living wage for one, let alone three. Liz stressed that, "[Childcare] is the only [option]; I have to work. There's no way we could be a one income family." She admitted that she, too, had considered getting a second job because her wage as an administrative assistant was inadequate. She was not the only participant to consider this action.

Priscilla also shared that as a single person, she, too, had considered the financial reality that she would need a second job. Fortunately, though, Priscilla was advocated for by her outgoing supervisor to receive supplemental pay. Priscilla recounted:

> One of the last things [her former supervisor] did before she left was, she went to the budget department and told them I wasn't making enough. But I had sort of reached the top of my whatever [pay scale] category I'm in. I'd sort of reached the top, and so she got me... it's a temporary, though I've had it for three years now, a temporary supplement. I think that's what they call it. Temporary salary supplement. Now it can be yanked away at any time. But every year, they've agreed—every time that fiscal year turns over since then they have said, "You are still earning this, and we're going to keep giving it to you." So, if I didn't have that supplement, I would make a lot less. It's still a huge pay cut from what I was making in [a major city] at [her last place of private sector employment]—at least $10,000 of a pay cut. I mean, I do think I'm comp... especially if you look at what I made versus what a lot of the other admins on campus make that probably are on my same level, I do make more than them. So, I can't say I'm unfairly compensated when you consider all of that. […] In fact, before I got it, I was kind of looking around for a part

> time job thinking, *where can I work that I can make the most and have the fewest hours?* I didn't want to get a part time job at all. But I was kind of thinking about that when I got [the temporary salary supplement].

Priscilla's reflection recognized several productions identified thus far. Not only did her family formation and residential configuration impact her financial reality but so did her job classification; Priscilla noted that she was already maxed out at the top of her pay scale potential. Without her outgoing supervisor's support, she would not have received supplemental pay. The fact that such supplemental compensation could be taken away at any time was important to note, though. Priscilla recognized that without such supplemental compensation, she would have needed that second job. Additionally, note Priscilla's reflection on her compensation in the private sector compared to her compensation in her role in the public one. The most interesting revelation from Priscilla's comment, though, was her awareness of her compensation compared to other administrative assistants on campus. Immediately after she noted this comparative reflection, I remembered thinking, *the fact that this temporary supplemental pay affords you a living wage is satisficing!* However, Priscilla was understandably relieved to receive the supplemental pay as a single woman solely responsible for her home's mortgage.

One other participant expressed interesting awareness concerning the connection between gendered labor exploitation and the wage. Ruth, in an off-handed comment, seemed to recognize the disproportionate extent of benefit and harm in the following remark concerning a vacancy within her department's staffing structure:

> They were going to hire somebody to do the [advising] position. In the meantime, I would be doing that work and my other job. They were paying extra service for two

> years. We decided on amount $5,500, which they got a pretty good deal for me doing this other work.

"They got a pretty good deal." With this comment Ruth revealed an awareness that the university was disproportionately benefiting from a new working arrangement. Supplemental pay for administrative assistants—which are gendered roles given the caretaking nature of their responsibilities—was not the only solution to insufficient administrative assistant wages according to almost all this study's participants.

When supplemental pay was not offered and wages were inadequate, two other wage-related concepts emerged. Three participants (Cher, Liz, and Imogene) each addressed merit raises, while Cher specifically floated the idea to change jobs as a means of increasing one's wage—a provocation addressed in a subsequent section. First, Cher shared her thoughts concerning such strategies:

> I don't think that this job will never get paid as much as it should because they give tiny raises. […] I feel like the best way to make more money is to change jobs. That's really what you have to do. So, I've changed jobs a lot, but I still feel like I don't make very much. The people that just started are making the same as me, and they don't have the experience. They don't have all the institutional knowledge or the knowledge of what we're doing.

Cher's connection to insufficient merit raises motivated her behavior—job hopping. Interestingly, though she had admitted to such behavior herself, Cher seemed frustrated at her report that new staff members were compensated with her same wage. Her comment, "The people that just started are making the same as me, and they don't have the experience. They don't have all the institutional knowledge or the knowledge of what we're doing," revealed a

potential line of flight. If new staff members were compensated the same wage as those who have a certain measure of institutional knowledge, given Cher's strategy, should she not also engage in a job change despite whatever institutional knowledge she did or did not possess? Cher's example both resonated with previous comments made concerning pay scale potential and job classifications and revealed complications with such a strategy. It also, though, teased a more thorough sentiment expressed by Liz.

For those unwilling to change jobs often as a means of increasing one's salary, it was important to negotiate a sufficient starting salary. Liz explained:

> When I was given the offer, I went to check what the others—my counterparts—were making at the time to make sure that I wasn't getting low balled because our director of HR is very famous for that. I wasn't expecting to make what the person who was leaving was making, but I was expecting to make sure that I was making sufficient amount because when you negotiate is really the only time that you'll get a decent salary. All the increases are just smaller from there on.

"[…] when you negotiate is really the only time that you'll get a decent salary. All the increases are just smaller from there on." This comment from Liz both complicated and affirmed Cher's understanding of job hopping and merit raises respectfully. Further contextualizing this manifestation was a comment from Imogene.

Imogene not only recognized the insufficiency of merit raises, but she also demonstrated her financial literacy and experience with additional compensation. She explained and contextualized the following:

> You can get merit increases. But depending on the year, the [state] legislature sets what the maximum merit increase is for what level of performance you have. But sometimes they say that they're not doing merit increases that year—that there's not the budget for it.

Despite the potential irregularities concerning merit raises, when such additional compensations were available (according to state funding for public institutions), Imogene reflected that from her experience, not all staff members understood the financial implications of merit raises. Imogene explained the logistics of merit raises:

> Instead of making your merit pay go to your base salary, they will pay out merit as lump sum. That makes it where it doesn't stick to your base salary. So, when you're getting your percentage cost of living, the percentage that you're getting is smaller because it's based on your base salary. If the merit pay never goes to your base salary, then that's lost wages, and your cost-of-living increases are smaller. Your subsequent merit increases that are a percentage of your base salary are smaller.
>
> I've talked to my co-workers a bit, because there are some co-workers that have young children in school, and they like to get that lump sum because they use it as back-to-school supplies and clothing. But I told them, "If it sticks to your base salary, you're making more money all year long, and you're losing money by the percentages not being increased." […] I think [one young couple she advised] felt like they were too poor to worry about whether it was sticking to their base salary. In order to buy school supplies and their kids' clothing, they just needed that shot of cash at that very time of year. I think as their kids got older and got in better positions financially, then they started wanting it

to go to base [salary]. But when they were very young, had very young kids, and were kind of struggling financially, they just wanted the immediate short-term gain.

This reflection from Imogene was striking; not only did she recount an explicit example of financial illiteracy (i.e., classness), but she also provided an excellent example of the power of conversation—a forthcoming provocation. Additionally, although merit raises (when available) were lackluster when applied to one's salary (as opposed to a lump sum), with certain financial know-how, such additions to one's wage compounded over time.

Benefits

Several participants shared important reflections concerning employee benefits. Often associated with an employee's compensation package, benefits concern matters of insurance, time off, retirement, and other "fringe" benefits. Participants in this study discussed at length time-off. Five participants (Sam, Melody, Imogene, Morgan, and Jennifer) reflected upon their experiences concerning sick leave and vacation leave specifically. Of these five participants, two (Sam and Melody) revealed concerning sentiments in their hesitation to take sick leave. Four participants (Melody, Imogene, Morgan, and Jennifer) shared their thoughts and experiences with vacation leave. Viewed through a social reproduction lens, each of these manifestations revealed important attitudes and values toward worker rejuvenation.

Two participants explicitly shared that they were hesitant to take sick leave because of potential co-worker perceptions or implications. First, Sam admitted that even though COVID-19 would be an acceptable illness to warrant sick leave, "lesser" illnesses would cause hesitation:

Sam: I feel less comfortable taking sick days.

Alexa: Why?

Sam: Just because if it's not pre-emptive, then who is going to make things run smoothly? If I'm definitely ill, then I will call out; no problem. If I got COVID I'd be like, “I'm not coming in. Y'all deal with it.” But if I had to call out for a day or work remotely for a day, I would hesitate.

Alexa: Why do you think you would hesitate?

Sam: Because I think I would be shamed.

Alexa: Why would you be shamed?

Sam: Because the office depends on, “Why are you not coming in? Are you really sure that you can't come in? It's inconvenient to other people!” What about it being inconvenient to me, you know?

Sam’s reflection, “What about it being inconvenient to me?” revealed an important site of resistance toward a culture that utilized shame to deter employees from taking sick leave, a benefit afforded to all employees. Sam was not, though, the only participant to express reservation concerning sick leave.

Melody also expressed strong reservations about using sick leave. Here, she explained not only her outlook toward her own sick leave but also her perceptions of others’ who “take advantage” of the benefit:

> I will not take a day off just to take a day off—a mental health day or just a day to rest. I don't want to put [her supervisor] or my coworkers in that position just because I don't want to come to work that day. I don't know. I'm not saying that's good or bad. But I know what it's like to see when other people take advantage more so than others. [That’s] a detriment to the work life balance here: the people who are here, while that other person is just taking a day all the time. I think we should have four-day workweeks, but that’s a whole other story.

> I don't waste [my vacation days]. If I'm taking a vacation day, it's either because my kid was little and out of school, or I'm literally going on vacation. Now sick days: I don't use sick days. I am very lucky that I don't get sick a lot. Now, if I have the sniffles, am I coming to work? Absolutely. Once again, I'm not going to put people out because I have the sniffles or a headache. I'll pop the Tylenol and come to work. Once again, I'm not saying that's good or bad. It's probably more bad than good, to be honest with you. But that's just how I've always been. I don't want to let anybody down. I don't want to let my boss down. I don't want to let my coworkers down. I don't want anybody to pick up the slack.

Clearly, Melody engaged in an internal reflection throughout this portion of our conversation. “I don't want to let anybody down. I don't want to let my boss down.” This specific portion of Melody’s comments revealed an important fulcrum supporting Melody’s behavior: she did not want to “let down” or disappoint her supervisor and colleagues. When forced to choose between her own health and well-being and the perception of being a reliable employee, Melody chose to serve her employer. Even though Melody favored her employer in relation to her own health and sick leave, she did admit that she valued her vacation leave. Melody was not the only employee to value vacation leave.

Three other participants—Morgan, Imogen, and Jennifer—shared insightful commentary on the motivation behind vacation leave, the practice of accruing vacation leave, and the importance of boundary setting during vacation leave. First, when asked what a week’s worth of vacation provided to her, Morgan explained, “That's why I work, so that I can take time off work to travel, and see friends, and be thoughtless.” This comment struck me in conversation and resonated with the expression, “work to live, not live to work,” which was invoked in

conversation with all eleven participants. That Morgan understood work to be a means to an ordinary end—to travel, to spend time with loved ones (e.g., friends, family, partners), and to "be thoughtless"—revealed the insidious nature of the wage and benefits. Second, Imogene shared her intentional practice in accruing both vacation and sick leave. She explained, "I use [vacation and sick leave]. I just try to keep my balance [where] it doesn't go beneath having a week in reserve." Imogene's comment demonstrated an awareness like Melody's that it was wise to have leave time available in case of emergencies (e.g., one's own sickness, illness within the family, last-minute opportunities). Unfortunately, even with the motivation and availability to take one's vacation leave, not every participant was able to enjoy their time off from their employment. Here, Jennifer provided a descriptive account of challenges faced when utilizing leave time:

Jennifer: If I'm out three to five days, I come back [to] 300–400 emails. How am I supposed to come out of this wave of drowning in emails all the time?

Alexa: Are you of the mindset that taking time off and really disconnecting, while it's nice to do that, it's also stressful upon your return because the amount of work piles up? So, you are checking emails maybe when you shouldn't be?

Jennifer: Trying not to call out sick even when I actually am sick because I don't want to deal with it? Yeah, I was that way. I actually had to train myself to not feel guilty and be stressed about deciding not to check emails. I think that's my strict boundary now, where I don't check emails and I put an away message that [says] "I will not be available, and I won't be checking." I just put it out there so people know. [Once] my boss was like, "If something really important comes up, you have to be monitoring," I'm like, *what is she going to do to me if I'm not checking it? She can't make me do something. I'm just not going to check it.* I try not to. Of course, when I come back it is stressful to have all those emails piled up. I feel like in higher education, there are always going to be emails no matter what you do.

Jennifer's account conveyed a sense of defeat; not only did she Jennifer need to address 300–400 emails upon her return from leave, but she was also never really "off" when her supervisor expected her to be "monitoring" her email. In response to this labor exploitation, Jennifer

implemented boundaries (a practice further addressed in a forthcoming provocation). Yet even when she "puts it out there so people know" that she is unavailable, Jennifer acknowledged the stress that manifested once leave is over and emails were expected to be addressed.

In summary, the wage and benefits were a significant production of gendered labor exploitation discussed by all eleven participants. Again, as the mechanism that afforded their social reproduction, participants revealed several interesting intentionalities between the wage, social reproduction, and gendered labor exploitation. Lines of flight began to pool given other productions (e.g., family formation and residential configurations) identified in this study. Clearly, the wage was identified by participants as an opportunity to address social change and financial wellbeing for participants and their families.

The Workweek Structure

The fifth production identified concerned the workweek as a structure that is made and remade over time. Seven of eleven participants identified ways in which the workweek impacted gendered labor exploitation. These participants also identified two relief valves that could be better adopted to reduce the strain placed upon women staff working in higher education. Thus, two sub-productions manifested. First, five participants identified workweek flexibility as a relief to this phenomenon. Second, eight participants discussed work from home opportunities to lessen gendered labor exploitation. First, though, comments from two participants—Melody and Sam—illustrated manifestations of this broad production.

Recall that Melody is a mother of three with one child still in her home. Here, in reflecting on her career trajectory, Melody revealed important intentionalities concerning the workweek structure:

> When my [youngest] kid is driving and I don't have to worry about her as much in terms of needing me, I think then I can start looking at an 8am–5pm, much more in-depth, more stimulating job. Because she'll be taken care of, she can take herself to swim practice. She can do all that kind of stuff, as long as I'm home in the evenings to help with anything or available even in the day. So, [her supervisor] was always a big proponent of me taking that next step. But he's giving me what I need right now. Why would I leave this? I mean if somebody wants to pay me $20,000 more...bye! But that's not happening.

Melody's anticipation of not being needed as much by her youngest child revealed an important awareness of time in relation to this manifestation. She acknowledged that when her child could drive independently, Melody would have additional availability to engage in a "more in-depth, more stimulating job." Not only did this manifestation relate to family formation but also to the wage. A more in-depth job presumably could correlate with higher wages. When examining gendered labor exploitation, this manifestation demonstrated how phenomenological concepts relate to one another through intentionalities.

Another participant, one who was married but without any dependents, described another manifestation of this broad production. When prompted to consider if work impacted life at home, Sam addressed the workweek structure as a source of exhaustion:

> Your stress levels at any given time can affect personal relationships, health, all of those things. I definitely crash on the weekends most times because [of] the exhaustion. You just crash, try to recoup, and then you're back at it on Monday. I'm a really firm believer [that] we should be having a three- or four-day work week in the United States. We work ourselves to the point of exhaustion, and we don't have enough time to recuperate much less take time to do other things for ourselves.

Sam's identification of the pattern "crash, try to recoup, and then [be] back at it on Monday," demonstrated an awareness of the workweek structure on social reproduction. When workers do not have the necessary time or ability to rest, matters of health and stress impact all facets of one's life both at home and work. Sam not only identified the source of the problem but also provided a suggestion to ameliorate the issue.

A three- or four-day work week was identified by five participants as a remedy to an exhausted workforce. Melody, for example, also advocated for a four-day workweek. She reasoned:

> There are a lot of jobs that can be done in 32 hours a week. I don't know why we put so much emphasis on work; how much work did you get done? How stressed are you; how much money you're making; how successful are you? When I die none of that matters. But when I die, I want to make sure that I took that trip, and I saw my kid's ball game. I think we could all continue to make this country flow and work [while] not kill ourselves doing it. And I'm sorry, [but] two days on the weekend is not enough. It's just not enough to get everything done, especially when you don't have a flexible job during the week. I would like more time just to get stuff for me done.

Although Melody's comments may be read as privileged, as some workers depend on their wage to afford basic social reproduction needs, in the larger context of our conversation, I understood Melody's sentiment to be a critique of capitalism broadly. Melody would often note in her belief of "people over profit." Again, previously identified productions such as family formation and residential configuration or benefits (i.e., vacation leave) related to Melody's above comment.

Workweek Flexibility

Five participants (Shelby, Liz, Melody, Ruth, and Sam) identified workweek flexibility as a relief to this phenomenon. The three participants with children in their homes (Shelby, Melody, and Liz) each discussed how their supervisor's support for their workweek flexibility (e.g., late arrival, early departure) enhanced their ability to engage in the social reproduction worth of others (i.e., dependents). Liz, for example, reflected:

> I don't know what I do; I probably would be looking for another job that had more of a flexible schedule if I had to. […] I mean worst case scenario, we'd have to do morning extended day [a childcare program where school-aged children arrive early or stay late beyond school hours]. I'd probably have to get a weekend or a nighttime job. We'd have to find a way to get the money to be able to do that. Actually, I'm anxious about that now because I just applied to a new job within the university. And like you said, you don't know what that supervisor's like, what the expectations of the office are. I don't know if I'm going to be allowed to keep my flexible schedule. So, that is definitely something that I'm concerned about for the future.

Liz's ability to keep her flexible schedule was entirely dependent upon her supervisor. If she were to change jobs for any number of reasons, she would risk the reality that a new supervisor would not accept her need for a flexible schedule. This would force her to enroll her son into a second extended day childcare session, which would be an additional childcare cost necessitating her need for additional income. Although Liz was grateful that her supervisor at the time was amenable to her needs, the guarantee that future supervisors would not was a source of stress.

A great example of how provocations impact productions, additional workweek flexibility manifestations from both Liz and Melody are discussed in the forthcoming

provocation concerning COVID-19. These additional comments concerning workweek flexibility specifically attributed the pandemic as the catalyst to their ability; therefore, such comments are located appropriately.

Work from Home

Eight participants discussed work from home experiences in the context of the workweek structure and gendered labor exploitation. Although some participants were adamant in their support of the workweek alternative, others identified arguments both for and against the concept. Concerning those in support of work from home, consider Shelby. Recall that Shelby was supportive not only of work from home but also for workweek flexibility as she often took her granddaughter to pre-school:

> I think [work from home is] just more relaxing. Even if your commute is ten minutes, that's still ten minutes that you don't have to get up and put makeup on. I mean, you don't have to do that anyway, I suppose. But you don't have to prepare yourself for the day outside of your house if you don't want to. I think it's just such an easier day. […] [Commuting] costs you money, puts you in danger depending on how people are driving that day. It's just unnecessary.

Shelby's reflection concerning the commute workers face resonated with a similar comment from another participant—Ruth. When asked her perception of work from home concerning her social reproduction needs, Ruth expressed:

> It's nice to be home if you want to go throw a load of laundry and come back [to] doing your work. [It's] little things like that. Even if you want to go to the grocery store on your lunch [hour], you can run up, get stuff, and come back home. At work the campus is so

large, you don't want to leave for fear of never getting a parking spot when you come back.

Such reflections from both Shelby and Ruth reveal clear benefits to workers in their ability to engage in necessary social reproduction work. Other participants, though, considered tradeoffs associated with work from home arrangements.

Both Priscilla and Jennifer appreciated work from home capabilities; however, they both also recognized different arguments against the concept. Priscilla, for example, noted of her own reflection on the matter:

> I do think about the fact that I spend eight hours—or nine really with your lunch hour—working away from home. You're spending all this money to have this home, but I'm not there for so many hours of the day. But at the same time, I think it's a tradeoff because I'm really lucky to have a job that I enjoy that allows me to have the home I want. I know when my bread is buttered. I don't really hate being at work or anything like that.
>
> I do wish I had more time at home […]. I could be with my dog all day. I could work in pajamas. I did pretty much sit at my home desk with my laptop the same amount of time I sit at my desk here. I could go throw some clothes in the laundry if I needed to. But I still was checking the three email inboxes. […] I liked working from home. You did have a little more time to do stuff, but I still had pretty much work the same schedule.

The tension or tradeoff Priscilla identified is clear; because her institution ended its work from home arrangements following the outbreak of COVID-19, she was grateful to be compensated at a rate that allowed her to have the home she desires. This manifestation was important to highlight as it related not only to the productions of family formation and residential

configuration but also the wage. This comment underscored the acceptance some participants expressed concerning the necessity of wages to perform social reproduction activities. Priscilla was not the only participant to recognize both arguments for and against work from home arrangements, though.

Jennifer also addressed the tradeoff between work from home and a typical 9am–5pm workday in an office on campus. She reported:

> There are things I like about [work from home] and things I don't. Something I like [which] I guess could be both good and bad, is that I have a safe space at home. So, if things bother me or I get really stressed, I can go for a walk around my house, do something else, and distract myself. Talk to my mom, or my pet, and I'll feel better; I can [then] go back to work. I can compartmentalize because physically, I'm not in that space with whoever I might be stressed with or whoever I'm annoyed with.
>
> But then the downside is, in general, you're less connected with people. Separation, sometimes, can make you feel a little bit lonely or isolated. Because if you're not working on a project with someone or you're doing more independent work, it's very easy for the day to go by without talking to anyone. I guess that's the pro and the con. I do like working remote, but I think I prefer having the hybrid situation.

Even though Jennifer appreciated the ability to engage in self-care or wellbeing practices (e.g., taking a walk, socializing with loved ones), she also recognized the potential for workplace isolation when working entirely from home. Her comment, "I think I prefer having the hybrid situation," opened the possibility to additional flexibility. Just as Liz and Melody addressed workweek flexibility, Jennifer introduced the concept of hybrid workplace (a form of flexibility)

throughout the workweek. Both solutions could address gendered labor exploitation and social change. Clearly, the productions of family formation and residential configuration and the wage also related to this final manifestation.

Again, another great example of how provocations can impact productions, additional work from home manifestations from Priscilla, Melody, Liz, Morgan, and Shelby are discussed in the forthcoming provocation concerning COVID-19. These comments concerning work from home specifically attributed the pandemic as the catalyst to their ability; as such, these comments are located appropriately.

Conclusion

The five productions revealed—gendered labor; job descriptions and classifications; hierarchies; the wage and benefits; and the workweek structure—exposed the ongoing ways in which the phenomenon (gendered labor exploitation) manifested over time in the workplace. Although each of the given examples provided throughout Chapter 7 demonstrates to varying extents gendered labor exploitation, collectively they continue to reveal the margin of the phenomenon of interest. Remember, the fleeting, partial, and multiple intentionalities revealed as productions in this chapter are constantly in flux—being made and unmade in varying contexts. Conceptually, such morphing movements, when viewed through the lens of SRT (where women are primarily responsible for the necessary but contradictory provision of social reproduction labor in a patriarchal society), exhibit the contours of gendered labor exploitation. Findings from this chapter demonstrate that women are not only burdened in their homes but also in their places of employment.

Phenomenological Material Interlude: Sam

An incredible (and lengthy) excerpt of phenomenological material produced is provided not only to demonstrate thick, rich, conversational phenomenological material but also as an example of many crisscrossing lines of flight concerning gendered labor exploitation at work. Productions and sub-productions introduced thus far, such as gendered leadership, caretaking, the impact of job descriptions, hierarchies, and the wage, manifested within the following sample of Sam's second conversation. Recall that Sam struggled with her supervisor's hypocrisy; Sam theorized that such behavior was tolerated because of favoritism within the hierarchy. Connections are interspersed throughout the excerpt as a means of demonstrating lines of flight.

Alexa: I want to talk about your current employment. Describe for me your work life, and I contextualize this with the knowledge that you are covering other people's work right now.

Sam: I'm three different people at least!

Alexa: Tell me about your work and the work that you're taking on too.

Sam: Yeah, well now that the temp is no longer with us, I will go back [to those assigned tasks, as well]. I had her doing easy stuff because you're getting your bearings in your first week.

Onboarding her was kind of thrown on me. It was not really given as an option. I was not her supervisor in any capacity. If I had a better supervisor, I would have probably done things a lot differently. But this is my supervisor who does things in a way that I do not agree with at all times. And that is fine. That is her way of doing it. But a lot of people disagree with her. She didn't even make time to meet with her on her first day; [she] just basically went in her office [and] completely ignored [the temp]. I was like, *that's not a good way to like start somebody's first day off, even if they're a temp. There's a better way to say that we value the work*

that you're doing. You can't even take 15 minutes, take her to coffee, or say, "Hey, let's get to know each other. What do you need for me as your supervisor?"

But our HR manager had to leave last week because she had a death in the family. She's been out all this week. We haven't had that support, and so I was running solo. I've got to train this new person, but she doesn't have access to anything she needs. So, I was like, "Okay, we're going to get your [institution] card; we do that." Now, I will retake over stocking our kitchen and making sure that's done. [But] I won't have that extra person if I need them to run and grab lunches. Those are mundane things that I have to do. But they take a lot of time, you know? I have to order the lunches, which is fine, that doesn't take long, but the thing is the picking up. I have to go and pick everything up. I have to make sure they're right. If they're wrong, I have to get them corrected, and then I have to walk all the way back to get to our building. I could be doing five other things during that timeframe! So that person was ideally going to take that over at least to help give me some buffer time; I don't have that now.

So, I will be managing all the lunches in addition to managing eight people's expenses; I manage expenses for the office. I order anything needed: snacks, drinks, supplies, ink. You name it, I order it. I handle the invoices for any vendors that we do. We use consulting services, all that fun stuff. Finances take a good chunk of time during the week, depending on how many people are traveling. I book a lot of travel; I would say probably two or three people a week need travel. I was hoping that the temp would eventually take over some of that expense reporting—that way I could alleviate that. But you have to do a lot of financial trainings for those things, which I had requested for her to have access to. But that takes processing time on that department's end. On a daily basis, generally most of my time is spent calendaring. I calendar for, let's see, [counts off using her fingers four individuals' names], four people I consistently do. But I can calendar for like a bunch of other people, and I handle conference rooms.

Alexa: So how many folks are utilizing your calendaring, financial reconciliation, organization? How many people are you working on behalf of?

Sam: At any given time, anywhere between eight and ten. […]

Sam's reflection not only further demonstrated the caretaking nature of their role, but it also illustrated the (gendered) "housekeeping" associated with administrative assistant roles. Managing catering, ordering supplies, coordinating travel, reconciling finances, and calendaring

were comparable tasks associated with gendered labor at home. That places of employment utilize the phrase "housekeeping" (e.g., "As a matter of housekeeping, please ensure that your garbage can is placed outside of your office.) is in and of itself illustrative of the association between "women's work" or hidden labor within the context of employment.

Additionally, Sam recognized mental labor when she explained her frustration in anticipating the temporary employee's needs, only to encounter barriers that forced her to change her unexpected onboarding task (in addition to the work she had taken on because of an additional vacancy). Finally, Sam's expressed disappointment with her supervisor reenforced the realities administrative assistants faced within a HEI hierarchy; that Sam's supervisor tasked them with onboarding a temporary worker while already providing additional labor due to multiple vacancies revealed another manifestation of gendered leadership's labor exploitation. Our conversation continued:

Alexa: What gendered roles, if any, do you think you play at work?

Sam: I mean, the caretaker is an obvious one.

Alexa: How so?

Sam: I make sure everyone is settled, taken care of, nurtured in whatever way, like nurturer, organizer. I am the secretary, which is traditionally a gendered role, typically associated with women or femme identifying people. I'm constantly having to baby other people. I should not be having to do that; you should know what you're supposed to be doing. […]

Here, Sam explicitly recognized her role within her unit as "the caretaker" and associated such a role with the role of a "secretary," which held gendered connotations. Because I had collected Sam's job description as a means of phenomenological material production, I was able to engage with the document with Sam as the conversation continued:

Alexa: It's interesting, as you were talking, I was "command f'ing" [a way to digitally search a document for specific text] your job description, and it turns out "nurture," "baby," and "notes" are not found in your job description. So, I'm curious, how do you...

Sam: I'm going to go look at it because I can tell you.

Alexa: Pull it up!

Sam: It's subtly put in there. Let's see, "Provide support," that's probably the caretaking bit.

Alexa: Is that some coded language?

Sam: Yeah. Oh, yeah. "Assist" is usually... there's going to be some hand holding. I should not be teaching other people senior to me how to do their jobs; I'm a firm believer of that. We have HR training for that; you can do a LinkedIn training on how to better take notes! There are college resources from the university on how to take notes. You have a college degree too—watch a video! Let's see. "May take dictation" or "May supervise the work of other administrative employees," "Coordinate..." Yeah, definitely some coded language. […]

Alexa: I guess the boiled down question that I have for you is: is the reality of your work reflected on this job description?

Sam: Well, that's an easy no.

Alexa: Okay, how so?

Sam: Because it says, "Provides administration support for the chair of an academic..." it indicates, like, one or two people—when in reality it is between eight to ten.

Serving anywhere from eight to ten staff members and doing the work of three roles, Sam was clearly overworked. Such staffing vacancies were common among this study's participants (especially given the COVID-19 pandemic). Sam's job description—the third production identified—was a useful tool to demonstrate the extent of her overworkedness.

Fortunately, Sam was also employed by a department that was able to afford additional compensation, as an hourly worker who was permitted to work overtime. In our third and final conversation, Sam and I returned to the idea of compensation, a production previously identified:

Alexa: I think you, of all my participants, are the one most explicitly doing work beyond your role, right now. And yes, to some extent you are being compensated in the fact that you're allowed to be doing overtime. There are participants who are explicitly told, “You cannot work overtime. If work doesn't get done, work doesn't get done, but we can't afford overtime. So, drop the balls, okay?” So, you are a little bit of an anomaly in my pool in that you have this ability.

Sam: It’s because I'm in a much higher profile office than probably a lot of the admins that you're working with. I hate to say that, but I know that this is the case in a lot of our academic departments where if you're hourly, you cannot fathom overtime. […] But I'm very lucky to be in a high enough office that [has] more money than usual. They're not as constricted. But I know I'm a rarity on that.

This final portion of this excerpt of phenomenological material revealed Sam’s awareness of intra-institution hierarchy. Not only were individuals ranked in an employment hierarchy, but Sam asserted that so, too, were departments. Sam was employed at the time of phenomenological material production in a very prominent and public-facing department. Sam clearly articulated a perception that because of the department’s status within the institution's hierarchy, the department’s hourly staff members were afforded the opportunity to work overtime (and thus be compensated more appropriately beyond their standard wage according to their job classifications)—a practice that other participants explicitly shared was unavailable. Sam’s comment revealed an important nuance to the tension between the wage, additional and fair compensation, job classifications, and work-life balance—something that Sam explicitly reported was important to their wellbeing.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERLUDE 7

BRIDLING JOURNAL: NOVEMBER 28, 2022

Not only is the running thread or use of the movie analogy stressful and anxiety-producing for me, but so too is the intentional choice of presenting something as monumental as my dissertation in such a causal tone. Presenting my thoughts, this study's participants' ideas, and ultimately my analysis in such a manner feels immature within the academy.

However, I have been struck (as if it were a provocation) time and time again by the impact of conversation throughout this dissertation process. It was a casual conversation in passing with my social theory professor, eventual major professor, and ultimately committee chair that I was introduced to Judith Butler, who led me to Nancy Fraser, who pointed me directed to Tithi Bhattacharya, whose theoretical work inspired this entire study. It was conversation that allowed me to connect with each of my participants in a more authentic way. Comments such as "I should be paying you to be my therapist" or "I just want to thank you for this work; it's been so refreshing just talking about this" were moments of phenomenological material production that kept me engaged with this study. It was the same conversation outline that further exposed my own reflexivity as I conversed with my committee chair. It is dialogue or conversation in film that further captures the audience's thoughts, words, and perhaps deeds.

Therefore, it was ultimately important to me that conversation or at least a casual tone be utilized throughout this phenomenological text, as I present my findings. Just as I have had countless conversations with myself, this study's participants, and my chair, I hope that the experience of reading this dissertation serves as a pseudo-conversation with anyone who has

picked up this text. I hope that this work is thought-provoking for you at the very least; perhaps, though, it inspires you enough to continue this conversation with someone else. Let's keep the conversation going, shall we?

CHAPTER 8

PROVOCATIONS CONCERNING GENDERED LABOR EXPLOITATION AT WORK

The second of two connected sites of gendered labor exploitation explored in this study concerned participants' employment at higher education institutions (HEI). Four provocations revealed intentionalities concerning this phenomenon. Primarily during the second of three participant conversations, job descriptions were referenced as participants reflected upon ideas concerning gendered labor exploitation. In the second conversation, participants were asked if they considered their work as administrative assistants to be fair; who benefited the most from their labor at work; and what, if any, harm was done given their employment labor. In what follows, I introduce the provocation concerning gendered labor exploitation at work, provide rich descriptions to illustrate the phenomenological construct, and identify ways in which the production relates to social change.

Four provocations (COVID-19 global pandemic, conversations with other women, experiences with HR, and moments of realization) exposed interesting intentionalities of this phenomenon. Each of these four provocations served as a catalyst to the phenomenon of interest. Again, as discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 9, Social Reproduction Theory served as a useful theoretical framework that revealed several lines of flight between gendered labor exploitation and women's employment as administrative assistants in HEIs.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic

Six of this study's eleven participants explicitly reflected upon the COVID-19 global pandemic as a provocation in relation to gendered labor exploitation. While the pandemic

continued to ebb and flow through the entirety of this dissertation, manifestations of this provocation had already emerged. Each of the following comments revealed interesting intentionalities between gendered labor exploitation and higher education employment.

First, to contextualize the monumental provocation of COVID-19, the following reflection from Priscilla captured the sudden sentiment expressed by several participants concerning work during a global health crisis:

> I remember thinking *there's no way I can do my job from home. I'm not going to do that,* you know? And then we all did; we figured it out. The [department] bought all the staff laptop computers and brought them to our homes, so that made a huge difference because I just had my iPad. We did [work from home] all of that summer, and then when school started back in the fall, we came back to the office.

Priscilla's reflection, "there's no way I can do my job from home […]. And then we all did […]" captured the attitude of most of this study's participants. Work from home, remote work, or telework arrangements—concepts relatively foreign to higher education administrative assistant roles prior to the COVID-19 outbreak—were explicit topics of interest throughout conversations.

By the time of phenomenological material production, eight of eleven participants had at least one full day of remote work arrangements. More specifically, two participants experienced two days of work from home arrangements; one participant enjoyed three days a week remotely; and one participant worked in the office five full days per work week. In relation to the previously identified production "workweek structure," two participants—both of whom still had children residing in their homes—utilized a "flex schedule" as opposed to full work from home days, meaning their hours in the office five days per week were scheduled outside of the typical 8am–5pm workday to accommodate their children's needs; Melody was one such participant.

When prompted to consider how her flexible work from home schedule has impacted her life, she recounted:

> It has been life-changing, and it sounds so stupid. We're talking [about] an hour, you know? I take a 30-minute lunch where I go get my kid [from school], and then I work from home for an hour. It's life-changing not to have to fight traffic to get off campus. [Before] I'd stay until 5pm, but I'm really not leaving until 5:30pm because [traffic’s] horrible. Being able to throw the laundry in at 4pm rather than at 6:30pm, being able to throw something in the crock pot, or literally sitting down and watching TV waiting for the next game that'll pop up [on her phone]. I dread the thought of ever going back to the 8am–5pm kind of schedule.

Melody’s 1.5-hour flexible work from home arrangement five days a week culminated in a total of 7.5 hours of remote work per week; her reflection that such an arrangement has been “life-changing” revealed the dramatic impact on her ability to engage in social reproduction work at home (i.e., child transportation, laundry, cooking, rest) during those hours. Melody quickly noted that 7.5 hours over the course of five workdays is still less time than one typical eight-hour workday from home. Given her family formation, a more flexible daily schedule was more beneficial to Melody than an entire eight-hour day at home. Melody was not the only participant to engage in a more flexible daily schedule following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Liz also enjoyed a flexible daily schedule. She reflected, first, on how her work from home arrangement came to be:

> Returning from COVID, the university gave people options to work remotely, so a lot of people took the university up on that. Then as the university wanted people to return from home, units were given the option of how they wanted to handle it. Some people required

> everybody to return on campus; others were allowed to have hybrid models. Our [department] does a hybrid model, so each person can request their own schedule. I know some people who work two days at home and come into the office three days; there's some people who work from home in the mornings and come in in the afternoons. Everyone has their own schedule based on their needs. There's a co-worker who works from home five days a week. She works from 6am–3pm, and that got approved. It just depends on your supervisor and what they have approved.

Entirely dependent upon her supervisor's and department's approval, Liz shared that her institution permitted localized departmental decision-making to coordinate work from home requests; this flexibility was beneficial to Liz and presumably to all workers who manage various social reproduction responsibilities. Although several participants were also employed by institutions that allowed for departmental decision-making, Liz was the only one of two participants to experience work from home arrangements on a case-by-case basis. The five other participants who experienced some remote work arrangements were subject to universal requirements according to their department or institution.

In contrast to several participants who shared that they would prefer to work remotely even more than their arrangements permitted, Liz shared the following:

> I personally do not like working from home; I prefer to be in the office. I find home too distracting, too lonely. I find tasks take twice as long to do sometimes, so I enjoy being in the office. I also feel like I have more things. At home, I just have my laptop and whatever fits in my bag. Where in my office, I have my files, I have my cheat sheets, I have two monitors. It just feels more productive for me, so I prefer to work from the office.

Be it the environment, access to needed supplies, equipment, or community, Liz was only one of four participants to express any desire to physically work in the office following the pandemic. Additionally, recall that Liz had a child under the age of ten. Perhaps because Liz was responsible for so much social reproduction in her home (her "second shift"), she preferred a workday in the office as opposed to work from home arrangements.

Given personal preferences and her family formation, Liz—like Melody—also arranged for a flexible daily schedule as opposed to full work from home arrangements. Here, Liz described how her son's childcare impacted her decision-making:

> Arranging for childcare—to get my son to and from school—is challenging. [His] school offers extended day, but A) it's a hit or miss whether you get accepted or not depending on how early you apply; B) there's a cost [$186 a month for the morning or afternoon session]. We got accepted for the afternoon extended day; we felt that it was too expensive to do both morning and afternoon. Since the mornings are quieter and I can be in the office by 9:15am (my boss starts her day at 9am), it was okay not to be logging in at 8am, not to show up at 8am, which is our typical workday. I just make up those hours beforehand, and it's worked out okay. No one's really complained, which is why I've been allowed to continue to do it.

Without extended day, a childcare program where school-aged children arrive early or stay late beyond school hours, Liz would be unable to transport her child home. Childcare, a central concept of social reproduction discussed by all eleven participants, was the primary motivation behind Liz's individual arrangement with her department. Though Liz had support from her supervisor at the time of phenomenological material production, given her final comment above,

she was aware that such an arrangement could be revoked if others complained about her schedule and availability.

The threat of coworker complaints was not unfounded. Even though she, herself, benefited from a flexible work schedule, Melody expressed reservations toward her colleagues and their flexible schedules. She commented:

> I will say with COVID happening and us learning that we are fully capable—some of us, not everybody—of teleworking, I think we have people taking advantage of that. Some are like, "Well, I can just work from home, so I have a headache. I'm going to stay home, but I'm not taking a sick day. I'm going to telework and never come into work." I think that's caused some problems. I try not to telework outside my current teleworking schedule.

Melody's skepticism of her coworkers' reported illnesses revealed an interesting intentionality concerning sickness since the outbreak of COVID-19. Like Liz who also liked to work in the office, Melody further explained her own approach to sickness and work:

> [Her supervisor] likes me here too, and I know he likes me to be that buffer. He likes me to be the "catch all" before [anyone] gets to him. I came in really sick one time because I was taking the next day off, and we had stuff we had to have done. I just wore my mask because that's what COVID has done; I wore my mask, came to work, did what I had to do.

Melody's willingness to come into the office while sick revealed several interesting intentionalities. First, despite her sickness, "stuff" had to be done. This comment revealed some sense of loyalty or commitment to her work despite her illness. Second, Melody was aware that she would be taking a certain amount of leave time the next day; her comment seemingly

revealed hesitation to take any additional leave. Third, it was possible in a post-COVID world for her to work while masked, which enabled her to avoid taking additional leave time. Finally, her supervisor's preference for her to physically serve as a barrier seemingly impacted her decision-making.

Each of these intentional connections, when examined separately or collectively, open up or reveal multiple lines of flight toward the phenomenon of interest. Such intentionalities resonate with ideal worker norms where workers are so devoted to their employment that they make decisions that seem contradictory to their own social reproduction wellness. To follow such lines of flight from the provocation to the edge of the phenomenon—gendered labor exploitation—affords the opportunity to affect social change.

Melody was not the only participant to reflect on sickness at work, though. Morgan also considered how sickness impacted her decision to work or take sick time/medial leave in a post-COVID world:

Alexa: Do you think there's a difference between working from home sick versus going into the office sick? Are those different thresholds?

Morgan: Totally. I don't think I would go into the office sick anymore. I think the pandemic really killed that for me, but I know in the past before the pandemic, I definitely did.

So, while Morgan was willing to go into the office when ill before COVID-19, the pandemic changed her approach to working in the office while sick. Such a change in behavior might explain an increase in staff members' request to work from home while sick—a manifestation that bothered Melody. The intersection between working from home, working while sick, and the refusal to work while ill warrants additional consideration and research as social reproduction gains social attention.

One's physical health was not the only wellness consideration reflected and commented upon by participants. Mental health was also discussed explicitly by at least two participants. Cher, for example, reflected:

> Especially during COVID, people's minds really opened up to mental health. With Zoom, being alone all day, being trapped when you can't do anything, I think COVID really turned around some of the ways that we did stuff, like asking [people to] do things.

Inquiring into one's capacity to take on additional tasks, given the many challenges COVID-19 inflicted upon workers, was according to Cher a beneficial outcome of the pandemic. Other working outcomes that resulted from COVID-19 concerned the continuation of work from home arrangements and labor exploitation realizations.

For example, Morgan unapologetically expressed her refusal to comply with her institution's return to office expectation. Expected to be in the office three days a week, Morgan shared that she was not planning to travel to her campus. She explained:

> I think after the pandemic, the rules don't matter. [They] want us to come in because [they're] paying rent to the city. But it doesn't affect our work anymore because we learned to work remotely. Even when we go into the office, we're not having in-person meetings. We're on zoom in each other's offices, so I don't think that there's going to be repercussions for [her absence in the office] especially because I travel a lot.

Morgan's blatant refusal to come into office—after two successful years of work from home experience—despite an official institutional policy change was an excellent manifestation.

Another participant, Shelby, shared her perception of others' realizations toward their labor exploitation and subsequent resistance plans. Shelby, when discussing her observations on overworked and undercompensated colleagues, commented:

> I think whenever people were at home during the pandemic, they realized how much work they were doing and how many longer hours they worked. They were like, *y'all are getting so much more work out of me right now!* I think you had more time to think about what you're doing. Then everybody gets their little plan together in their head about how they're going to rally for their work at home days: how much they do, how well they do it, and stuff like that.

According to Shelby, the COVID-19 global pandemic afforded workers time to reflect upon their working conditions. This reflection from Shelby resonated with my perceived understanding of Morgan's decision-making; Morgan's experience working from home throughout the global pandemic informed her thinking (and ultimately her behavior) concerning working conditions. Though other participants also experienced provocative realizations (enough to warrant a forthcoming provocation), the comments from Morgan and Shelby explicitly concerned COVID-19 as a catalyst for social change. As such, their reflections were most relevant to this provocation.

In summary, COVID-19 was a significant provocation; six participants revealed interesting manifestations concerning gendered labor exploitation given ideal worker norms, the socialization of the second shift, and social reproduction needs. The normalization of work from home arrangements given various family formations, health and wellness considerations, and ongoing policy changes revealed several lines of flight among this study's productions and provocations. Several participants benefited from either workweek flexibility accommodations or work from home arrangements because of the global pandemic; such arrangements clearly resulted in positive social change. Social Reproduction Theory continued to be not only an appropriate lens to examine health and wellness as it relates to gendered labor exploitation.

Conversations with Other Women

Similar to the conversations with other women concerning gendered labor exploitation at home, four participants (Shelby, Jennifer, Priscilla, and Ruth) shared experiences of interaction among other women concerning gendered labor exploitation at work. Such conversations with familiar contacts enabled participants opportunities to vent, realize, and discover intentional relationships to the phenomenon of interest. Just as conversation was a revealing and helpful methodology to produce the phenomenological material for this study, participants' conversations with others throughout their careers revealed interesting manifestations of the phenomenon of interest.

Shelby, for example, reflected on her entrance into the field of higher education because of a conversation with a friend and previous co-worker. Recall that Shelby was a stay-at-home mother until her children were school-aged; what began as volunteer work eventually resulted in employment within her children's school while they were in the K–12 system. She recalled:

> It was one of my co-workers in K–12 that started working at [university] that was like, "Hey, we have a position open; you should really come here. You would really like it." Had she not done that, I probably wouldn't have even thought about [leaving K–12 role for employment at local university]. I doubt that I would have ever gotten hired because I didn't have any fresh office experience anyway.

Shelby's admission that it was unlikely she would have even considered applying for the job she'd held for over ten years at the time of phenomenological material production, let alone "gotten hired because [she] didn't have any fresh office experience," spoke not only to the power of conversation within one's community but also to the privilege associated with social

connections. From the very beginning of her higher education employment, Shelby experienced the impact of conversation among other women.

The concept of community, especially within and among administrative assistant rankings, continued to reveal itself through participant conversations. Jennifer, for example, frankly described communication norms within such an employment community. She noted:

> I definitely recognize a camaraderie with administrative assistant type roles and executive assistants because we are all the keepers of knowing what happens behind the scenes. We know everything that's going on at the university. So, of course, we talk amongst ourselves a bit; there are certain things we can't share because the senior leadership tells their assistants what we're not supposed to share with other people. But I would say that a lot of people are pretty jaded or not happy. I mean, I think that's why the Great Resignation is happening in general.

Jennifer's reflection demonstrated not only "camaraderie" among colleagues of similar ranking within HEIs but also hinted at frustration or "jadedness" among the "keepers of knowing." Her theory that such dissatisfaction contributed to the Great Resignation was an interesting one, as administrative assistants were admittedly privy to information that they found upsetting. Jennifer provided an excellent example of this manifestation:

> In an assistant role, I get to see what kind of decisions [senior leaders] are making. I've been really disgusted with how much I disagree. Like [concerning] entry level people, say the difference [in salary range] is between $36,000 and $40,000. They're like, "Oh, we'll just offer $36,000, and we'll put that extra $1,000s to something else." I'm like, *so you do have the option; you can offer those funds.* Then I'm the HR person, and when I'm hiring I have to go back to [the person being offered] and tell them, "Compensation says

> we can't like give you more—it’s not in our budget.” It's just the lies and lack of transparency!

Jennifer’s proximity to hierarchical decision making and subsequent knowledge “behind the scenes” in this example concerning one of this study’s productions—the wage—demonstrated the disagreement or frustration she previously referenced. Not all manifestations of this provocation were necessarily isolated though.

Shelby also shared another interesting manifestation concerning conversations among women colleagues. Although her first description addressed her introduction to higher education employment, the following comment from Shelby described a conversation with her supervisor where she came to believe that her compensation needed to be adjusted given information received:

> We were talking on the phone visiting; she wanted to talk to someone and complain: “I can't find anyone I want to hire... blah, blah, blah. I don't have enough. I have too much to do. I need those people that already know what to do." Now, I'm the person that's worked [in the department] for the longest time. We started talking about the starting salaries that [the new hire was] going to make, and that was just a problem for me. I mean I understand that you have to hire people now more than you had to pay them 10 years ago, as a base salary. This information, I've been privy to I suppose, because it's all public knowledge—the payrolls and everything. So, I said, “You can't hire these people at this rate. That's what I make, and it's just not fair!”

Shelby’s realization concerning her perceived outdated compensation was the result of an ordinary phone call with her supervisor. Had this casual conversation not occurred, Shelby

would not have had the opportunity to advocate for herself. She went on to share the outcome of this interaction:

> She [her supervisor on the phone] agreed; she talked to our department chair and the dean, and it worked out. I got a raise—a substantial raise for [the specific academic field] anyway. You know, we're a public university, so on average probably about two and a half, maybe three percent is the [merit raise] system that we've been using. But I got thirteen percent, so that was good.

Not only did Shelby eventually receive an appropriate compensation adjustment (and gain incredibly valuable information as a "keeper of knowledge"), but she also was afforded the opportunity to reflect on this interaction with her supervisor who set this entire sequence of events into motion as the result of a casual phone call. Shelby recalled:

> She said, "You know, we really, really need to do a better job at watching this […] That's my responsibility to do, really. I'm your supervisor." So, she apologized. But she had to bring it to my attention, and I got so upset about it. But you know, if that conversation hadn't happened, I have no—I don't know. I don't know what would have happened.

"If that conversation hadn't happened, […] I don't know what would have happened." Presumably, had that casual conversation not occurred with her supervisor, it would be impossible to know when or if Shelby would have ever learned about the wage discrepancy she faced. Like Jennifer's admitted frustration, Shelby's admission to being upset because of this casual interaction and her self-advocacy resulted in additional significant compensation. Though Shelby's experience ultimately produced a personally positive outcome following a conversation with a supervisor, some participants recounted experiences of doubt and potentially negative outcomes following colleague interactions.

One such participant was Priscilla. Priscilla described a conversation where she learned that she and a colleague situated within the same hierarchy level were no longer being compensated similarly with supplemental pay. She reported:

> There's one other admin in our in our suite, and she's the receptionist and runs the other side [of the department]. But she doesn't do the budget, so that position always made a little less than I did. She also had a supplemental salary. They yanked that back as of July, and she came in asked me if I had a supplement and was I still getting it? I said, “Yes and yes.” She's like, “Well, they took mine away.” I was like, “Oh, okay.” Before she told me that, I did think *okay, even though it's called a temporary, they would have to be really heartless to take that back after however many years.* I've been here a lot longer than her, but they did. They took hers back, and I advised her to get our director to speak to [senior leadership] and really advocate for her because I think the director would do that. I don't know if she ever did or not. That was my advice, but I never followed up because it's none of my business. But after she told me hers got yanked back, I thought *oh dang; mine might too!* It's always possible, and I would miss it.

What Priscilla learned during the above conversation was that her colleague’s supplemental pay was taken away, just as her supervisor warned was always possible. Recall that Priscilla previously considered the need to acquire a second job to afford her mortgage as a single woman Fortunately, instead she received a supplemental salary. Though Priscilla did not seek out the information she gained during this conversation, the knowledge acquired reminded her of the possibility that her supplemental pay could be rescinded, as “heartless” of an action as it was. This reflection from Priscilla provided insight into the financial comfort and security staff

members grow accustomed to concerning supplemental pay. Compensation was not the only subject, though, of conversations among other women.

Another interesting manifestation of this provocation concerned Ruth. Recall Ruth's upsetting situation—discussed as a manifestation of the wage production—concerning her lack of compensation for the additional work she completed as the result of a staffing vacancy. At the institution in which Ruth was employed, there was a four-month period in which employees could report to the institution's labor union labor disputes. Ruth shared that she only knew of this policy through word of mouth:

> Because I talked to other folks on campus, and I know people, and we've talked—that's how I knew about that four-month thing, or I wouldn't have known. I'm sure there are other people that have that happen, and then it's too late to do anything about it. […]

Had Ruth not known of this policy, she would not have been able to file a report with her institution's labor union (of which she was not involved with prior to this incident). She elaborated:

> I was talking to a staff member that works in [a certain school]. She and I were talking outside of work; we were at a retirement party. She's the one that first said to me, "They need to be paying you for extra service. Tell them!" I was like, "Alright." So, then I mentioned—I didn't say who told me—I just said that I was talking to someone else, and they said that I should have the extra service.
>
> There's actually quite a few [staff members] that are involved in the union. So, I was chatting with a couple I'm friends with, and she's like, "You've got to call [union representative]. She's fantastic!" So, it was from other people saying it; it wasn't like me

just saying, *I'm going to call*... because I wouldn't have known who to call really at first because I don't go to union meetings.

Again, in conversation with women colleagues (some of which occurred "outside of work"), Ruth experienced the impact of community and shared knowledge. Without such conversations with other women, it is impossible to know if or when Ruth would have learned of the resources (i.e., four-month policy, labor union contact) available to address her blatant exploitation. Clearly, the impact of conversations with other women contributed significantly not just to Ruth but to all participants who gained significant insight because of such experiences.

In summary, just as conversations with other women were a significant provocation within the private sphere, they were also significant within employment settings (the public sphere); four participants revealed interactions with other women colleagues that sparked or provoked interesting thoughts, reflections, or realizations concerning gendered labor exploitation. Such conversations revealed opportunities for social change.

Experiences with Human Resources (HR)

A third prominent provocation that emerged from all participants concerned some experience with human resources—the designated office or department responsible for an institution's human capital or workers. Each participant spoke of some experience or perception they had with HR. When asked if they viewed HR as a friend or foe to workers, ten of this study's eleven participants explicitly responded. On one end of the spectrum, three viewed HR as a friend; though, of these three participants, two mentioned conditions such as, "I would be hesitant to reach out for some areas with them," or "I know what their limitations are, you know?" On the opposite end of the spectrum, three participants explicitly considered HR to be a foe. Liz was one such participant who expressed the following:

> Definitely a foe. I don't think that they're fair. I don't think they understand the work that people do. I think they—our HR person but also university HR—try to provide so many other benefits that I think it masks from the real issues in the real work. So, while I appreciate work-home balance, don't spend all this time creating workshops, and resources, and websites, and spending time and paying people to do things that take away from the real issues. That money that you're filtering for all these special projects would be nice if used to increase salaries.

Liz's comment alluded to her frustration that HR only attended to superficial issues instead of addressing low wages—a reality acknowledged by many participants. Four participants viewed HR rather neutrally. For example, one participant noted that she viewed HR generally as a foe but also had an experience where the department and its staff took great care of her personally during a health crisis. Imogene offered a complicated yet insightful comment when she elaborated:

> I mean it's [HR's] job to represent the institution. It's not their job to represent you as an individual. So, if it comes down between your personal self and the interest of the institution, they have to come down on that side. I don't think they're necessarily being a foe, but they're not your advocate. They're not your personal advocate.

Imogene's perspective that HR "is not your personal advocate" complicated the binary prompt that inspired this portion of the conversation. Her comment later resonated with part of a conversation with Melody. Melody also understood HR as a neutral party; she elaborated:

> Melody: I mean, HR is so short staffed, so overworked. I feel bad for people in HR. I don't put any of that onus on them at all. I think I put it more on [her department] because we should be more aware of what our people are paid. […] We have to be our own advocates. I'm not a very good one because I'm like, *I'll just sit here, do a good job, and they'll see, and they'll give me money.* [But] it doesn't work that way. We have to fight for ourselves, and that's really hard. Because I look at

my job, and I'm like, *well, I get paid decently, [her supervisor's] really good to me, so I'll just sit here.* Then I'm like, *what? Why am I the bottom though?* So, I'm happy, and it's okay, and he treats me well. But then the equity thing comes in, and that's really, really tough. […]

Alexa: […] What about benefit? Who benefits the most from the work that you do?

Melody: I would think the school; they get the benefit of paying me less, right? I mean, it just made me think when you were going through all that *why are they going be like, "You know what? We need to pay our people more money!"* I mean, they're not going to do that. They're—it's a business. I get that. You want to make a profit to have as much money in your pocket as possible, and paying everybody more just because of equity or seniority, that's not in their best interest as a business. I get that, and I think that's why it comes down to us being advocates for ourselves. They're not going to do it, so I'm going do it myself. Then if I don't like what happens, I go look for another job.

It was apparent that although Melody was conflicted with her situation (where she felt supported by her specific supervisor and yet compensated inequitably), she did not blame HR for acting in its own interest. She, like Imogene, believed that workers need to advocate for themselves.

Participants generally agreed that HR's purpose was to protect the interests of the institution and not its workers. This sentiment was particularly prominent with the two participants who belonged to labor unions—which could be understood as the counterweight to HR. Recall Ruth's wage and job description discrepancy experience where she was supported by her labor union after speaking with a woman colleague. The lines of flight that emerged from Ruth's experience from both productions and provocations further outlined the contours of the phenomenon of interest—gendered labor exploitation.

This third provocation—experiences with HR—served as a catalyst or intensity concerning gendered labor exploitation. To more fully demonstrate the many ways in which this provocation manifested, two noteworthy sub-provocations are described: (1) job reclassification and reorganization and (2) vacancy-filling issues.

Job Reclassification and Reorganization

Within the realm of HR interactions, four participants (Ruth, Morgan, Liz, and Melody) identified experiences concerning job reclassifications or reorganization as moments of intensity related to gendered labor exploitation. For two of these four participants, HR initiated such provocations. For example, Ruth described how a departmental reorganization set the stage for her eventual labor exploitation as described throughout this study's findings:

> Three and a half years ago, we got a new HR person/business liaison. She wanted to do a reorganization, and one department had three [administrative assistants]. She was like, "No, you [only] need one." So, they had one, and the other two, she [reclassified]. All the other departments had [reclassified roles], except for the one I was in; we only had me.

Even though Ruth described an outcome that structurally seemed equitable within an organization chart according to HR, what Ruth went on to describe was the burden she faced as the sole staff member responsible for the work distribution of three administrative assistants. This experience resonated with the production of job descriptions; the allocation of tasks assigned eventually cost Ruth's institution as her labor union defended Ruth's situation. Role reorganization was not the only HR initiated provocation, though.

Morgan described an experience where HR reclassified a role she eventually occupied. The revision of her role, like Ruth's, eventually provoked her exploitation. She explained:

Morgan: My role did exist as a much higher-level role. It was an associate director role before the pandemic, and it was expected to be in office (as needed) with travel and stuff.

Alexa: Why did it change?

Morgan: That person didn't work out. My boss thought that [her predecessor] was mismanaging money and time […], and she didn't like that. This person left, and then when the pandemic happened, they were like, "Well, we don't need anyone

to come in and do the work, represent the team, or travel for the team because it's a pandemic. So, let's just hire an administrator. They did, and that [hire] was me.

Alexa: What was the difference in job description between the associate director role to [the one] that you're in?

Morgan: There's no difference, really.

Alexa: So, you're doing the role of an associate director except going in [to the office], but you're not being paid for it then?

Morgan: Right.

Morgan's report that HR's reclassification of her current role compared to its previous classification as an associate director was "no different" (less the role's expectation to be in the office despite the institution's recent announcement to be in the office three days a week) revealed an important intentionality between job classification and compensation—other productions identified in this study's findings. Because of this reclassification, Morgan was effectively doing the work of an associate director for the compensation of an administrative assistant. Morgan's experience was not the only one to involve job reclassifications.

Three participants (Liz, Melody, and Morgan) self-initiated (as opposed to an HR-initiated) a job reclassification to varying degrees of success. For one participant—Liz—with the encouragement of her supervisor, an attempt was made to reclassify her specific role:

Liz: Two things have recently happened. One is that the department administrative assistants or I should say the department administrators (for each of the departments), those positions were quasi-professional. The university restructured positions, and they clearly designated those lines as either exempt or non-exempt. This kind of quasi-professional, they have grandfathered people in. But all those positions are considered non-exempt, and the job indicators for these classes didn't accurately describe the work that they did. They felt that they were professionals before. They should be treated as professionals, and they had this whole rationale for why they should become exempt, which is a big deal to go from non-exempt to exempt and having to prove it. It took several meetings/fights

and three administrative assistants leaving for them to make that change. […] Three folks leave, and before they left, they were very vocal with the [senior leadership] on why they felt that their indicator was not accurate. The HR representative disagreed. She kept disagreeing; she kept going behind people's backs and saying that so and so had said something, and that they totally agree that it's fine, and so on and so forth. The [senior leader] finally just had it and said, "I want it changed; get it done." So, during that process, my boss came up to me and said, "You know, the department admins are going to non-exempt. The work that you do is valued more or considered a higher level than the responsibilities of a department administrator." She felt that this was a good opportunity to put a case together for me to go exempt. The problem is that my job description is all about supporting the [senior leader]. So, there are no functions that I am solely responsible for—that I supervise, that I solely manage. Everything that I do is in support of the [senior leader]. So, I was not eligible to make a petition for exempt status.

Alexa: Would you have wanted that?

Liz: Oh, I definitely would have wanted that because then I wouldn't have to ask for permission to alter my schedule because I could come and go as I please. If I decide to work from 9–10pm, no one's going to say, "Well, you're really working outside of office hours, and you need to get that approved." No one clocks your time when you're exempt. You also get more PTO time. Usually there's higher salaries, as well, for exempt staff.

Unfortunately, despite her supervisor's intention to reclassify her role, because of HR standards, Liz was ineligible for such a reclassification. As such, several benefits were unavailable like additional paid time off, a higher wage, and unstructured work hours. Liz's experience was one where several lines of flight revealed the complexity of productions such as the wage and job descriptions concerning this provocation—job reclassifications. Some participants, though, were able to successfully advocate for themselves.

Two participants—Melody and Morgan—successfully obtained such a change to their job classification. Melody revealed a few interesting intentionalities in conversation concerning her job description:

Alexa: When was the last time you looked at your current job description?

Melody: Early 2021 when I was to be reclassified. Because one of the things is—I'm low man on the totem pole for [administrative assistants] on campus. So, this may not be some mind—melting, horrible, stressful job that deserves all this money, but if you look at equity in terms of all the [administrative assistants] on campus, I'm down here in the lowest spot. […] I needed more money. […]

Alexa: How did you know that you were, in your words, on the "low end of the totem pole?"

Melody: Girl, you know, we all look at those open records! Come on! […] I also have some friends in the business office that can give me some more numbers up to date than that. […] When I get my review in January, I'm going to go back [since] I've been working on my job description adding little lines. *I did that one thing! Put it in there to know that I'm taking on more responsibilities, that I am doing more!*

Not only is this excerpt provided as an example of the familiarity and comfort demonstrated through my conversation with Melody, but it also revealed several interesting manifestations. Melody's comments resonated with a few previously discussed productions such as notions of hierarchy, job descriptions, and the wage. She also revealed two interesting supports. First, Melody mentioned knowledge concerning public information; as a state institution, salaries were publicly available. Second, Melody acknowledged connections and community with fellow staff members across campus; such relationships resonated with Imogene's relationship with staff members in the parking department and Jennifer's connections with "the keepers of knowledge."

Equipped with the knowledge of how to access such information and who her fellow administrative assistants were, Melody was able to gather public salary records to report her comparative salary in a spreadsheet for her supervisor. She elaborated:

> [During] my review in January 2021, I don't know how it got brought up, but there was some talk about taking on more responsibilities. Somehow, I slipped it in that I was "low man on the totem pole." [Her supervisor] was like, "What?!" I was like, "Yeah!" He was like, "Give me that spreadsheet." They did a reclassification at that time for me to get me a raise. That bumped me up two spots, but I wasn't "low man on the totem pole" [anymore].

> Of course [institution] veered; they have their limits of 10%, which is all garbage because—listen, if they want to give you more than that, they find a way to do it. I know that for a fact. I was grateful for the 10%. In order to do that, though, you have to show what else you're doing. Now part of it was equity because I could show that I've been here for x number of years, blah, blah, blah. So, the job description is literally to make HR sign off on it; you've got to put everything.

Melody's admission resonated, again, with a particular production—the importance and significance of the job description. Additionally, Melody reported that she knew (presumably as a "keeper of knowledge") that exceptions were made when decision-makers wanted them to be. Recall that it was Melody who strongly asserted that it was up to workers to advocate for themselves; she was not the only participant to do so.

Morgan also successfully initiated and received a job reclassification from HR. Below, Morgan described the situation she faced following her supervisor's absence during the COVID-19 pandemic (another provocation):

> The director had to go off work for a month and a half because she had long COVID. So, I took on a bunch of her work, and then her boss was like, "What can we do?" I was like,

> "I need a promotion." She said, "Write up a new job description, and we'll make it happen." I did that. […] I've talked to a lot of other administrators who can't get out of their role, can't get a raise, can't get a promotion. I'm just like, "You have to rewrite your own. You have to do all the work yourself; you can't expect anyone to initiate it for you. You just have to do it."

Though Morgan was successful in her role's reclassification, she, like Melody, was adamant that individual workers needed to advocate for themselves. Additionally, though all three participants—Liz, Melody, and Morgan—had the support of leaders within their departments to have their individual roles reclassified, only Melody and Morgan found success working with HR. Even though Melody did have initial success as reported above, she went on to note that less than one year later when she checked to verify her status among her fellow administrative assistants, she was once again among the least compensated and planned to update her spreadsheet to take to her supervisor with an updated job description to advocate for herself. Equipped with knowledge and data, Melody's self-advocacy could be interpreted as working for social change.

Vacancy-Filling Issues

The second sub-provocation concerning HR interactions revealed by participants recognized intensities involving job vacancies. Three participants (Jennifer, Morgan, and Sam) identified experiences where a colleague vacated a role (the sub-provocation) and described how this sub-provocation impacted their perceived exploitation. First, when discussing the tenets of exploitation (fairness, benefit, and harm), Jennifer described her experience witnessing vacancies on her campus:

Jennifer: You know [HR] is struggling a lot to fill positions. People leave, and then they're reposting the same jobs over and over again.

Alexa: That's something I wanted to ask you about! I'm glad you said that; thank you. Tell me about your understanding of what happens when someone quits. That work then gets put on who?

Jennifer: On whoever is in the office still.

Alexa: Then what happens to [the person that remains]?

Jennifer: They just take it on with no compensation. They don't even get a one-time performance pay or anything.

Alexa: What ultimate harm is done from that?

Jennifer: I think people become overworked, and they start to feel resentment, like they're under appreciated. Then I think they, in turn, quit too because it's a cycle. […] Quiet quitting is real now because you are constantly doing too much. I don't think I've ever had a role where I wasn't covering for at least two or three other people's jobs and had never been compensated or acknowledged for the work that I was doing.

Jennifer's recognition of the burden placed on those who remained when vacancies opened revealed several worthwhile comments. First, and most saliently to the sub-provocation, when HR failed to successfully fill a vacancy, the downstream effect was additional work placed on those who already had their own capacity of responsibilities (via their job description). Second, without additional compensation for additional work, those who remained were reportedly resentful of the situation. Jennifer theorized that such resentment and underappreciation ironically churned additional vacancies for HR to fill or the onset of "quiet quitting." Jennifer's comment revealed the totality of the vacancy cycle.

Second, another participant further complicated this sub-provocation when she admitted that no one directed her to take on the work of a vacancy. Morgan reported that she simply took on the work of her supervisor following her departure:

Alexa: I want to go back to your comment; you said, “I was doing the work of multiple people.” How do you know that? How did you become aware of the fact that your workload is too much?

Morgan: In my previous job, my manager left, and I took on her work, as well as my job, which was as an administrative assistant to the [senior leader]. I was doing all the scheduling, planning, and project stuff. Plus [the senior leader] taught, so I also would do his TA work. My manager was [also] the Events Manager, so I started doing the events for the whole organization.

Alexa: Were you directed to do those things, or did you just start doing them?

Morgan: I just started. I mean, it would have been hard for me to let that slide. So, I guess I started doing them. But...

Alexa: Why would it have been hard?

Morgan: Because I was so involved in my manager's work that I knew what was going on, and no one else did, really. To just let all that slide off would be a major failure for the whole center. So, I just took it on and hoped that I would get some credit for it at some point.

“I just took it on and hoped that I would get some credit for it at some point.” This statement from Morgan revealed her motivation and acceptance of additional labor (on top of her blatant gendered care work responsibilities) without direction and without support from her colleagues. Not only was this a startling moment during the conversation, but it also resonated with comments previously made concerning care of her department. Morgan went on to share:

> I think not only would the executive director (who was my boss at the time) be upset if [this work] just fell through the cracks, but also, the rest of the team would be because it was such an ingrained part of the program that we do this event. […] I mean, as a part of the team, I cared too!

Morgan’s admission that her care for the success of her department at her own expense spoke to the power of exploitation. That she took on additional work without any direction from her

supervisor or HR out of care for her department demonstrated not only the normalization of exploitation but also its insidious nature; to permit a worker's passion to drive her own exploitation was problematic. This recollection from Morgan resonated with sentiments from women in their roles at home as mothers and wives who took on disproportionate work out of care for their dependents.

A final manifestation of this second sub-provocation revealed itself through conversations with Sam. Recall that over the course of phenomenological material production, Sam was supposed to have benefited from HR's hiring of a temporary worker to supplement an excessive workload given several vacancies. Unfortunately, the temporary worker quickly realized the employment opportunity would not be beneficial and left the role, leaving Sam, once again, with another colleague's vacancy. Sam recognized, though:

> The thing is, the parking [department] assigned [the temporary worker] at the adjacent campus next door, and said, "Okay, you have to park there and take the shuttle," which is an extra 30 minutes onto a 40-minute commute. So, you're already financially disadvantaged for being a temp; you now have an hour and fifteen-minute to an hour and twenty-minute commute depending on traffic. Then on top of that, you're not getting benefits because you're a temp. [It's] insane. I don't blame her one bit for quitting; I completely get it.

Sam's reflection that HR played a role in the temporary worker's decision to quickly leave the role demonstrated not only the seeming disconnect between HR as the hiring agent and Sam as the employee impacted by the downstream effect but also Sam's empathy toward the temporary worker—even when her departure eventually caused additional burden. This example was an interesting one because it related to a few ideas made by participants. Just as Cher acknowledged

how expensive it was to reside in her city and questioned her institution's leadership as to what they would do to ensure that employees could afford to live in the city in which they were employed, Sam recognized the additional burden placed on this temporary worker because of HR's decision to place the temporary worker's parking at an adjacent campus. Productions such as the wage (public) and family formation and residential configuration (private) interacted as lines of flight.

In summary, various experiences with HR were a final significant provocation; six participants revealed interesting manifestations concerning gendered labor exploitation. As ten of eleven participants shared a variety of opinions concerning HR's status as a friend or foe, two sub-provocations emerged. First, four participants shared experiences concerning job reclassifications and reorganizations (to varying degrees of success). Second, three participants communicated concerning experiences involving HR and vacancies. Again, Social Reproduction Theory continued to illuminate several lines of flight.

Realizations & Behavior Changes

Realizations and behavior changes manifested for seven participants throughout phenomenological material production. Six participants described moments of clarity concerning their gendered labor exploitation. Importantly, each of these various realizations was accompanied by decision-making and acts of resistance—provocations of social change. Two participants (Imogene and Ruth) identified and described their decision to leave a job after realizing the extent of their gendered labor exploitation, while four participants (Cher, Jennifer, Morgan, and Sam) implemented boundary-setting behaviors to counteract their gendered labor exploitation, which, again, can be understood as drivers of social change.

Both Imogene and Ruth took the significant action to leave a role because of their treatment. Their departures from one role to another have been alluded to throughout this chapter's productions and provocations. Both participants conclude the retelling of their experiences, as follows.

First, Imogene shared how she came to realize that she was being exploited. Recall that Imogene felt her work situation was unfair. She also shared the perception that her department head benefited disproportionately from her work while she was harmed: "I had to crunch all of that [extra, unspoken work not written in her job description] in between the actual duties of my job. It just made my job bigger and heavier." Imogene elaborated:

Imogene: I would see other assistants—we were in separate buildings until our building [was] renovated—once we all moved into the same building together. I knew, theoretically, that I was doing more for my department head than what the other assistants were doing for theirs. But when we all moved into the same office space together and it was one big office, I could see every day, on a day-to-day basis, what I did and what the other ones did. I didn't realize how much I was doing and how [many] higher level responsibilities I had. […] What I ended up doing was leaving that job ultimately. I realized that I was working at such a higher level than what the other ones were doing, and we were all the same title, the same pay.

Alexa: How do you know you were the same pay?

Imogene: Oh, because back when before we got [information system], when we just had our own university system, you could look in there; you could look and see what anybody on campus made. There were no silos of information; anybody could see anything.

Physical proximity, following a completed building renovation, enabled Imogene to witness the extent of her workload compared to other administrative assistants of the same title and salary. Though impossible to say with certainty, it is feasible that without that office move, Imogene could have remained isolated enough to not realize her disproportionate workload and

subsequent exploitation. Note the ease of access to and knowledge of salary information within the institution, in addition to the accessibility of publicly available salary information. Imogene was not the only participant to leave a role because of an exploitative situation.

Recall Ruth's manifestations concerning contract work that she was once compensated for, but upon the contract's end date, Ruth was expected to continue to provide the same service without supplemental pay. This manifestation involved several productions (i.e., the wage and job classifications) and provocations (i.e., conversations with other women and vacancy experiences with HR). This final excerpt, though lengthy, concludes the telling of her experience:

> Everything was hunky dory. I kept asking my boss, "When are they going hire somebody?" [He said] nothing. The contract I signed for a year was from October to October. But [the following] October, there wasn't [a new] contract. […] Meanwhile, I'm still doing the work, which was helping students with their transfer credits, their paperwork, and any kind of student related paperwork. We have advisement reports in the system, where if something doesn't match up, you make exceptions to make everything fit [so that the student can] graduate. I was doing all that stuff, and then December comes around.
>
> With our union you have four months to say something if you're doing work that is outside of your job description, or [else] it becomes your work. […] So, I asked [her supervisor] again in December, "What is going on [with the contract]?" A couple of days later, I get an email from him that says, "[Senior leader] has declined the extra service." That was it. I'm like, "What does that mean? Who's going to do this job?" I was so angry.

Without the knowledge of the four-month rule that was shared by a colleague, Ruth would have simply absorbed additional work beyond her job description without the compensation that she was once given for the same additional work. Such a scenario resonated with Priscilla's fear that her supplemental salary could be rescinded at any time, as her co-worker's was. Given the senior leader's denial of the extra service request, Ruth continued:

> I went downstairs to talk to our business leader because I felt [her supervisor] was supposed to do something a few months back but never did. […] And [the business leader] was like, "What are you saying? You're not going to do the work?" I'm like, "No, I'm not doing the work [without the contract for extra service]." She's like, "Well, then you'll have to go somewhere else."
>
> Fine! I'll go somewhere else because I was not going to be bullied by them thinking they're going to dump this on me. So then, I emailed the attorney for the Union, and I explained what was going on. I asked, "Can they do that?" [The attorney] called me right away. She's like, "Absolutely not. They cannot do that. We can file an improper practice charge."
>
> Apparently, [the business manager] didn't inform [her supervisor] of our conversation because he was like, "What are you talking about? This is part of your job duty, and I'm not giving you permission to stop doing this work." So then, [the attorney who was copied on these emails] confirmed: "So you're saying that Ruth does this work, and you want her to continue to do it?" He's like, "She needs to continue doing this stuff." Well,

> there was silence after that because I think [the business manager] got ahold of him and told him to be quiet. […]

Ruth's retelling of this account was striking. Not only did her supervisor continue to expect Ruth to perform extra work not listed on her job description (a previously identified production of gendered labor exploitation), but he admitted so much in an email. Ruth's union representative was quick to defend Ruth in her improper practice charge—a labor protection that nine of this study's participants were not afforded. Ruth finished recounting her experience and reflected:

> They could have increased my salary a couple of thousand dollars or something as a token like, "Yeah, we know you're doing this; here's some money." I would have continued to do it. But they didn't even go that route. I was telling my friends, it felt like a divorce or work divorce.
>
> He—[her supervisor]—was lying. He was saying he didn't realize all that I was doing because I didn't involve him; that I just did [the extra work] and took care of it. […] I would not have left my job if it was not for him. I love my job. I love the faculty. I love what I did. He was the reason I left.

Ultimately, Ruth left her role following this upsetting experience that she likened to a "work divorce." Recall that Ruth had experienced a marriage divorce previously, which concerned the family formation and residential configuration production identified. Ruth, herself, reflected on the connections she made between our conversations concerning already identified productions and provocations (e.g., realizations and altered approaches to partnership, family formation):

Ruth: It's funny after [our last conversation], it made me wonder if your home relationship affects your relationship with your boss? Like how you communicate at home with your spouse and how things are done, if [that] makes a difference? Because it just struck me... I think there's something to that: why I don't like my

old supervisor because of his supervising ways. He was so controlling and not respectful. I never thought about all the stuff at home, and how we do things in our house, and the chores and things, and how it's equal. There's not like one person in control of everything; it's a team kind of feeling where I didn't feel that in my in my other job. So, it just made me think that [maybe] there's [some] kind of correlation.

Alexa: It's something I haven't considered either. But I think that's part of thinking about the time activity for folks who consider their "work family," or they talk about their "work husband," "their work wife." Because [given] the amount of time we spend...

Ruth: Right.

Ruth's realization of a potential relationship between one's family formation (e.g., remarried following a divorce) that "just struck [her]" following our last conversation demonstrated not only the power of conversations with other women (the central phenomenological material production of this study) but also the power of provocation during conversation.

Soon after her successful court mediation, Ruth did find a new role in another department at the same institution; she was still in her first year of said role at the time of phenomenological material production. It is imperative to share that I, as the other person in conversation with Ruth, felt a full-body, visceral reaction to this story throughout this discussion. It was obvious that even a year after this confrontation and a successful transition into a role in which Ruth felt appreciated, she was still upset by her exploitation. Although some consider it a privilege to be able to afford to leave one role for another, Ruth's experience was the most dramatic as a form of resistance (given the involvement of legal representation). Other participants, though, also exerted resistance to their gendered labor exploitation.

Four participants (Cher, Jennifer, Morgan, and Sam) each implemented some form of boundary setting (a behavior change) with their HEI employers to counteract their perceived

gendered labor exploitation. In contextualizing the need to establish boundaries, Cher expressed a recognition of the connection between her family formation and her employment:

> To be honest, my goal in life is for me to have a good time. If I'm worrying about work all the time, I am not going to have a good time. […] I can be selfish because I don't have kids. I don't have to look out for someone else; I can look out for me. Worrying about work just isn't what I want.

To "look out for [herself]" following the realization of the insidious nature of additional work, Cher began protecting her time. She explained:

> One thing that I do is I turn things in on time, but I'm not necessarily going to let them know exactly how fast I did [a task] because I don't want to keep having more stuff piled on me, you know? Because they're like, "Oh, you can do that in 15 minutes, not 30. So, let's give you something else to do." I don't want to get overloaded. I think that I would be able to say, "No, I can't do this," but I haven't gotten to that point yet.

By implementing boundaries at work, Cher has been able to protect her time and workload. She admitted that she has not yet needed to outright say to her supervisor, "No, I can't do this," however, that she has recognized this potential exploitation and prepared herself to protect her boundary was notable. Cher was not the only participant to implement boundary setting, though.

Jennifer reflected on her experience with therapy as a space to realize the intentionalities concerning her gendered labor exploitation. She explained:

> [Over] the past few years, I've been learning a lot on boundaries through therapy and the importance of being able to be empowered to say "no," which was something I couldn't do before. I wouldn't even know or identify burnout when I had too much on my plate until [I became] physically sick or something like that. […] I realized what it was that I

was doing: [over giving]. But that feeling of wanting to get love or validation through others by doing for them, I felt like if I [gave] and I kept [giving] more, that people would think that I was important. Or they needed me, or they'd acknowledge me like in the workplace. I've definitely been working on setting boundaries and that my self-worth isn't tied to how much I do for other people because other people will just keep asking for more; they don't stop. […] I mean, in my early years in higher ed, I did put way too many hours, and I stayed way too late at work. I just worked way too hard.

During therapy sessions Jennifer realized that by giving her employer too many hours and working too hard, she was "over giving," which benefited her institution and harmed herself. That "people will just keep asking for more; they don't stop," was a difficult lesson for Jennifer.

Although Jennifer utilized therapy as a support to set boundaries around her work, she also expressed a key insight into the relationship between gendered labor exploitation both at home and work; the two spheres are intrinsically connected. Jennifer explained:

Jennifer: I guess work life and personal life, as much as we try to keep [them] separate, they impact each other inevitably. Our own issues or whatever we experience outside of work, we do end up bringing [those] into the workplace as much as people try to say [to keep them] separate.

Alexa: Do you think it's possible to separate them?

Jennifer: I want it, but no. I think ultimately, there's always going to be crossover.

Alexa: You gave a really good example of this earlier, and I guess I want to clarify. I asked you last time: which is the driving force in your life? Is work driving your life? Or do you try and separate those spheres? But then today, you'd mentioned your theory that perhaps the stress of your work is contributing to your health at this point, like being sick in the ways that you are. I'm wondering if you have any comments about that, as it relates to... is it really hard to separate what is happening at work from home?

Jennifer: Yeah, I think that, ideally, they need to be balanced so that you can enjoy both parts of your life. You want to be able to enjoy your time away from work and be able to separate yourself. Then you also want to be able to be okay with your job, whether you feel fulfilled or not, enough where [it's] not taking a toll on your ability to function outside of work. If you're stressed all the time, it affects your health, and then you can't really enjoy your life. I think that plays a part, but then sometimes depending on the environment, too, you want to separate just to protect yourself. That's the way I've been operating the past few months. I want to keep personal separate, so no one can use it against me. But then, ultimately, your personal values and your personal life drive the way you interact with others at work or the way you do your job or what your values are.

In implementing boundaries, Jennifer was able to protect her time and energy, devoting less to her work life and more to her personal wellness—a form of resistance to gendered labor exploitation.

Similarly, both Morgan and Sam committed to their boundaries, which can be understood as forms of resistance or a commitment to social change. Recall that Morgan refused to go into her office, despite her institution's policy. She elaborated and clarified:

> [This new policy] is bullshit; it's petty. Half of my team is remote; half my team is in the area. I know that half my team is not working at the office; I know [because] I'm not seeing them. So, it's really hard to tell your staff that you have to be here. But there are certain exceptions for other people, and that's just the way it is. I can see through it, my manager can see through it, the director of our project is like, "I don't care where you work from; it doesn't matter to me." These are [institution] rules that I think are just not being enforced at this point.

Since the rules of the institution were not being enforced and because her supervisor agreed that it did not matter where one worked from, Morgan felt comfortable to engage in such resistance. Workers were not always as supported as was Morgan, however.

Recall that Sam—in relation to the productions of hierarchy and job classifications—defended boundary-setting as an hourly worker. Not only did Sam utilize the protection of hourly work, but Sam also advocated for at least one, if not two, days working from home. Such advocacy certainly resonated with other participants' self-initiated advocacy. However, consider how each of these participant examples of resistance were supported. Yes, both Ruth and Morgan benefited from Union and supervisor support; however, Imogene, Jennifer, and Sam's realizations and resistance were not encouraged nor supported by others.

In summary, several acts of resistance—a key tenet of feminist practice—were born out of participant realizations. Six participants revealed interesting manifestations of this final of four significant provocations. Though not as dramatic as Imogene and Ruth's departure from a role entirely, four participants also engaged in behavior changes that can be understood as acts of resistance. Such behaviors ultimately resulted from realizations concerning gendered labor exploitation and can be interpreted as opportunities for social change.

Conclusion

Four provocations—COVID-19 global pandemic; conversations with other women; experiences with HR; and realizations and behavior changes—reveal intensities concerning gendered labor exploitation. Although each of the given examples provided throughout Chapter 8 demonstrates to varying extents gendered labor exploitation, collectively they expose the edges of the phenomenon of interest. Again, the fleeting, partial, and multiple intentionalities revealed as provocations in this chapter are constantly in flux—being made and unmade. Conceptually, such catalysts or intensities, when viewed through the lens of SRT (where women are primarily responsible for and burdened by the necessary but contradictory provision of social reproduction labor in a patriarchal society), exhibit the contours of gendered labor exploitation. Once more,

findings from this chapter demonstrate that women are not only burdened in their homes but also in their places of employment.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERLUDE 8

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As I wait for the conclusion of MIHE admitted student weekend this evening with a dinner at Trappeze, I cannot help but reflect on the totality of my experience as a graduate student over the past four years. I moved to Athens, GA (a well-known quirky, music-loving SEC college town) without a friend, family member, or any real community. In hindsight, fall 2019 was the last semester of the before times. But, of course, how could we have known that then? As I settled into a life that was defined solely by my academic work, I could never have predicted that the loneliness that I felt during that first semester could be even lonelier as a grad student who lived alone during an unprecedented global health crisis.

What I remember of that first semester was overwhelming. I would block out hours of my day (at least 6 days a week) to read every assigned reading during what I knew would be the most intense of five coursework semesters. For the most part, I did read everything that was assigned. (It wouldn't be until my second year that I found the value in ensuring all my pdf files were readable.) Sure, I may have made the strategic choice to skim methods sections that were not of real interest to me, but I read all the readings. I heard older students make comments about how this experience is supposed to be overwhelming; it's graduate school after all. Although different folks approached their work with varying levels of intensity, I was very pleased that I took my coursework assignments as seriously as I did because there were ideas and citations from that very first semester that continue to shape my thoughts today.

That first semester was lonely though; it was difficult. It's hard to make friends as an adult. Sure, I joined the Junior League in town. But there's a lot of sussing out who likes you, who doesn't like you, who thinks you're too much, who can't stand you. I think I put way too much time and energy into caring what other people thought of me in the beginning. But all alone, in a new location, on the heels of a tumultuous exit from my previous employment and life, I could not help but be swept up in my worries.

It’s true; during that first year, I was not interested in quantitative research methods. The fact that quantitative methods would be a part of my entire first year of Graduate School was annoying to me. The last class I had in the before times was the quant II midterm. I had my colored pens and my singular note card with a formula cheat sheet when I walked out of that test feeling as good as I thought possible. This was also the last class before spring break! As a well-informed, dedicated Rachel Maddow fan, I couldn’t help but pay attention to a concerning health crisis appearing in Europe. I can remember being horrified as I watched footage and reporting out of Italy in particular. Lines to the grocery store? Rations on how many items people could buy? Everyone wearing masks? Wasn’t this what I imagined living during a war was like?

Of course, it wasn't long before reports started in the United States; I believe Washington that was first reported state. Just weeks prior, I had spent the weekend in Atlanta with some friends. There were already cases in the city; we just didn’t know it yet. I had also traveled to Dallas for a sorority event; it was already circulating among us as we traveled. Therefore, I wasn't entirely too caught off guard when certain cities or states made the decision to extend spring break vacations that were already underway. That idea wasn’t totally foreign to me. Afterall, when I worked in student affairs we would always be prepared for a wave of various illnesses in the weeks after students returned from their various destinations.

I remember vividly receiving an email from USG letting us know that classes would resume on schedule no matter what. I remember laughing as I walked from the Starbucks on College back to my car (parked on College, not Broad, when that road was still open to traffic). I texted friends that I both could and couldn't believe this decision. Of course, within a matter of hours, a second email went out informing the community that spring break would be extended.

There were also text messages that were circulating that said something to the effect of, “The National Guard is shutting down state borders. Get gasoline while you can. Travel will be restricted. I heard this from a friend in the military.” Of course, living very far away from my mom, I spoke to her on the phone, and she insisted that I drive home at least for spring break because she would feel better with me at home in Ohio. I remember packing in a bit of a daze a single bag full of leggings, two sweatshirts, a couple of T-shirts, and a single black dress—you know, in case there was a funeral I needed to attend. I put gas in the car, packed up my plants and the cat, and started the 11-hour drive north.

What I thought would be a two-week vacation turned into five, almost six, months in my childhood home with my mom and three cats, as we would watch hundreds of thousands of Americans die because of COVID. I really thought we were all going to die if I’m being honest. Therefore, I started engaging in various abnormal behaviors: I started staying up until 3am every night; I downloaded TikTok finally; I had a glass (or two or three) of #WineWithDeWine at 2pm during the televised daily briefings before 5pm Happy Hour with mom. Sure, I finished my coursework, turned in finals, and engaged in many Zoom happy hours and assistantship meetings. Yes, I spent more time outdoors walking and socializing from a distance that summer than I ever had before. Yet it all felt so unbelievable and surreal. I was stunned that there was so much infighting concerning if COVID was even real let alone what to do about it. As more and

more Americans died, a sense of hopelessness washed over me. I truly believe that were it not for my coursework, I would have become untethered.

In hindsight it's not shocking, but at the time I was devastated to learn that the governing body of the university was requiring in person attendance for fall 2020 courses even though we still didn't have vaccines. In addition, there also would be no policy concerning masking. I had no choice but to return to Athens. On the one hand I am incredibly grateful that I had a quaint, safe, and comfortable home where I need not worry about infecting someone else or being infected. However, with only Rayna's company, I was certainly incredibly lonely. But with phone apps like Marco Polo, I could in real time send messages to friends and loved ones who were also isolated; this certainly helped the situation. I also engaged in many an outdoor activity with friends. Hangouts in the park, walks around town and through Athens' many beautiful trails provided some sense of community while maintaining the security of health.

For a while, this became the norm. Going to class, knowing that another wave of COVID would follow just as quickly as the last receded, another election, more infighting, making plans around whether someone got sick or not. In the meanwhile, I was adopted by two women (one of whom was also a student in the program.) Collectively we became known as the Broad Pod. Without these women I am sure that I would not be as successful of a student as I am today.

As I was deciding who would be on my dissertation committee, a publicly available vaccine emerged. The sense of security and freedom that came with being vaccinated was something so comforting, I'm sure I will not be able to capture the experience in words. It was a relief knowing that this nightmare of a year could be ending soon. Of course, to think that spring 2021 would have been the end of this nightmare was cute. However naïve that thinking was, I was vaccinated (Pfizer, baby!); I choose my committee; I completed my program of study

meeting with said committee; and I set forth on the summer-long journey back home to Ohio to prepare for my comprehensive exams.

I sat for my comprehensive exams in fall 2021. This meant that I had a really stressful three weeks to begin the semester followed by a month-long to hear back the results of my written exam. At the same time, I was awarded the Libby V. Morris Leadership Award. This was an incredibly humbling moment that I truly did not expect. The day after the award reception, I flew to NOLA for what would have been the rescheduled 2021 Jazzfest to be held in October. Of course, like everything else that was rescheduled, the festival was canceled because of the Omicron variant. However, that would not stop Mom and I from spending a week in New Orleans. Bars and restaurants were, for the first time, rewarding/incentivizing vaccinations and boosters by only permitting those who could show verification of their vaccine/booster. We REVELED in this environment. It was during that week that I learned that I successfully passed my written comprehensive exams and would need to schedule my oral defense at some point still that semester. After successfully defending my comprehensive exam (I believe in early November), I enrolled in a Spring 2022 course beyond IHE that served as the structure I needed to complete my dissertation proposal. Working with a fellow IHE student and friend, I eventually crafted what would become a significant portion of my dissertation. I cannot express how grateful I am that so much of the work of this dissertation was completed because of my comprehensive exams, that course beyond MIHE, and the proposal itself.

It wasn't until January 2022 that I finally came down with COVID. At first, I didn't think anything of my symptoms. A sore throat? I'd had them constantly over the past two years (Real or imagined? Who's to say?). I remember my back hurting, but I didn't think anything of it because I had just been in the car for 12 hours and unpacked all my holiday luggage. I took an at-

home test that came back negative. But of course, because I was so paranoid, I went to the health center to get tested. The doctor tested me for strep, first, and then COVID. I remember getting the negative strep test results emailed before learning at work that my COVID results came back positive. I packed up my stuff very quickly, put on my mask, and ran out of the building to go home. I sobbed on the phone with friends and family letting them know of my results. I don't know what more I can say other than that I was so scared. Yet I was incredibly thankful that I was vaccinated and boosted by then. But to know that so many people had died from the same thing that had infected me was difficult, while I was, yet again, isolated alone.

After recovering from COVID (which lasted about 6 miserable days), I spent the rest of that semester soaking up as much joy as possible. I stayed up late with friends, co-hosted supper club parties, experienced all the bars and restaurants in Athens, attended wine-tasting classes, tried to start dating, and engaged in community that indulged me for exactly who I was. In hindsight, that period was like the best part of a bottle of wine, the thrill when the lights dim at the movie theater, the comfort that washes over you as you get into bed. It was, quite frankly, the most soul-filling communal part of my graduate school experience.

I was in New Orleans, again, in April 2022 for what would be the first Jazzfest since the inception of the pandemic, when I completed my last online zoom class, finished writing an entirely new methodology for my proposal, and put a period on the end of my third year as a graduate student. At the time, I had an idea of moving to New Orleans after I completed my degree. I can remember staying up incredibly late one night writing in a courtyard, listening to the ambient noise that passed by, when it occurred to me that I could see myself living in New Orleans. I knew then that I would do what it took to make that dream happen.

I think it's important to document that up I had only experienced one semester in the before times. Throughout the fall 2020 semester faculty were permitted to offer some form of hybrid in-person class, which meant that we would still meet in person every week but for shorter periods of time before completing our coursework with asynchronous learning. In spring 2021 I had one entirely remote class with a department beyond IHE. By fall 2021 I was out of coursework, so although my coursework experience throughout my doctoral coursework was unsettling throughout a global health crisis, I know the people in my immediate environment were doing their best as we all navigated these unprecedented times. Of course, were it not for so many virtual experiences, I might not know that I am capable of working entirely remotely. This experience solidified my interest in pursuing an entirely remote job on the other side of this dissertation. When the pandemic forced us to pivot, at least I gained incredible zoom facilitation skills.

My final year of Graduate School, the one where I gathered all my phenomenological material, thought extensively with theory, and wrote what is at present a 300-page dissertation, has been one of relative freedom and flexibility. Although I don't spend nearly as much time reading as I did during coursework, I spend just as much time thinking about theory, writing not only my dissertation but also proposals for other publications and conferences. I found a sense of confidence because of Michael Goodman's foresight in my ability to research alongside him. I was also stunned to learn that I received the Zell and Shirley Miller Fellowship, which was such a compliment and nod of confidence coming from the MIHE faculty.

I also experienced for the first time the ASHE conference—this one held in Las Vegas. In the weeks leading up to the conference, I found myself in a slump (and not just because I got another booster days before we traveled). I had already revised/reworked Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4

of this dissertation. But for whatever reason, as I finalized my participant Venn diagrams and profiles, I could not bring myself to begin writing my findings. Connecting with colleagues from institutions throughout my life, I found myself under Paris hotel's Eiffel Tower late one night staring out at the Bellagio fountains when a former classmate said, "At some point, you're going to just wake up one morning and need to get what is currently swimming in your mind out on paper. It will just pour of you." That's exactly what happened. But not before two of my four closest friends and roommates on the trip tested positive for COVID. A third friend and I were enjoying our last few hours in Vegas before our late flight when we learned of the first positive test. We arrived back to ATL, exhausted, concerned, and deflated. I was particularly upset because this all transpired on the Sunday before I was due to leave home for Thanksgiving week. If I had COVID, there was no way I would go home. The anguish I felt as someone who was going to have to make a difficult decision to protect people I love at the cost of my own holiday joy was devastating; it felt so unfair as someone who took the pandemic so seriously. Only because every COVID test I took came back negative did I decide to make the trip home.

Of course, as my graduate school experience concludes, I finally found a groove, vibe, and adoration for an experience that is almost over. As someone who believes in higher education immensely, I head into my final admitted student reception this evening with a sense of appreciation for all that this experience has been and grief over the fact that it must end.

I know this experience has been unique. I can say with certainty it was difficult and at times unbearable. But now in spring 2023, I can say that it has also been one of the most impressive things that I've done with my life. The ideas that I was exposed to, the identities that I was encouraged to try on, the experiences that I have had, and the community that I have built

are treasures that I will hold onto dearly as I step off this train onto the platform where I await the next.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

At this point, the film has ended, and you—the audience—are treated to the director's commentary. It is my hope that as the house lights come on and you stretch after consuming a lengthy presentation, you eagerly turn to the person next to you to share your immediate thoughts because you were so moved by moments of the film (i.e., findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6). In case you were confused by any part of the film or if you were simply curious about a particular sequence, I offer the following commentary or discussion to demonstrate my understanding of the final product—this post-intentional phenomenological text.

Study Summary and Discussion

This critical feminist study sought to explore the phenomenon of gendered labor exploitation in two separate (but related) sites—the home and higher education employment. In doing so, a gap concerning the limited body of scholarship addressing higher education staff members was filled. Answering the calls to contribute to this post-secondary scholarship deficiency was motivating (Kezar et al., 2019; Sallee, 2021), as higher education is often associated with feminist action. Here, bell hooks contextualized the association between the academy and feminism:

> Since the work of feminist theorists necessitates fundamental questioning and critiquing of the ideological structures of the prevailing white-supremacist, patriarchal hegemony, it is fitting that the university be identified as a useful site for radical political work, for feminist movement. It must be remembered that it is not and should not be the only site

> of such work. Academic women and men engaged in the production of feminist theory must be responsible for setting up ways to disseminate feminist thought that not only transcend the boundaries of the university setting, but that of the printed page as well. It is also our responsibility to promote and encourage the development of feminist theory by folks who are not academics. As long as the university remains "the" central site for the development of feminist scholarship, it will be necessary for us to examine the ways in which our work can be and is undermined. (1989, p. 36)

This dissertation was my first attempt to "transcend the boundaries of the university setting." Because the university has been identified as a useful site for "radical political work," it was an obvious site upon which to focus the lens of Social Reproduction Theory (SRT). As a Marxist feminist theory that addresses laborer production, SRT was appropriate to "think" with (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) because social reproduction concerns sites other than the private home. Although some recent post-secondary scholarship has utilized SRT (Ford, 2020; Greene, 2021; Guild, 2019; Jayasuriya, 2021), my explicit intention to utilize this theory considering both the sites of the home and higher education employment with an often-forgotten population—women staff—was not only unique but also personally meaningful.

Although higher education scholars have broadly explored women's higher education labor, research disproportionately concerns faculty as opposed to "non-academic" staff. Such ample literature concerning women faculty members has examined the various stages of faculty life, intersectionality, institutional type, parenting and family formation, invisible labor, and coping strategies. One faculty-focused study reviewed inspired a critical component of this study's phenomenological material.

As a part of the University of California Faculty Work and Family Survey, Mason and colleagues (2003) asked participants to reflect on the average number of hours per week they had spent on professional work, housework and home maintenance, and caregiving activities. This single question inspired the reflective activity that occurred during the first of three conversations with each participant. Though Mason and Goulden (2004) reported that women faculty with children worked 100 hours per week between their waged work within academia and social reproduction responsibilities at home, this study was not interested in reporting the number of hours women engaged in social reproduction (i.e., home maintenance and caregiving) activities. However, engaging in this reflective activity at the outset of this study's three conversation series acclimated participants to a new term (i.e., social reproduction) that encompassed activities in which they were already intimately familiar. Even though both Mason and colleagues' (2003) and Mason and Goulden (2004) studies concerned faculty, s scholarship greatly influenced this study's research design.

Literature concerning women staff was less abundant but specifically considered various hierarchical and functional areas in which women staff were employed, stressors and work satisfaction, ideal worker norms, and parenting and family formation. When considered collectively, the literature reviewed broadly addressed ideal worker norms, career development, and retention, attrition, and burnout. However, as Sallee (2021) and Kezar and colleagues (2019) suggested, more research was needed concerning higher education staff and ideal worker norms. This study attempted not only to address the gap identified but to also examine the connection between social reproduction and higher education labor.

As a critical theory, SRT helped uncover the structures and processes that underpin domination and promote emancipation. Stemming from both Marxist and feminist thought

during the 1970s, SRT is a middle-level theory that concerns the everyday ways in which capitalism reproduces a unique commodity—labor power. In a society where women are socialized into caregiving roles, SRT explicitly concerns matters of gender and sex. The theory gained popularity after a period of relative dormancy in the 1990s and early 2000s and has even surfaced within recent higher education scholarship. Recent scholars such as Ford (2020), Greene (2021), Guild (2019) and Jayasuriya (2021) have connected SRT to the site of higher education. This study looks to extend such progress in answering Backer and Cairns' (2021) call to examine social reproduction across various social reproduction sites, both private and public.

Though SRT was the primary theoretical framework utilized, this study also specifically considered the neoliberal academy. Byproducts of the societies in which they were constructed, institutions of higher education are gendered, racialized, classist, and ableist institutions (Acker, 1990; Costello, 2012; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Reay, 2004; Simpson & Fitzgerald, 2014). Although many intentional efforts have been made to address higher education's exclusionary history, sustained attention should be given to this important matter. As model organizations to its students and reproductive site, academia must do more and do better.

One such opportunity for academia to be better concerns its employees. Identified by Kezar and colleagues (2019), the Gig Academy—an outgrowth of Slaughter and Leslie's (1997) and Slaughter and Rhoades' (2004) theory of Academic Capitalism—exploits faculty, graduate students and postdocs, research-only faculty, and staff, all of whom "are indispensable to the functioning of the institution" (p. 16). Given this study's inherent feminist motivation to explore and understand gendered labor exploitation, the lens of SRT was appropriate.

To underscore the intersection and complex relationship between various concepts introduced in the introduction, literature review, and theoretical framework (e.g., caregiving,

women, socialization, family formation, the wage, reproduction, invisible labor, the patriarchy), consider the following from Melda Yaman. Here, Yaman (2022) explained the ways in which social reproduction is related to social inequalities such as class, gender, and race, ecology, social policies, and economic crises:

> First of all, capitalism determines people's reproduction through wages, social policies, and economic crises. That is, social reproduction is a class-based phenomenon, and the tendencies of capital accumulation determine the survival conditions of working-class houses. Moreover, women do unpaid reproduction work under patriarchal inequalities. Besides, they are responsible for reproduction work just because of the sexual division of labor grounded on patriarchy. These coercive conditions and the workload determine women's life—from participation in paid work to realize their human potential. Apart from these, reproduction work involves several activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, and responsibilities and relationships such as love, care, and social and familial ties. Most of these emotions and social links are significant for humans and society. However, they put an additional burden on the shoulder of women and are indeed the means to make women responsible for all care and reproduction work. For an individual to develop as a human being and a social being, she definitely must be brought up in social relations. There is no necessity for the caregivers to be women at all. (p. 78)

Yaman's explanation of social reproduction is presented here as a reminder of how obvious gendered labor exploitation is and its complexity as an embedded function of capitalism. It was not surprising to me, then, how unfamiliar this study's participants were to the term and concept, despite my enthusiastic adoption of the theory (see initial post-reflexion statement).

Ultimately, though, I was surprised by participant reactions to their experience as a source of insight into the phenomenon. One participant who was visibly energized by our third conversation was Melody. When asked if she had any final thoughts, comments, or ideas to share about gendered labor exploitation, she expressed:

> I think it's very important, though, if you decide to have kids or if anybody decides to have kids, what we're teaching that next generation […] about their role in society, to help make that next generation see the importance of people: who they are—more so than where they come from, or dollar signs, or anything like that. I think discussions like this and making sure that the next generation is trying to follow those footsteps of equality, and equity, inclusion, and living life when you can, and helping those who can't. I think that's the only thing we can do. Go to the voting booth. If you have the ability to make change, go for it. But also, we've got to teach this next generation to make [this society] better than the last.

Melody's comment alludes to Melody's understanding of social reproduction at the culmination of our conversations. Similarly, Morgan shared the following when asked if she had any final thoughts, comments, or ideas:

> I think we've covered everything. I think this feels like therapy to me because I don't... people who work in higher education don't really talk to each other about this stuff, I don't think. They do for very specific reasons, but [concerning] the overall picture, I've never had this conversation with anybody. It's been lovely. We should be forced to do this to realize what it is that we're doing and how we can get out of our misery and think about our future. So, thank you.

I am not sure I can convey in words the feelings of immense pride I felt after hearing Morgan's comment. That she likened her participation in this study's phenomenological material production to therapy was humbling. However, it was her comment, "I've never had this conversation with anybody," that signaled to me the individual impact that conversation concerning SRT could have.

After considering various methodological approaches, ultimately this research utilized a post-intentional phenomenological methodology to explore the phenomenon of interest—gendered labor exploitation. Though the broad goal of this higher education labor study was to understand the experience of gendered labor exploitation in two separate but connected reproductive spaces, specifically, the following questions guided this research:

- What does it mean for women staff to experience labor exploitation in both their homes and their places of employment (higher education institutions)?
- To what extent and in what ways do women staff imagine institutional support services and policies could be adjusted to address social reproduction equity?

Acknowledging feminist critique of the philosophy and approach (i.e., phenomenology's historic usage of essence, neutrality toward sex and gender), I argued that post-intentional phenomenology (PIP), as an evolved phenomenological methodology, and feminist theory could be crafted in a way that enhanced both traditions. Such thoughtful research design was particularly powerful given both tradition's shared goal concerning social change and political problems.

Utilizing Vagle's (2018) non-linear five step approach, I first identified a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue (i.e., gendered labor exploitation). I also devised a clear yet flexible process (e.g., mid-conversation series request for job descriptions) for

producing phenomenological material and made a post-reflexion plan. Ultimately, I produced phenomenological material from four sources: a series of semi-structured conversations, participant-generated daily schedules (via reflective activity), a collection of participant job descriptions, and my bridling journal. As I explored the post-intentional phenomenon using SRT, I engaged the phenomenological materials by deconstructing the wholes of the materials via careful line-by-line readings, "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), and analyzing post-reflexions. Utilizing Google's digital Jamboards, I organized phenomenological materials into, first, Participant Venn Diagrams and synthesized said diagrams into, second, Participant Profiles. In familiarizing myself with the phenomenological materials produced, I eventually identified both "productions" and "provocations" that could produce social change concerning the phenomenon of interest. Ultimately, this dissertation is presented as text that engages said productions and provocations of gendered labor exploitation within two separate but related sites: the home and R1 higher education institutions (HEI).

As described in Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8, this study's findings—presented as productions and provocations—assisted me in identifying "cracks" in the cycle of reproduction. In supplementing the summary of productions and provocations identified, I also present a discussion of this study's findings with particular attention given toward the possibility of social change. As a feminist scholar whose intentionalities (see post-reflexion statements) are also constantly being made and remade within a society that, too, is constantly made and remade, it is imperative to acknowledge, again, that a different "director" could produce an entirely different "film." However, in what follows, I present my understanding of production and provocations of gendered labor exploitation in the related sites of the home and employment within higher

education institutions. Three productions concerning gendered labor exploitation in the private home were revealed.

First and most noticeably, family formation and residential configurations (i.e., the unique configuration concerning with whom one resides, partnership status, and responsibility for any dependents—children or elders) related to various manifestations of gendered labor exploitation. Single participants, although without the responsibility of dependents, spoke of the financial strain placed upon their social reproduction given their single income. Though they were not solely responsible for the gendered caretaking or social reproduction of others at the time of phenomenological material production, they described ways in which they have been or could yet be. Such participants shared anxieties concerning the financial strain placed upon them (i.e., considering a second job, co-owning a home with a sibling). With only one income, it was interesting to note that the sole participant to extensively care for her elderly relative had already made retirement arrangements given her singleness. All participants who were partnered or married benefited from the income of another individual to offset the financial burden of social reproduction; some of these participants had disposable enough income to outsource social reproduction tasks (i.e., lawn care, cleaning services); however, each of these participants also lamented the ways in which additional souls (regardless of gender) in their home increased the amount of gendered labor exploitation (in the form of social reproduction) they experienced, as well. Participants with children, unsurprisingly, spoke passionately about exploitation. Whether single or in partnership, each participant described ways in which they were burdened with disproportionate caretaking responsibilities. These participants expressed not only the desire for any amount of "me time" to be individuals but also a palpable desire for assistance in their roles as wives and mothers. The production of family formation, in its many iterations, demonstrated

the financial implications concerning social reproduction. Considering the potential for social change, the various family formation manifestations also revealed the durability of the nuclear family as a structure to exploit women—particularly when love is weaponized. Until the nuclear family is challenged, women who are socialized to maintain this private space without any compensation, will continue to be exploited laborers.

The second production observed within the private sphere of the home concerned patriarchal gender socialization. More specifically, three sub-productions—manifestations of women's invisible labor, perceptions of men's socialization, and implicit examples of women's socialization—revealed ordinary ways in which women were inherently exploited within a patriarchal, capitalist society as the conductors of social reproduction whose (invisible) labor is inherently not valued. This production, though, could be a place of disruption when considering social change. Social reproduction work (i.e., caregiving) could be valued, made visible, and be completed by all individuals regardless of their gender. The socialization of children, in general, could disrupt the generational cycle of gendered labor exploitation. However, for this social change to occur, such unvalued labor must not only be recognized but also valued (i.e., compensated). It will take intentional effort to create value under a system that has historically profited from such exploitation. Additionally, cycles of generational, gendered socialization would need to be broken and the binary construct of gender, itself, reexamined. Such tasks would be gargantuan. Fortunately, the third production identified—family history/role modeling—could also serve as a site of disruption in the effort for social change.

The final home production identified involved participants' family history/role modeling. Several participants made intentional connections between the conditions of their upbringing (i.e., family formation) and their perpetuation or disruption of similar roles and behaviors as

adults. For example, some participants simply reproduced the nuclear family or gendered roles in which they observed as children. Other participants, however, intentionally disrupted the production of family history/role modeling by choosing to remain single, to not have children, or to raise their children with different values. Each of these divergent actions inspires the belief that, although slow, change within individual nuclear families is possible. Imagine for a moment what change within an entire generation of collective nuclear families could produce.

Each of these three productions demonstrated ongoing ways in which the phenomenon of gendered labor exploitation manifests over time. Following lines of flight, each production also revealed potential ways in which gendered labor exploitation could be disrupted. Although each of the identified productions are relatively sturdy structures, constructs, and ideas within a racist, gendered, sexist, classist, imperial, ableist, capitalist society, the potential for a more equitable labor distribution for all is possible.

In addition to the three identified productions of gendered labor exploitation in the home, three provocations also manifested. Each of these three provocations served as intensities of gendered labor exploitation: realizations followed by altered approaches to partnership, exposure to feminist ideas, and conversations with other women. Each of these three provocations addressed how social change is possible.

First, three participants discussed experiences concerning a partnership breakup or divorce. Such alterations to one's family formation, living arrangement, and financial relationship impacted not only the perceived amount of gendered labor exploitation experienced but also one's general awareness of the phenomenon. In terms of both additional financial consequences and subsequent levels of social reproduction activities taken on because of this provocation, participants seemingly appreciated the freedom and independence that subsequently

emerged with the dissolution of their relationship. With the support of family and friends, these participants were able to move forward from their previous relationships with clear expectations and ideas concerning any future partnership. Participants who experienced a partnership breakup or divorce recognized disproportionate levels of social reproduction within their partnership, made a change to their family formation, and ultimately created new standards to evaluate the health of future relationships. With such clear expectations, these women disrupted gendered labor exploitation given their altered attitudes and outlooks towards partnership. Though breakups and divorces can be painful experiences, they also served as provocations that led to social change for participants. Though impossible to say with certainty, were it not for these significant and life altering experiences, participants could still be in relationships where gendered labor exploitation continued.

Second, exposure to feminist ideas served as a catalyst—and second provocation—for participants' ideas concerning social reproduction equity at home. Four participants spoke of their experiences engaging with feminist thought through post-secondary education, a book, blog, TikTok, television show, podcast, or Facebook group. Each participant spoke of their enlightenment—both big and small—resulting from these feminist idea exposures. Although the decision to pursue formal education was a significant commitment for one participant, the other exposures described by participants happened in ordinary and even happenchance ways. Ultimately, each engagement with various feminist ideas inspired or provoked critical thought concerning gendered labor exploitation. So long as women have access to various outlets where feminist thought is shared, the opportunity for feminist ideas can be nurtured. As such, continued efforts to broadly spread feminist thought and philosophy should continue with the explicit political intention of enabling social change.

Finally, four participants described interesting intentional connections concerning gendered labor exploitation at home and conversations with other women—the third home provocation identified. Participants described examples of conversations had with familiar contacts (some intimate, some distant) that enabled even brief opportunities to reflect upon, vent about, question, accept, and ultimately realize elements of the phenomenon of interest. Importantly, though, each of the conversations described occurred with other women. As this provocation emerged throughout the exploration of the phenomenon using theory, phenomenological material, and post-reflexion, I was affirmed in my decision to conceptualize this study's phenomenological material production through conversation, as opposed to traditional interviews. Because I was clear with participants that we were engaging in conversation, I felt in real-time an embodied connection to each participant as we explored gendered labor exploitation. I believe, in hindsight, that this post-intentionality was possible because of the conversational nature of phenomenological material production. Therefore, it is imperative that women continue to hold space for these venues of dialogue and to prioritize connection. In a patriarchal society that benefits from the gendered status quo, women must tend to and nurture one another's liberation, a marker of social change.

The three productions and three provocations of gendered labor exploitation in the private space of the home revealed several interesting intentional connections. One's family formation (production) was impacted by family role modeling/history (production), gender socialization (production), altered approaches to partnership given breakups and divorces (provocation), and conversations with other women (provocation). Some altered approaches toward partnerships (provocation) were impacted by exposure to feminist ideas (provocation). Yet each of these productions and provocations demonstrated where or how (around the edges of the phenomenon)

opportunities to disrupt gendered labor exploitation in the pursuit of gendered labor equity—a social change of interest to feminist scholars.

Gendered labor exploitation in academia, a public space of employment, was the second of two sites of social reproduction examined in this study. Five on-going productions were revealed through the phenomenological material produced concerning this public site: gendered labor, job descriptions and classifications, the wage and benefits, hierarchies, and the workweek structure. Each of these five productions addressed the ongoing ways in which the phenomenon, gendered labor exploitation, manifests over time in the workplace— identified by bell hooks (1989) as an ideal site of feminist intervention.

The first production identified—gendered labor—was discussed by several participants. Within this production, two sub-productions emerged: caretaking at work and embedded gendered labor expectations in relation to one's job description. An interesting line of flight emerged from the manifestation that some women leaders perpetuate and redistribute gendered labor onto other women staff; doing so reproduced the gendered nature of such administrative assistant roles within the gendered academy. Generally, though, this production revealed the insidious ways in which women's caretaking socialization in the home is also expected in the workplace. In reviewing participants' job descriptions, it became clear that some of the gendered labor expected of participants was codified within the human resource document; if participants are expected to serve as caretakers in their employment, then such labor must be valued and women must be compensated as such. Other gendered labor, though, was perceived to be exploitative through both implicit and explicit expectations. In pursuit of social change, this production revealed ample opportunities for disruption. For example, with greater awareness of the role that women, themselves, perpetuate when in positions of power, women in leadership

roles within hierarchical higher education institutions could disrupt the patriarchal cycle of gendered labor exploitation. Additionally, with increased awareness among individual women leaders, directives to HR could review and update not just job descriptions (formally) for clarity but HR could also address exploitive supervisor/managerial expectations. That participants even questioned what was and was not gendered labor demonstrates the need for collective attention to this on-going production.

The second production, job descriptions and classifications, was identified as a substantial production that maintains (but also disrupts) gendered labor exploitation. More specifically, most participants identified three sub-productions: hidden labor, job classifications, and job transitions. "Hidden labor," the first sub-production, concerned work expectations that were not accounted for in job descriptions (as recognized and discussed in the first production above). Job classifications, the second sub-production, demonstrated the important implications of hourly, salaried, and contract roles according to HR within academia. Institutional leaders must advocate for their administrative assistants and actively engage with HR to address outdated policies and practices concerning job classifications. Because job classifications are often determined according to job descriptions, leaders should begin with this production. Next, job classifications should be reexamined as structures that uphold and maintain gendered labor exploitation in the workplace with the recognition that such exploitation in one site, the academy, impacts gendered labor exploitation at home. Finally, participants also identified job descriptions as important tools when transitioning into new jobs, the third identified sub-production. Job transitions could be natural points of disruption. Incoming laborers could and should be coached to only labor according to the expectations of the role in exchange for appropriate compensation. HR could engage with outgoing laborers to ensure that gendered labor exploitation was not a

reason in which the outgoing employee decided to leave their role. Job descriptions and job classifications, as structures that already exist, should be examined at points of job transition to address gendered labor exploitation over time.

The third production identified—institutional hierarchies—manifested from conversations with six participants. Within this production, three sub-productions emerged: stratification within an institution, gendered leadership within institutional hierarchy, and stratification among institutions. First, participants broadly addressed hierarchy as a mechanism that produced or resulted in institutional stratification among employees. Second, participants shared experiences and perceptions concerning gendered leadership, which both complicated and related this third production to the aforementioned production concerning job descriptions. Interestingly, one participant also recognized hierarchies among higher education institutions. So long as institutional hierarchies persist, those who are least valued—including but not limited to administrative assistants—will continue to experience any number of inequities that make their employment more difficult. Seemingly insignificant examples such as parking statuses or departmental favoritism may not resonate with those who have not also experienced the downstream effect of institutional hierarchies. But, for those who resonate with the maddening implications of stratification within the academy (e.g., intradepartmental, interdepartmental, and across higher education institutions), hopefully a spirit of resolve to dismantle—to the extent possible—institutional hierarchies can/will bring about social change. As institutions claim to teach students critical thinking skills, it should be within the realm of possibility to reimagine systems and practices that enable—not hinder—the ability of workers to do their jobs.

The fourth production, the wage (and subsequently employment benefits) manifested as objective measures of gendered labor exploitation. As the mechanism that afforded and enabled

their social reproduction, participants commented broadly on this production's manifestations. Perceived tradeoffs between job security (with state institutions) and compensation, contextualization of the wage during a period of high inflation, the insufficiency of current wages necessary for social reproduction (for oneself, let alone others in more complex family formations), the implications concerning merit raises and job hopping, and the utilization of sick leave were topics of conversation among all participants. Though some participants were content with their compensation given the flexibility or supplemental wages their role afforded at the time of phenomenological material production, other participants were adamant that all higher education staff (not just administrative assistants) were under-compensated given the labor performed. In recognition of this chronic under-compensation, participants asserted that additional compensation necessitated either self-advocacy (i.e., research and reporting to one's supervisor) or job hopping (and negotiating aggressively from the outset). When women and administrative assistants are already burdened by gendered labor exploitation in the home and at work, encouraging them to advocate for themselves or expend energy in job searching feels cruel. Why is the onus on individuals who are already burdened? Instead, supervisors, managers, leaders, and HR decision-makers have an opportunity to support workers in increasing wages (and benefits).

The fifth and final production regarding gendered labor exploitation at work concerned the workweek structure. Historically, because higher education institutions adopted the typical 8am–5pm Monday–Friday work week, women and administrative assistants are limited in their ability to perform social reproduction activities. Although the 8am–5pm workday was once a labor rights victory, the 40-hour work week is due for additional examination. Seven participants identified ways in which the workweek impacted their perceived gendered labor exploitation.

Participants also identified two opportunities for social change to reduce the strain placed upon women staff working in higher education: workweek flexibility and work from home capabilities. Both sub-productions demonstrate recent (but inconsistent) progress in addressing the conditions (i.e., time, location) that continue to exploit women's labor. For those participants who have been able to participate in flexible work schedules and work from home arrangements, "life changing" benefits were described. Although clear benefits have been demonstrated for the worker since their implementation, it is important to note that several participants' employers had already or were in the process of rescinding such alternatives. Because such flexibility has been demonstrated to improve workers' lives, it is upsetting (and yet not surprising) that HEI decision-makers seem determined to conform again to the constraints of the on-campus workweek structure.

In addition to the five identified productions of gendered labor exploitation in the academic workplace, four provocations also manifested. Each of these four provocations served as intensities of gendered labor exploitation: the COVID-19 global pandemic, conversations with other women, experiences with Human Resources, and realizations accompanied by behavior changes. Each of these four provocations addressed how social change is possible.

First, six participants explicitly reflected upon the COVID-19 global pandemic as a catalyst in relation to gendered labor exploitation in the workplace. Certainly, higher education institutions were not the only employment sites to "pivot" because of the unprecedented global health crisis. However, the successful experiences of participants working within academia open up the possibility of social change as a site of reproduction. In fact, several participants described the ways in which previously identified sub-productions—flexible schedules and work from home arrangements—noticeably improved their abilities to engage in social reproduction

activities. Were it not for the global pandemic, decision-makers within higher education institutions may never have introduced nor allowed such accommodations. However, given the experiences of this study's participants, it seems prudent that the same decision-makers not only continue such positive interventions but expand them in ways that benefit all.

Second, just as conversations with other women concerning gendered labor exploitation manifested as a provocation in the home, four participants shared experiences of interaction among friends or other women regarding gendered labor exploitation in the workplace. Whether such conversations served as gateways into higher education employment, as interactions to build comradery among decentralized co-workers, or as information-sharing opportunities that directly impacted one's wages, conversations with other women colleagues significantly impacted this study's participants. Again, just as previously reported in the findings concerning provocations at home, my decision to engage in genuine conversation with participants throughout this study's phenomenological material production was affirmed. It was powerful to connect with participants as they questioned, vented, realized, and discovered concepts and ideas related to gendered labor exploitation at work. Given my own experience, coupled with the perceptions shared by participants, I hope decision-makers within higher education institutions prioritize community-building efforts and that women administrative assistants seek out and find community among one another. Clearly, the impact of even ordinary conversations among women can produce social change—both small and large.

Third, experiences with HR served as a catalyst—and provocation—for participants in their understanding of gendered labor exploitation in the workplace. Each participant spoke of some perception they had with the department responsible for human capital. Though participants generally agreed that HR's purpose was simply to protect the interests of the

institution and not its workers, only two participants recognized and belonged to their institution's labor union. In examining this third provocation, two sub-provocations manifested: job reclassification and reorganization, and vacancy-filling issues. First, participants identified experiences concerning job reclassifications or reorganization as moments of intensity related to gendered labor exploitation. Some reclassifications were initiated by HR, while others were imitated at the request of the participant; varying degrees of success were reported concerning this HR interaction. A successful reclassification was a clear example of positive change; higher wages and more autonomy in a current role afforded participants with stronger grounds for their next employment move. Second, a vicious cycle emerged for some participants when HR failed to successfully fill a vacancy within a participant's department, the downstream effect placed additional work on those who were already at capacity for responsibilities (via their job description). To add insult to injury, without additional compensation for additional work, those who remained in their role (burdened with the work of vacancies) understandably became resentful of the situation. To make the situation worse, while participants may have been compensated for additional work at one point, it did not guarantee supplemental compensation in the future. This provocation demonstrated the power not only of one's supervisor or manager but also with a department that was perceived to serve the institution as opposed to the worker. Given the growing popularity of labor unions and the two participants' successes working with them, this third-party entity holds great promise to enact social change in future efforts supporting workers.

Fourth, and finally, several participants described realizations concerning their gendered labor exploitation; importantly, each moment of clarity was followed by intentional acts of resistance, which can be understood as catalysts toward social change. Participants not only

described decisions to leave a job after realizing the extent of their gendered labor exploitation, but they also implemented boundary-setting behaviors to counteract their gendered labor exploitation. Moreso than any other production or provocation identified, participants' moments of clarity provoked opportunities for personal and social change. Though some subsequent actions were more consequential than others, I understood each action as a form of resistance to gendered labor exploitation. It was inspiring to hear the conviction and satisfaction in participants' voices as they recounted their experiences being brave, bold, fed up, and determined. They also expressed their fears, hesitations, and anxieties—all of which were palpable throughout our conversations. Ultimately, though, participants demonstrated their willingness to combat the phenomenon of interest in both big and small ways. I had the pleasure of engaging a relatively minuscule population of women employed as administrative assistants in R1 higher education institutions. However, I am inspired by their collective spirit to resist gendered labor exploitation even without much or any understanding and awareness of SRT's concepts. If women are capable of this much resistance without exposure to this Marxist Feminist theory, I can only imagine the potential for additional realizations and subsequent behavior changes following our conversations.

Five productions and four provocations of gendered labor exploitation in the public space of the workplace revealed interesting intentionalities. For example, that gendered labor (which is learned through gendered socialization—a production in the home) was explicitly or implicitly expected by one's employer (production) may or may not be codified by one's job description (production), which may or may not be compensated appropriately according to one's wage (production) demonstrated the post-intentional relationship among the identified productions and provocations. That one's job classification (i.e., status as exempt, hourly, contract) as an

administrative assistant impacted one's standing within a gendered institutional hierarchy, which correlated to one's wages and benefits (production), which ultimately impacted decisions concerning family formation (a production in the home). But because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, conversations with other women, experiences with HR, and realizations coupled with behavior changes (all provocations) women were able to advocate for themselves and their job descriptions/classifications (production), wages (production), and alternative workweek structures (production). Collectively, each of these productions and provocations demonstrated both the peripheries of the phenomenon, and the opportunities to disrupt gendered labor exploitation in the academy—an ideal site to address social and political change.

To be clear, the findings from this study reveal stealthy ways in which gendered labor exploitation is related among two separate but connected sites: the home and the workplace. Women, who are socialized as caregivers to maintain social reproduction in the home, find themselves acting as caregivers (implicitly or explicitly) in administrative assistant roles within R1 higher education institutions. Meanwhile, various employment structures within the workplace (i.e., insufficient wages, workweek structure, job classifications, institutional hierarchies) hinder women's ability to complete the social reproduction services necessary to sustain both themselves and their dependents/families. Under the system of capitalism, social reproduction work remains necessary (i.e., the worker must be maintained), yet it is also unvalued. As such, women find themselves under-compensated completing gendered caretaking work in their employment within academia before heading home to complete entirely uncompensated/unvalued labor in their home. Whether a woman chooses singleness or a large nuclear family, social reproduction work is required so long as the wage is necessary to sustain

life. As such, several implications concerning individuals, higher education institutions, and society at large are offered given this study's examination of gendered labor exploitation.

Implications and Recommendations

This study highlights several important implications and inspires recommendations for researchers, individual workers, and decision-makers responsible for higher education institutions. Primarily, this study extends the reach of social reproduction concepts. As human beings, social reproduction (i.e., eating, drinking, sleeping, utilizing shelter) is vital and essential. As human beings who labor for a wage "to enjoy life," social reproduction is necessary. Because capitalism is the primary economic system under which most of society resides, it is imperative that laborers and capitalists alike understand and recognize social reproduction as a necessary condition to maintain the workforce. For those who dare to reimagine the workplace, return to Tithi Bhattacharya's (2017) question: who produces the worker? With women and higher education institutions in mind, the following implications are addressed and recommendations are provided as my intellectual contribution toward much needed social change.

Concerning Post-Intentional Phenomenological Scholars

Given my intentional shift in outlook from semi-structured interviews with participants as a means of data collection toward semi-structured conversations throughout phenomenological material production, it is important to acknowledge the active role I played concerning two provocations identified from this study's findings. Although several participants shared their reflections and experiences concerning conversations had with other women prior to phenomenological material production (as reported in Chapters 6 and 8), I would be remiss if I did not recognize the fact that I (a woman) was also in conversation with this study's participants (who identified as women).

As Melody and Morgan directly commented on their appreciation for the opportunity to discuss the phenomenon of interest to this study, I believe it is noteworthy to recognize a subsequent provocation in producing phenomenological material via conversations with women. Similarly, recall Jennifer's admission that she discussed the conversation had with me during phenomenological material production with her mother. Though impossible to say with certainty, it is interesting to consider the possibility of gendered labor exploitation coming up in causal conversation between the pair of women were it not for Jennifer's participation in this study.

I am humbled by the reflection that just as conversations with other women were provocations for participants, so, too, were conversations with me. Although this possibility is not of explicit interest to this study, the idea struck me as very meta: conversations with women concerning conversations with other women. This realization reinforces Vagle's (2018) prescription that future scholars—particularly post-intentional craftspeople—should continue to practice post-reflexivity throughout the research journey not only at the culmination but also importantly throughout the writing phase when crafting a post-intentional text.

Concerning Individual Women

Although it is upsetting to ask more of individuals who are already burdened, this study offers several implications concerning individual women. Presented in accordance with this study's design, specific implications concern both the home and the workplace for not just for individual women serving as administrative assistants but for all women staff working in HEIs.

First, concerning the private space of the home, individual women should actively reflect on their perceived levels of exploitation in the home. Various home configurations (e.g., singleness, "traditional" nuclear family) result in various compromises (e.g., finances, time, energy). Therefore, equipped with an understanding of what social reproduction is and how

society, in its current formation, exploits women's labor, individuals should examine their own family formations and prepare accordingly. For example, given the status of social service at the time of writing, individuals should prepare sooner rather than later for retirement and eldercare needs. Additionally, given the impact that family history and role modeling had on this study's participants, women with children should, if they have not already, reflect upon and implement the kind of socialization and role modeling they intentionally want to promote to their children.

Second, concerning the public space of the workplace, individual women should actively advocate for several workplace accommodations to promote their wellbeing. After individually reflecting upon their perceived gendered labor exploitation, women should first turn to one another (when possible and when comfortable) in both informal and formal communities as a means of support. As this research demonstrated, a sense of connection and community among women can quickly develop; perhaps this is the result of a lifetime's worth of socialization among women. Regardless, when women feel comfortable discussing their struggles among peers, information is shared, resources are dispersed, and solidarity is formed. Under such supportive conditions, individual women can observe and question the extent of their perceived labor exploitation according to their job descriptions. They can advocate for job reclassifications (which may or may not require comparative salary research, job description revisions, etc.) with or without the support of their supervisors and managers, who may or may not be part of the exploitative situation. If individuals continue to find themselves in roles that continue to exploit their labor or under the supervision of unsupportive leadership (which may be under the direction of other women), they may consider job-hopping to negotiate from the start higher wages; although, for some individuals (given their family formation), the prospect of relocating may not be possible. Regardless, individual women should at the very least research and consider joining

a supportive labor union (when possible) to actively represent their interests as women and workers. Finally, something that individuals with employment benefits can and should be able to implement into their lives immediately without the support of any others is to take seriously the social reproduction function of rest and wellness. When sick leave and vacation time is afforded, individuals should fully utilize these benefits possible given neoliberalism's constant pressure to produce, produce more, and produce more quickly. The worker must, unfortunately, look out for herself under the current system of capitalism. However, as bell hooks inspired, "To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality" (2000, p. 110). While recognizing this current "concrete reality," individuals should also hold space for what social change is yet possible.

Concerning Higher Education Institutions

It is imperative, at this point, to reiterate that higher education institutions are not entities capable of making decisions. Individual human beings serve as decision-makers or leaders at an institutional level. Although politics are often a consideration at least in public higher education, to dismiss the possibility of institutional change is unnecessary. Change is possible when decision-makers decide to make (social) change. As such, the following implications are presented with the feminist spirit that other realities are possible.

First, concerning institutions without labor unions, decision-makers should consider the possibility of working alongside a counter-organization whose purpose and role are clearly outlined. Though various state contexts are obviously paramount, it might be beneficial for two parties—higher education institutions and labor unions—to play two distinct roles, as opposed to walking a narrow line responsible for the interests of both workers and the institution. Again, it may not be possible for higher education leaders to welcome or encourage labor unions given

political climates. However, wherever possible, decision-makers of the academy should approach the possibility with curiosity. Similarly, for those higher education institutions who already work alongside labor unions, decision-makers should embrace fully, if they have not done so already, such organizations. With clearly defined motivations, the opportunity to role model people over profit is possible.

Second, regardless of the working relationship between a higher education institution and labor union, institution decision-makers (including those from HR) should consider several implications. Most obviously, a reexamination of wages should consider at the very least the cost of living given the variety of family formations among employees. As the extent of wages is considered, institutional decision-makers should also ensure that sustainable supplemental pay practices are consistently followed. Given participant experiences with staffing vacancies, decision-makers must be prepared to compensate staff who are not only doing their own work but the work left unfilled from vacancies. Within the vein of compensation, HR decision-makers should also ensure that remaining staff are utilizing employment benefits, such as sick leave and vacation time. Institutional leaders should, furthermore, ensure that supervisors and managers are encouraging, rather than shaming, staff who are engaging in social reproduction. Unfortunately, students and colleagues will suffer further consequences if staff who remain in higher education employment continue to burn out at exponential rates given staff vacancies. To disrupt this feedback loop, HR decision-makers must ensure that vacancies are filled thoughtfully, successfully, and as quickly as possible. To aid staff who are overworked given increased workloads, serious consideration should be given to increasing workweek flexibility, as opposed to restricting already implemented accommodations. Both workday/workweek schedule flexibilities, as well as work from home arrangements, should be available to workers. Perhaps

job descriptions and classifications will need to be reexamined; however, if workers can demonstrate that their work is completed according to established deadlines, why must the typical workweek schedule oppress women and their ability complete social reproduction tasks?

Decision-makers within the academy have a tremendous opportunity to improve and enhance the lives of an institution's employees while they are both on the job and at home. Each of these employment implications are suggested as interventions not only to protect the longevity and well-being of higher education employees but also to keep institutions of higher education from churning through employees at rates that could potentially disrupt the functioning of the academy. It is worth reiterating one final time that higher education institutions are model organizations for students; therefore, if institutional leaders want to inspire transformational leadership, abundant opportunities to transform employment within its own walls currently exist. Investing in practical solutions (perhaps starting with employee parking and transportation) that make higher education employment easier and not unnecessarily more challenging. For the conditions of one site of gendered exploitation impact the other.

Concerning Society at Large

What occurs within higher education institutions, though, is only a microcosm of the larger society. Although brave decision-makers within higher education institutions may champion the issue of gendered labor exploitation among staff, doing so will be challenging in a larger environment that does not support such transformation within both public and private spheres. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge the following societal implications.

It would behoove not only women but society at large if social services such as childcare, retirement, healthcare, and housing assistance were prioritized and distributed equitably. Given the strain placed on women because of their social reproduction responsibilities, collective

services could ease such burdens, which would then enable women who are also workers more time, energy, and financial freedom. With the expansion of social services, more women could liberate themselves from the current nuclear family structure and norms. No longer dependent upon the financial security of a two-income relationship, women would be free to plan for the family configuration that suits them best instead of conforming to often heteronormative construct that weaponizes love.

For those who are less interested in radical transformation, normalizing practical solutions such as couples living separately or in separate bedrooms, raising all children (regardless of gender) to engage in social reproduction activities, and addressing the tax code so that single individuals are not penalized for their singleness could enhance the environment in which higher education institutions exist and attempt to reimagine gendered labor exploitation. Homeownership could be made more affordable so that more individuals were homeowners and less subject to annual rent increases. Perhaps, then, more higher education workers could reside in the cities and towns in which they are employed. With the forthcoming retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, perhaps with a societal acceptance of flexible work schedules beyond the 8am–5pm Monday–Friday structure and higher wages, more adult children will be available to engage in or afford eldercare. Perhaps with more widely available and affordable childcare and health insurance, caretakers would be more present and less stressed during work hours knowing that their children were in quality care. By now it should be clear how the effects of exploitation in one sphere impact the other. Therefore, it is in the interest not just of the worker and higher education institutions but also for society, broadly, to consider the implications of this research.

Future Research

Because the PIP methodology embraces the Deleuzeoguattarian concept of "lines of flight," it is crucial to reject the belief that ideas, phenomena, people, and objects are "stable, singular, and final. Instead, [remember that] all things are connected and interconnected in all sorts of unstable, changing, partial, fleeting ways" (Vagle, 2018, p. 199). As discussed throughout Chapter 4, difficult decisions were made in designing this study. The only consolation to this study's limitations was the realization that for every research design limitation there also existed a possibility for a different study. With this Deleuzeoguattarian commitment in mind, several opportunities are provided to inspire continued attention to this important research agenda—gendered labor exploitation—in higher education employment.

As this specific study bound its access to the phenomenon according to participant eligibility (i.e., women administrative assistants) and institutional setting (i.e., R1), future scholarship could consider myriad other postsecondary populations and institutional types. Particular higher education women staff populations of interest could involve student affairs populations by functional area (e.g., student activities, DEI, housing, Greek Life, dining services, campus recreation), custodial staff, and admissions/orientation. Future studies could also consider staff according to institutional hierarchies; supervisors, middle managers, and senior leaders could reveal unique manifestations of gendered labor exploitation. It could be further revealing to replicate this study with administrative assistants' supervisors. Given this study's findings, to identify productions and provocations of gendered labor exploitation with a population that was identified by this study's participants as agents of their perceived exploitation could be interesting. Additionally, I am wildly curious about senior women leaders and their perceptions of the phenomenon of interest. Given participant comments about the

cascading impact of perceived gendered labor exploitation and SRT, I cannot help but wonder about the experiences and perceptions of this specific population: how have they experienced gendered labor exploitation; has their awareness of the phenomenon changed throughout the course of their career; in what ways have they perpetuated or disrupted gendered labor exploitation? With such a wide spectrum of higher education staff roles, future scholars have the potential to involve many participants in the pursuit to understand (and address) gendered labor exploitation.

In addition to studies that involve participants according to their role and ranking within the academy, future studies could further specify participant qualifications in relation to the home. Of particular interest to me are additional insights into the identified production concerning family history and role modeling. With the motivation to address social change, I am intrigued by a study that concerned participants who have explicitly reproduced the family formation in which they were surrounded by as children; who have intentionally rejected the family formation in which they were surrounded by as children; who are in heteronormative family configurations; and who have intentionally chosen against the nuclear family. Further refining participant eligibility may seem limiting, however, intentional research design can also expose important productions and provocations given unstable, changing, partial relationships.

One final suggestion concerning participants is offered. Just as participants of this study represented several family configurations, they also represented various points along the human life cycle. Several participant comments sparked my curiosity throughout phenomenological material production. I remain interested in exploring how participants at specific ages and stages of life (e.g., child-bearing age; new mothers; retirees) perceive, understand, and experience gendered labor exploitation. Future studies could attempt to map the phenomenon according to

various participant placements along such a lifetime spectrum. Though this study's findings allude toward potentially relevant productions and provocations (e.g., family formation, family history/role modeling, realizations and altered approaches to partnership), longitudinal studies that considered participant life cycles could be interesting.

Not only could different populations complicate the exploitation of the phenomenon of interest, but so, too, could additional sites. Because the home is a vital site in relation to SRT, I suggest that alternative higher education institutions be explored. First, given the complexity of post-secondary education, other institution types (e.g., R2, community college, HBCU, HSI, Tribal Colleges) could reveal important complexities concerning the phenomenon of interest. Second, intentional studies could explore both institutions with functioning labor unions and institutions where labor unions are nonexistent. Finally, intentional design concerning institutions within specific regions of the United States may be interesting. Clearly, there is no shortage of post-secondary complexity to explore.

Lastly, given the Deleuzeoguattarian assumption that all phenomena are partial, fleeting, and unstable, I believe it is imperative for future studies to consider generational change in relation to this specific phenomenon. After all, post-intentional phenomenologies understand phenomena to be multiple, partial, and contextual. Therefore, of particular interest to this scholar are the ways in which senior leaders (who are presumably of various generations) understand gendered labor exploitation, given societal attitudes towards productions and provocations identified, such as family configurations, divorce, family history and role modeling. It is intriguing to consider how the Women's Movements throughout the 1970s–1990s may or may not have impacted the career development of women who are now senior leaders within higher education institutions. How are these women senior leaders perpetuating gendered labor

exploitation upon women of other generations? In what ways are generational differences contributing to perceptions of the phenomenon both at home and at work? The possibilities for future study concerning generational differences, SRT, and the academy are plentiful.

Given not only my personal experience with gendered labor exploitation (both at home and within my higher education employment) but also as a woman who has been deeply impacted by political, legal, economic, and cultural decisions, attitudes, and events (i.e., 2008 recession, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, COVID-19 pandemic), I am invested in a certain type of social change—a social change that eradicates not only the patriarchy but all oppression. I sincerely hope that future scholars will also be personally motivated to hold space for possibilities and contribute to the body of scholarship that situates higher education as a site for similar social change. This study is offered to future scholars, workers, managers, and senior leaders; I hope you are inspired not only by this study's phenomenon of interest, but also its methodology and theoretical framework. As bell hooks charged:

> To ensure the continued relevance of feminist movement in our lives visionary feminist theory must be constantly made and re-made so that it addresses us where we live, in our present. Women and men have made great strides in the direction of gender equality. And those strides towards freedom must give us strength to go further. We must courageously learn from the past and work for a future where feminist principles will undergird every aspect of our public and private lives. Feminist politics aims to end domination to free us to be who we are—to live lives where we love justice, where we can live in peace. (2000, pp. 117–8).

Though such aims still seem far away, I look forward to future scholars' company as we make and remake this lifeworld.

Living Dissertation

Although this particular "film" and post-intentional text must end and be submitted (graduate schools do have deadlines), I am pleased (and truthfully relieved) to share that at least one sequel (i.e., additional scholarship) is already in the works. Just as I asked you, dear reader, to "enter in the middle" when you began reading this text, I, too, have entered into the middle of this scholarship. And it is clear to me that one film, one text is not sufficient. Because I wholeheartedly believe in Deleuzeoguattarian concepts of lines of flight and multiplicities, I know that this research is partial, fleeting, unstable, and ever-changing. Therefore, I am excited to adopt the unconventional practice of a "living dissertation." What is a living dissertation? I understand a living dissertation as scholarship so fruitful, so plentiful that it cannot be contained to a single study, text, or publication. After all, in the Deleuzeoguattarian spirit, everything is always constantly being made and remade.

Therefore, I have decided to maintain a virtual space where this scholarship can be made and remade; think of it as a director's office—a behind-the-scenes space. Virtually access it at www.alexaleearndt.com. You will find not only updates to this current study but also extensions of it, as my understanding of the phenomenon of interest evolves. For example, you may have noticed that although this study asked two research questions, only one is adequately answered in this PIP text.

Heeding Vagle's (2018) advice to "remain open, flexible, and contemplative in our thinking, acting, and decision-making" (p. 200), I made the difficult decision to exclude one third of the phenomenological material produced during participants' three-conversation series. There

simply was too much material to engage with and report on in this text. As a young but aspiring phenomenological craftsperson, I opted for clarity as opposed to additional complexity. Thus, I look forward to explicitly exploring to what extent and in what ways women staff imagine institutional support services and policies could be adjusted to address social reproduction equity in future publications. These publications will be available as a part of my living dissertation.

Given my feminist inclination to explore possibilities and reimagine the future, it was difficult to exclude this portion of the post-intentional phenomenological material because I perceived it to be the most important; the most potentially consequential; the most inspiring for women workers and decision-makers of higher education institutions. The good news is that it yet can be. I look forward to regularly maintaining this living dissertation not only with updates concerning this and future studies but also as a source of related scholarship, theory, and methodology. Although I believe that the journey is just as important as the destination, it is my hope that my living dissertation is an inspiring pitstop for those who are on their own journey and interested in the "gnarliness" (Vagle, 2018, p. 193) of academia, the home, social reproduction, and PIP.

Conclusion

"I think I went into [higher education employment] like, *this is going be my passion project [...]. I'm going to work hard, and it's all about the students*—all those things you hear all the time. So, I would work really late and not be compensated for it. I considered that to be the norm. I checked emails on the weekends. I always was working. Then I realized that there was no reward for it really. I realized I wasn't getting paid enough. It was almost like I was enabling them not to hire more people because people left and then I was doing the other people's jobs plus my own. Then I noticed, *oh, if I operate at this capacity, they're never going to hire other people,* which

they never did. [After] a year I realized that I wasn't really getting anything out of it, except feeling exhausted, burned out, and underappreciated." — Jennifer

Broadly, this study not only contributed to the limited body of scholarship concerning an often overlooked yet critical population of higher education workers—staff members—but it also explored the post-intentional connections between social reproduction and higher education labor. In answering Sallee's (2021) and Kezar et al.'s (2019) call to examine postsecondary labor beyond the classroom, this PIP utilized a Marxist Feminist theoretical framework—primarily Social Reproduction Theory—this study explored the phenomenon of gendered labor exploitation in both private (home) and public (higher education employment) spaces. Several lines of flight concerning gendered labor exploitation in the home and workplace were identified. Ultimately, nine productions and seven provocations revealed opportunities for social change. Again, I hope this is the first of many studies that critiques and calls attention not only to the current "concrete reality" faced by women employed by the academy but also the "possibilities beyond that reality."

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APPENDIX A

IRB EXEMPTION LETTER

Tucker Hall, Room 212
310 E. Campus Rd.
Athens, Georgia 30602
TEL 706-542-3199 | FAX 706-542-5638
IRB@uga.edu
http://research.uga.edu/hso/irb/

Human Research Protection Program

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

July 12, 2022

Dear Amy Stich:

On 7/12/2022, the Human Subjects Office reviewed the following submission:

Title of Study:	Women's Labor Exploitation Beyond Academia's Classrooms and within the Home: A Post-Intentional Phenomenology
Investigator:	Amy Stich
Co-Investigator:	Alexa Arndt
IRB ID:	PROJECT00006010
Review Category:	Exempt 2ii

Materials Reviewed: IRB Submission, Training Records, Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals Facebook permission, Expatriates of Student Affairs Facebook permission Consent Form, Interview Protocol, Recruitment Information, Advertisement Flyer

We have determined that the proposed research is Exempt. The research activities may begin 7/12/2022.

- Since this study was determined to be exempt, please be aware that not all future modifications will require review by the IRB. For more information please see Appendix C of the Exempt Research Policy (https://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/compliance/hso/IRB-Exempt-Review.pdf). As noted in Section C.2., you can simply notify us of modifications that will not require review via the "Add Public Comment" activity.

- The PI is responsible for ensuring that all activities and materials are compliant with the following policies: Participant Selection and Recruitment, Research with Vulnerable Populations, Participant Incentive and Compensation, Internet Research.

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Also, the consent process must include the elements in Appendix B of the Exempt Review policy.

A progress report will be requested prior to 7/11/2027. Before or within 30 days of the progress report due date, please submit a progress report or study closure request. Submit a progress report by navigating to the active study and selecting Progress Report. The study may be closed by selecting Create Version and choosing Close Study as the submission purpose.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Aisha Haggard, Compliance Professional I
Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia

APPENDIX B

IRB APPLICATION – PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Greetings! My name is Alexa Arndt, and I am a doctoral candidate at the Louise McBee Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia conducting my dissertation research. Alongside my advisor, Dr. Amy Stich, I am seeking participants for a study to understand gendered labor exploitation. I am seeking women staff members whose roles are considered to be administrative or clerical to respond to questions regarding their gendered labor experiences both at work and at home.

If you or someone you know is a self-identified woman employed in an administrative or clerical role at a R1 institution of higher education, please consider participating in or sharing this phenomenological study with someone who fits the participant criteria. This study will intentionally include participants from a variety of family formation combinations (i.e., single person with no dependents; coupled person with children; coupled person responsible for eldercare).

Participants should expect to be interviewed a total of three times, where each interview lasts between 45 and 60 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled at the participant's convenience early in the Fall 2022 semester. Participants will be compensated with a $20 gift card for each interview conducted.

Because the interview is audio-recorded, this interview poses no more than minimal risk of breach of confidentiality prior to the de-identification of interviews, which will occur at the point of transcription. Because the interview will preferably take place online via Zoom and include the recording of audio content, this research will involve the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort will be taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. All personal or identifiable information will be removed before any results are made public, including the name of any employment institution. Participants will be asked to choose pseudonyms (fake names) to be referenced in reported findings.

Thank you so much in advance for your help and consideration of this research!

APPENDIX C

IRB APPLICATION – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT LETTER

Gendered Labor Exploitation

You have been invited to take part in a research study concerning gendered labor exploitation. This dissertation study will be conducted by Alexa Lee Arndt, under the guidance of Dr. Amy Stich at the University of Georgia Louise McBee Institute of Higher Education.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Amy Stich
McBee Institute of Higher Education
(706)-583-8244, astich@uga.edu

Co-Investigator: Alexa Lee Arndt, Doctoral Candidate
McBee Institute of Higher Education
alexaleearndt@uga.edu

Research Purpose and Participant Selection
The purpose of this project is to understand the phenomenon of gendered labor exploitation. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a full-time, self-identifying woman staff member working in an administrative or clerical role in higher education.

Study Procedures and Time Commitment
This study will consist of up to three individual interviews. If you agree to participate in this study, each individual interview will take between 45-60 minutes of your time. Throughout all interviews you would respond to questions about your experience working in higher education and engaging in social reproduction work (i.e., care work, household chores, domestic work).

Risks and Discomforts
There is no more than minimal risk associated with participation in this research. Because the interview is audio-recorded, this interview poses minimal risk of breach of confidentiality prior to the de-identification of interviews, which will occur at the point of transcription. Because the interview will take place online via Zoom and include the recording of audio content, this research will involve the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort will be taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. All personal or identifiable information will be removed

before any results are made public. You will be allowed to choose pseudonyms (fake names) to be referenced in any written presentation of data.

Benefits
First, your responses may help us understand how labor exploitation is reproduced both in the home and within employment. The findings may influence or inform policy and practice recommendations. Second, in order to compensate participants for their time and expertise, participants will be compensated with a $20 digital gift card for each of three potential interviews completed. Participants who finish and complete three potential interviews will receive a total of 3 $20 digital gift cards; participants who finish and complete two interviews will receive 2 $20 digital gift cards.

Confidentiality of Records
Participation is voluntary. You may refuse to take part or stop at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your participation in your program. There are questions about your experiences relative to family formation and exploitation that may make you uncomfortable. You can skip these questions or any asked if you do not wish to answer them. Steps will be taken to protect your privacy, but there is a small risk that your information could be accidentally disclosed to people not connected to the research. To reduce this risk, your real name will not be utilized, and instead you will be asked for your preferred pseudonym or an assigned pseudonym at the point of transcription of the interview will be provided. Audio files will be stored on a password protected computer until transcription, at which point, they will be deleted. The researcher will maintain one main document for the study that will link your pseudonym to your real name, email, and demographic information so the researcher can later reach out for follow-up (which is also entirely voluntary). The main project document will be destroyed once we have finished collecting information from all participants.

Additionally, because the interview will take place online via Zoom and include the recording of audio and video content, this research will involve the transmission of data over the Internet. Again, every reasonable effort will be taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

Only the transcription of your interview (after the identifiers have been removed) could be used or distributed without additional consent for future research; audio files will not be stored, used, or distributed for future research.

If there are any questions about this study or your participation, or if anything is unclear, please contact the researcher at alexaleearndt@uga.edu (Alexa).

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the UGA Human Subjects Office by calling 706-542-3199 or emailing irb@uga.edu.

Please keep this letter for your records.

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED CONVERSATION GUIDE

Conversation Guide for Each of Three Interviews

Keep in mind the research questions throughout the conversation:

> **Research Q1:** What does it mean for women staff to experience labor exploitation in their homes and their places of employment (higher education institutions)?
> **Research Q2:** To what extent and in what ways do women staff imagine institutional support services and policies could be adjusted to address social reproduction equity?

Data Production: Remember to remain open & the four rules from *Bossypants* (Fey, 2011):

1. Agree. Always Agree and Say Yes.
2. Not Only to Say Yes, but Yes, And (You are supposed to agree and then add something of your own).
3. Make Statements (Don't ask questions all the time).
4. There Are No Mistakes (Only Opportunities).

First, ask questions concerning personal demographics/life, educational and professional history, motivations for working in higher education.

Second, lead into discussion concerning participants' basic perceptions of labor exploitation.

Initial Introduction:

SCRIPT: Thank you so much for meeting with me today. It is my hope that this study will ultimately help scholars and practitioners understand labor exploitation for women staff working in higher education. Your answers will be kept confidential, so your name and any identifying information won't be included or attributed to you. Have you given any thought into a pseudonym or fake name that you'd like to represent you in my findings?

I'm hoping to understand gendered labor exploitation as it reveals itself in your experiences—and what it was like for you. I'm going to be asking you to recall specific incidents, situations, and events that you experienced while working in higher education. Vivid and descriptive details of your experiences and what these incidents and situations were like for you are so appreciated.

I hope you will feel comfortable sharing your thoughts, feelings, perceptions, as well as situations that may have been connected with your experiences or that may have impacted you or your experience. Again, know that your responses will be entirely confidential.

With your consent I'm going to record our conversation so that I can be more present in the moment with you and not worry about taking notes; is that okay?

Before we get started, do you have any questions or concerns that I can answer or address?

Ready to get started?

END SCRIPT.

Topic 1: Labor Exploitation at Home

***Begin recording!**

ACTIVITY: Inspired by University of California Faculty Work and Family Survey (Mason et al., 2003)

SCRIPT: I want to start out with an activity that will help to initiate our conversation today. I am going to put a link to a google excel sheet in the chat box and ask you to click on that so we are viewing the same document. **END SCRIPT.**

1. Present the daily agenda and ask if participant can walk through what they do from when they get up in the morning to when they go to sleep). This would make it a bit easier to estimate total hours below. (**If the participant is struggling, pivot to the "brainstorming" tab first*).
2. Next, ask participant to click on "UC Faculty Work and Family Survey tab" where the comparative table is presented.
    a. **SCRIPT:** Within this space, I'd like you to think about the professional work you do each day and then list how many hours you devote to professional work in a week; there are 168 hours in a week. *(*You can type/brainstorm and talk through and list tasks/time and help to determine hours).* Now, we are going to consider the same question for housework/home maintenance *(*talk through and list tasks/time and determine hours).* Finally, think about any caregiving you do (children, family members, colleagues, friends, etc.). How many hours a week are devoted to caregiving? **END SCRIPT.**

SCRIPT: Okay, so let's dig in a bit more now:

BEGIN CONVERSATION:

- Tell me about your home life... What does it look like?
    - Who are the people at home?
        - How long have you been in this relationship?
        - How old are your children?
        - When did your ___ move in with you/you with them?
            - At what age were you & they when this occurred?
    - Has it been an intentional choice to live alone/have a roommate?
        - What lead to that decision?
        - What percentage of your income goes to housing?
        - Have you considered how this living arrangement might end/what would cause this arrangement to end?

    - What responsibilities or chores do you have in your home? (e.g., childcare, eldercare, dependents)
        - Since you are partnered/have a roommate, what responsibilities or chores do others have at home?
        - What is the division between time, finance, energy in home responsibilities?
        - How did you/the family decide who would do what?
    - Since you live alone, how do you make decisions about time, finances, energy into home responsibilities/life after work?
- How do you understand or characterize your role as a single person/couple person/parent at home?
    - At home, do you feel like you fit any gendered stereotype?

PAUSE CONVERSATION.

SCRIPT: Let's pause for a minute, and let me backtrack with some more information about this study. I'm ultimately interested in gendered exploitation, specifically the exploitation that women face, both at home and at work. I don't know about you, but for much of my life, when I thought about exploitation, I was only thinking about it in a specific work context. So, as I began trying to really understand exploitation largely or try to explain what it is to others, it was really actually really challenging! Generally, when I ask others to explain exploitation to me, the response I get is, "Exploitation is when someone is taking advantage of someone else." That's a good start. But how does exploitation actually work? In my own research, I've come to understand how three things work together when someone exploits someone else: fairness, benefit, and harm. So, for example, when you take advantage of someone, you benefit more than the other person, which is inherently unfair. And taking advantage of someone can also be harmful to the other person.

- So, with this understanding in mind, is the work you do at home fair?
    - Do you consider the division of labor to be fair?
    - Who benefits the most from work around the house?
    - How do you feel about this? (That some benefit more than others? If unfair, what harm comes from such arrangements?)
        - How so?
- What about harm? We could also consider harm as negative consequences or tradeoffs (intended or unintended) that result from the work you do at home?
    - Short-term; long-term?
    - Financial?
    - Time?
    - Energy?
    - Identity?

- Well-being?
- Socially?
- That impact you specifically? That impact others specifically?

- Who benefits the most from the work you do at home? (Remember what we mean by work at home is the cleaning, shopping, organizing, mending, planning, remembering...)
  - Does it bother you that some benefit more than others?
- Have you ever thought about these ideas about gender equity or fairness at home before today?
  - How so?
  - When did you begin thinking about these issues?
  - Where do you think your ideas about household work came from?
  - Does birth order impact this at all?
  - Cultural upbringing?
- Do you think your role at home impacts your employment? How so?
  - Do you think your role at home impacts your hours of work? How so?
  - Do you think your role at home impacts your role at work? How so?
  - Do you think your role at home impacts your ability to do your work at work? How so?
- Would it be possible to go ahead now and schedule our next call? The focus of that conversation will be labor exploitation at work.
- Would you be willing to share your job description with me in preparation for our next chat? Maybe it's available on a HR website or you have it in some online files of yours?

SCRIPT: Those are all of the questions I have for today, but are there any final thoughts that you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your time and energy. I will be emailing you a gift card as compensation for your time today.

Please know that you can outreach to me at any time via email if you have any questions, concerns, or other ideas that you'd like to share. **END SCRIPT.**

Topic 2: Labor Exploitation at Work

Is this still a good time to chat for the next hour or so?

Thank participant for returning to the conversation.

Verify, again, that it's okay to record conversation. **Begin recording!**

RESUME CONVERSATION:

- How have you (if at all) reflected on our last conversation?
    - Have you thought any more about the measures of exploitation (i.e., fairness, harm, benefit)?
- One thing I've been reflecting on since our last conversation was ---
    - *(See individual's notes)*
- Describe your work life. *(*have their spreadsheet available just in case)*
    - Tell me about your job responsibilities.
    - Tell me about a busy day; tell me about a non-busy day.
    - Do you have the ability to work from home? How did that opportunity come about? Do others in your office have the same opportunity?
- What gendered roles, if any, do you fill or play at work?
- Thank you so much for sharing your job description with me prior to today! I've got it pulled up; is it possible for you to have it handy, as well? Can you walk me though it?
    - Is the reality of your work reflected on this description? How so?
        - Is that fair?
    - Can you think of any other times when you've thought to yourself "that's not fair" or that you're bothered by fairness?
    - Are you being compensated fairly for the work that you actually do?
- Who benefits the most from the work you do at work?
    - Is that benefit fair?
        - How do you feel about this? (That some benefit more than others? If unfair, what harm comes from such arrangements?)
            - If unfair, how so?
    - Speaking of compensation, what benefits do you utilize? (e.g., sick days, vacation days, insurance, daycare, pension/retirement, other fringe benefits?)
        - Have you always utilized benefits?
    - Are you a part of a union?
- What about harm; are there any negative consequences (intended or unintended), given any potential unfairness?
    - Short-term; long-term?
    - Financial?
    - Time?

- Energy?
  - Identity?
  - Well-being?
  - Socially?
  - That impact you specifically? That impact others specifically?
- Have you ever thought about gender equity or fairness at work before today?
  - How so?
  - When did you begin thinking about these issues?
  - Where do you think your ideas about gendered work at work came from?
- Do you think your role at work impacts your work at home? How so?
  - Do you think your role at work impacts your ability to do the things you need to do at home? How so?
  - Do you think your role at work impacts your role at home? How so?
  - How has COVID impacted this dynamic at all?
  - How has working from home changed the dynamic between home & work life?
- HR: friend or foe?
- Would it be possible to go ahead now and schedule our next call?

SCRIPT: Those are all of the questions I have for today, but are there any final thoughts that you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your time and energy. I will be emailing you a gift card as compensation for your time today.

Please know that you can outreach to me at any time via email if you have any questions, concerns, or other ideas that you'd like to share. **END SCRIPT.**

Topic 3: Reimagined Institutional Support Services and Policies to Address Exploitation

Thank participant for returning to the conversation.

RESUME CONVERSATION:

- How have you (if at all) reflected on our last conversation?
    - Have you thought any more about the measures of exploitation (i.e., fairness, harm, benefit)?
- One thing I've been reflecting on since our last conversation was ---
    - *(See individual's notes)*
        - *Examples:*
            - What percentage of your income goes to rent?
            - What percentage of your income goes to childcare?
            - Given your preference to be exempt, have you had a conversation with your supervisor about what hours you would need to work? (Freedom of hours)
            - What percentage of your income goes to eldercare?
            - How has working from home changed the dynamic between home & work life?
- Return to calendar (UC Faculty Survey) - what do you make of/what reactions are you having seeing the hours you've categorized?
- Do you think any changes are needed at your home relative to roles and responsibilities?
    - If so, what changes and how might you implement changes?
    - What do you think has gotten in the way of making changes to date?
    - Who needs to be involved in order to make change?
- If I had a magic wand and I could instantly change your workplace, or the workplace for women staff in general, no questions asked, what specifically would you suggest I do?
    - To improve fairness and benefit? How could we address harm?
    - How could we address fairness of others?
- What could your institution do to support you, and other women staff, better?
    - What policies could be implemented that would improve your work life?
    - What support services would improve your work life?
- Are there things as a society we can do to better support you and women staff working in higher education?

<u>Final thoughts:</u>

SCRIPT: Those are all of the questions I have, but are there any final thoughts that you would like to share?

I'll also be sending you a quick demographic survey that I hope you will be able to complete!

Thank you so much for your time and energy. Again, I will be emailing you a gift card as compensation for your time today.

Although we have reached the final interview, please know that you can outreach to me at any time via email if you have any questions, concerns, or other ideas that you'd like to share. **END SCRIPT.**

APPENDIX E

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA FACULTY WORK AND FAMILY SURVEY EXERPT

University of California Faculty Work and Family Survey

This survey concerns how faculty meet their work and family responsibilities. Although some questions are specific to faculty with children, many of the questions can be answered by everyone. Your answers will help the University of California design better work and family policies.

All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. You may withdraw from the survey at any time, or skip any question that you do not wish to answer.

When you have finished the survey, you must click the submit button (located at the very bottom of the survey) for us to receive your response.

You may at any point along the way save your responses (by clicking one of the save buttons) and return to the survey at a later point in time by logging in again with your username and password.

A. Work and Family Questions for All Faculty

1. In the past year, what is the average number of hours per week you have spent on each of the following activities? Rough estimates are fine *(there are 168 hours in a week).*

	Weekly Activities	Average hours per week?
a.	**Professional work** (*e.g. teaching, research, writing, committee or departmental meetings, conferences*)	
b.	**Housework and home maintenance** (*e.g. shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry, paying bills*)	
c.	**Caregiving** (*e.g. meeting the needs of children or teenagers, spouse/partner, elders, friends, other family members*)	

2. This question describes four family-friendly policies at UC. Please indicate whether you have heard of these policies.

	Family-Friendly Policies	Have you heard of these policies? Yes	No
a.	UC faculty with a "substantial responsibility for the care of an infant, or of a newly adopted child or fostered child under five" may request and be granted temporary relief from teaching duties (e.g. full or partial teaching relief for a semester or more).	○	○
b.	Assistant professors with "substantial responsibility for the care of a newborn child or a newly adopted child under the age of five" may stop the tenure clock for up to one year per child.	○	○
c.	Pregnant UC faculty are entitled to at least six weeks of paid leave to be taken prior to, during, and/or after childbirth.	○	○
d.	Any faculty member may be granted up to one year of unpaid leave to care for their child, their spouse's child, or the child of their domestic partner.	○	○

	Yes	No
3. Since you joined the faculty of University of	○	○

APPENDIX F

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY EXAMPLE

DAILY SCHEDULE

Week of: **October 2**

Set the starting date in cell C2. Rows 3 and 4 will automatically update with the correct dates and days of the week.

	10/2 SUNDAY	10/3 MONDAY	10/4 TUESDAY	10/5 WEDNESDAY	10/6 THURSDAY	10/7 FRIDAY	10/8 SATURDAY
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NOTES

THOUGHTS

APPENDIX G

POST-ANALYSIS POST-REFLEXION STATEMENT

January 24, 2023

As I trudge through the editing phase of crafting this PIP text, it became obvious that it was time to engage in another post-reflexion writing. I sat with a cup of tea and wondered for a while if I should revise one of my initial statements or simply craft another entirely. Ultimately, I decided it was most appropriate to start all over again, as I feel like an entirely different person than the one who crafted my initial post-reflexion statement. Wasn't it Heraclitus who said, "No [wo]man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and [s]he's not the same [wo]man?" Following phenomenological material production, writing, and much editing, I do feel like a different woman–one who has not only engaged with participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest but who has also, herself, continued to experience gendered labor exploitation (at home if not in an entirely professional capacity as a full-time student) while dissertating.

A great source of why I feel like an entirely different woman and scholar stems from "Thinking with theory." The practice has saturated my life; there's not a friend, close family member, or classmate who hasn't been subjected to many a comment, tirade, or monologue concerning Social Reproduction Theory (SRT). Acquaintances at a dinner party, total strangers at the bar, and even a few dates have been on the receiving end of my thinking with theory. To all those who have engaged with my intellectual rumbles, thank you. As a reminder, a rumble (according to Brené Brown) is:

> a discussion, conversation, or meeting defined by a commitment to lean into vulnerability, to stay curious and generous, to stick with the messy middle of problem identification and solving, to take a break and circle back when necessary, to be fearless in owning our parts, and, as psychologist Harriet Lerner teaches, to listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard (2019, para. 3).

As this specific research begins to wind down, I've been able to reflect on the hundreds of conversations I've had in the river with said friends, loved ones, and strangers. In hindsight, I'm stunned by how easy it was (and still is) to get them into the river with me. I'm shocked by how willing folks were/are to engage in hard conversations about difficult or strange concepts such as capitalism, the patriarchy, and classism. I can't help but wonder if it's been relatively easy to rumble with folks in the river because all we were/are doing was/is conversing about something that is pervasive even if hidden in plain sight? Did/do they leave the river different people? I'd like to think so, but at the very least I know that I was/am.

Every rumble since Fall 2020 when I first discovered SRT has informed the way in which I view not only others' lives but how I live my own. When I say that an intellectual floodgate opened all because I haphazardly clicked on a link to Nancy Fraser's (at the time) most recent

publication–*Feminism for the 99%*–I'm not being dramatic. I have devoted hundreds of hours of my time listening to podcasts, reading books, watching documentaries and lectures, and engaging in deep thought about how SRT impacts not only my life but the lives of everyone a part of this capitalistic, patriarchal, racist, colonial, Christian, ableist, and homophobic society we endure.

Although it has been exhausting and at times upsetting, I don't know that I can put into words how grateful I am for the luxurious experience of thinking so much. I don't believe I would be as close to liberation as I am without the time, capacity, and resources to think with this theory that explains how women continue to be exploited in 2023. I say luxurious because I know there are so many who are more than capable of thinking deeply and contributing to the academy. However, many individuals cannot afford to step away from their employment to do so for any number of reasons. Capitalism ensures, after all, that we have to sell our labor in order to live. It feels important to name this assumption; I assume (given my identities, lived experiences, awareness, and education) that women are exploited by various constructs–constructs that work together (despite any initial motivations) and utilize hierarchies to oppress in order to wield power. I assume that even when women can't, don't, or refuse to realize or articulate their oppression, it occurs, nevertheless. I want to stress that I assume that capitalism accepts no limit and will continue to prey on passion and devotion. As long as women continue to be socialized into the assumed under/unvalued roles of "caregiver," they will continue to be exploited. "Love" will continue to be weaponized by capitalism.

However, I also assume that liberation is possible–that a different world can be reimagined. I assume that transformation will take an unnecessary and absurd amount of time. I assume that I won't live long enough to witness total emancipation; although, participants from this study revealed ways in which they consciously or not are resisting this oppressive lifeworld. I assume that neoliberal and conservative forces will continue to resist any resistance to their modus operandi. And yet, I assume that resistance will continue to manifest across generations–that children will witness this exploitation and be just as outraged–if not more–as I find myself.

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANT PROFILE EXAMPLE

Participant's Redacted Name (52)
Pseudonym: Imogene
Participant's Redacted Institution | Redacted Department

SES: lower middle class
Race: white
Sexual orientation: heterosexual
Partnership Status: Married
With whom they reside: Husband
Children: 2 grown
Elders: none

R1:

- Great example of neoliberal university needing to grow because of enrollment - physical space needs - hierarchy afoot (VP office displacing unit)

Exploitation provocation:

- Generation:
    - "It seems like each generation, it gets a little bit better. But these changes don't seem to be really dramatic."
    - "I think there will be a big generational, I think something's will and some things won't change."
        - Generational reactions over time in response to previous generation
- COVID
- Exposure to feminist ideas:
    - *Feminine Mystique*
- Realization that she was being exploited job; left job --
    - ME: Realized that she is being exploited in doing too much work for not enough compensation, and so she actually left her role. That is something that I don't think anyone else has done so far well that's not true.

Exploitation production:

- Home:
    - Husband went to work so she stayed home; wanted to be SAH mom.
    - Husband's family gave them a "sweetheart deal" on both of their homes.
    - "We were at a family gathering one time & I was thinking of the things that a husband does for you versus the things that a wife does for you. Sometimes I would rather have a wife!"
        - ME: hands down; one of the best quotations thus far

- Social Reproduction:
    - When first married, maybe that division of labor was affected by the working schedule? So, the fact that husband was at work all day, she was at home, so she did household; now flipped since husband's retirement.
    - Kids get reduced services as they age; it's part of growing up & socializing them to be independent; perceived husband as feeling less loved when she reduced.
    - FAIR?
        - "I have felt like it's not before, but when I think about do I want to take on the yard work & the finances? I'm like, no, I don't! I feel like I feel like it's more fair now than it ever has been"
        - "Part of it happened naturally; a part of it was took a like a lot of emotional labor on my part to get there"
        - When I would get home, I would think, I don't want anybody to want anything from me. Like I've already, like at work and at home - it's ... I just have people wanting things from me all day long.
    - SR roles? "I was aware, & I knew at the time that it didn't have to be that way. But the way that both of our strengths were like, it just I felt, I felt comfortable doing those things."
    - Awareness of daily frequency of SR tasks were falling on her - she imposed finances on husband so he'd have "something to worry about on a daily basis" - he's done them ever since
- Work:
    - Job description: "wondering because like, a lot of the things that typically are read is gender exploitation when you're in an admin support role, it's just the expectation of the job."
    - "Allowed" working hours - 7:30am-5:30pm -- very insisted upon by supervisor
    - Re: AA roles: there's a lot of gendered labor that just goes with that type of role. But I did notice that like, in the very few instances where we ever had any, young men did the job differently.
    - Reserved parking: leave for lunch, ability to park quickly after 1 hour commute when you have to pee
    - Gendered aspect of AA role: intuit needs; Imogene's experience is that male AAs were affronted by this expectation
    - FAIR? No, probably not. Because like the other, like, the other department heads didn't expect that of their assistants.
    - BENEFITED: Oh, the department head.
    - HARM: I had to crunch all of that in between, like, the actual duties of my job. So it was like, it just made my job, like, bigger and heavier.
    - Issue with faculty -- started with empathy but after 8-9 years, loses it when only some retain the same thing you've told them over and over again
    - "It's a lot of hard work that's extra on top of your administrative assistant work. You don't have anyone to review it for you or with you. So basically, he was just kind of left hanging."

Other notables:

- ME: she just said the final word and it needed to be the final word which is that HR's job is to protect the institution not to protect you.