

# WORK-LIFE BALANCE ISSUES AMONG FULL-TIME WOMEN FACULTY

by

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(Under the Direction of Jay W. Rojewski)

## ABSTRACT

Problems exist with work-life balance (WLB) issues among women who must attempt to balance time and attention for themselves (spirit/self), family, and work. At the same time, women often deal with inequality and discrimination issues in the workplace. Collectively, these factors can lead to health-related issues, including anxiety and excessive stress. This scenario is equally applicable to women who are fulltime faculty members at higher education institutions. The 2020 census reported that mostly all job losses are lost by women. According to the American Association of University Professors, only 33 percent of women are full professors. Additionally, the racial and ethnic composition of faculty does not completely mirror the United States population.

Five self-identified women that are full-time faculty members currently hold (or held) leadership positions at various levels participated in this study. Utilizing a semi-structured interview format, each participant was asked four broad open-ended questions related to work-life balance to include additional follow up questions that were prompted by their responses. These questions allowed me to analyze their unique experiences and understand their perspectives. During this process, six common themes emerged from the data.

A basic qualitative research design incorporating the interview method was used for this study. Merriam and Tisdale (2016) describe this design as “the most utilized qualitative approach over time and across disciplines.” WLB is a very complicated issue. As a result, there are multiple working theories specifically for work-life balance; a single theory was not used to conduct this study.

Finally, this research study provided a historical timeline of significant events to establish a clearer understanding of factors that impact work-life balance issues affecting American women today. It is imperative that all women become aware of their work life balance status and make necessary adjustments to prevent irreparable consequences. The information gained from this study provides opportunities for further research concerning WLB issues and concerns.

INDEX WORDS: Work-life balance, higher education institutions, academia, full-time female faculty, labor participation

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2022

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December 2022

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“Despite the progress our nation has made...there remain two million fewer women in the workforce than there were before the pandemic struck – taking a toll on our economy and millions of families across the country.” Millions of women are struggling to return to the workforce due to work-life issues. These issues are not new; however, they have been intensified due to the Covid-19 pandemic (White House, 2021).

The purpose of this study was to examine and understand work-life balance (WLB) issues among full-time faculty who identify as women in higher education. This study evaluated their WLB and assumed responsibilities traditionally performed by women. Kulkarni (2013) defines *balance* as "having enough time to work and enough time to have a life thus work-life balance." WLB concerns depend on the person and their circumstances, which is also a paradigm for this study (Vanner & Bicket, 2016).

WLB is a significant challenge for most Americans, particularly among women in academia who (in addition to other aspects and pressures of WLB) must contend with vague promotion and tenure requirements that lack clear guidelines or work performance standards resulting in the inclination to “do more.” According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), there is also concern and deficiency in the literature about gender inequalities related to Covid-19 research authorship by women due to their work-life balance issues:

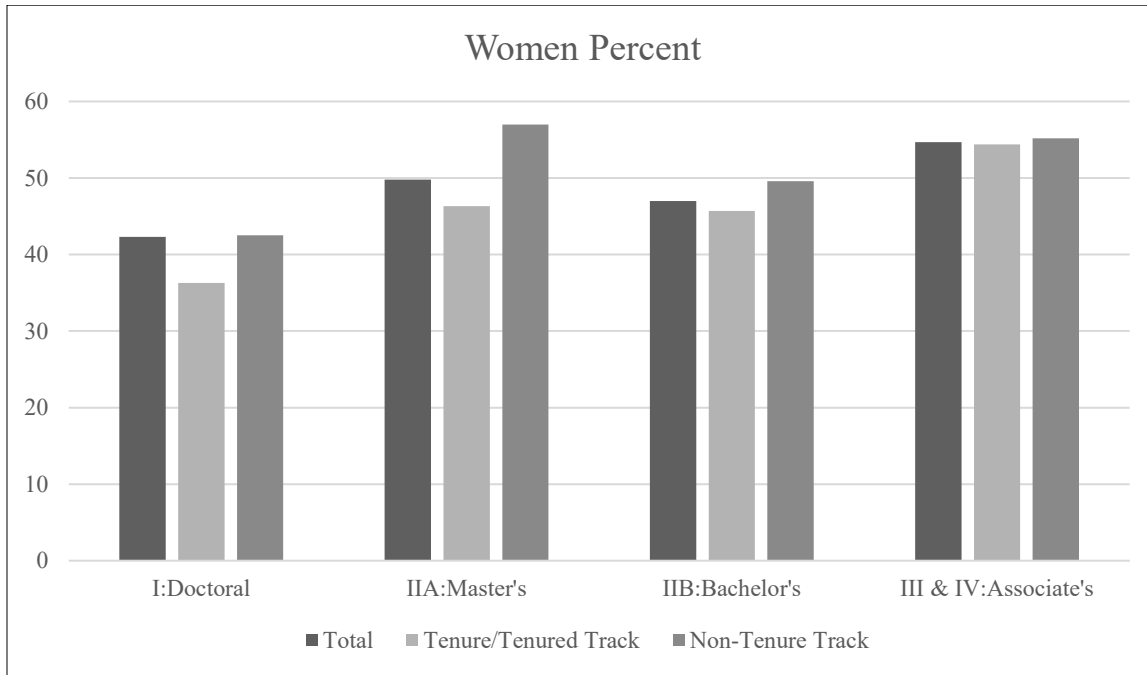
With lockdowns enforced across the globe due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many researchers are now working from home and face competing demands from parenting, homeschooling, and other caring duties. Women predominantly assume these roles, especially in countries with high gender inequality. Women's representation in research generally, and specifically in the study of Covid-19, may be disproportionately affected by lockdown measures. Under-representation of female researchers tends to create under-representation of issues relevant to women in research—in our current situation, this may create essential gaps in our understanding of Covid-19. (Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020, p. 1)

Women were an integral part of the workforce prior to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their labor participation rate has declined over the past several years due to WLB issues (Burke, 2018), specifically among women between the ages of 16-24 and among women of color (specifically Hispanics and African Americans). Based on recent census data collected between 2020 and 2021 during the first year of the Covid-19 recession, more women (2.4 million) have quit the labor force compared to men (1.8 million).

According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), more women are enrolled in college and are earning associates, masters, and bachelor's degrees. Refer to Figure 1. In higher education, more women are instructors, lecturers, and assistant professors without tenure. However, only 33 percent of women are full professors. Few women have tenure, notably women color. There are also fewer women in higher (top) administrative roles such as department chairs and deans. Additionally, the racial and ethnic composition of faculty does not fully represent the United States population (AAUP, 2020).

**Figure 1**

*Representation of Women Among Full-Time Faculty*



*Note.* This figure represents a non-profit, degree granting, post-secondary institutions only ( $N=2774$ ). Source: Modified from the American Association of Professors (AAUP).

Although women today now account for slightly less than half of the workforce, they accounted for the majority of the decrease in the labor force in the first year of the downturn (Kochhar & Benett, 2021). Together, Hispanic, Black women, and women between the ages of 16 and 24 represent 46% of the total decrease among women and less than one-third of the female labor force. However, Hispanic women have a more significant presence than other women and men in the hospitality profession. Compared with other women with children at home, Hispanic and Black women are more likely to be un-partnered parents (Kochhar & Benett, 2021).

## Figure 2

*Unemployment Rates Among Black and Hispanic Workers, February 2020–2021*

<b>Women</b>	<b>Covid-19 Peak</b>
White	15.7
Black	17.3
Hispanic	20.5
Asian	16.7

*Note.* Compared to other workers, Black and Hispanic female workers have higher unemployment rates. Source: Modified from the Pew Research Center.

Yadav (2012) explained that stress and work-life balance is affecting everyone around the world and is critical when it impacts job satisfaction.

Work-life balance is a state of balance in which the demand of both professional and personal life is equal. Each role has a different set of demands and when such role demands overlap, multiple problems are faced and it creates a lot of stress. People use the term stress to describe the feeling, when it all seems too much, when they are overloaded and don't feel that they are able to meet all the demands and challenges placed upon them. The causes of stress are known as stressors and there are exactly hundreds of different types of stressors. Any event in life that a person finds threatening, difficult to cope with or causes excess pressure can be a potential cause of stress. (p. 64)

Regardless of demographic background, most women are experiencing stress and anxiety now more than ever. Stressors may be intensified due to job dissatisfaction, dealing with women's rights disparities, the Covid-19 pandemic, and racial tensions. Untreated stress and anxiety will lead to significant health issues, including high blood pressure, mental issues, other physical ailments, and burnout. Simmons (2012) defined burnout as a state of ongoing

exhaustion that is both physical and mental. It results when there is a disconnection between work and life; there is no energy left to fulfill work and familial obligations.

Experiences and stressors on the job can significantly impact emotional and physical health and thus may be essential facets of faculty well-being and retention. For example, poor interpersonal relationships at work are related to poor physical health, poor emotional health, and low job satisfaction among faculty members in higher education. Emotional well-being is a stronger predictor of turnover or retention than job satisfaction. (Wright & Bonett, 2007)

Women are also attempting to manage various responsibilities, including trying to manage their family, education, and careers (Fernandes-Alcatara, 2018). There have been many positive changes for women since the women's suffrage movement that occurred during the early part of the twentieth century, but there is still work to be done. More so than men, women end up reducing their work hours, resigning from their jobs, or discontinuing their education to take care of dependents in need, especially during the pandemic (Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020).

Regarding the inception of the term, WLB was first used in the late 1800s when manufacturing laws limited the working hours of women and children. The 40-hour work week became standard once the Fair Labor Standards Act passed in 1938. The term re-emerged in the 1980s during the Women's Liberation Movement, which brought work-life balance issues among women with children back to the forefront (Raja & Stein, 2014). To date, there are approximately 233 conceptual and 204 operational definitions based on published literature. The operational definition used for this study is explained by Byrne (2005) in which she describes WLB as a process in which people seek change according to their own priorities. The current

state of WLB issues among women was recently addressed during a Whitehouse briefing this year.

Despite the increase in the number of women faculty members during the past 20 years, several scholars note, "projections of a noticeable increase in tenured female professors have not come to fruition" (Samble, 2008). Several factors contribute to this disparity, which includes an increase in part-time faculty and non-tenure appointments, and more worthwhile prospects outside of the academic profession (Samble 2008). Additionally, achieving work-life balance has been increasingly difficult as faculty responsibilities and expectations have increased without appropriate compensation (Samble, 2008). This research is necessary because these issues are critical regarding the future of women in the workforce, in academia, concerning the United States (White House, 2021).

In a typical heterosexual relationship during this period, women were to hold down careers and continue the primary family and home management (Raja & Stein, 2014). With the influx of women entering the workforce, people desired to balance their professional and personal lives. Women also needed more flexibility managing their schedule, and presumptively increased satisfaction from work and life. Hence, the term "work-life balance" became a crucial concept in the late twentieth century. Today, it is often presumed that these issues mainly affect middle-aged married women with children. According to the latest U.S. census conducted by the Pew Research Center during 2020-2021, many women begin working at 16. Therefore, consideration for work-life balance should start as early as junior high school (Lagace, 2002). Not all women are married or have children, but they may have dependents (i.e. elderly parents). Regardless of their status, women typically juggle five aspects of their lives at any time. They include work, family, friends, health, and spirit (or self) (Bryne, 2005).

If institutions aspire to have an equitable workplace, men and women should participate in the workforce, balancing life and work equally. Since the turn of the century, the labor participation rate among women has been on the decline due to work-life balance issues (Burke, 2008). The labor participation of women was also significantly impacted by the pandemic. Some of the concerns women are still grappling with include inequality and discrimination, which are historical in origin. Even though women have successfully dealt with these issues, it has been at the sacrifice of their health and well-being.

The resultant stress that university employees experience is associated with work and family conflicts (Wong & Ko, 2009). Although Wong and Ko (2009) examined hotel workers, parallels can be drawn that are similar to women in other professions. For instance, Irfan and Tabassum (2015) studied university instructors and primary and secondary school teachers in India. The basis of their study included examining WLB issues among women in the United States. They asserted that women in professional careers experienced more work-life pressures due to dealing with different types of students, work hours, differences in workloads, training requirements, and the nature of courses. While Wong and Ko's assessment is not specific to female faculty, studies among other groups of women of various professions demonstrate WLB issues.

Another concern for women is limited opportunities for job promotion compared to men. For example, women doctors (or health professionals) with children have lower career success and less support compared to men (Tarquino, 2016). Women faculty with a health professions (clinical) background concurrently work in the clinical setting to sharpen their skills and maintain credentials while meeting academic and administrative expectations. Some women faculty members also participate in shift work in the clinical setting. As a result, they have

disrupted daily rhythms and sleep deprivation, accidents, illnesses, and psychological issues because of family and friend isolation due to having a shift that is different from others (Simmons, 2012) or due to self-quarantine measures because of Covid-19 exposure (Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020). Although these issues are not solely women's issues, women have faced longstanding discrimination and barriers that have hindered them.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Oleschuk (2020) evaluated gender equity issues among faculty for tenure and promotion.

Inequalities shaping women's and men's academic careers are not new; they existed well before Covid-19 hit North American universities in March 2020. Gender differences in academic success are long-standing and have been documented across disciplines in academia, with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) female faculty being significantly penalized. This include disparities between men's and women's representation in faculty positions, publication rates, citations, recognition, and salary that regularly favor men over women (Council of Canadian Academics, 2012; Huang et al., 2020; King, 2008; Ortega-Liston & Soto, 2014; Timmons, 2016). Existing research stresses that these differences are not reflective of differences in the merit of male and female scholars. Instead, systemic barriers impeding the productivity of female academics throughout their careers, such as the structure of career absences (Cameron, White, & Gray 2016), the peer-review process (Witteman et al., 2019), resource and grant allocation (Duch et al., 2012), service demands (Hanasono et al., 2019), implicit biases and stereotypes (King, 2008), work climates (Milkman, Akinola, & Chugh, 2012), and family and household responsibilities (Mason et al., 2005). (p.2)

Certain barriers worsened during the pandemic, especially barriers related to family and household responsibilities. Striking differences related to gender regarding productivity and visibility should foster re-evaluation of how faculty are assessed for tenure, promotion, and retention during the pandemic. The ramifications that resulted from the pandemic will resonate for many years. Recurrent lockdowns, school and daycare closures, and the psychological impact that regular isolation has physically and mentally affected people. "The Covid-19 pandemic serves as an opportunity and a provocation to rethink our established ways of evaluating academic success to acknowledge and ameliorate systemic differences in its enactment." (Oleschuk, 2020, p. 7).

There are many definitions concerning work-life balance. Casper et al. (2018) stated that approximately 233 conceptual and 204 operational definitions of work-life balance exist according to their research study. It was discovered that definitions, themes, and measures were evaluated based on published literature. Reoccurring themes related to balance family, health, and wellness, prioritizing, integration, and setting boundaries.

As the researcher, I selected the operational definition as explained by Byrne (2005) because it addresses one's motivation to seek balance and identifies the underlying factors that can lead to work-life imbalance in a simple and concise statement. She believes that work-life balance is a process in which people seek to change after their priorities, physical, psychological, or both, and these can be triggered in their turn by factors such as age, changes in working conditions, the demands of new technology, and poor management. (p. 53).

Work-life balance among women in the United States and how they manage has laid the groundwork for assessing similarities among women around the world. The factors affecting work-life balance must examine the experiences and perceptions of women of different

generations and backgrounds. Younger generations of American women do not want to work the same way as their parents, but they are not as prepared for the workforce as previous generations (Byrne, 2005). In addition to dealing with historical issues of workplace inequality and discrimination, full-time women faculty in university settings face a unique set of issues related to academic expectations and clinical responsibilities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) was to examine and understand work-life balance (WLB) issues among full-time university faculty who identify as women. Kulkarni (2013) defines balance as "having enough time to work and enough time to have a life thus work-life balance." WLB concerns depend on the person and their circumstances, which is also a paradigm for this study (Vanner & Bicket, 2016).

Work-life balance issues in the United States are important because women of various ages and backgrounds struggle. This study aimed to evaluate the experiences and perceptions of full-time female faculty in a higher education setting. The concerns of full-time women faculty were examined. Particularly, their duties of work, domestic obligations, and spirit/self-care. Although not the focus of this study or exhaustive in scope, it also identified gaps in the literature about the lack of qualitative research studies regarding balance issues among American women, the effects of personality traits, and limited understanding about paternity policies related to men (Mehta & Kundami, 2015), and the lack of female authorship of the effects of Covid-19 on balance issues among women (Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020).

Current statistical data regarding the labor participation rate in the United States and a historical timeline of events that has and continues to impact women in the workforce were shared. A variety of definitions, theories, and measures from studies were also introduced.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do full-time women faculty define WLB?
2. What influences their overall perspective?
3. What are current and past experiences of women faculty with work-life balance?
4. What are barriers and supports experienced by women faculty to challenge or support WLB issues?

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework correlates with the qualitative interview research method utilized for this study, which examines work-life balance issues among full-time women university faculty members from various colleges within the university setting. Concept maps illustrate critical assumptions within the study and illustrate the connection between them (Maxwell, 2013). Figure 2 represents the concept map for this research study and demonstrates the informative connections that help establish the researcher's assumptions between the research (central), the participant, and their perceptions based on personal experiences as well as existing literature.

## **The Research**

The process is the research itself at the center of the informative interaction. The primary purpose of this basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) is to evaluate and better understand the work-life balance issues of women in general, specifically among full-time women faculty in higher education. According to the latest census, women now make up less than half of the workforce (Kochhar & Bennett, 2021). Therefore, WLB issues are important because women of various ages, years of professional experience, dependent status, and backgrounds struggle, particularly in today's climate, especially among Hispanic and African

American women. Pew Research presumes that their workforce participation rate is on the decline because they are struggling more since they are typically un-partnered parents, according to the census data (Kochhar & Bennett, 2021). The environment in the United States today is further impacted by the lack of continued disparities and inequalities about the acknowledgment of women's rights issues, in addition to the Covid-19 pandemic and increased racial tensions (Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020).

Younger women drive the current trend toward seeking work-life balance. The women struggling the most are responsible for dependents and are minorities concerning race, culture, and gender (Byrne, 2005). Based on the literature, it is highly probable that WLB issues impact retention rates across professions. It could have a detrimental impact on the American workforce.

The qualitative interview research method will be utilized and incorporate aspects from various methods that will be explained in detail later (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The bigger picture is that the framework addresses specific work-life balance issues to evaluate detailed designs and work-life balance theories on a broader scale. Methods used to collect data were open-ended virtual web-conferencing interviews. Memos were documented throughout the process to ensure questions answers and briefly document patterns and themes. Hand analysis was used to establish, organize, and categorize patterns, themes, and codes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Additionally, the small sample of five participants effectively and sufficiently captured and portrayed pertinent information since the participants were demographically diverse.

### **The Researcher**

As the researcher, the expectations of potential findings support the informative interactions beginning with the study design, research questions, and understanding of the

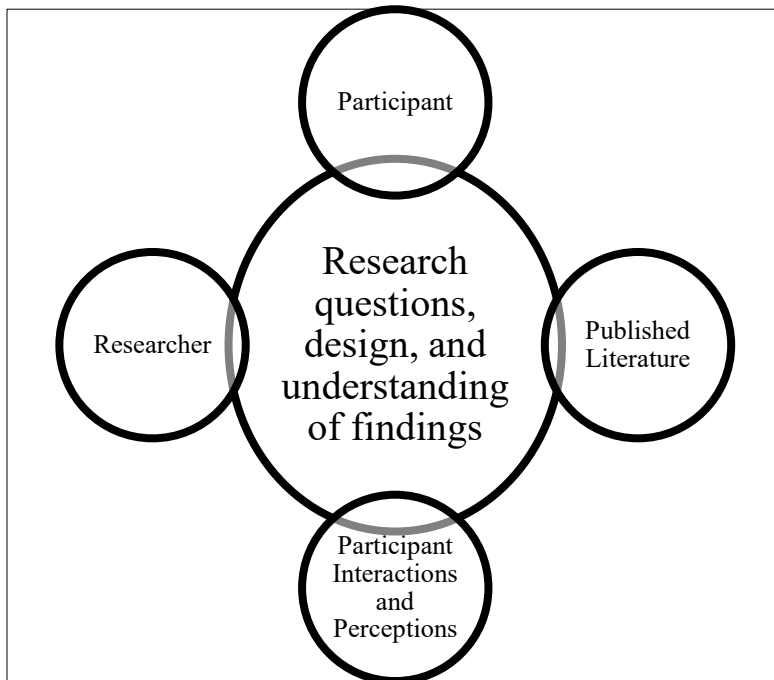
findings. There are advantages and disadvantages to being familiar with the profession as a full-time faculty member and a graduate student in multiple academic settings. One advantage is direct access to participants. Another is the ability to empathize with the experiences of the participants.

The disadvantage is that my advantages may lead to speculation regarding the participants' experiences (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). As a result, there is a need to be reflexive. Reflectivity involves discussing the role of the researcher regarding the study, which allows reflection of biases, values, and assumptions that will actively influence the research. The evaluation of personal experiences, perceptions, cultural backgrounds, and how they impact the interpretations are conclusions drawn from this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Central to the informative interaction process is the research that include the research questions, design, and understanding of the findings. The researcher, published literature, and the participant (their interactions, experiences, and perceptions) and the central aspect of the process are linked and inform each other interchangeably as seen in Figure 2. The conceptual map of the perceived framework was developed to better understand work-life balance. It illustrates the relationship between informative interactions and multiple elements within the framework that ultimately support the researcher's assumptions.

**Figure 3**

*Concept Map of the Framework*



*Note.* This figure conceptually represents the perceived framework for understanding work-life balance. The informative interactions are linked. The research questions, design, and understand of findings are central and supports the predictions established by connected interactions—the participant's interactions, their perceptions authenticated by their experiences, and published literature that are linked all serve inform each other interchangeably.

Another interaction that supported the researcher's assumptions are the participant's interactions and perceptions based on their experiences, which are further supported by published peer-reviewed literature. It is a critical time to understand and support women by evaluating their concerns since, at one point, they accounted for almost half of America's workforce. However, today their labor participation rate is on the decline due to WLB issues. There is no clear definition for work-life balance. Like the various definitions of truth, the truth can either be what one needs it to be, desires (wants) it to be, or is for the individual (Evans, 2011). It appears that WLB also has various definitions for similar reasons. For example, Kulkarni defines balance as "having enough time to work and enough time to have a life thus

work-life balance." Similar to the truth, WLB concerns depend on the person and their circumstances (Vanner & Bicket, 2016).

The following passage from various lecture series at Harvard University is a significant contribution to the conceptual framework. During the Mobius Leadership Forum, Lagace (2002) stated the following, "Mentioning work-family balance you think of a trade-off: something gained for something lost." Guest panelist Rabbi Shmuley, a participant of the same forum, but during a discussion on a different occasion, stated, "Equality for women was a step back for women...real greatness is when you do not have to prove yourself constantly." He further called for the "feminization" of men versus the "masculinization" of women (Lagace, 2002).

### **Importance of the Study**

To better understand work-life balance issues among women, this study will determine the sentiments and experiences of full-time women university instructors. Their impressions and experiences will impact our current knowledge of the matters. The significance is that it may generate suggestions for further research. Suggestions include supporting existing theories or developing new theoretical approaches that will improve our understanding and address gaps in the literature.

Those who connect with the findings of this study may be led to reflect on their situations. They may be encouraged to share related experiences in forums such as workshops, round table discussions, and support groups. It is desired that the results of this study lead to awareness of WLB issues and concerns among women in academia to include continued review, modification and development of related policies and procedures at various educational levels. It is my hope this study positively impacts professional practice. Most importantly, I want it to serve as an impetus for women to begin to make better lifestyle choices and make themselves the

top priority in their lives. Illuminating concerns might help others in similar situations and allow them to assess their balance issues and develop an action plan to address potential severe implications of negative work-life balance (i.e., unbalance). For instance, women faculty members may decide to reprioritize their responsibilities personally and professionally, especially if children, the elderly, and sick dependents, and a decline in their health are involved. If these decisions do not occur, some women are more likely to lose or quit their jobs to take care of dependents and themselves compared to men (Burke, 2018).

The pandemic has accentuated existing issues women face concerning WLB. The NCBI released an article that addressed the challenges and burdens of Covid-19 and its impact on mental health issues. These issues were related to families in isolation, their contact restrictions, and the shocking and unexpected economic shutdown. This change drastically affected the psychosocial environment of affected countries. The current situation significantly impacts children, adolescents, and their families. Kindergartens and schools were closed resulting in minimal social contact and canceled out-of-home leisure time activities. Parents had to support their children's education with homeschooling while at the same time working from home. External support by other family members and social support systems also fell away. Besides worries and anxieties related to Covid-19, the economic situation had worsened with high and rising levels of unemployment in all affected countries. These circumstances caused more pressure that affected children, adolescents, and their families, which could result in distress, mental health problems, and violence (Fegert et al., 2020).

Concerning higher education, there have been nationwide changes in the delivery of instruction, advisement, and completion of administrative responsibilities due to the instant transition to remote instruction. For instance, department and student meetings mainly occur

virtually with the use of web conferencing. Face-to-face instruction has transitioned to partially online, hybrid, or fully online (Author 2, 2020). There are also changes in household maintenance due to Covid-19 and working remotely.

The study and the participants of various demographic backgrounds provided insight regarding ways to address WLB issues. For example, potential policy modifications concerning re-examining traditional work hours can be evaluated. Alternative delivery instruction methods may be explored. Finally, promotion, tenure, review and retention policies and procedures can be clearer.

At the state level, new policies were implemented while others were modified due to the pandemic and race relation issues. Faculty and administration were strongly encouraged to consult with human resources (HR) to seek accommodations or consult with supervisors/department chairs to discuss flexible and alternative schedules to assist with WLB issues. Students were also encouraged to seek accommodations through the office of disability services or contact their instructors to discuss their status and schedule conflicts (Author 2, 2020). The data from this research may inform higher administration of additional ways to support faculty. Alternatively, they can consider ways to implement continued evaluation and policy development regarding balance issues.

### **Summary**

The future of women in the workforce is critical. Policy and procedure modification and the development of new policies due to work-life balance issues among employed women, principally university faculty, continues to be a work in progress. The impact of disparities among women, the pandemic, political unrest, and racial tensions have domestic life hanging in the state of the unknown. Understanding these matters and the associated factors can provide

employees invaluable insight. This perspective is needed to carefully modify, develop, and implement policies and procedures that legitimately and effectively address work-life balance issues among women faculty in higher education.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

At the start of this research in 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report indicated that women made up half of the workforce, but their labor participation rate declined due to work-life balance (WLB) issues (Burke, 2018). During the first year of the Covid-19 recession, more women (2.4 million) have quit the labor force compared to men (1.8 million) based on 2020-2021 census data (Kochhar & Bennett, 2021). According to the Pew Research Center, women now account for marginally less than half of the workforce. Women accounted for the majority of the decrease in the labor force in the first year of the downturn. Together, Hispanic, Black women, and women between the ages of 16 and 24 accounted for 46% of the total decrease among women, but now they represent less than one-third of the female labor force. Hispanic women have a more significant presence than other women and men in the hospitality profession. According to their research, pandemic-driven pressures on parents may also have affected Hispanic, Black, and Asian women more than White women. Compared with other women with children at home, Hispanic and Black women are more likely to be un-partnered parents (Kochhar & Benett, 2021).

The idea of WLB began in the late 1800s when manufacturing laws limited the working hours of women and children (Raja & Stein, 2014). During this period, the Women's Suffrage Movement is underway. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FSLA) of 1938 was the first policy to establish a boundary between work and life. It provided basic labor protections to address overworking and low pay. The act determined minimum wage, overtime, record-keeping, and

child labor laws (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). It also marked the time when women earned the right to vote. Additionally, Eleanor Roosevelt developed the Community Facility Act of 1942 to provide childcare facilities on-site for women who entered the workforce during World War II.

These events, along with the Federal Drug's Administration (FDA) approval of the "the pill," in 1960, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Roe vs. Wade and the legalization of abortion in 1973, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, and the ability to open a checking account without a man serving as co-signer empowered women in the workforce (O'Connor 1996; Palley, 2017) (p. 1). Also, in the 1970s, the term work-life balance was first used to explain the balance between one's work and personal life. The term's resurgence occurred during the 1980s when the Women's Liberation Movement brought work-life balance issues among women with children back to the forefront (Raja & Stein, 2014).

Considering today's working environment, the idea of a 40-hour week is a moving target. The literature states significant life changes are occurring today. Americans have been working tirelessly since the Great Recession and dealing with the pandemic, racial and political discord; there are many burned out Americans (Hamel & Salganicoff, 2020; Perry et al., 2013). There is also a crisis in higher education. Despite the increase in the number of female faculty members during the past 20 years, several scholars note, "projections of a noticeable increase in tenured female professors have not come to fruition (Gappa et al., 2007; Hult et al., 2005; Samble 2008; Schuester & Finkelstein, 2006).

The purpose of this basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) was to examine and understand work-life balance (WLB) issues among women in America, predominantly full-time women faculty in higher education. The advantages of using this design is that it provided

an opportunity for research study participants to share their experiences. It increased awareness of WLB issues and their impact on their health and wellness. It also enabled them to evaluate and discuss their support systems, and define balance in their terms. The emphasis of this study is on WLB disparities, exclusively in the United States. According to the literature, women of all walks of life throughout the world are struggling to balance time and attention for themselves (spirit/self-care), their family, and workplace responsibilities while dealing with issues related to workplace inequality (Byrne, 2005).

This study also identified specific gaps in the existing literature. These gaps are exhaustive and are larger issues that are not the sole focus of this study. They include (and are not limited to): more qualitative research studies regarding balance issues among Americans and full-time women university faculty in the United States, the effects of personality traits, and paternity policies and procedures related to men (Mehta & Kundnani, 2015). According to the National Center for Biotechnology (NCBI), there is also concern and research deficiency related to inequalities in Covid-19 research authorship by women taking care of dependents and ultimately their unavailability (Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020).

There are a variety of definitions concerning work-life balance. Casper et al. (2018) indicate approximately 233 conceptual and 204 operational definitions of work-life balance. Several definitions, themes, and measures were evaluated based on the published literature. Reoccurring themes related to balancing family, health, and wellness, prioritizing, integration, and setting boundaries consistently appeared in published research. This literature review discussed several definitions. The operational definition preferred as the researcher is explained the best by Byrne (2005). She states:

Work-life balance is a process in which people seek to change things by changes in their priorities, physical, psychological or both, and these can be triggered in turn by factors such as age; changes in working conditions; the demands of new technology; and poor management.

Finally, this review concluded with consequences and proposed solutions concerning negative work-life (or unbalance). Ultimately, the theoretical framework is based on research objectives and includes the participants' experiences involved in this study, as supported by published literature.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Accessed library databases and search engines employed include (but are not limited to): GALILEO, CINAHL, MEDLINE (PubMed), Professional Development Collection, APA PsycArticles, SPORTDiscus, eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost), ResearchGate, Sociological Collection, Complementary Index, Advanced Placement Source, Psychology, and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Directory of Open Access Journals, Emerald Insight, Consumer Health, Health Source, SocINDEX, and Gale Literature: Book Review Index. Search engines include Google, Microsoft Edge, Microsoft Bing, Firefox, Yahoo, and AOL.

Current literature and sources were searched within the last five years to include additional sources that date further back to provide historical context. In the case of limited research concerning the topic of work-life balance specifically among Americans, seminal literature from statistical resources related to the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Pew Research Center, the United States Department of Labor, and the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), as well as conference proceedings, best practices reports, and blogs supported by reputable publishers.

Table 1 lists pertinent search terms and reoccurring themes related to this body of research that consistently appear in the literature.

**Table 1**

*Pertinent Terms and Themes of Work-Life Balance*

<b>Term</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
<i>Work-life balance</i> : the state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritizes the demands of one's career and the demands of one's personal life. (Gregano et al., 2020)	WLB
<i>Work-life integration</i> : blending both personal and professional responsibilities (Gregano et al., 2020)	WLI
<i>Work-health balance</i> : a state in which the worker feels able to effectively balance health and work needs, considering management attention to the employees' health and the perception of compatibility between the personal health situation and the job characteristics. (Gregano et al., 2020)	WHB
<i>Work-family balance</i> : generally refers to a work and family life that is well integrated and a situation in which the individual is actively engaged (Gregano et al., 2020)	WFB
<i>Family-to-work conflict</i> : when the effect is harmful from the family domain to the work domain (Gregano et al., 2020)	
<i>Work-family-conflict</i> : when the effect is harmful from the work domain to the family domain; arises when participation in either role is incompatible with participation in the other role (Lobel, 1991)	
<i>Family-to-work enrichment</i> : when the effect is positive from the family domain to the work domain (Gregano et al., 2020)	
<i>Work-to-family enrichment</i> : when the effect is positive from the work domain to the family domain. (Gregano et al., 2020)	
<i>Work interference with personal life</i> : when role pressures from work and personal life territories are unharmonious in some manner (Hayman, 2005)	WIPL
<i>Personal life interference with work</i> : when role pressures from personal life and work territories are unharmonious in some manner (Hayman, 2005)	PLIW
<i>Work personal life enhancement</i> : satisfaction and mental peace among employees related to fulfilling the demands of both work and personal life (Hayman, 2005)	WPLE
<i>Women faculty of color</i> : a woman who is of a race other than white or who is of mixed race (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)	WFOC

<i>Predominantly White institution</i> : institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment; the majority of these institutions may also be understood as historically White (Kelly & McCann, 2013)	PWI
<i>Protestant Work Ethic</i> : a valued code of morals rooted in the ideas of thrift, discipline, hard work, and individualism (Market, 2004)	PWE HBCU
<i>Historically Black Institution</i> : institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the intention of primarily serving the African-American community (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)	LSHPD
<i>Long-standing health problem or disability</i> : a health problem that has lasted or is likely to last for at least 6 months (Gregano, et al., 2020)	
<i>Black and Indigenous people of color</i> : the term is used to acknowledge that not all people of color face equal levels of injustice (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)	BIOPC

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### **Historical Background**

According to an article written by Sandra Day O’Conner (1996) for the Vanderbilt Law Review in 1996, “To appreciate the tremendous progress made by American women in the last century, we should consider the point from which it started.” (p.1). The idea of WLB began in the late 1800s when manufacturing laws limited the working hours of women and children (Raja & Stein, 2014). During this time, the Women’s Suffrage Movement was also underway, from 1840-1920. It marks a significant point in history regarding achieving women’s rights and equality. The impetus of the suffrage movement occurred in 1840 when Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were not allowed to participate in the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. In 1850, a strong alliance between the women’s suffrage organizations and the Abolitionist Movement (O’Conner, 1996) developed. Also, at this time, the first Women’s Rights Convention was held in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Women reformers wanted to pass reform legislation at the turn of the century. Politicians did not want to assist the disenfranchised group. Therefore, women realized they needed to earn the right to vote for reform; in 1872, Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth attempted to vote. Anthony casted her ballot during the presidential election for Ulysses S. Grant in Rochester, NY.

She is arrested and brought to trial (O’Conner, 1996). Truth demands the right to vote after arriving at Battle Creek, MI (Battle Creek Daily Journal, 1907). She is not allowed to vote.

Two influential organizations led the suffrage movement of the twentieth century—the National Association Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the National Women’s Party (NWP). The NAWSA was a modest organization with millions of members led by Carrie Chapman Catt. The NWP led by Alice Paul was a more radical and aggressive organization. Due to the hard work of both groups, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment passed and liberated women in 1920 (O’Conner, 1996).

Amidst the suffrage movement in 1904, economic sociologist Max Weber published “The Protestant Work Ethic” (PWE) (Market, 2004). Market (2004) evaluated the correlation between the PWE and the ascent of capitalism. He inferred that capitalism is "the rational and calculated expectation of profit by utilizing opportunities for exchange." Weber further described PWE as a valued code of morals rooted in the ideas of thrift, discipline, hard work, and individualism. According to the ethic, God's blessings are available in the afterlife if the individuals are prudent, orderly, industrious, self-directed, and prosperous. This viewpoint, along with the goals and aspirations of minorities (including American women, slave descendants, and immigrants) seeking the "American" dream, is the central theme in the story of the United States (Market, 2004).

According to Raja and Stein (2014), the concept of work-life balance is not new. It began in the late 1800s when manufacturing laws limited the working hours of women and children. Then, The Fair Labor Standards Act (FSLA) of 1938 established the 40-hour workweek. The act sustains the earning power of the workforce in America. The act has three components targeted at the labor market. First, it sets the minimum wage. Next, it required workers to get paid time

and a half for working overtime (over 40 hours per week). Finally, it determined the categories of appropriate employment performed by children (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

Around the time the FSLA was passed, many women worked outside the home during the 1940s. The period during World War II afforded women the extraordinary opportunity to enter the workforce and acquire jobs that had been traditionally held by men, especially in the industry of defense. Many obstacles were overcome, including battling stereotypes against employed women, inadequate childcare during work hours, and additional discrimination against blacks and dislocated minority women (Dubois & Dumneil, 2016).

In 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt (wife of former President Franklin Roosevelt) convinced her husband to approve the Community Facility Act, establishing the first U.S. government-sponsored childcare facilities (Roosevelt House, 2019). She also pleaded with other industry leaders to construct childcare facilities for their employees. Unfortunately for women, this still was not enough to meet the needs of working mothers and children. Cultural resistance toward women working persisted. Hence, Rosie the Riveter was created by the government as a form of propaganda to ensure women worked hard while maintaining their good looks and femininity (Dubois & Dumneil, 2016). To some, Rosie the Riveter, whose image is of the real-life appearance of Naomi Parker Fraley working in a factory, represents a feminist icon. Once the true meaning of the poster re-surfaced, it notes that Riveter was not a true feminist icon by others (Ryan, 2021).

Also, during this time approximately, 350,000 women joined the armed forces. They served in various capacities, including nurses, truck drivers, airplane mechanics, and secretaries. In 1944 during segregation, Black women were finally allowed to serve. Black men served in only black units. Black nurses were only allowed to treat black soldiers. Many women (Black

and White) lost their lives and were held captive as prisoners of war (Dubois & Dumneil, 2016). Other women worked in civil service positions, such as chemists and engineers. African American women had difficulties obtaining jobs because White women did not want to work with them. Japanese American women also had limited access to new employment opportunities. As a result of being displaced and relocated to America after the war, Japanese American women grappled with maintaining their sense of cultural identity and normalcy. After the war ended, many women lost their jobs. Conversely, that time was short-lived, and women ages 14 and older re-entered the workforce—many acquired work shattering the "1950's housewife" stereotype (Dubois & Dumneil, 2016).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 also empowered women in the workforce. The movement, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called for equality for men and women. The act outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (O'Conner, 1996). Additionally, racial discrimination in schools and public facilities officially ended. The act had a tremendous impact on working women. As a result, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 established the EEOC (Equal Opportunity Commission) in 1970. The organization helped women obtain jobs that were initially not available to them. In 1978, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act prohibited inequity against pregnant women in the workplace (Palley, 2017).

During the 1960s and 1970s, several other profound events transpired that influenced women's ability to participate in the workforce. The first was the development of the non-barrier contraceptive method ("the pill") approved by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) on May 9, 1960 (Junod, 1998). The second monumental event was the Roe vs. Wade decision issued on January 22, 1973. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Texas statute banning abortion.

Abortion had been illegal throughout most of the country since the late nineteenth century before this decision (Ginsberg & Shulman, 2021).

Finally, in the 1970s, women were also granted the right to open checking and savings accounts at banking institutions without a man serving as a co-signer (O'Conner, 1996; Hazan et al., 2018). The expression, work-life balance, was first used to describe the balance between work and life during the seventies. Around the 1980s, the Women's Liberation Movement brought work-life balance issues among women with children back to the forefront.

To accommodate women in the workforce, flexible working schedules and maternity leave were popularized. Initially, this concept was only for women, expected to hold down careers and continue the primary family and home management. Soon, these benefits and ideas included professional men and women. The idea that people would want to have a balance between their professional and personal lives, more flexibility in managing their schedule, and presumptively increase satisfaction from work and life became a key concept in the late 20th century. (Raja & Stein, para. 5)

O'Conner (1996) stated that, "...it is hard to believe that only 100 years ago, the U.S. Constitution did not include women's rights. They could not vote, control their property and earnings, and had limited opportunities to seek higher education and employment, and lacked legal status." (p.1). These historical events and the timeline of their occurrences significantly affected women. Some of these issues still govern their participation in the workforce today.

## **Work-Life Balance**

### **The Argument for Work-Life Balance**

Work-life balance is a multimillion-dollar industry and a deciding factor in choosing jobs. A Google search for the term "work-life balance" results in approximately 1,440,000,000

results, including links for tools for work-life balance, scientific articles, and consulting companies, to help create work-life balance (Raja & Stein, 2014).

As of 2021, the census indicates that over 50% or more of women now work in the following professions: hairstylists and cosmetologists, nursing assistants, registered nurses, teaching assistants, pharmacy technicians, pharmacists, financial managers, real estate brokers, and sales agents. Salary ranges for these occupations range from \$25,000–\$125,000/year. It continues to exist regardless of whether women are the majority, equally represented, or the minority percentage of the workforce within a particular profession. For certain occupations, such as graphic designers and pharmacists, the gender pay gap has significantly decreased (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Although more women than men are enrolled in college earning associate and bachelor's degrees, fewer women are choosing teaching as a profession, particularly in academia.

Seeking work-life balance is a serious issue in our country because Americans are experiencing burnout. They have been working tirelessly since the Great Recession and coupled with today's current climate of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, racial and political discord (Hamel & Salganicoff, 2020; Perry et al., 2013). The concept of WLB has significantly evolved over the years. There has been a significant increase in work in the last several decades due to technology and competitive and intense work environments (Kulkarni, 2013). Because of this, a call for an expansion of the concept to be inclusive of other relevant factors today. Gragnano et al. (2020) agreed:

Many researchers have called for a natural expansion of the WLB concept, such that the second arm of the balanced—life—is not confined to the family role. The call for an expansion of the concept is theoretically grounded and related to recent changes in the

labor market. Identifying the work-family-balance (WFB) as an indicator of the WLB was relatively practical and valuable in recent decades when the most remarkable change in workplace demographics was the increase in the participation of women. Managing family and work roles for working women and dual-earner couples, especially women with children, became a central issue within organizations. Currently, workplace demographics are more heterogeneous. In addition to the massive presence of women in the labor market, we also see an increase in the rate of active elderly workers, workers with an LSHPD, single workers, and childless couples. An exclusive focus on the family has become reductive when considering WLB.

### **Challenging Characteristics**

Better work-life balance starts with the department managers. Today, employees seek more flexibility regarding their work schedules to address significant life changes. It also addresses the following issues: flexibility does not always translate into better work-life balance, paid family leaves or childcare support can raise perceptions of unfairness in the workforce, and the majority of employees who do have access to flexible work arrangements are reluctant to use them (Byrne, 2005).

The Research Request (2017), Work-Life Trends report indicated that American workers are struggling with issues related to work-life balance.

A study published in American Sociological Review found that 70 percent of U.S. workers struggle to achieve an acceptable balance between work and family life. In a recent survey conducted by the Hay Group, 39 percent of respondents indicated that they did not have the right balance between work and personal lives. Twenty-seven percent of

respondents said they worked for a company that did not support work-life balance and indicated that they planned to look for new work within two years. (p. 2)

According to Raja and Stein (2017), "Although achieving work-life balance is an individual task that cannot be standardized, tools for assessing work-life balance and evaluating priorities may help increase awareness of imbalances" (p. 72).

### **Consequences and Proposed Solutions**

A way to filter the idea of WLB is to determine whether one suffers from the consequences of poor and unbalanced WLB (Adams, 2006). The consequences include fatigue, poor health, and loss of quality time with loved ones and friends. These costs result from increased responsibilities at work and at home, longer work hours, and taking care of dependents. Once the issues prevail, many scholarly articles offer suggestions for applying the idea of good balance. They include (and are not limited to): ensuring one is doing a job they love, prioritizing one's health, not being afraid to unplug, taking vacations, making time for self and others, setting boundaries regarding work hours, setting goals, and prioritizing them, and requesting flexible schedules. Gragnano et al. (2020) listed job satisfaction is due to work-family and work health balance.

Among the literature considering work-related outcomes, job satisfaction has been the most studied variable. Job satisfaction represents the extent to which workers like or dislike their job. Job satisfaction is a central variable in organizational behavior research. Spector ascribed its importance to three main reasons that are indicators of wellbeing and psychological health. It is related to many worker behaviors that are positive for the organization. Finally, it is a handy indicator of organizational problems. Job satisfaction is highly related to burnout, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and, to a lower extent,

perceived physical illness. It is related to job performance and four dispositional traits predictive of job performance: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Job satisfaction is also a significant predictor of turnover and turnover intention. (p. 4)

The Mayo Clinic has emphasized ways to relax, volunteering to help others outside of work, developing a sound support system, and identifying signs that warrant seeking professional help if needed. Managers should also properly train supervisors to create a more supportive company culture. Other proposed solutions include assessing the current work-life balance status of employees. According to Bryne (2005), it is essential to develop a plan after thoroughly filtering your thoughts. She suggested several exercises that were beneficial as the researcher. For instance, the first exercise is a personal assessment of one's curriculum vitae (or resume). Previous roles are to be evaluated with documentation of past experiences (good and bad) to include recalling the environment and the people you worked alongside. The same suggestion applies to hobbies and interests, identifying transferable and acquired additional skills. The next exercise involves identifying motivational factors regarding selected roles and ranking them. The final exercise requires a detailed career review and establishing plans (short and long-term).

Interestingly, some critical questions are similar to a few research interview questions—several questions related to identifying barriers and allies regarding career opportunities. In comparison, the main difference is that the research questions inquire about barriers and supports related to work-life balance, not solely work. After completing the assessment, Byrne suggests forming a personal board of directors and meeting with them regularly to discuss ideas and issues related to balance. This board should consist of two to three close family members and

friends. If it is affordable, it is encouraged to consider hiring a counselor or life coach to assist with balance issues (Byrne, 2005).

Adams (2006) provided a practice guide for teachers that included activities to identify balance issues. Her assessment was more formal than the previously described exercises. It helped readers to define work-life balance on their terms after reading assigned chapters that discuss various work-life balance issues based on personal experiences. She warns that it is okay for personal definitions of balance to evolve.

Finally, Elle (2021) suggested writing/journaling as a form of cost-effective therapy to deal with balance issues. However, her focus is on spirit/self-care. Her journal consists of a series of questions to consider answering daily (or as frequently as desired). After answering a selected number of questions, one creates a positive affirmation that relates to question responses. Elle describes the benefits of this process:

When done transparently and honestly, writing can serve as a form of meditation, therapy, and healing. When we slow down and settle into ourselves, positive self-affirmations can help build a home by laying the foundation of self-awareness, introspection, and understanding. Speaking life and kindness into one's journey opens the door of possibility. Peeling back our emotional layers is an intense process, but we have the power to be our most excellent teachers when we use writing as a self-reflection resource. Self-care teaches that one can pour into oneself just as one pours into others.

### **Definitions, Theories, and Measures**

Casper et al. (2018) identified approximately 233 conceptual and 204 operational definitions of work-life balance in scholarly literature. Since there are a variety of definitions, the major themes that arise from these definitions include work, prioritizing, integration, spirit/self,

health and wellness, family and friends, and establishing boundaries between work and personal (non-work) endeavors.

Before discussing theories, there are several definitions to explore. The first two are from Bryne (2005). She is an independent career and development planning consultant. Her article explains the concept development of work-life balance and the trend towards achieving it. This article, along with the reflective exercise, was the first article that I read regarding this topic at the start of the research; it still resonates with me the most. She discusses two definitions of work-life balance. The first definition is the operational definition of balance because it addresses what it is, how it occurs, and why it affects people.

Work-life balance is a process in which people seek to change things by evaluating their priorities. These priorities include physical, psychological, or both, and these can be triggered in their turn by factors such as age; changes in working conditions; the demands of new technology; and poor management. (p. 55)

Byrne (2005) also offered another definition described by The Work Foundation (formerly The Industrial Society of the United Kingdom). Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where, and how they work. When an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm to the mutual benefit of the individual, business, and society (Byrne, 2005, p. 55).

Kulkarni (2013) identified two working definitions. First, "WLB is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between work (career and ambition) on one hand and life (health, leisure, pleasure, family, and spiritual development) on the other hand." Likewise, WLB involves "having enough time to work and enough time to have a life thus work-life balance" (p. 2). WLB concerns depend on the person and their circumstances, which is also a paradigm for this study

(Vanner & Bicket, 2016). This definition is simple and is applicable across occupations. These interpretations of WLB are often defined similarly in everyday use and are comparable to other meanings found in scholarly literature.

Regarding theories, measures, and multifaceted approaches related to balance, the studies of Wayne et al. (2021): Work-non-work balance; Kumar & Janakiram (2017): A Conceptual Review of Work-Life Balance Theories; Blustein (2001, 2006, 2008, and 2013): The Psychology of Work; and Gragnano et al. (2020): Work-Family and Work Health Balance. Their definitions of work-life balance correlate with their theoretical frameworks and associated measures.

According to Grant and Osanloo (2014),

The theoretical framework is the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study. It serves as the structure and support for the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions. It provides a grounding base, or an anchor, for the literature review, and most importantly, the methods and analysis.

Items in a research study are called measures. Examples include participant responses, manufactured situations, surveys, and interview questions (Trochim, 2007). Furthermore, a multidimensional approach consists of more than one feature/design to address a situation/problem that is considered complex or needs assessment from several points of view. McFarlane (2021) indicates that this approach "emphasizes the constant interaction of the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of our inner worlds with the relational, social, structural, and cultural dimensions of our outer worlds" (p. 394).

Wayne et al. (2021) note that given their comprehensive review of the literature, dictionary meanings, and qualitative data research, Casper et al. (2018) provided the most

thorough work-life balance definition (as stated below) that does not solely focus on work and family roles. Instead, the term "work-non-work balance" describes the balance that also includes non-work roles in addition to family responsibilities, which include self, friends, and community members.

Employees' evaluation of the favorability of their combination of work and non-work roles, arising from the degree to which their affective experiences and their perceived involvement and effectiveness in work and non-work roles are commensurate with the value they attach to these roles.

Wayne et al. (2021) viewed work-life balance in this way. They used a quantitative approach to develop and substantiate a measure of work-non-work balance, with 20 items comprising measures of five items for global balance (unidimensional reflective construct) and five items for each dimension. Table 2 lists dimensions considered formative constructs: affective, involvement, and effectiveness balance.

**Table 2**

*Reflective and Formative Constructs*

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**Global Balance (Unidimensional Reflective Construct)**

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1. There is harmony in how I blend my work and non-work roles.
  2. My work and non-work roles are combined in harmonious ways.
  3. Overall, my work and non-work roles are integrated.
  4. Overall, my work and non-work roles fit together.
  5. All in all, my work and non-work roles are in harmony.
- 

**Involvement Balance (Formative Construct)**

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1. I can devote enough time and attention to meaningful work and non-work activities.
  2. I can be adequately involved in the work and non-work roles that matter most to me.
  3. The time I spend in work and activities outside of work reflects my life priorities.
  4. I spend enough time on meaningful work and non-work activities.
  5. Based on what matters most to me, I devote the right amount of my time to work and non-work roles.
-

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**Effectiveness Balance (Formative Construct)**

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1. I perform well in the life roles that I value.
2. I do well in roles that are my biggest priorities.
3. I can effectively handle important work and non-work responsibilities.
4. I am successful in work and non-work roles that matter to me.
5. I perform well in my most highly valued work and non-work roles.

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**Affective Balance (Formative Construct)**

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1. I experience many positive emotions in my most highly valued work and non-work roles.
2. I am happy with essential work and non-work roles.
3. I am happy with the work and non-work aspects of my life that are important to me.
4. I feel satisfied in the essential work and non-work roles.
5. I am content with how things are going in the life roles that are my top priorities.

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*Note.* This is a modified recreation of global balance (as a reflective construct) and the five items associated with each reflective and formative construct, respectively. Source: Wayne et al. (2021).

Wayne et al.'s (2021) continued the research of Carlson et al. (2008) and Valcour (2007) who also assessed balance. Wayne et al. (2021) demonstrated that content adequacy, factor structure, reliability, gender, and parental status are invariances of the measure. Hence, the research provides a broad, justified, multifaceted measure of work-non-work balance and suggests a different interpretation of valued attitudes and behaviors.

The study demonstrated that as measured by their scale, balance explains contemporary measures that do not collect compelling variance in employee attitudes and health. Limitations of their study include a cross-sectional design, the lack of examination of personality, and the values of their participants. It was suggested that future research include the previously mentioned characteristics as test items. Moreover, data should be collected over time to illustrate relationships in a temporal order. Finally, Wayne et al. (2021) recommended the need for a cross-cultural investigation of the scale used to assess invariance since the study used two heterogeneous, working adult samples across various industries.

WLB is also viewed as a psychological construct, as Valcour (2007) and Marks and McDermid (1996) discovered. This construct views balance as "an attitude that refers to an individual across roles with the attitude object of "combination of work and non-work roles" (p. 197). Marks and MacDermid also believe that balance has cognitive-affective components. For example, balance is a compelling factor and two cognitive factors (i.e., involvement and effectiveness; Wayne et al., 2021).

There are different theories from other noted scholars that address work-life balance problems. First is the "theory of role balance," as described by Marks and MacDermid in 1996. Role balance is "approaching every role and role partner with attention and care, conceptualizing role balance as an internal model that also encompasses a behavioral pattern of acting with a general orientation across roles." Next, Voydanoff (2002, 2005) explained balance as person-environment (P-E) fit, an integrative model. This model proposes that work and family demands and resources predict demands-resources fit in which family and work demands meet resources present in both domains. Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) established balance as a relational construct. They defined it as "the accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domain" (p. 458). Finally, in 2011, Greenhaus and Allen defined balance as when role effectiveness and satisfaction are consistent with life priorities (Wayne et al., 2021).

Kumar and Janakiram (2017) identify 17 theories consolidated into six main domain categories. They include structural-functionalism, ecology systems, segmentation, compensation, spillover, and enrichment theories. Several theories explain different aspects of the relationship between work and family life. Boundary theory and border theory are the two fundamental theories that researchers have used to study role conflicts. The six dominant theories are built on

the foundations of boundary and border theories. In the two decades since boundary theory and border theory was first proposed, the rise of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has considerably altered work and life (Field & Chan, 2018). Work is now performed at any time and in any location. Domains are blended and boundaries are difficult to maintain (Field & Chan, 2018) as evidenced by the responses of the participants in this research study. Other published literature report seven dominant theories are used to explain the relationship on the boundary-border continuum. These theories include the domains identified by Kumar and Janakiram and also “role enhancement” as the seventh dominate theory (Miri-Lavassani & Movahedi, 2014) (p. 1). The seven dominate theories are as follows:

1. *Structural-functionalism theory*: concludes work and life balance is when men work and women take care of home-related affairs
2. *Ecology systems theory*: proposes that work and life are a joint function of methods, processes, person, situation, and time characteristics and are indicative that each of the multiple characteristics yields an additive effect on the work-life experience.
3. *Segmentation theory*: indicates that both aspects of work and life as separate entities that do not influence or interfere with each other as every person restrains work-related thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviors in the life domain, does the same at work by suppressing personal life thoughts, emotions, and problems or pleasures at work
4. *Compensation theory*: argues a contradictory relationship between work and life exists, so individuals attempt to satisfy voids from one sphere with satisfaction from another

5. *Spillover theory*: the most popular viewpoint of the relationship between work and family. Several researchers suggested that workers carry feelings, emotions, attitudes, skills, and behaviors that they establish at work into their family life and vice versa
6. *Enrichment theory*: describes an experience in one role (either work or family) that will enhance the quality of life in the other role
7. *Role enhancement*: proposes that multiple role engagement (i.e., kinship caregivers and caring grandparents) increases health because individuals gain power, prestige, resources, and social identity from their social roles

Each of these theories, though not universal, applies to everyone differently based on their experiences and perceptions and has a unique dimension in the concept of work-life balance.

The Psychology of Working Framework (PWF; Blustein, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2013) is selected because it supplements prevailing vocational theories by more openly emphasizing the role that social class, privilege, and freedom of choice serve in career choices and contentment. The fundamental goal is to clarify the work experiences of all individuals. Principally people close to or in poverty, people who face judgment and ostracism in their lives, and people confronting perplexing work-based alterations for which indirect influences are frequently the critical drivers concerning the capability to obtain sufficient work. The primary function of this theory is to explain essential elements in securing decent work and define how carrying out sufficient work leads to needing satisfaction, work fulfillment, and wellbeing (Duffy et al., 2016).

Another quantitative study emphasizes a variety of different concepts that include work-family balance (WFB,) work-health balance (WHB), work-family conflict, long-standing health problems or disabilities (LSHPD), and its effects on job satisfaction. Gragnano et al. (2020) from

the Department of Psychology at the University of Milano-Bicocca in Milan, Italy, stated the significance of their study.

This study aimed to investigate the importance of other non-working domains in WLB with a particular focus on health. Moreover, the exploration of job satisfaction and the importance of the work-family balance (WFB) and the work health balance (WHB) on job satisfaction is informative. The massive presence of women in the labor market has fostered the literature about work-family balance. There is a highly increased rate of active elderly workers, workers with a long-standing health problem or disability (LSHPD), single workers, and childless couples. These workers have different needs and interests outside of work. (p. 2)

From this perspective, Gragnano et al. (2020) recently developed the concept and measure of work–health balance (WHB), which is particularly relevant for elderly workers and workers with an LSHPD. Finally, we explored how the effect of WFB and WHB on job satisfaction changes according to worker characteristics (age, gender, parental status, and workability).

The conceptualizations of the WLB were evaluated by Kalliath and Brough (2008) who proposed a different definition of WLB. "Work-life balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth following an individual's current life priorities" (p. 326). Four types of influence were identified between work and family established by their order and strength. Family-to-work conflict occurs when the effect is harmful from the family to the work domain. Work-to-family conflict happens when the effect is negative but from the work domain to the family domain. Enrichment is the term that is appropriate when the effect is positive. It can have two directions: family-to-work enrichment

and work-to-family enrichment. Work-family conflict studies the negative form of work-life balance (Gragano et al., 2020).

Gragano et al. (2020) used an online questionnaire and administered it to 318 workers. A t-test assessed the significance of non-working domains. Multiple and moderated regression analyses investigated the effect of WFB and WHB on job satisfaction. The study's results indicated that workers considered health just as important as a family regarding WLB (Gragano et al., 2020). There were several limitations the authors addressed. First, the impact of work-to-family conflict on job satisfaction was more significant for women, parent workers, and elderly workers.

Next, women are likely to evaluate family as more central in their lives versus men because of widespread cultural norms and gender-differentiated values. Also, parents are more likely to give more salience to their family than people with no children because of cultural norms and, possibly, because of the "self-selection process." They suggested that future studies should test the impact of work-to-family conflict on job satisfaction for those responsible for eldercare (Gragano et al., 2020).

Other limitations included using the cross-sectional study design, which hindered their ability and limited their confidence in determining the cause and effect in the relationships between the considered variables. Longitudinal studies are needed to reproduce their findings. Next was the adoption of an online recruitment process. The sample did not represent the entire population of workers. Because of the self-selection of participants, there is the issue of participant selection bias.

Additionally, there was an under-representation of blue-collar workers and an over-representation of white-collar workers, particularly clerical support workers. Moreover, the

education level of the sample was higher than the general population. It is necessary to test if the results are the same across samples for workers with a lower level of education. Finally, the results concerning the significance of various life domains may have been discriminative based on the measurement instrument used (Gagnano et al., 2020).

Regardless of the limitations, they asserted the research is relevant to WLB literature. They deem themselves the first to consider work-health balance (to their knowledge). They also state their research is one of few studies that used moderation analyses to discover how the effect of WLB on relevant outcome changes based on workers' characteristics.

Finally, the literature proclaims that work-life balance is a myth. To seek a balance between work and life is not always attainable, nor can it be maintained. Instead, the notion of "work-life integration" is more realistic. Dr. Julie Welch of Indiana University explains the difference between balance versus integration. Balance is a sense of feeling derived from being whole and complete.

Moreover, one should avoid viewing it as a scale of taking it from one to give to another. On the other hand, integration creates harmony in one's life. Integration is achieved by cultivating the areas of life that are important. The Mental Health Foundation affirms the case for work-life integration by stating that "companies that earn a reputation for supporting effective work-life integration differentiate themselves in today's business environment and have a competitive edge in the talent search."

Kulkarni (2013) determined that in the minds of the majority, there is a flawed rationale in respect of balance. Family life for many is low value and worth; hence, the myth of work-life balance. The U.S. Department of Labor is aware of the need for an upgrade of the FLSA to meet the needs of 20th-century workers. The act was developed in the 1930s when mothers

traditionally stayed home to maintain the household and take care of their children while fathers worked and were declared the breadwinners. This notion is the accepted and often desired cultural norm for most American families. Since then, minorities and immigrants have been a part of the labor force. They are the exception to the traditional American family structure that continues to influence work-life balance as a myth, including maintaining a 40-hour work week and the idea of a traditional family and work structure reminiscent of the 1930s (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

Based on literature assessment and personal experiences, as the researcher, the conceptual framework is that full-time women university faculty are struggling with work-life balance issues to the extent that they have decreased their labor participation in the university setting due to grappling with overwhelming work-related demands and personally related issues. These demands encompass increased workloads (i.e., classes/semester ratios), faculty shortages, handling administrative and teaching responsibilities, or holding two or more positions without additional financial compensation. There is also the requirement of fulfilling committee obligations on the department, college, and university levels.

As a result of dealing with overwhelming job demands, faculty may prefer responsibilities and obligations of less challenging job titles (i.e., lecturer, instructor, adjunct faculty, and sole entry-level administrative positions in an educational setting) that are not on the tenure track. In comparison, job titles with more formidable pressures that encompass scholarship and research requirements, in addition to teaching and service requirements may not be as appealing. These job titles also have considerable requirements for promotion, professorship, or tenure.

The concepts of work-life balance play a significant role in research investigation. They are essential in order to define them within the theoretical framework. The following information is the basis of the theoretical framework of this study. From a qualitative perspective, Byrne (2005) defines work-life balance as a process in which people seek to change things by evaluating their priorities that may be physical, psychological, or both. These can be triggered in turn by their age; changes in working conditions; the demands of new technology; and poor management."

Wayne et al. (2021) based their quantitative research of work and non-work balance on the definition proposed by Casper et al. It states that employees' evaluation of the favorability of combined work and non-work roles arise from affective experiences. The perceived degree of involvement of the experiences impacts the effectiveness in work and non-work roles. These roles are commensurate with the value they attach to these roles. The significance of the study conducted by Gragnano et al. (2020) is slightly different from the others. The main objective was to investigate the importance of other non-working domains in WLB, focusing on health and the importance of the effects of the work-family balance (WFB) and the work health balance (WHB) on job satisfaction.

Kumar and Janakiram (2017) provided a conceptual overview of 17 work-life balance theories. There are six main categories: structural-functionalism, ecology systems, segmentation, compensation, spillover, and enrichment theories. A seventh category, "role enhancement" proposed by Miri-Lavassani & Movahedi, (2014). The key function of Bluestein's Psychology of Working Framework (2001, 2006, 2008, 2013) is to explain essential elements in securing decent work and define how carrying out sufficient work leads to need satisfaction, work fulfillment, and wellbeing (Duffy et al., 2016).

The final consideration by Dr. Julie Welch is that work-life balance is a myth. To seek a balance between work and life is not always attainable, nor can it be maintained. Instead, the notion of "work-life integration" is more realistic. Kulkarni (2013) further determined that in the minds of the majority, there is a flawed rationale in respect of balance. Family life for many is low value and worth; hence, the myth of work-life balance.

A combination of all the proposed definitions, theories, and associated measures are most relevant to this study's aim. Each theory, though not universal, applies to everyone differently. Differences are based on their experiences and perceptions and has unique, multifaceted dimensions in the concept of work-life balance.

## **Work-Life Balance Among Women**

### **Women Compared to Men**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FSLA) of 1938 established the 40-hour workweek. It was one of the first policies in America to address work-life balance, especially among women and children (Raja & Stein, 2014). The expression, work-life balance, was first used to describe the balance between work and life in the 1970s. Around the 1980s, the Women's Liberation Movement brought work-life balance issues among women with children back into the public's eye (Raja & Stein, 2014).

According to the 2018 Bureau of Statistics, 50% of the workforce in America are women of various demographics. Even though more women are working, their labor participation rate declines due to WLB disparities (Burke, 2018), particularly between the ages of 16-24 years old and women of color (i.e., African Americans and Hispanics). Women are stressed now more than ever. They attempt to manage various responsibilities, including (but not limited to) trying to manage their family, education, and careers (Fernandes-Alcatara, 2018). More so than men,

women end up cutting back on work hours, resigning from their jobs, or discontinuing their education to take care of dependents in need (Burke, 2018).

The assumption is that balance issues mainly affect middle-aged married women with children. Not all women are married or have children. Regardless of their status, women juggle five aspects of their lives at once. They include work, family, friends, health, and self (spirit/self) (Byrne, 2005). According to the latest census report, most women begin working at 16 years old. Therefore, consideration for work-life balance should start as early as junior high school (Lagace, 2002). During the pandemic, women worked from home, faced competing demands from parenting, homeschool, and performed other caring duties in a disproportionate number compared to men (Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020). Grogan and Shakeshaft noted the following:

Like men, women experience the day-to-day activities of leading as all-consuming. However, unlike many men, many women leaders go home to another "day's work," taking care of family and home. Some women leaders have supportive husbands (or partners) and family who help with household duties, but their desire to manage both work and home is a theme in literature. Another concern for women is limited flexibility for job promotion compared to males. For example, female doctors (health professionals) with children have lower career success and support values than males (Tarquino, 2016).

Women often refer to their mothers when discussing their female role models. With pride, they share how much they had to handle. Regarding leadership opportunities, they consider them an inspiration and motivating factor. Today, women desire to achieve a balance between their work and family lives while freely choosing to focus on work as men do (Grogan & Shaft, 2011).

Frequently referred to as "women's work," the ability to maintain their households and care for dependents is a performance enhancement characteristic of women in leadership roles. Women appear to have the ability to lead more effectively when home and work responsibilities have a semblance of harmony. The majority of women insist on the importance of being authentic and attempting leadership strategies they need to acquire to handle the rival challenges of family and work (Grogan & Shaft, 2011). When women gave up work to look after the home and family, men were the family breadwinners. Women who actively participate in the workforce have jobs with pay, and some women employed during pregnancy return to work after maternity leave (Bryne, 2005).

### **Work-Life Balance Among Full-Time Women University Faculty**

Preschool, primary, secondary, and postsecondary teachers are leaders every day. Examples of how they lead include the following characteristics and actions based on demeanor, behavior, reactions in certain situations, their decisiveness, transparency, tone of voice, and how they effectively communicate with others. They mentor and lead students through demanding activities and arduous learning. They also mentor and lead their peers through formal/informal mentorship, as committee members and officers, and during meetings in general (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Teachers consistently assume additional leadership roles in and out of the classroom. Invariably some compassionate teacher's aide students and are dedicated to their department, college, and university no matter the cost. Their willingness to work through lunch breaks and after scheduled work hours to support students and department is often at the sacrifice of themselves and ultimately their work-life balance (McCoy et al., 2012).

There is a work-life balance crisis in higher education. Despite the increase in the number of women faculty members during the last 20 years, several scholars note, "projections of a

noticeable increase in tenured female professors have not come to fruition (Gappa et al., 2007; Hult et al., 2005; Samble, 2008; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Several factors contribute to this disparity, including an increase in part-time non-tenure appointments and more worthwhile prospects outside of the academic profession (Barzeat & Hughes 2006; Bentley & Hughes, 1993; Samble, 2008; West & Curtis, 2006). Additionally, achieving work-life balance has been increasingly difficult as competition for and expectations for faculty have increased (Samble, 2008).

### **Educational Leadership Styles**

All participants interviewed currently hold (or previously held) designated leadership positions with particular administrative responsibilities within each college. Women faculty typically possess and demonstrate a variety of leadership styles concurrently in their work lives. According to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), there is substantial literature to understand what women in education do and why they do it. While it is understood, not all women lead in a certain way. There are some preferences and approaches that distinguish women leaders. The authors discovered five types of styles that explain women leaders.

1. *Relational leadership*: a form of leadership that is about being in a relationship with others in a horizontal versus a hierarchical sense
2. *Social justice leadership*: women that view their careers as social justice work enter the education field to "change" the status quo to change the lives of others, to make the world a fairer place, and to change the institutions so that all have a chance; significantly, children

3. *Learning leadership*: instruction and learning are central to this leadership style; women are likely to make decisions based on student learning priorities and push for instructional change that improves learning
4. *Spiritual leadership*: the idea that leadership is grounded in spirituality, particularly women of color; spirituality is as a source of personal strength as well as a way to understand connectedness to others and the greater world; women draw on their religious beliefs to understand the effects of spirituality in their lives as leaders
5. *Balanced leadership*: women strive to balance work responsibilities and home; women experience all-consuming day-to-day activities and return home to another "day's work," taking care of family and home.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) concluded that in the late twentieth century, the diverse ways that women lead have served them well in environments varying from kindergarten to college. All participants in this study strived for balanced leadership. The participants that hold administrative titles exhibited relational and social justice styles based on their responses. Faculty who hold director positions had a distinct learning leadership style. Finally, the African American and Puerto Rican participants consistently referenced spirituality hence, spiritual leadership style attributes.

### **WLB Educational Research**

In a research article related directly to educators, "Work-Life Balance among Teachers: An Empirical Study" maps the dimensions of work-life balance (WLB) amid teachers in India (Irfan & Tabassum, 2015). The article provided extensive summaries of published literature based on WLB issues among women in the United States as a basis for the study. It was reported that there is a need to explore this subject due to increased work-life problems among teachers

compared to those working in corporate sectors. A change in workforce demographics was the main reason for increased family work issues.

The primary objective of the research was to identify the dimensions of balance among university faculty and primary and secondary school teachers by assessing the following factors: gender, marital status, spouse occupation, number of dependents, and age. The sample included 112 participants that completed questionnaires. The constructs/dimensions considered for the study adopted from Hayman (2005) are as follows: Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), and Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE).

The results indicated no differences between gender, marital status, spouse occupation, number of dependents, and age among teachers. However, there were significant differences between university faculty and schoolteachers. Physical evidence, types of students, work hours, differences in workload, training requirements, and the nature of courses were included in the study. Ultimately, the results verified that university faculty who taught professional courses experienced more work-life pressures (Iran & Tabassum, 2015). Limitations of this study include the sole evaluation of faculty in the university setting. Also, the time to conduct the study and complete data collection was limited. The article suggested that further research could involve other universities, an increased sample size, extending the time period to conduct the study, and enhancing the rigor and data collection process.

Assistant Professor Kimberly A. Houser of Oklahoma State University examined the unconscious biases behind gender imbalances in academia, including affinity, confirmation, and availability biases. According to social scientists, when humans are unaware of their prejudices,

they are seemingly incapable of making unbiased, merit-based decisions (Houser, 2019). The three different types of biases described include the following.

1. *Affinity bias*: occurs when one demonstrates a preference for people who are similar to them. A homogenous group makes decisions; there is a natural tendency to hire those like themselves.
2. *Confirmation bias*: transpires when one who is in authority to make a decision only values the information that supports their gut instinct
3. *Availability bias*: happens when recently viewed information is more accessible for people to bring to mind. For example, consider this famous riddle: A father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The son is rushed to the hospital. Just as he is about to go under the knife, the surgeon says, “I cannot operate - that boy is my son!”

According to a research study conducted by psychology professors Mikaela Wapman and Deborah Belle of the College of Arts & Sciences at Boston University, most participants (even the younger ones) were not able to readily predict that the surgeon was the boy's mother.

In a series of questions posed to leading academics, Houser (2019) identified key challenges that women face in academics. She noted that although over half of PhDs belong to women, the percentage of tenured female faculty is approximately 20-30% in European countries and the United States. Women face obstacles at various stages, including hiring, letters of recommendation, student evaluations, peer reviews, awarding of grants, funding, and requests for services, and promotion to tenure (Houser, 2019).

McCoy et al. (2012) expressed that environmental conditions also significantly impact the faculty well-being of men and women. The article introduced the term “work-life

integration.” The main factors that significantly affect the work environment are existing economic conditions, climate, collegiality, administrative support, job satisfaction, intent to leave, faculty retention, and emotional and physical health. This article was intriguing because it included men and summarized that women and men require additional institutional support related to work-life integration. The results could help employees have a more positive view of their wellbeing.

Kelly and McCann (2013) conducted a qualitative study exploring the socialization experiences of four women faculty of color (WFOC) in two public predominantly White institutions (PWI) in the United States. They broke barriers and eventually were promoted to associate professor and earned tenure. The authors state, "Although these women earned tenure, their adjustment as newcomers to the academy was fraught with the marginalization of being both women and persons of color." The implications of their situation were related to higher education practice, research, and theory. Regarding practice and based on their identity, WFOC are frequently tokenized. Therefore, higher education institutions should consider whether their significance is based on diversity or tokenism to determine their merit. Study findings also illuminated that Black and Asian American faculty have similar experiences in academia about gender and race issues. Therefore, they suggested that further research could address a broader range of races, ethnicities, and ages since current research highlights the experiences of African American women (Kelly & McCann, 2013).

Tarquino (2016) highlighted work-life balance issues among researchers and physicians, herself in particular. In the article titled, "Work-life balance? It is not about balance, but priorities," she reveals that she was discouraged from pursuing a profession as a doctor early in her career. She led a very successful career while ignoring the warnings from others regarding

work-life balance related to her roles as a wife, mother, and professional. She forged through by working hard and putting in long hours as a critical care physician and researcher. However, her husband became very ill and entered the ICU. At the time, they had a 20-month-old daughter, and she was pregnant with their second child. During her husband's stay in the ICU, she completely shut down. The most important lesson she learned from the experience is that she could not care for her family if she was not well.

During the family crisis, Tarquino (2016) appreciated having a simple but complete life. The author further discusses research performed by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) regarding the evaluation of women physicians and career success. The study noted a 50% increase of women entering medical schools. One-third are full-time faculty and 21% are full professors. Nonetheless, the following issues persist and include: problems and challenges for women and academia are ongoing, there is little flexibility for promotion criteria compared to men, and women doctors with children have lower values relating to career success and support compared to men (Tarquino, 2016).

However, according to the study, women demonstrated increasing levels of overall life satisfaction. Another study the author refers to evaluated WLB among men and women gynecologists. Their work-life greatly affected relationships with their family (partners and children). After evaluating published research and her personal experience, Tarquino (2016) decided to re-prioritize. She concludes by providing insight about how she has defined WLB in which she states that "improvement in work-life balance comes from having a conducive work atmosphere and a customized approach to individual needs on an institutional level of understanding and support. I would encourage connecting yourself with peers in similar situations in your institution" (Tarquino, 2016).

The educational research studies; considerably, the results of Irfan and Tabassum, and Kelly's studies are very relatable to women faculty. They concluded that women faculty who taught at the university level experienced more WLB pressures than WFOC in a PWI. McCoy et al.'s study encouraged seeking institutional support when dealing with the most challenging times of WBL issues.

### **Existing University Initiatives**

Concerning work-life balance issues among women university faculty, I chose to evaluate higher education policies and initiatives compared to other institutions cited in the literature. Evaluating existing policies and initiatives is a crucial research aspect of this study. Regardless of gender, many faculty members and administrators are unaware of existing policies that assist with WLB issues. They need further clarification about the information related to the associated procedures to use to their benefit, which can serve as a form of institutional support.

The main hindrance among women faculty is hesitation in taking advantage of institutional support. Particularly seeking accommodations, which involves divulging personal and medical information to human resources; even though disclosure is confidential. Also the possibility of being harassed, threatened, judged, stereotyped, facing resistance and tension from colleagues and administrators, and risking job loss (McCoy et al., 2012) are examples of factors that deter one from seeking assistance.

At the University of Indiana, the initiative to address the lack of women professors is similar to the Irish Gender Action plan of 2018-2019, which created a limited number of women-only professorships. The goal is to ensure that by 2024, 40% of all professor-level positions in academia include women (Estop, 2019). Other examples of initiatives brought forward are from Oregon State University. They specifically address balance issues among women that include

examining leave policies at the university level. The goal is to ensure clarity and consistency of related policies at various levels. Also, each institution should have a liaison with Human Resources to provide information to all faculty, staff, and graduate assistants pertinent to family leave, work-life balance, and workload inequity (Author 2, 2008).

At the onset of the pandemic, higher education institutions consistently provided information through correspondence that identified resources and policies addressing work-life balance issues among students, faculty, and staff regardless of gender. Institutional handbooks include detailed meanings and policies related to flex/telework schedules and requesting accommodations. However, for administration, it is challenging to equitably accommodate such requests since faculty positions are salaried and based on monthly contracts. Also, faculty are not required to clock in and out daily and have varied schedules (Author 2, 2008). It seems that there is confusion regarding whether a faculty member is obligated to complete work during a traditional M-F 40-hour workweek considering varied schedules and alternative course delivery methods (i.e. online and hybrid)

Faculty contracts are either 9, 10, or 12-month contract. Faculty contracts nor do institutional handbooks at some institutions directly address a specified work schedule. Conversely, time accrual to include vacation and sick leave requests are based on the traditional work schedule. Therefore, department chairs determine what is acceptable concerning regarding the completion of full-time hours based on a 40-hour work week. A 40-hour working schedule is required regardless of specified days and times. Additional policies related to time away from work, including the "Fair Labor Standards Act Leave," can also be found in human resources manuals (Author 2, 2008).

Regarding the application for seeking medical accommodations (American Disabilities Act – ADA), it explicitly states that faculty members and administrators seeking to complete this form should do so for medical purposes only, not due to childcare or dependent care issues that are not medically related. Through this process, faculty may also request of higher administration to consider a change in delivery method of course(s) taught from face-to-face to some form of online or hybrid method that involves remote instruction. Medical documentation is required to supplement the accommodation request. Application information and supporting documents are deemed confidential. If approved by human resources, the faculty member or administrator must meet with the department chair to develop a reasonable plan of action detailing an alternative work schedule, for example, long term flex or telework accommodations (Author 2, 2008).

For those seeking telework accommodations mainly for childcare or dependent care purposes only, staff and faculty are to report to the department chair to discuss a schedule directly. Once a schedule is decided upon and approved, approval is at the chair level. Faculty with school-aged children and medical issues that are not a risk may pursue telework/flex-time accommodations. In both cases (medical accommodation or telework/flex-time requests), publicly posting office hours are required. Virtual office hours are known to department personnel if faculty work remotely (Author 2, 2008). Other support systems for faculty on college campuses include (and are not limited to):

1. Employee Assistance Programs
2. Women's Leadership Organizations
3. Women's Health Clinics
4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Cultural organizations specific to race, culture, and gender to include the above list of support systems (Author 1, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d) provide networking opportunities for individuals that are able to identify and related to certain groups. These systems are also sources of valuable information that could assist with addressing one's WLB needs. Faculty must be assured of their rights. They should be encouraged to learn more about them in order to implement them to take advantage of existing policies and initiatives created for them with referral and support from peers and higher administration.

### **Summary**

Bodies of literature regarding work-life balance discuss multiple definitions, theories, and measures to address balance issues among women and how it impacts labor participation in the workforce. Although it may be initially perceived, they are markedly inconsistent. There is no consensus. Each theory, though not universal, applies to everyone differently based on their experiences and perceptions and has unique, multifaceted dimensions in the concept of work-life balance.

Researchers have documented that unresolved WLB issues can lead to significant health issues such as stress (Gragano et al., 2020). The literature also describes how support systems (i.e., personal and institutional) influence WLB experiences (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). There is limited peer-reviewed literature on WLB problems among American women, especially full-time female faculty in a university setting.

Current statistical data about the labor participation rate in the United States and the historical timeline of events has and continues to impact women in the workforce. A discussion of various definitions, theories, and measures studies from studies conducted by notable scholars concerning this subject matter. A list of pertinent terms and recurrent themes that consistently

emerge from the research will be further evaluated and defined throughout this study. The results of previous research that focus on balance, education, and existing initiatives to include its relevance to the journey of myself and the participants will be shared. Finally, the plea to expand the definition of balance to be more relevant in today's society has been expressed, along with the consequences and proposed solutions for non-balance.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to address work-life balance disparities among women in America, focusing on full-time university female faculty. The main goals of this research study are to identify patterns and relationships after data is collected and analyzed. The researcher interpreted the following: the significance of historical and cultural phenomena, explore diversity and give voice to this marginalized group of participants, which is achievable by comparing work-life balance issues between female faculty with various titles, differing ages, years of experience, marital status (single vs. married), dependent responsibilities, and mental/physical challenges.

Knowledge of general patterns and relationships was accomplished by evaluating several comparable situations or experiences after the data was collected and analyzed. Doing so provided a way to neutralize the uniqueness of each situation. As a result, broader patterns and issues were unveiled. Since broad patterns of themes existed across several experiences, it may reflect the operation of an underlying cause inferred from the broad pattern (Ragin & Amoroso, 2019). These patterns could be the impetus to conduct further research.

The significance of most historical phenomena derives from their atypicality, the fact that they are dramatically non-routine, and from their impact on who we are today....We care about these events and their interpretation because of their relevance for understanding our current situation - how we got to where we are. We are fascinated ... not because we expect repetition but because of its powerful impact on current political structures and

behavior. Other phenomena study their cultural relevance.... We study these significant phenomena not because they represent data for generalization but their atypically on the one hand and their significant impact on the other. (p. 31)

They further asserted that it is important to recognize social diversity. While this goal may seem similar to identifying general patterns and complimenting them in some respects, it is quite different. Exploring diversity often means that the researcher ignores prevailing patterns and focuses on the existing variety of experiences.

Research questions include:

1. How do full-time women university faculty define WLB?
2. What influences their overall perspective?
3. What are the current experiences of women faculty with work-life balance?
4. What are barriers and supports experienced by women faculty to challenge or support WLB issues?

### **Theoretical Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry**

The research will address critical assumptions of the philosophical studies of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Their relationship to various applicable theoretical frameworks related to work-life balance may guide this study. Each theory, though not universal, applies to each person differently based on their individual experiences and perceptions. Although the literature identifies approximately 17 theories of work-life balance, there are six main categories. These categories include structural-functionalism theory, ecology systems theory, segmentation theory, compensation theory, spillover theory, and enrichment theory (Kumer & Janakiram, 2017). Recent literature induces a seventh category, “”.

Ontology is the study of fundamental concepts; the study of ultimate reality – what is real? The idea is that it is associated with what we believe to be accurate concerning how we, and others, talk about what we believe to be true" (Hirokawa, 2011). Epistemology is the justification of knowledge. It addresses how the act of knowing takes place, how we know what we know, and how we decide what knowledge is most worth having. Several varieties of symbolic interactionism have different approaches to empirical research and different epistemological presuppositions.

Symbolic interactionism is derived from the earlier interactionist approach of the “Chicago School.” It has two primary forms. Critical scholar W. I. Thomas inspires the first. The second form is from the philosophical tradition of James Cooley. The first approach attempted to relate attitudes to values somewhat “scientific”, which linked meanings and causes. This approach stems from conventional ethnography from another noted scholar, Howard Becker. The second approach drew on G. H. Mead's theories of self. Supposedly, it was the basis of Herbert Blumer's development of symbolic interactionism that was more concerned with meanings than with causes. The work of Ervin Goffman further developed this approach. The ethnomethodologists contributed to the development of phenomenological ethnography" (Harvey, 2020). Additionally, noted by Charmaz and Belgrave, Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) also emerged from Symbolic Interactionism (Crotty, 1998).

Axiology is the study of value; what is the value in what one enjoys? It adds a micro-level perspective to mainstream sociology. The micro-level perspective focuses on small details and daily interactions. The perspective one gains when focusing on an individual problem that attempts to establish the elements of business practices that contribute to that problem (Wijk et al., 2019). It is also the potential bridge gap between macro and micro levels. The macro-level

perspective considers the whole panorama and typically incorporates several more minor micro-level issues. Finally, Wijk et al. (2019) asserted that it advances our understanding of sociological processes.

### **Research Design**

The study employed a basic qualitative research design (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) and incorporated aspects from various qualitative research methodologies. In doing so, the research uses a broader approach. After the data from this research was gathered, the analysis and development of data occur (Agresti, 2013). The constant comparative method is one of the many aspects of data analysis and is a general characteristic of qualitative research designs. It involves identifying relationships among categories and properties (Agresti, 2013).

### **Participants**

Purposeful sampling was used. According to Patton (2015), purposeful sampling is the standard used to determine if the participants and the site(s) provide valuable information to conduct the research. Supporting the decision to choose this form of sampling, an appropriate strategy for the study is identifiable. Before or after data is collected is when the strategy is used (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Participants were women faculty members at a higher education institution in the south. The interview method was semi-structured and included open-ended questions that covered experiences and perspectives regarding work-life balance (WLB). Memo notes documented pertinent information. Each interview session lasted approximately one and a half hours, and five full-time instructional women faculty members are the participants. They identified as women and have various backgrounds, academic titles, years of experience, and 10 or 12-month contracts. As the researcher and woman faculty member, there is direct access to the participants.

All participants were interviewed using web conferencing. Web conferencing technology features recorded and transcribed interview sessions.

### **Interviews**

A research study introduction email (Appendix A) was sent to participants using purposive sampling. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, participants were given the consent form (Appendix B). The form was reviewed prior to their scheduled interviews. A detailed list of interview questions and prompts are indicated in Table 3. These questions are also included in the consent form.

**Table 3**

*Research, Interview, and Supporting Questions*

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<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>	<b>Supporting Questions and Prompts</b>
1. How do full-time women university faculty define WLB?	1. As a full-time woman faculty member, how do you define work-life balance and influence your overall perspective?	1. Describe yourself and your family life.
2. What influences their overall perspective?		2. What is your family role?
3. What are the current experiences of women faculty with work-life balance?	2. What are the past and current experiences you face regarding work-life balance?	3. How long have you been at the university?
4. What are barriers and supports experienced by women faculty to challenge or support WLB issues?	3. Based on your experiences attempting to maintain a work-life balance, what are your most significant barriers and supports?	4. Has there ever been a time when your work-life balance was in sync or out of sync?
	4. If in a leadership role, how has your accent to leadership impacted your perception of work-life balance from a faculty member to a leadership position? Has your perceptions of work-life balance changed? If so, how?	

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The process of analyzing data began after the first interview. Interviews were transcribed using video conference transcription features. The audio transcript option settings of the platform were accessible for further data collection. Once enabled, a transcript automatically generated each interview conducted (Karl et al., 2021). The audio transcript feature is programmed to generate a searchable text transcript of the audio and make the transcript available in the platform's video player. The text of the transcript displayed closed captions. The text was editable and allowed me to correct any errors in the transcript/captions.

Notes in the margins of the printed transcripts were documented for each interview. Themes or patterns emerged from interview responses. Themes were grouped and developed into a table that summarized and explained how they are similar or different from experiences as identified in other published research studies. Finally, the themes from all participants were verified. Then, the accuracy of their experiences was determined (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The simultaneous process of the constant comparison method was incorporated. It entailed overlaying repetitive stages: data collection, note-taking, coding, memoing, sorting, writing, and literature review/analysis. Saturation occurred with theoretical sampling. The final step involved collecting and interpreting data (Tie et al., 2019).

### **Data Analysis Methods**

#### **Coding Procedures, Decisions, and Criteria**

According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), research questions can be answered after analyzing qualitative data, which requires interpreting the data and images. A six-step process is associated with analyzing and understanding qualitative data that involves: preparation and organization, exploring and coding data, explaining the findings and developing themes, depicting and reporting findings, expounding on findings and their meaning, and validating the authenticity of the findings.

Coding may be formal or informal and is based on the interactions between the researcher and their data. Codes are composed of brief labels developed when the researcher engages with the data. Factors codes include actions, behaviors, themes, topics, concepts, terms, phrases, and keywords. There is special consideration to only code-relevant data (Tie et al., 2019).

First-round coding involves attributes (descriptive data regarding the setting), magnitude (ordinal evaluation of responses), sub-coding (second-order tags), structural (predetermined

research topics), descriptive (nouns that describes the topic), in vivo (respondents' words), process (actions), and emotions (recalled or inferred). Second-round coding may occur after interviews, and member checking is complete. Findings may be analyzed or coded again within or between participants (Tie et al., 2019).

There are two processes to consider for data analysis: hand analysis of qualitative data and the use of computer software. Hand analysis was used to evaluate research data for this study. It entailed reading the data, marking it by hand, and dividing it into sections. It also involved cutting and pasting phrases onto note cards, color coding, and inputting data into developed tables. An advantage of hand analysis includes a connection or hands-on feel to the data. Other advantages include affordability and the time commitment to complete a hand analysis if the research includes a small number of participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

### **Subjectivity Statement and Methodological Assumptions**

Subjectivity directs the researcher's chosen topic, developing a hypothesis, methodology section, and data interpretation. The main concern regarding subjectivity is how it impacts objectivity (Ratner, 2002). Since the Covid-19 pandemic, from a personal perspective, there is additional pressure to advise students, complete administrative duties, and change the delivery method of teaching courses from face-to-face to online (fully, partially, or hybrid) relatively quickly. There is also a struggle to accomplish personal and professional goals as a researcher. Goals include seeking promotion and tenure while attempting to prioritize oneself. Additionally, attempting to balance the roles of mother, wife, sister, and daughter, full-time professional, and graduate student are equally challenging. Sacrificing time with family to prioritize professional concerns leads to a feeling of disconnect. Choosing to provide for them by working more versus

spending time with them harms one's professional life. The constant back and forth is why work-life balance is the general dissertation topic.

As the researcher, I needed to be informed by my perceptions and current experiences as a full-time woman university faculty member. My perception is that all women have WLB concerns and issues. It is often difficult to find the time or make the effort to identify or assess them. Oftentimes, pivotal life circumstances or events force one to evaluate their WLB status. My perception is based on past and current experiences. I am of the belief that these influences shaped the design of this study and impacted the interpretation of the findings. Open-ended interviews will allowed the participants' experiences to be listened to and subtle cues that would otherwise be unrecognizable were also acknowledged (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). The familiarity of the profession as a current full-time faculty member had both advantages and disadvantages. For instance, it was easier to relate to their experiences. However, this advantage led to assumptions regarding the participants' experiences (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). As a result, reflectivity occurred throughout the interview process. Reflectivity involves discussing one's role in the research study. Furthermore, this process allowed me as the researcher to reflect on my own biases, values, and assumptions. My biases were actively assessed during this study. I was mindful to be aware of how personal experiences and my cultural background affect the interpretations and drawn conclusions from the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Methodological assumptions regarding qualitative studies include the nature of reality, relationships, generalization, causality, and roles of values. Regarding the nature of reality, there is no generalization. The research involved a more holistic understanding of the issue. Therefore, prediction and control are implausible. Since the relationship between the researcher and participants are interconnected, one influenced the other. Since causes cannot explain every

action, there was simultaneous mutual interactions among the participant's experiences. These actions related to qualitative research that implied that values are bound and subjective; not biased (Prasad, 2018).

## **Limitations**

### **Validity and Reliability**

A recurrent criticism of qualitative research is that it lacks scientific rigor. In terms of adopted methods, validation is poor. Another limitation is the perceived absence of transparency about analytical procedures. The findings, viewed as an assembly of personal opinions, are subject to researcher bias (Long & Johnson, 2000).

There are ongoing debates about whether terms such as validity, reliability, and generalizability are appropriate to evaluate qualitative research... alternative frameworks for establishing rigor are appropriate. Lincoln and Guba offer alternative criteria for demonstrating rigor within qualitative research, namely truth value, consistency and neutrality and applicability. (Long & Johnson, 2000, "Rigor, Reliability, and Validity" section)

To establish the trustworthiness of the findings of the research, strategies discussed in the article included: accounting for personal biases, acknowledging biases in sampling and ongoing reflection methods, maintaining meticulous record-keeping and ensuring interpretations of data to guarantee transparency, establishing a comparison case to determine similarities and differences to certify various represented perspectives, demonstrating clarity regarding the thought processes when data is analyzed and interpreted, performing respondent validation and data triangulation, will be implemented (Long & Johnson, 2000). When conducting research and analyzing the data, I acknowledged my biases through continuous reflection methods. Detailed

interview transcriptions, explicit memos, and participant validation, member checking, and the triangulation process allowed me to maintain thorough records, and correctly interpret the participants' responses.

Noble and Heale (2016) describe triangulation as a method used to assess research findings. It involves validity (accuracy) and credibility (trustworthiness). Two types of triangulation methods used for this study were data and theory triangulation. Data triangulation is comprised of involvements related to space (environment), time, and people. Theory triangulation is the use of multiple theoretical patterns that allow the interpretation of an occurrence (Denzin, 1970). During the member checking process, the participant was asked to review the reporting of my interpretation of their responses for accuracy after being interviewed.

### **Perceived Risks Versus Benefits**

To determine perceived risks and benefits regarding the research study, I was encouraged to seek guidance from higher administration at the higher education institution. Two administrators noted they perceive minimal risk. The first administrator indicated that participants might benefit from talking about work/life balance. They also foresaw possible benefits for making a cross-college comparison. However, focusing solely on faculty in specified colleges (particularly amid the pandemic) could be advantageous.

The second administrator identified the main benefit is primarily the ability to contribute to the body of research on this topic. Since the sample of participants is small, they recommended that faculty be interviewed from a couple of colleges. They perceived the familiarity of the researcher being a faculty member will make it easier for the study to be conducted, especially considering the pandemic. It also gives the research cohort one more attribute to have in common. They concluded that the only risk to consider in their opinion is

failure to maintain participant anonymity and confidentiality. Their remarks coincided with the information discovered in the literature regarding anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

### **Logistics and Timeline**

Logistics is defined as handling operation details (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The research referred to the operational details of the qualitative research conducted concerning higher administration faculty and work-life balance as indicated in the dictionary. According to the article, "Logistics Research beyond 2000: Theory, method, and relevance," logistics in research was born from the business disciplines of marketing and management and is further described as "an evolving, expanding academic discipline that does not appear to be approaching full maturity in the near term." Since good research is grounded in theory, it is essential to reveal the continued development of logistics in research and associated theories. The interview, document analysis, and observation are qualitative research studies (Karatas-Cetin & Denktas-Sakar, 2013). The authors stated an increase need for a more accepted use of logistics and triangulation in qualitative research methods. They also noted that "Triangulation provides greater empirical support to the theory in question."

The article also highlighted various commentary published and evaluated in reputable logistics journals. Theory-method relevance was the basis of the article. Logistics research was born from the business disciplines of marketing and management. Although survey research associated with quantitative research is the method of choice, it is tied with the qualitative methods such as interviews, triangulation, and document analysis (Karatas-Cetin & Denktas-Sakar, 2013). Concerning the research, participants were interviewed using triangulation methods and data was analyzed and documented as discussed in this article.

## **Summary**

A qualitative research design was determined to be the best fit for this study. Details concerning various design aspects explained the context for the study, the problem statement, research goals, questions, and methods. As the researcher, theoretical foundations concerning methodology and associated assumptions were related to the study. Finally, the discussion of data analysis methods, the subjectivity statement, limitations, and logistics are indicated. This process validated the discussion and provided appropriate evidence that supported the literature.

## CHAPTER 4

### PARTICIPANT PROFILES

1. This qualitative study evaluated the work-life balance experiences of women in full-time university faculty positions. To understand these experiences, I asked four broad questions related to work life balance. First, “How do you define work life balance and how does it influence your overall perspective?” Second, “What are your past and current experiences regarding work life balance?” Next, “Based on your experiences attempting to maintain work life balance, what are your most significant barriers and supports?” Finally, what are barriers and supports experienced by women faculty to challenge or support WLB issues?

Supporting questions, prompts, and follow-up questions during interviews included: (a) “Provide demographic information, describe yourself, your family life, and your family role,” (b) “How long you have been teaching?” (c) Prior to teaching (even going back as far as your first job or while in school), have you ever had work life balance issues?” (d) “Does work life balance even exist?” (e) “Can you recall moments when work life balance was in or out of sync?” (f) “Do you find yourself modeling parents, partners, mentors, or cultural expectations regarding work ethic?” (g) “If in a leadership role, how has your accent to leadership impacted your perception of work life balance from a faculty member to your position; and how has your perception of work life balance changed?”

## Summary of Methods

A total of five participants were interviewed during the month of July, 2022. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The selection criteria included the following: must identify as a woman, have various backgrounds, academic titles, years of experience, and 9, 10, or 12-month contracts. Two participants were not able to be interviewed due to scheduling conflicts. The remaining individuals that agreed to participate were sent a follow up email that provided more information about the study. Then, each participant was sent a research consent form to review prior to the scheduled meeting. Before each interview, the consent form was reviewed, discussed, and signed by participants.

Each interview was conducted in a semi-structured format. Although the four broad questions were posed, the interview structure allowed me to ask supporting and follow-up questions that related to each participant's distinct experiences (Clandinin, 2013). I intentionally interviewed women who worked full-time (i.e., 10- or 12-month contracts). Coincidentally, all participants hold (or held) a leadership/administrative position while simultaneously maintaining their faculty responsibilities related to teaching, service, and scholarship. An additional interview question was developed as a supporting question to address the impact of leadership roles and work life balance.

All women identified as women. They are cis gender, and their preferred pronouns are she/her. They all are married with children and employed by higher education institution in the south. They work in various colleges and departments. To protect their anonymity, they were given pseudonyms. All participants approved the vague identification of their leadership/administrative titles and degrees. The two colleges indicated in this study are College

A and College B. Finally, the various departments are represented as Departments 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Refer to Table 4 for participant descriptions.

**Table 4***Participant Descriptions*

<b>Name or Pseudonym</b>	<b>Demographic Background</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Highest Degree Earned</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>Department</b>
Lola	A 30-year-old African American female, married to an African American male for 14 years, mother of two school aged children; a son that is 12 years old and a daughter 6 years old.	Administrator	Doctorate	College A	Department 1
Abby	A 47-year-old White female, married to a White male for 20 years, mother of three children two daughters and a son ages 18, 17, and 13 years old respectively.	Faculty	Doctorate	College B	Department 2
Kate	A 68-year-old White female, married to a White male for 21 years, mother of two adult aged sons The oldest is 39 years old with special needs. And, the second son is a 34 year old single father that Kate is the co-parent of his four year old daughter.	Director	Master's	College B	Department 3
Jennifer	A 38-year-old Puerto Rican female, married to a Puerto Rican male for two years, mother of one 28-year-old adult aged male child with special needs.	Director	Doctorate	College B	Department 3
Miranda	A 47-year-old African American female married to an African American male for 23 years. They share two children a daughter and son ages 18 and 9 years old respectively.	Administrator	Doctorate	College B	Department 3

**Presentation of Findings**

At the onset of the study, I assumed work life balance was unique to the individual simply because people live their lives differently. For example, in 2016, a study conducted by Baumeister et al., indicated that living a meaningful life and being happy are interrelated with

essential differences. There are several various predictors of happiness (controlling for meaning) and meaningfulness (controlling for happiness). Fulfilled needs and wants improved happiness but was fundamentally unrelated to meaningfulness. (Baumeister et al., 2016). After the interviews were completed, I realized that living a meaningful and happy life was important for all the participants. They also more in common besides marital status, cultural backgrounds, and years of professional experience.

Yet, their WLB experiences were unique to their situations as predicted. Each participant's experience was constructed individually based on interview transcripts and notes. This approach was also taken in an effort to acknowledge their distinct experiences. All participants were given the opportunity to review and modify their responses based on memo notes taken and my interpretation of their responses during the interview. Direct quotes were used frequently to describe the individual experiences to ensure each participant's voice was authentically heard. Since the participants' accounts of their experiences were not in chronological order, I restructured most their responses sequentially for clarification purposes.

## **Participant Experiences**

### **Lola's Experience**

Lola is a 40-year-old African American female who has an older sister and two younger step siblings. She has been married to her husband for 14 years who is also African American. She is the mother of two school-aged children. A son aged 12 years old and a daughter who is six years old. Among all the participants, she has the youngest children. Therefore, our interview involved an extensive discussion about them and how WLB has impacted her role as a mother.

She earned her undergraduate degree from a renowned historically black institution (HBCU) followed by obtaining a master's degree in a health-related field. She returned to school

to earn a doctorate degree from the institution in which she is currently employed. Lola has served at her current institution since 2012. She moved up the academic ranks to ultimately earn a tenured track position. Beginning July 2020, Lola served as a top interim administrator in her college. In July 2021, her appointment was permanent. Additionally, her service to the community and university are equally impressive.

When discussing her upbringing, Lola revealed her parents divorced when she was nine years old. At that time, she primarily lived with her mother. Her father is a major influence in her life. He is also highly regarded in his career as a health professional. Lola describes herself as highly driven and goal oriented ever since the fourth grade. This is evident considering the timeline of her achievements and accomplishments at such a young age. When asked how she would define work life balance, she indicated that it was more like a leveling out versus a balance. For example, if she worked overtime to meet a deadline or worked out of town to attend a conference, she made sure to spend as much time with her husband and children when resuming her normal work schedule.

She also stated that concerning her family role, her husband and her joke about her being considered the “lead parent.” Her definition of the lead parent simply meant that she was the one who held and fulfilled most of the responsibilities related to the children. We referred to this term frequently during her interview. I was intrigued by this term and decided to ask all remaining participants to be interviewed if they considered themselves the lead parent or co-lead parent in their familial relationships. Since her professional position is very demanding, Lola’s husband decided to pursue a professional position that is less demanding for personal reasons.

As an undergraduate student, Lola admits to not taking college seriously the fall semester of her freshman year. She was more concerned about socializing and partying. Her wakeup call

came when she was placed on academic probation and being called out for her irresponsible behavior by her mother. Then, she had an experience in a course she had to repeat related to a class assignment about the alarming rate of positive HIV cases among African Americans. These two events marked the turning point in her education and academic aspirations. She credits these events as being the impetus to her choosing a health-related career.

I am a firm believer in being in the right place at the right time, destiny, and predestined paths. I am very clear that all these life phases prepared me for this role. I know how to support students who are struggling. Some students have never had a black faculty member as their professor. I even realized that when I was a graduate assistant (GA) for one of my mentors prepared me for my current role. I did not know it then but realize it now.

Lola also discovered she had a shared interest, a heart for service and leadership in the health field like her parents. Lola eventually followed in the footsteps of her father professionally. However, she was determined to make a name for herself. Lola's past experiences related to WLB issues were not as impactful until she had children. Prior to having children, she constantly worked overtime. Working past scheduled office hours is easy to do in academia, particularly, when one desires retention, promotion, and is on the tenure track. Lola also admits that there's this underlying unspoken pressure of having to perform at the highest level at all times as a woman, especially a Black woman. She still grapples with her insecurities of being an underachiever early in college.

I know I do more than other people in our department. What's driving me to do all of this? Being black and feeling like I need to be a good representative of my folk. Being a black woman fuels what and how much I do things. We are not at a lot of tables. Because

I still deal with my insecurities of being an underachiever and the enjoyment of leading and being in leadership roles, I may bite off too much. Doing these things also ensures that I get the minimum opportunities.

Lola revealed that her husband and her mom are her greatest supporters along with very strong mentors since being a graduate student. She has a close relationship with her mentors even today. Lola further asserts that a former faculty member is more of a “friend-tor.” She started off as her mentor and their relationship evolved into a very close friendship.

When asked about her greatest barrier(s), Lola stated it was herself for a variety of reasons. The first involves not forgiving herself for being placed on academic probation as a freshman. Lola says the main difference between her partying versus the friends she was partying with was that they still went to class and performed well academically. She often slept in and skipped classes after a night of partying. Once she had a wakeup call from her mom about her grades, she made it her mission to make up for her mistake. The following semester she went from being on academic probation to earning a 3.4 GPA. No matter how well she did from that point, she could not raise her overall GPA over a 2.9.

Lola frequently referenced the fact that she too could have still partied and performed well academically like her friends did if she was more focused. She knew she could do so because she has been highly driven and goal oriented since her school age years. At this moment in the interview, Lola had stated the previously mentioned several times. Therefore, I wanted to explore this further because it was obvious that based on her current circumstances, she clearly was no longer an underachiever and had nothing else to prove to herself or others. She even noted that at this point in her career, nobody asks or cares about her GPA.

Secondly, she admits to having overwhelming “mommy guilt” about missing many of her children’s events due to her busy schedule. We both briefly paused after processing this revelation we both had for ourselves. Prior to assuming her current role, Lola desired promotion to full professor. Even though being a full professor and tenured is not necessary for her current position, she is so close to achieving this goal. She is also being encouraged to pursue this rank by her current dean. Lola admits it is nearly impossible to meet promotion and tenure requirements as a faculty member while being an administrator. She states, “It is completely impossible to accomplish this goal. I am basically working two jobs. I can barely teach one course let alone find the time to meet promotion and tenure requirements.” This acknowledgement also led us to discuss her “mommy guilt” in more detail since her schedule involves her having to constantly leave town for meetings.

Lola is determined to be there for her children since her dad traveled frequently for his work and missed many events. Therefore, she admits that she overcompensates by being very active in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) in both of her children’s schools. However, it has been very difficult to maintain her previous level of activity in the PTO and other parental volunteering opportunities, as well as accomplishing her professional goals since assuming her current professional role. She recalls the following:

I remember my daughter had an open house for school. I also had to attend a conference in another state the same day of her open house. I spent hours trying to schedule my flight to return home in time to make it to my daughter’s open house. Unfortunately, I could not make it happen. This was the first time I ever missed an open house for either of my children. My husband had to fulfill this responsibility. I made sure he put me on FaceTime during the open house. As a matter of fact, when I am out of town for work

related reasons, I frequently communicate with my family using FaceTime. This has become part of our routine.

Lola's admission of feeling guilty about no longer being the lead parent at all times and now more of a co-lead parent in certain situations with shared responsibilities of home and the children prompted me to ask why she felt this way. I shared with her that from my perspective it seemed to be a good thing in attempting to create a better work life balance for herself. Most importantly, it allowed her husband the opportunity to further develop his parental skills and bond with the children.

I referred to her previous admissions about her parent's divorce and being placed on probation as a freshman in college. I asked her if her presence and being the lead parent was important because that was what her mom was able to be for her since the divorce. Then, I asked if her being overly driven and goal oriented was somehow connected to her trying to make up for being placed on probation. I stated that since she confessed to being empathetic and understanding of students making mistakes due to finding their way in college, especially as a freshman, why she not understood that for herself was perplexing. I concluded by saying that subconsciously she may not have forgiven herself for being placed on probation. Since she indicated that she has been highly motivated and goal driven since the fourth grade, maybe what she experienced as a freshman was a well-deserved break from always being so serious.

Regardless of her successful career and seemingly ideal family life, I sensed she was still trying to prove to herself and her parents (especially her father) that she was worthy and not a failure. She admitted that this was very plausible and until the interview she never thought about it in that way.

The last question I asked related to how her leadership role impacts her work life balance. She said it was significant. I referred to her previous comments and confessed she had essentially answered this question already. However, I wanted to give her the chance to add to her prior responses. Lola feels it is a privilege to be in the position she is in as a woman and as a Black woman. Lola is the youngest of all the participants, and her accomplishments have truly inspired me.

### **Abby's Experience**

Abby is a 47-year-old White woman married to a White male for 20 years. They share three children, two girls and one boy ages 18, 17, and 13 years old. Abby is a tenured professor and has a doctorate degree. She has worked in her profession for 15.5 years. She has a younger sister and lived at home with her parents until she attended college.

Abby describes her parents and their lifestyle when she lived with them as very traditional. Her parents have been married for 50 years. She states her family was not wealthy, but they had a lot of material things they desired. Her father has an MBA and is an accountant. Her mom has a master's degree in education and taught middle school for many years. As a matter of fact, Abby's mom was her eighth-grade teacher. Abby's mom stayed at home when they were small. When her younger sister was around three years old, her mom went back to college to finish her degree. As a teenager, Abby worked on a fruit farm during summers. She really enjoyed it because she worked with many of her friends. She defined work life balance this way:

I think, defining work life balance, the biggest part of the definition is understanding that it changes over time. It is also understanding and accepting that it's going to shift over time. That has been an important aspect of the definition for me. I think, to me, the

definition is that it's the ability to be comfortable and feel fulfilled in both of those parts of your life, you know, like work and everything that's not work. My definition is influenced by I guess really my values.

Our conversation continued with discussion about past and current experiences concerning WLB. Abby focused on her most recent experiences, which included witnessing colleagues and friends that were out of balance. She said it is like observing someone's life being eaten away - their enjoyment of life. She confessed there are times when she wants to tell them that she has been where they are and wants them to stop and take time for themselves. Abby feels that the key to assessing one's own WLB issues is to realize that sometimes there are things that cannot be fixed and that it's not always up to one person to fix it. She stressed that one's main responsibility is to take care of yourself. Once that is ensured, everything else will fall into place. Abby made it a point to state that she was not implying that there is an easy fix or restore work-life balance. She explained that there is a path either toward or away from what is causing someone so much physical and mental pain and stress. She further asserts:

It is not going to be perfect, but you do have some control over your life. I think there is a lot we can do. I do feel as a White woman, I have a tremendous amount of privilege, and so it is hard for me to assess. I am glad you're in the role that you're in because you can speak to women of color from a different place than what I can speak, of course, because I haven't lived that experience. And I don't want to presume that I can fix this for you, for anybody. But I do feel like there's a certain amount of ... when I assess my WLB, I'm coming from a place of tremendous privilege and even still I've had to really stand back and take stock and take care of myself. I seriously think about people who don't have that privilege that I have been afforded my whole life.

Abby's responses were thoughtful and thorough. I was curious to know about her past experiences or a pivotal moment in her life that allowed her to have such a keen perspective. Abby revealed that she has a daughter with a severe mental illness. But prior to this revelation, she stressed that she was never one to be obsessed with titles (professionally). In fact, she has held several administrative/coordinator positions throughout her career. Abby always wanted a career and a job that she could feel good about. She wanted her profession to enable her to pay the bills and support her family. She never wanted to go all the way in her career. She confessed that during this phase of her life, she currently has no professional aspirations in terms of promotion. Abby admitted that she has no desire to be in administration. She says that she is finally giving herself permission to do things that matter to her most and to not be ashamed of what those things are. She adds:

I now spend a lot of time on myself quite honestly. I mean I get up every morning and I fill my cup. Because I have realized after a lot of years of starting my day without ever having the opportunity to fill my cup meant that I wasn't really doing anybody any good. I was strung out. I wasn't being a parent or the kind of parent, teacher, and mentor I wanted to be. I wasn't being that kind of person that I wanted to be in any of those aspects. Probably five years ago, I just really started making myself a priority. It has made a tremendous difference in allowing me to give myself permission to be who I am and to say unapologetically this is what's important to me in my life. I am going to take care of myself. I am going to stand on that truth. Having some big career no longer interests me. What's more interesting to me is being with my family and having fun. You know I am enjoying my life and enjoying the people around me. Abby stressed that what

is most important professionally is making a difference in the lives of others. This can be accomplished regardless of title or how much money a person makes.

After this admission, I let Abby know that she inadvertently answered my next question that pertained to how holding a leadership position impacted her WLB. This portion of the interview concluded by Abby stating that feeling good about what she is doing and it being worthwhile is her biggest value in life. She feels like that is what really constitutes good work life balance. Abby indicated that her greatest barrier concerning WLB is herself and that her greatest supporters are her husband and her parents.

### **Kate's Experience**

Kate is a 68 year-old White woman. Currently, worked in her profession for the past 15 years. She is the youngest of two daughters. Kate lived with her family until she went to college. Although previously divorced, Kate has been happily remarried for 21 years. She has two sons and a granddaughter. Her oldest son is 39 years old and has special needs. Kate's youngest son is 34 years old and a single father. His daughter is four years old and Kate serves as a co-parent. She admits to being the lead parent in her amicable co-parenting relationships with her ex-husband and her other son's father. Kate and her current husband do not have any children together, but he assists Kate with co-parenting.

Kate described her parents and their lifestyle as the typical stereotypical small-town, middle-class family during the late 1950s and early 1960s. She described her parents as having good common sense, hard-working, and reflecting very traditional roles as husband and wife. Although they did not have college education, her parents expected Kate and her sister to attend college. It is interesting to note that Kate is the sole survivor of her immediate family. Her father

and mother died at the ages of 72 and 93 years old, respectively. Her older sister passed away from cancer at the age of 61 years old.

When I asked her if her recollection of WLB issues went back as far as high school, she indicated no. Kate said she was very fortunate to have jobs as a teenager that were very flexible. Her parents did not allow her to do anything that would interfere with school. In fact, encounters with WLB issues started during the first professional job she held after graduating with a degree in her profession. Kate described her female boss as mean, cruel, and unfairly dissatisfied with the quality of Kate's work and job performance. Kate knew this was not a fair assessment because her work ethic was often praised by physicians she worked alongside. Even though she describes her working conditions at the time as a toxic work environment, it actually drove her to work even harder based on her parents' influence.

My parents' work ethic influenced my work ethic. I cannot recall a time when my parents did not work due to being sick or ill. I do not even remember my mom taking a nap. I believe in the 50's and 60's my parents had a good work life balance. They never worked overtime. That was not the case for me. My WLB between the years of 1988 - 1997 were not really good. I had these terrible migraines and had to call in sick. This made my manager furious. At one point, I was on call 24/7 for six months! I was truly focused even though there was hell to pay. Why did I stay? Because I loved the patients and the field.

However, staying in this workplace had a negative impact on her first marriage of 19 years. Kate ultimately resigned from her position and gave a one-month notification versus the minimum two-week notification requirement. She even wrote her manager a letter describing her work experiences while under her leadership. In hindsight, Kate believes her former manager

was jealous of her because she (Kate) had a bachelor's degree and her manager did not have a degree.

### **Jennifer's Experience**

Jennifer is a 38 year-old Puerto Rican women currently married to a Puerto Rican man for two years. She has a 28 year-old adult male son with special needs. She received her doctorate and is serving her second and final term as a full-time visiting instructor in her college. Jennifer's situation is rather unique since she is also the acting director for clinic in her program. She expressed a desire to continue in her leadership role as a director. She has been a part-time faculty member in her department since 2016. Jennifer is the younger of two girl siblings. She lived in her parents' home until she married her first husband. Jennifer ultimately divorced and remarried. She revealed that she is the lead parent. However, her husband assists significantly with co-parenting her son with special needs. Jennifer does not share a biological child with her current husband.

Jennifer described her parents and lifestyle as the quintessential traditional Puerto Rican family. Both parents worked very hard to provide for their family. Her mother was a stay-at-home caregiver ensuring that the home was maintained and the family were well cared for. Jennifer states that since her mom had some health issues and always stayed home, she learned to be comfortable staying home. She further explains:

Puerto Rican women are used to being home with the kids and cooking because we enjoy it. It's not our expected role anymore. Growing up we did not do many active things (as a family). We didn't really go anywhere. It was rare when we went out to eat. I think we went to an amusement park once. So, my sister and I would just take off to the pool. We

do have a problem in our culture if we are doing something outside (of our responsibilities) and we don't take care of our spouse.

Her father worked multiple jobs to support the family. He is a multitasker and a busy body. Jennifer admits that she is a lot like her dad in that respect. When I initially asked how she would define work life balance, Jennifer could not provide a direct answer at first. Instead, she discussed her role as a visiting instructor and then explained how she became the acting clinical director for her program. Jennifer expressed the challenges of being in her current role while learning how to teach at the same time. It wasn't until she started talking about her family that she was able to describe WLB as relative and unique to her circumstances.

My mind is always stimulated, but I have to remember I have a family at home. So, what I do is I know their schedule. They both (my husband and my son) go to bed super late. They wake up late in the afternoon. They're both night owls. I'm the opposite. I'm smartest in the mornings. Anything after a certain time, it's over, it's a wrap. So my work life balance I learned is according to their schedule. For example, I don't stay at work late. I'm go to work early. When I'm at work, I put all my energy into my job. But I leave at 3:58 pm. I have to be at the stop light at the entrance of the university no later than 3:58 pm.

Although her parents do not have a college education, Jennifer always wanted to go to college. The parental expectation of being required to attend college is similar to what the other participants described. When asked about jobs she held in her youth, she discussed having jobs with value such as being a lifeguard and babysitting. She described herself as being a "hustler moralist" during this time in her life. When asked what this meant, she reiterated that she only

wanted jobs that benefited her in return with money and/or knowledge. Jennifer admitted that she never thought about WLB until her department chair brought it to her attention.

After realizing that Jennifer was struggling with defining WLB, I provided several definitions of WLB. Then, I asked her if there were any that she related to the most. After serious consideration and reflection, Jennifer revealed that there are moments when she realizes that she is not practicing good WLB. When this occurs, she immediately thinks about WLB repeatedly in her mind. Then, she stops what she is doing (which is usually something job related) and forces herself to do something other than work. When this first occurred, she started watching the Netflix hit series “Stranger Things”; a show she always wanted to watch but never made the effort to sit still long enough to watch it. As simple as this may seem, doing this was really a struggle for Jennifer at first. Doing something relaxing and not work related is a real challenge for her. Another show she really got into was NBC’s, “This is Us.” She was so moved by the show that she sent messages to cast members praising their performance via Twitter. One cast member responded to her directly thanking her for her compliment. NBC even re-tweeted her post and it went viral. This really blew her away. Taking the time to watch her favorite television shows was one of the ways Jennifer started to address her WLB issues.

A revelation Jennifer brought forth is that she is grateful the department went on its first retreat off campus. She stated that during the retreat, department members had the opportunity to participate in a team-building exercise that included holding animals that people are typically afraid of. Jennifer’s favorite animal is the owl. She has always admired them from afar. The exercise gave her the opportunity to actually hold one. Holding the owl was so overwhelming for Jennifer, it literally brought her to tears. During the interview, Jennifer revealed her fascination with owls. She told me that her tears were not of fear but of pure joy. She reminded me that as a

child her family rarely participated in outings. As an adult with a son with special needs, family outings are rare. She appreciated this retreat event more than anyone could have ever imagined. Jennifer even managed to collect all the pictures taken during the retreat and created a video montage of the experience that was ultimately shared with department personnel and higher administration.

Finally, Jennifer acknowledged that her family aspect of WLB is improving. For example, she is learning to take the time to do more things with her husband and son. Outings that typical families take for granted, like going to the grocery store or the Dollar Tree with her son, are a major ordeal. He's wheelchair bound so every trip, even visits to area stores has to be carefully researched and planned. She has set boundaries and made efforts to have family outings. Revealing this to me prompted Jennifer to talk more about her first marriage. She stated that her first husband, also Puerto Rican, was extremely traditional in terms of male/female (husband and wife) roles. Jennifer said he was not supportive when she wanted to explore career opportunities let alone pursue going to college to earn a degree. What hurt the most was his lack of support for his own son. He expected her to cook, clean, and take care of him while being the lead parent of their son. Even though her father tremendously supported her in the areas that her husband lacked, she assumed that all Puerto Rican men (other than her father) were this way and vowed never to date anyone of the same race again.

When her marriage started taking a turn for the worse, Jennifer heeded the advice of her manager.

My manager was an African American female. She used to always tell the bank tellers (mainly women) to save money for ourselves on the side that we only had access to. She stressed to start off small; literally \$1 a week. At first, I never really gave this advice

much thought until I realized that my marriage was on shaky ground. So, I started saving \$1 a week. Then, I started saving more money a week. During this time, I was diagnosed with cancer. My husband did not help me like a husband should during the most challenging time of my life. When things got really bad, I had enough money to leave my husband. I told him that we (my son and I) were going to visit my parents and I never returned to home to him. Before I could file for divorce, my husband passed away.

After this devastating event, Jennifer was able to pursue everything she ever wanted professionally. Since no one was holding her back any longer, she was more determined than ever to make up for lost time and desperately wanted to achieve all her professional goals. Along with support of her parents and amazing mentors, she decided to return to college. The pursuit ultimately led her to earn a doctorate degree. After divorcing, she was a single parent. Complicating matters more, she was diagnosed with a different type of cancer. These events exacerbated her WLB issues.

Jennifer was introduced to her current husband through a mutual friend. Their relationship started off really slow because she vowed to never date/marry again, especially a Puerto Rican man. She did not think they would even have a relationship other than friendship. However, he was different. He was extremely supportive of her and her son. He tended to her while undergoing chemotherapy. He even helped her father with his pressure washing business when he hurt himself on the job. Her husband's support of her helped her to realize the true meaning of unconditional love and a supportive partner. Jennifer also recognized that she was stereotyping and judging all Puerto Rican men (excluding her father) based on her negative experience with her first husband, which was not fair. Fast forward to today and she is now

married to her best friend of two years now. Jennifer said that she still feels like she is in the honeymoon stage of her marriage.

Like the other participants, Jennifer describes herself as highly driven and goal oriented. This is also evident considering the timeline of her achievements and accomplishments after divorce. Prior to remarrying, she also had a life changing experience involving her first husband related to his co-parenting responsibilities. These two events marked a turning point in her life professionally and personally.

I was attending a real estate seminar out of town. Even though my son's father and I were separated, we co-parented. My former husband volunteered to take care of our son while I was away. It was at this time that my first husband committed suicide. I felt completely helpless. All I could think about was my son and hoping he was still alive. Since I was out of town, I could not get to him immediately. Although he was okay, I hated the fact that I could not get to him immediately. Because of this, I rarely go out of town now.

When the majority of faculty visited the larger campus during the retreat via the university shuttle, I drove my own car. If something happened to my son, I could leave and get to him immediately.

This admission led me to ask the next quest regarding greatest barriers and supports. Jennifer revealed that her husband and parents are her greatest supporters. When asked her greatest barrier(s), Jennifer stated it was herself. Furthermore, she indicated that most people may perceive her son with special needs as being a barrier. She stressed that he is not a barrier, he is her son. Taking care of him can be a challenge, but not a barrier.

The last question I asked was how her leadership role as a director impacts her work-life balance. She referenced some of her responsibilities in this role earlier during the interview.

However, she provided more information about her clinical responsibilities. The type of program Jennifer works in requires a lot of lab and clinical hours. Direct supervision of students is a necessity. She is responsible for working with students in the lab setting along with other program faculty for many hours. There are also students completing clinical internships. Due to the shortage of employees in her profession, when Jennifer makes clinical site visits, she actually treats patients along with the students on site. This occurs several times a week.

Jennifer is still a practicing clinician to maintain her credentials. She works several hours a month at the local hospital. It is also her contingency plan to re-enter the clinical environment on a full-time basis if she does not become a permanent full-time faculty member. She is also involved in many community service efforts related to her profession. Due to her active involvement outside of her academic responsibilities, she often involves students in these endeavors. These opportunities have provided the institution local media exposure for her program.

### **Miranda's Experiences**

Miranda is a 47-year-old African American female who has been married to African American husband for 23 years. They share two children. A daughter who is 18 years old that just started college and a 9-year-old son. She is the oldest of three girl siblings. Her father died when she was five years old leaving her mother a widow and alone to raise three young girls.

When asked to recall her earliest recollection of WLB issues she stated that she was balancing work and school as early as 14 years of age. Her first job was a waitress at a local restaurant. She needed money for cheer camp, which was \$1000.00. Although she asked her mom for the money, she did not want her assistance.

It turned out that I did not need the money from my mom because I had earned it all myself from tips that summer. I will never forget submitting payment for camp to my cheerleading coach. I handed her so many rolls of change and hundreds of one-dollar bills. In hindsight, I should have been embarrassed. But, I was proud to pay for camp with my hard-earned money. My work ethic and drive were solidified from that day forward.

During her first year of college, Miranda said her major was undecided and she simply wanted to be away from home (but not too far away) to complete core classes. She knew she wanted to be in the healthcare field after completing an allied health course during her senior year of high school. She thought she was going to follow in my mother's footsteps and become a nurse and attend the same college her mom graduated from. Miranda stated that she was in awe of her mom's graduation picture, her cap and gown, and the huge diploma she was awarded for her bachelor's degree when she graduated. However, Miranda's mom did not want her to follow in her footsteps. She challenged Miranda to consider and research all opportunities in the health profession.

After taking her mom's advice into consideration, she decided to pursue a health major that was not nursing and applied to several reputable programs. After a successful interview, she was offered a seat in the program. Interestingly, this came as a surprise to many; including her husband who was her boyfriend at the time. He was attending a reputable HBCU on a full scholarship. Miranda asserts that it was no secret that she was an average high school student. She was more interested in socializing and extracurricular school activities. She admitted to not becoming very serious about her grades until she met my husband who was and still is very smart.

After earning her associate's degree, she decided to apply to another health program within the same college/department in which she was currently enrolled. She had a competitive GPA and a reputation for being a hard-working student. Miranda held two work study positions in a clinical environment. She was shocked and disappointed when she was not accepted into the second program. Her classmates that applied were accepted. So, she was very disappointed and confused by the decision since she knew she was just as competitive as her classmates. Yet, that did not stop her from applying to another institution.

I knew I really wanted pursue an additional health major in a related field. I did not want to wait to re-apply to the program in which I was denied acceptance as suggested. I applied and was accepted to a two year technical college in a different state. This opportunity proved to be a humbling and valuable experience for many reasons. First, I was able to compare the benefits of a two year college education with that of a four-year university. The main difference was that in a technical college, we spent more time in the clinical setting learning the job while taking classes concurrently. It seemed like we were in the clinical setting more than the classroom setting. Also, technical schools have immediate access to the latest technology. That was not the case at the four-year institution.

Upon earning a certificate in a different health related major, Miranda was still determined to earn her bachelor's degree from the same college as her mom. Therefore, she re-applied to the department's bridge program. A bridge program offers someone who is already a certified professional or has an associate degree in a related health field the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree. Application to this type of program is typically non-competitive with a very flexible class schedule. Since Miranda was already a degreed and certified health professional in

two specialty areas, a substantial amount of college credits were accepted and transferred. Therefore, she was able to obtain her bachelor's degree in a year's time while working part-time.

It was also during this time that Miranda discovered that she was drawn to teaching others. While enrolled in the bridge program, she was working as a health professional in a medical center that accepted students to complete clinical rotations. Miranda was always willing to assist a student when needed because she never forgot about her experiences as a student; especially, as a student of color in a profession where there were not many that looked like her in certain departments. In turn, students were also drawn to her. One student even suggested that once she graduated, she should apply for the director position that would be available in the college she was enrolled in. Miranda did not give this much thought for a variety of reasons.

Miranda decided to become a traveling clinician after earning her bachelor's degree. She got married, her husband joined the military and he was stationed overseas. Eventually, they both returned home, settled down, and started a family. The faculty director position that the former student encouraged Miranda to apply was still available. She applied, was offered the position, and has been teaching in higher education ever since. During this time Miranda obtained a master's degree and ultimately earned a doctorate degree. Her institution of employment offered the benefit of pursuing her academic career goals through an education tuition assistance program. The assistance allowed her to work full-time while being enrolled as a student part-time at the expense of her employer.

The plethora of WLB issues Miranda faced as a wife, mother of two children with full-time job and part-time graduate student was very overwhelming for her. She indicated that her timeline for completing both degrees did not line up with her reality. When asked to define WLB she described work and life as being fluid like water in which no one has no control over. She

stated that two mentors gave her the best advice when she was struggling with WLB issues the most.

My mentors at the time mentioned during phone conversations to not spend my energy on things that I cannot control. Instead, I needed to focus on what I could control. This included my attitude and my actions – how I respond to situations. Everything else, I needed to surrender to God and let Him handle the rest. As a matter of fact, I needed to surrender the situation initially to God and pray about whether I should even respond at all.

Miranda likened past and recent WLB issues to ebbs and flows of a current. When asked to clarify this statement, she noted that it was a figure of speech that describes how her issues changed regularly and repeatedly depending on the season she was in in her life (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). After presenting her with a variety of WLB definitions as mentioned in published literature, she resonated the most with Byrne (2005) who stated that it is a process that people seek desire to change after evaluating their priorities. She further noted that the process is dynamic may change from moment to moment.

I have come to the conclusion that work-life balance is essentially an ideal that is similar to aiming for perfection. It is desired and we strive to achieve it and there is no harm in that as long as you don't beat yourself up for not being "in balance or perfect." The point is that you tried your best. Instead, for my life and situations it is now about prioritizing. Addressing the needs and issues that arise next. Regardless of the order of the issue, self/health, and, family supersedes any non-related issue at any given time. As an administrator, my standard work hours are more traditional. I work 40 plus hours a week because I am still responsible for faculty obligations related to teaching, service, and

professional development. I am still the director of a department program as well. My administrator position is interim and I do not have tenure. Everything that I do cannot be done within a 40-hour work week Monday-Friday. However, I really try not to work over time during the weekends or too long after traditional work hours.

Miranda next addressed her greatest supports and barriers during the next phase of interview. She claimed her greatest support is her family - her husband, mom, and two children.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Through their testimonies, it is apparent that work-life balance issues affected each person differently. Every experience was unique while some experiences were commonly shared. Each person defined work-life balance differently. As identified from the data, six overarching themes emerged.

These themes will be discussed in more detail later.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

#### **Common Themes Across Participant Narratives**

The participant testimonies made apparent that work-life balance issues affected each interviewee. Though each experience was unique, there were commonalities among the five participants (including myself). Some had an explicit definition for WLB, while others struggled to provide a distinct definition. Yet, all participants were clearly able to identify when they were out of balance. In this chapter, I discuss six overarching themes that emerged. : (1) “self” is the greatest barrier; (2) family and good mentors represent the greatest source of support; (3) parents have the greatest influence on academic achievement; (4) being the lead parent in most situations and caring and providing for their children were participants’ greatest motivators; (5) all women described themselves as highly driven, an attribute fueled by being goal-oriented and passionate about their roles personally and professionally; and (6) each participant encountered a pivotal moment in their lives that led them to address their WBL issues (see Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Themes and Significance*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Significance</b>
1. Self	Greatest barrier
2. Family	Greatest source of support
3. Parents	Greatest influence of work ethic and academic achievement
4. Lead Parenting and Children	Greatest source of motivation
5. Highly Driven	Goal-oriented and passionate
6. Pivotal Moments	Assessment of WLB issues

**Theme 1: “Self” Is the Greatest Barrier**

Without hesitation, each participant identified themselves as the greatest barrier to achieving work-life balance. Statements supporting this theme included, “I am my own worst enemy,” “I need to get out of my own way,” and “The decisions that were made were all on me.” The participants explained that their loved ones were also negatively impacted as they observed the participants “doing this to themselves.” In hindsight, participants admitted to ignoring warnings from concerned family and friends and repeating the same behavior pattern of “getting in their own way.”

Educators, administrators, and clinicians often work long hours to address the plethora of professional issues they face. Issues include high staff turnover, excessive workloads, and dealing with urgent or emergent situations (Reith, 2018). All participants indicated they had concerns about WLB related to their positions. Since they all described themselves as highly driven (another theme discussed later), most were motivated to achieve their professional goals.

## **Theme 2: Family Support**

All participants indicated that their families—spouses, partners, parents, and/or siblings—were their greatest source of support in addressing personal WLB issues. In part, employee satisfaction is a result of support from family, impacting their physical and psychological well-being (Chavan et al., 2021; French et al., 2018). The participants, all of whom were married, stated that their spouses or partners were very good co-parents in caring for their children.

When Lola and her husband agreed that family responsibilities should be shared to support her professional aspirations and trajectory, her husband naturally assumed the role of “lead parent.” When I asked Lola if this decision affected her husband’s ability to advance professionally, she indicated that he wanted a job with less demanding responsibilities for personal reasons that did not involve her career aspirations. She stated that although he is a skilled manager, problem solver, and leader, he was not interested in the additional stress that comes with a management/leadership position. Moreover, their decision allowed him to be home more with their children. He was able to attend school-related events, such as open houses or extracurricular activities, when Lola could not due to professional obligations that frequently required her to be out of town. Even though Lola felt guilty about not being present for these events, she was grateful that her husband could support their children in her absence.

Lola acknowledged that in her current position, WLB issues had become even more challenging. Since her husband took on more of the lead-parent responsibilities, her mother also provided considerable help with childcare. Lola purchased a home that included a cottage on the property for her mother, who requested this arrangement so she could be readily available to

support her daughter and grandchildren. In addition to being her greatest supporters, Lola revealed that her husband and mother are very influential mentors.

Similarly, Abby also noted that her husband and parents are her most significant supporters. Abby loves her husband dearly and insisted that any semblance of WLB that she had attained was due to his help, despite the demands of his own job. She mentioned that when he left work, he would call and ask if she needed anything from the store or if he should pick up one of the kids from school or other events. He is also an important emotional support for Abby, allowing her to vent and talk things through with him with no filter. Although she described their relationship as “traditional,” they are not consumed with traditional family roles; he does whatever he can to make her load bearable. When asked how Abby’s parents supported her and her family, she explained:

They were both in a position where they were not having to work anymore; they were able to retire. My dad has since gone back to work full-time. You know he’s almost 70 years old! I don’t know if he’ll ever truly retire because he loves to work. I see and talk to my parents daily. My kids talk to my parents and go over to their house since they live only 10 minutes away. They help me every week—definitely at least once a week. My mom is always taking one of the kids somewhere or coming over to my house. I had to call her one day because our washing machine was broken. My husband had to work. She was there to let the technician in. So much of what I am able to do and achieve concerning maintaining WLB is because I have support. I have a lot of support.

Both of Kate’s parents, as well as her older sister had passed away. Prior to their deaths, they had been her greatest supporters and they were a very close-knit family. Kate recalled how

much her older sister had supported her and her sons when they were born, especially when her father passed away.

Kate's support now comes from the fathers of her sons and her current husband. Kate explained that her current husband had been a part of her children's lives for as long as they have been married, almost 22 years. She revealed that she has good co-parenting relationships with her son's fathers. Although Kate was the lead parent in all situations, she values the input of her sons' fathers. She also relies heavily on her current husband to help with her children and grandchildren, particularly her granddaughter and her special needs son.

Jennifer further emphasized the importance of parental support in the context of her Hispanic heritage and culture. She shared that she had moved back home with her parents after her first husband died. Before she remarried, her father was her primary support, especially when she needed help with her son, while her mother continued to maintain the home and provide meals for Jennifer and her son. Both parents also tended to her healthcare needs and took care of her son when she was diagnosed with cancer.

Although Jennifer's ex-husband was not supportive of her at all, her current husband was the complete opposite—which shocked her initially. Except for her father, Jennifer described Puerto Rican men and their position in family households as extremely traditional. Her first husband did not support her personal or professional goals. Even when she was sick due to cancer, he did not offer the care and support expected of a husband. When he died, she vowed not to marry again within her culture, assuming that if she did, she was destined for the same fate.

But that could not have been further from the truth:

I was initially introduced to my current husband through a mutual friend, but it took a long time before I agreed to go out on a date with him. As I got to know him over time, it turned out that he was nothing like my first husband or the stereotypical Puerto Rican man. He was the complete opposite. I kept waiting for the ball to drop, and it did not. He's very supportive, as he takes care of my son while I'm at work.

Finally, Miranda also explains how her family is her greatest support. She states that her children are understanding of her and her husband's work schedules, particularly hers due to her professional responsibilities. Since their daughter is away at college, she and her husband alternate transporting their son to and from school and extracurricular activities. They also alternate preparing and providing meals. Even though her mom lives in a different city, she is really supportive. Miranda states:

When I first moved to the area, I came alone with a newborn child. My mom and my middle sister alternated weeks and weekends to help me until my husband was able to sell our home and move to join us. When I was enrolled in school, I traveled a lot because my classes were out of town. My mom made it a point to re-arrange her schedule to be available to travel with me.

### **Theme 3: Parents Have the Greatest Influence on Work Ethic and Academic Achievement**

All participants stated their work ethic was influenced by witnessing their parents' hard work. In fact, most modeled their parent's work ethic or, at the very least, were inspired by it. Regardless of whether their parents had earned a college degree, each participant claimed that attending college was an expectation. Working hard and earning a college degree were goals set by the parents of all participants—goals they all met.

Lola's parents influenced her work ethic and academic achievements. Lola states that her father's lack of WLB had a negative impact on her parents' relationship and her relationship with her father. Even though she had followed in his footsteps, she was constantly reminded of the moments when he had not been around due to work. She had longed for him to attend school events that she participated in only to be disappointed by his frequent absence. Now that she works in the same profession, she understood why he had been absent. Similar to Abby, Lola's mother has a college degree and is officially retired. Both mothers retired for other reasons and agreed to support their daughter's and their families. According to both participants, their mothers would not have had it any other way.

Abby stated that she never considered not going to college since it was expected that both she and her sister would earn graduate degrees. She also indicated that, due to her family's strong, positive impact during her childhood and young adulthood up to the point of attending college, she always felt that she was expected to attend college, graduate, get married, and have several children. Even though her parents never told her she had to get married and have children, this is what they had done—and they had been successful. Her parents' marriage is still strong, and they still support her and her family as much as they had when she was younger, especially since she had children. Abby's children are her parents' only grandchildren on both sides of the family. Although she was unsure what the future holds for her children, she and her husband agree that they will be there for their children (even as adults) as much as their parents are there for them now.

Abby also mentioned that the priorities of going to college, graduating, getting married, and having children by a certain age were not the same for other women she knew. These women included her sister, best friend, and even her children. She said that her sister had no desire to get

married or have children. Her best friend recently married in her late 40s and did not want children. Of her three children, only her son had mentioned wanting a family (i.e., a wife and kids) when he was older. She felt certain that her two other children (both daughters in their late teens) did not want to have children. Abby admitted that having children was all she ever thought of and desired when she was younger. I confessed that I had had the same sentiment. She now understood, however, that women can have fulfilling lives in different ways.

Both of Abby's parents had college degrees; her dad held a master's degree in accounting and at one point in his career was a teacher. She said that even though he was supposed to be retired, he still worked in accounting. Her mother had since retired and was devoted to helping Abby with her children. After reflecting on my question about her parents' influence on her professional aspirations, she admitted that their achievements did encourage her to strive to earn her doctorate. However, as with her mother, she had learned that family and children were more of a priority than her career. Therefore, she had set personal and professional boundaries that she adheres to most of the time.

Like Abby, Lola's parents influenced her work ethic and academic achievements. Lola states that her father's lack of WLB impacted her. Even though she had followed in his footsteps, she was constantly reminded of the moments when he had not been around due to work. She had longed for him to attend school events that she participated in only to be disappointed by his frequent absence. Now that she works in the same profession, she understands why was absent. Also like Abby, Lola's mother had a college degree but is officially retired on her own terms. Now her mom is able to fully support her daughter's family. According to both participants, their mothers would not have had it any other way.

Miranda revealed that the women in her family work extremely hard, especially her mom.

My dad died when I was five years old. My middle sister was just born. My mom became a widowed single mother after my dad died. According to her mother, prior to his passing my dad was determined for her to be independent and to be able to take care of herself and us. This was a complete 180 because his mindset was the opposite prior. My mom said until that time, she didn't even know how to write a check. A month or so before his death, he helped her apply to nursing school. He also showed her how to write a check and take care of the bills. Then, he died in a car accident. My mom was accepted to nursing school shortly thereafter.

Miranda said that once her mom had that opportunity, she seized it and worked relentlessly making sure her and her siblings had what they needed. They never wanted for anything. Their mom instilled in Miranda and her sisters the value of hard work. She describes herself and her sisters as “latch key” kids. Miranda said as the oldest she had a lot of responsibility and did a lot of things to help take care of home and the family while her mom was working at a young age. She concluded that these responsibilities as a pre-teen and her mom’s determination to earn a degree molded her to be the independent and influenced her academic aspirations.

#### **Theme 4: Lead Parenting and Children**

All participants revealed that serving in the “lead parent” role and raising their children were their greatest motivators. Although Abby and her husband share co-parenting responsibilities, she considers herself to be the lead parent simply because her husband’s job was

not as flexible as hers. She said that she is the CEO and CFO of the household. She further asserted:

I am in charge of meals and making appointments for those who need healthcare appointments. I am in charge of the shopping. I'm in charge of most of the home care kinds of things that happen on a daily basis. I'm also in charge of paying the bills, like making sure the finances are in order.

When I asked Abby if she considered her husband to be the co-leader of their relationship and if they shared or alternated responsibilities, she stated:

We definitely share responsibilities for sure. But you know, he kind of has specific things that he does ... like you know how it is. He does laundry, he does the dishes, we kind of share those things somewhat, but he definitely takes the lead role in those things.

The older kids really don't need transportation, but the youngest kid ... we do split that as much as possible.

Prior to Lola's current position, she considered herself the lead parent. At times, she still did when her professional schedule allowed, though she had to allow her husband to be the lead parent during times when she could not. I understood clearly what Lola meant by this. We both admitted to having a hard time "letting go" and allowing our spouses to take the lead-parent role.

Kate and Jennifer admitted that due to their divorces and having an older/adult child with special needs, they had always been the lead parent. During their interviews, both detailed how meticulous they were concerning their children's care and their schedules. This included being very thoughtful of how they chose caregivers to assist them when needed. Kate only allowed her husband to take care of her children and works with a specific home healthcare organization. On the other hand, Jennifer only allows her father and husband to be the additional caregivers of her

son. Jennifer is still relatively young and healthy; therefore, she could handle lifting and carrying her son when needed. Finally, Miranda stated that she and her husband are good co-lead parents. They organically assume the lead parent role when necessary.

### **Theme 5: Highly Driven**

When asked to describe themselves, each participant stated they were “highly driven and goal-oriented” personally and professionally. Lola indicated that she has been this way—competitive in a healthy, innocent way—since elementary school. When she decided to improve her grades and be a better student after her probationary period as a freshman in college, she claimed that the second chance to redeem herself has been driving her ever since.

Abby shared a similar perspective. She stated that what drove her the most was her passion for helping others and making a difference in others’ lives. Similarly, Kate revealed that she was extremely passionate about her profession, so much so that it was difficult for her to decide on an exact date/year to retire. Jennifer discussed the freedom she now has to pursue her career aspirations, especially considering her parents are always supportive parents and now she has a supportive husband. She recalled that at one time she did not have the latter, and it was stifling.

Miranda stated that at one point in her life there was a perception from others that she was not a high achiever and would not accomplish much when she was younger due to her mother’s widowed/single parent status and Miranda’s tenacious nature. Like the other participants, she is passionate about teaching and helping others. She has even been told by other professionals that she is so highly driven that her drive is not like the average person. Miranda claims she is fully aware of what drives her to do the things that she does now more than ever. What drives her the most today is fully understanding that life is precious and her time on earth

is limited. Therefore, supporting her children and aging parents along with her husband; in addition to having a strong sense that everything she does (good, bad, or indifferent) serves a greater purpose even when she does not realize it in the moment is what motivates her to be so driven.

### **Theme 6: Pivotal Moments**

At some point, each participant realized that something needed to change regarding their WLB and associated issues. This often meant re-prioritizing what they perceived as important in their lives. Notably, that began with self. They blamed only themselves for past and current WLB circumstances, taking full responsibility for their choices and actions. Each participant discussed seeking work-life balance (or recognizing they were out of balance) while going through major life events.

Lola described how being placed on probation motivated her as an undergraduate student to do better. This taught her perseverance. It also allowed her to empathize with students and their struggles in her current position as an administrator.

Abby had learned early on to put her family before her career. She had a keen sense of when she was out of balance and had learned to make the necessary changes to regain a semblance of WLB. However, her pivotal moment involved an incident that had occurred after it was discovered that her daughter suffered from mental illness. Abby immediately stepped down from her director and administrator positions and scaled back her service to professional committees. She was also more selective about research projects. She asserted that even though her decisions were motivated by this experience, it was what she needed for herself as well. This meant slowing down and recognizing what was most important in life. Abby admitted that if she

wanted to, she could be more involved professionally and could make a name for herself in her field.

Kate revealed that her pivotal moment occurred when she was approached by a physician to work for him and leave her tyrant manager. She also realized that working in such challenging conditions had negatively affected her first marriage. Her interview also emerged as a pivotal moment because it was not until we talked that she realized she was actually a year older than she thought. Retirement was a more serious thought than it had ever been before. She still struggles to achieve WLB and to doing things for herself. But she is making more of an effort.

Jennifer had had several pivotal moments, first her two cancer diagnoses, then her separation and ultimate passing of her first husband. What resonated with me was when she stated that once she was single again, she no longer felt held back from doing what she had always wanted to do professionally. She sought to accomplish her goals with great tenacity. In addition, having a son with special needs represented a pivotal moment for Jennifer.

Miranda also had several pivotal moments. She described these moments in great detail. The first two involved the birth of her children and her high risk pregnancy status for both. Next, was the decision to pursue her career goals in another city while pregnant with her first child leaving behind her husband (long distance marriage) and the support of local family members. Finally, the most impactful moment was the death of her middle sister due to terminal cancer to date.

I have to say my sister being diagnosed with cancer and eventually passing away at a young age has been the most impactful pivotal moment for me so far. We were very, very close, and looked a lot alike. Although she was the middle sister, she was more mature and the glue that held the family together – the quintessential middle child. She died

during the early onset of Covid-19 when restrictions were very stringent. Due to restrictions, I could not visit her in the hospital as frequently as my mom and her husband when she took a turn for the worse. Hospital visitors and visitation hours were very limited. I spent a lot of our last moments together talking to her on the phone when she could speak and text messaging. I have memorialized that phone since she has passed away. It has all of our text threads, last text messages, her voice messages, and pictures we sent to each other.

Needless to say, Miranda confessed that she did not handle her sister's death well initially. She ultimately ended up taking a leave of absence from work. The grief exacerbated underlying issues and was the straw that broke the camel's back. Taking leave gave her the opportunity to openly grieve, begin the healing process, and attempt to get her life back in order – refuel. It also allowed her to re-assess and prioritize what was most important in life.

### **Summary**

After conducting the in-depth interviews with participants regarding their work-life balance experiences, the data collected were closely examined. During the analysis, six overarching themes prevailed: self as the greatest barrier; family as the greatest support; parents as the greatest influence regarding work ethic and academic achievement; lead parenting and children as the greatest source of motivation; the impact of being highly driven and passionate on accomplishing goals; the role of pivotal moments in encouraging an assessment of WLB issues.

In this chapter, I shared participants' WLB experiences as revealed through their detailed narratives. I provided direct quotations from their responses during the semi-structured interviews. This format allows the reader to relate to participants' experiences in unique and

intimate ways. The common themes that emerged are vital to allowing others to connect to the participants.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

This study examined work-life balance (WLB) issues among full-time university faculty who identify as women. Kulkarni (2013) defined work-life balance as “having enough time to work and enough time to have a life thus work life balance” (p. 2). WLB concerns depend on the person and their circumstances (Vanner & Bicket, 2016). Experiences and perceptions of women employed as full-time university faculty were gathered by asking about personal WLB definitions, past and current experiences, significant barriers and supports, and leadership roles. These questions led to a subset of questions related to demographic information, family role and responsibilities, teaching experience, identifying WLB issues as a youth, the WLB myth, being out of balance, and the influence of family, culture, and mentors concerning work ethic.

Participant’s concerns were examined and compared to each other, specifically their work duties, domestic obligations, and spirit/self-care. I presented a general overview of their work life balance perception. The research also served to address gaps in the literature pertaining to the lack of qualitative research on balance issues among American women, the effects of personality traits, and limited understanding about paternity policies related to men, and the lack of female authorship of the effects of Covid on WLB issues among women (Mehta & Kundami, 2015). Participants expressed having perseverance, determination, dedication, drive, passion, a strong work ethic, and resilience against all odds. They did not allow their environmental conditions to continue to affect their physical and mental well-being (McCoy et al., 2012). For example, all participants experienced pivotal moments that allowed them to reconcile work-life balance

choices that negatively impacted their personal and professional lives. Six common themes were identified from the interviews.

Future quantitative research studies could explore if these themes are common among a larger population. Discussions regarding the implications of negative work-life balance experiences should also be considered. It was evident that through the testimonies of the participants they all possess a myriad of traits that helped them navigate through their work life balance issues. These traits are further examined based on the participants' narratives.

### **Implications**

Some literature suggests that toxic work environments play a major role in work life balance issues (Rasool, et al, 2021). Nonetheless, not all participants indicated that their current work environments were toxic. Only one participant, Kate, worked in a toxic environment at a former place of employment. They all discussed their struggles and how they worked through them. Each participant explained how perseverance, motivation, determination, dedication, drive, passion, strong work ethic, and resilience helped them during the most challenging moments in their lives.

Moreover, not addressing WLB affected their health either mentally and/or physically mainly in the forms of anxiety and stress. Abby described her stress as being “strung out.” During Miranda’s interview she stated that she had “hit a brick wall.” Lola mentioned that the stress of trying to schedule out of town work related meetings to coincide with her children’s schedule was simply not feasible and took its toll. In hindsight, Kate and Jennifer realized that the lack of balance added to their anxiety and stress. They are currently in the process of assessing their issues, learning to put themselves first, and establishing boundaries.

Although it did not emerge as a common theme, there was an unawareness underlying hesitation related to taking advantage of WLB opportunities offered by the institution for most participants. These opportunities include (but are not limited to): flex and telework schedules, FMLA, and counseling services for university personnel on campus.

### **Practice Implementations and Recommendations**

Practices that higher administration should consider to implement include the following: (a) administer an engagement survey and evaluate results to identify and address WLB issues as a department goal with affiliated an action plan, (b) identify how specific WLB issues hinder teaching, scholarship, professional development, and promotion, (c) consider pre-approved flex schedules and reassess every semester, (d) inform department personnel WLB policies and benefits offered by the university and encourage them to take advantage of them when appropriate with the support of the department chair, (e) develop contingency plans for major and minor events related to short/long term FMLA and temporary coverage for vacant faculty positions due to resignation or retirement, (f) administer an activity book to read and complete together as a department for the year (i.e., common read) related to WLB as a team building exercise; this may be listed as a monthly meeting agenda items.

Also, reach out to the college or university's diversity, excellence, and inclusion (DEI) committee. Suggest the development and administration of a survey for faculty, administrative assistants, and students to garner interest in topics to discuss. Survey results may reveal the need to address several issues on various institutional levels. These issues can be addressed by having round table discussions (in-person on campus) and web conference lectures from guest speakers (including human resources representatives).

Other practice recommendations to consider include partnering a newer (or younger) faculty member with a more experienced one to develop a mentoring relationship within the department. Some institutions may offer formal mentoring programs. Another suggestion is for department chairs to ensure that all faculty members and administrators participate in an orientation process on multiple institutional levels. Even if a faculty member completed an orientation process earlier in their career, policies and processes may have changed significantly since they were hired. Therefore, it may benefit them to participate in an orientation process again.

### **Future Research Recommendations**

Continued research examining the WLB experiences of full-time women faculty system wide, could help institutions understand the factors that contribute to the issues that ultimately influence their decisions. For example, based on interview results, WLB experiences significantly impacted the health and performance of some participants. The work environment and ultimately their success personally and professionally were affected as well. My research was limited to focusing on participants from limited colleges and departments.

Next, additional research could examine inclusiveness, equity, access, and participation of women of various races, cultures, genders, and backgrounds. Although attempts were made to interview participants that African (not African American) and Asian/Asian Island Pacific, our schedules to set a meeting date did not work out. Moreover, I did not have the chance to interview participants that were a single parent, or a single with dependents (elderly or sick parents). Current policies that are in place should be enforced and monitored to ensure equitable access with positive outcomes that address disparities related to all minorities, especially women. When developing my subset questions, it was stressed that each participant clearly identified

their preferred gender and pronouns. It was during this time that it dawned on me that future research should consider examine those who identify themselves as other than cis gender and preferred she/her pronouns.

All participants indicated that their spouses were supportive co-parents. Two participants admitted there were occasions in which their husbands served as the lead parent (i.e., Lola and Miranda). Therefore, WLB issues among men would be worth investigating. Men have unique issues related particularly to their jobs and preconceived notions regarding men, their co-parenting, and co-caregiver responsibilities of dependents (i.e., aging parents). Finally, the literature also indicates that the impact of WLB issues among women during the Covid-19 pandemic and personality traits and WLB issues should be assessed in future research.

### **Summary**

Evaluating the experiences of others and reflecting on my personal experiences as the researcher has been life changing. As a woman of color and before conducting interviews, I felt like my experiences were unique to only me and that I was the only one going through them. I was so focused on my on WLB issues, I never fully understood that I was not alone and that although my experiences are not unique, I a lot in common with the participants. Their testimonies inspired me. Their willingness to share such intimate details of their experiences knowing that the information would be shared in this research study honestly took me by surprise. Yet, they still prevailed. It also gave me the courage to share some more of my personal experiences with them during their interviews.

Issues related to gender and race disparities and inequalities emerged organically. They were not the sole focus of this research or the narratives of the participants based on their responses. This assertion is not meant to minimize the experiences or the impact of gender and

race regarding WLB. The confessions of all the participants regarding what they shared about gender and race were profound. For example, Lola's confession of feeling like she has to be a good representation of an entire race as a black woman was something that I relate to and empathize with. Abby's recognition of the importance of me currently holding the role of interim chair as a black woman and her understanding of the advantages she has as a White woman when she assesses her own WLB issues were thought provoking. I cannot leave out Kate's experiences of being a part of a middle-class White family in the 50's and 60's. Jennifer also offered a detailed explanation of addressing the stereotypes Puerto Ricans and their families. Finally, Miranda spoke of connecting with students, particularly students of color when working in areas where there are not many women that look like her. These interviews were in depth learning opportunities for me and hopefully to all readers.

The main research goal was to provide a general overview of WLB concerns and issues; and, to identify common themes among the participants. I believe I have accomplished this. After interviewing the participants, I have a better understanding of their challenges and I empathize with the experiences of these women. Each interview session was filled with "ah ha" and "light bulb" moments. I left each session empowered to face my own WLB issues. This study also served as a forum, a way to ensure the voices of the participants were heard. Each person admitted that being involved in this research was cathartic. I hope that readers will be able to identify with some aspect of themselves in one or more of the participant's narratives.

This research contributes to the body of literature by pursuing to examine the lived experiences of full-time faculty women that work in higher education. Appreciating these experiences can aid higher administration and their decisions. These actions can assist in creating an environment in which women can put their fear and pride aside and ultimately feel safe to

express their and issues in the work environment (Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016). These actions may give them the courage to be vulnerable and know that it is okay to seek and ask for assistance. Additionally, it can create a culture of success for women as they explore their issues and concerns and assess their WLB status.

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## APPENDIX A

### STUDY INTRODUCTION EMAIL

I hope all is well with you upon receipt of this message. I am conducting a qualitative study titled, "work-life Balance among Full-time Female University Faculty." Work-life balance issues affect many women across professions and their labor participation rate in the workforce, particularly full-time female university faculty members in the health professions. It is my belief that you can help me by discussing your issues (past and current) based on your experiences. I have long admired your success and accomplishments. I want to understand how you define work-life balance and what influences your overall perspective. Moreover, I would like to know your most significant barriers and supports as you attempt to maintain balance. This knowledge might help others identify their work-life balance problems and better deal with their issues.

I know you are very busy. I understand if you are not able to participate. If you can participate, I would like the opportunity to discuss my research in more detail with you and provide additional insight regarding your role as a participant in this study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Myka Bussey-Campbell

APPENDIX B  
PARTICIPANT CONSENT  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM  
WORK-LIFE BALANCE ISSUES AMONG FULL-TIME FEMALE FACULTY

**Researcher's Statement:**

- You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if anything is unclear or if you need more information.

**Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Jay Rojewski

Department of Career and Information Services

[rojewski@uga.edu](mailto:rojewski@uga.edu)

706-542-4461

**Co-investigator:**

Myka Bussey-Campbell

Department of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Sciences

[mcampbell@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:mcampbell@georgiasouthern.edu)

912-344-2787

**Purpose:**

- Work-life balance issues affect many women across professions and their labor participation rate in the workforce, particularly full-time female university faculty members. We believe you can help by discussing your issues (past and current) based on your experiences. We want to understand how you define work-life balance and what influences your overall perspective. Moreover, I also want to know your most significant barriers and supports as you attempt to maintain balance. This knowledge might help others identify their work-life balance problems and better deal with their issues.

**Study Procedures and Time Commitment:**

- You are invited to participate in this research because I feel that your experience as a woman and full-time faculty member in a university setting can contribute invariably to our understanding and knowledge of work-life balance issues and practices. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. The choice you make will have no bearing on your job or any work-related evaluations or reports, and status. You may choose not to participate without penalty.
- If not participating, a follow up email will be sent thanking the participation for consideration.
- Upon agreeing to participate, I will send a follow up email to set up the meeting. You will participate in a one-on-one interview. The session will last approximately one and a half hours. On the day of the interview at the agreed location, I will go over the hard copy version of the consent form in detail. The participant will have control of the data and will have the right to withdraw.

- The interview may be in person or by web conference as preferred by you. If conducted in person, I will sit with you in a comfortable meeting place on campus while adhering to distance measures and protections during the pandemic. If it is by web conference, I will use Zoom or Google Meet platforms. If you do not desire to answer any questions during the interview, you may say so, and the interviewer will move to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you want someone else present.
- As the facilitator, I will start the session. I can also answer questions about the research that you might have. Then I will ask you questions about work-life balance concerning your profession. I will also talk about work-life balance more generally because this will allow me to understand the issues differently. I will ask the following questions:
  1. As a full-time woman university faculty member, how do you define work-life balance and influence your overall perspective?
  2. What are the past and current experiences you face regarding work-life balance?
  3. Based on your experiences attempting to maintain a work-life balance, what are your most significant barriers and supports?
  4. If in a leadership role, how has your accent to leadership impacted your perception of work-life balance from a faculty member to a leadership position?  
Has your perceptions of work-life balance changed? If so, how?
- 1. Supporting questions, prompts, and follow up questions may include the following:  
describe yourself and your family life, what is your family role, how long have you been at the university, has there ever been a time when your work-life balance was in sync or out of sync, etc.

2. The research will occur over a period of several months. Web conferencing features will provide a recording transcript. Participants will be contacted again for follow-up consultation. I will provide researcher interpreted content excerpts for each participant based on interview transcripts during this time. Moreover, I will use the member checking process in the participant, will be asked to review the reporting of my interpretation of responses for accuracy after being interviewed.
3. The recording's video or audio files, including the transcripts, will be stored on the cloud. I will print and maintain hard copies of the transcripts in a locked file cabinet.
4. A final email notification will be sent to the participants thanking them for their participation.

### **Risks and Discomforts**

- There was minimal risk involved in this study since the sample size of this study (five participants) is small. Participants were asked how much information they were comfortable sharing. You do not have to answer any questions or participate in the interview if you do not wish. You do not have to provide any reason for not responding to any question or refusing to participate in the interview.

### **Benefits**

- The benefits of this study include the following:
  1. This research will provide you a platform to discuss your work-life balance experiences from your perspective.
  2. In addition to your personal experience, others may understand and learn from your experiences.

- You are invited to participate in this research because we feel that your experience as a woman and full-time faculty member in a university setting can contribute invariably to our understanding and knowledge of work-life balance issues and practices. I request that you help us learn more about your work-life balance issues.

**Confidentiality Records**

- I will not be sharing information about you. The information we collect from this study will be kept private. Any information about you will have an assigned number or a pseudonym. I will only know what your number or pseudonym will be. I will not directly connect you to the data. Each participant will receive a summary of the results. The knowledge that we retrieve from this research will be shared with you before it is made widely available to the public. We will ask that each participant keep what is shared during the discussion confidential. You should be aware that we cannot stop or prevent you and the other participants from sharing personal information.

**Participant Rights**

- If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below:

Myka Bussey-Campbell  
Name of Researcher

Myka Bussey-Campbell  
Signature

6/28/22  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please keep one copy and return the signed copy to the researcher.

## APPENDIX C

### RESEARCH STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. The participant will be sent an email notification and asked to participate in this research due to their experience as a woman and full-time faculty member in a university setting. It will be expressed that their contribution is invaluable to our understanding and knowledge of work-life balance issues and practices.
2. The participant's informed participation in this research is entirely voluntary. They will be informed that there will be no adverse impact on their job or any work-related evaluations or reports and status. They will also be notified that they do not have to participate without penalty.
3. If not participating, a follow-up email will be sent thanking the participation for consideration.
4. Upon agreeing to participate, I will send a follow-up email to set up the meeting. It will be a one-on-one interview. The session will last approximately one and a half hours. On the interview day at the agreed location, I will go over the hard copy version of the consent form in detail. The participant will have control of the data and the right to withdraw.
5. The interview may be in person or by web conference. If conducted in person, I will sit with the interviewee in a comfortable meeting place on campus while adhering to distance measures and protections during the pandemic. By web conference, I will use Zoom or Google Meet platforms. If they do not desire to answer any questions during the interview, I will move to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless the participant wants someone else present.
  - a. As the facilitator, I will start the session. I can also answer questions about the research. Then, I will ask questions about work-life balance concerning their profession. I will also talk about work-life balance more generally because this will allow me to understand the issues differently. I will ask the following questions:
  - b. As a full-time female university faculty member, how do you define work-life balance and influence your overall perspective?
  - c. What are the past and current experiences you face regarding work-life balance?
  - d. Based on your experiences attempting to maintain a work-life balance, what are your most significant barriers and supports?
  - e. How has your ascent to leadership impacted your perception of work-life balance from a faculty member to a leadership position in a leadership role? Have your perceptions of work-life balance changed? If so, how?
6. Supporting questions, prompts, and follow up questions may include the following: describe yourself and your family life, what is your family role, how long have you

- been at the university, has there ever been a time when your work-life balance was in sync, or out of sync, etc.
7. The research will occur over several months. I will render a recording transcript. I will contact you for a follow-up consultation. I will provide you with a copy of your interview transcripts to review during this time. Moreover, I will use the member checking process in which you, as the participant, will be asked to review the reporting of my responses for accuracy after being interviewed.
  8. The recording's video or audio files, including the transcripts, will be stored on an external drive such as a USB device. I will have hard copies of the transcripts, and an external drive will be in a locked file cabinet.
  9. A final email notification will be sent to thank them for their participation.