

A Qualitative Study on Faculty Mothers and Identified Barriers Influencing Motivation:  
Experiencing Tenure in Higher Education

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Education in  
the School of Education at

Florida Southern College

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON FACULTY MOTHERS AND IDENTIFIED BARRIERS INFLUENCING MOTIVATION:**

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This phenomenological study addresses the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of working mothers on the tenure track in higher education. Specifically, this study explored the barriers of work-family culture, family-work balance, tenure clock policies, and reentry into the workplace after maternity leave. Barriers in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at higher education institutions have been addressed in the literature (Larson et al., 2019; Mason & Goulden, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016; Young, & Wright, 2001). This dissertation expands the research on motherhood to include Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory on motivation and explore the motivational influences of identified barriers on mothers in the workplace. Three research questions were addressed: What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university? How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university? What influence has motherhood had on job motivation of mothers at a college or university? To best address the research questions, a phenomenological approach was used to gather rich descriptions of participant experiences, developing into four meaningful themes, and better understand this shared phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). Mothers detailed accounts of successes and challenges working on the tenure track at a college or university and the influence on their job

motivation. Results from this research study include positive and negative experiences in the workplace with internal and external work factors that contribute to the motivation of each mother on the tenure track at a college or university. Four themes emerged from the data, providing a rich understanding of the passion and performance of work-related tasks, comradery between colleagues and administrators, work climate factors, policy and benefits, and the balance of motherhood in terms of societal and institutional expectations, as each mother details her experience and the influence on job motivation. The concluding discussion on the workplace factors and motivational influence for mothers recommends policy considerations and administrative growth for higher education institutions in support of working mothers on the tenure track.

*Keywords:* phenomenology, Fredrick Herzberg, motivation, tenure, higher education, mothers.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First, I want to thank Dr. Wolverton, Dr. Petrie, and my committee for their unwavering guidance along my journey at Florida Southern College! I would not have made it through if it wasn't for the support from all of them. Second, my family has been a tremendous support to me during this time. I love you! Grandma, you're always in my heart! Third, my children. You supported my long nights and early mornings! We did this together! Finally, Celeste, your compassionate leadership guided my thoughts, experiences, and opportunities along this journey. I will be forever thankful for your friendship and strong leadership mentoring you provided to me. Thank you!

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Problem

More mothers are pursuing careers in higher education (Stepan-Norris & Kerrissey, 2016). As women enter the higher education tenure track, their increasing levels of motivation are leading to a greater number of women succeeding in higher education careers. Research from the early 2000s to 2019 indicated the barriers that women face when obtaining tenure and how those barriers impact their career motivation levels in 4-year higher education institutions (Larson et al., 2019; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016).

Motivation levels directly correlate to job satisfaction levels (Herzberg et al., 1959). Mitchell (1982) described motivation as an intentional phenomenon. An individual's will to achieve and satisfy unmet needs indicates how motivated that individual is to achieve goals (Bedeian, 1993; Higgins, 1994). Researchers have identified motivational factors influencing employee productivity in the private sector (Bellé, 2013). However, the subgroup of mothers in tenure-track positions has limited research on possible motivational influences. Mothers working in higher education face barriers when seeking tenure (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). Working mothers struggle with family-work balance, work-family culture, reentry into the workplace, and stopping the tenure clock; these barriers may correlate with research from Herzberg et al. (1959) on motivation and job satisfaction. Accordingly, mothers on the higher education tenure track encounter motivation challenges. For purposes of this study, the definition for tenure is defined as follows: an appointment at a higher educational institution that can be terminated only for

cause or under extraordinary circumstances, such as financial exigency and program discontinuation (AAUP, 2001).

The previous literature on Herzberg's theory of motivation ignited interest in adding to motivational research for education employees for this research study. Specifically, exploring the subgroup of tenure track mothers through Herzberg's motivational framework could fill the gap on how motherhood influences job motivation. This deductive approach to understanding motherhood and job motivation served as the initial basis identifying the gap in the literature on working mothers in higher education. However, to understand the experiences of working mothers on the tenure track, an inductive approach to data analysis is presented to develop themes from participants about the phenomenon of motivation and identified barriers when working on the tenure track at a college or university (Creswell, 2013).

Previous research discusses barriers academic mothers encounter during the tenure process at higher education institutions (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). The barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace are prevalent in the body of literature on academic mothers (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). Thus, the shared phenomenon of the tenure track experience is of high interest to guide future research in higher education.

The field of higher education could benefit from research that fills the knowledge gap on working mothers in higher education, the tenure barriers they face, and their motivation levels while seeking tenure. Gerdes (2010) acknowledged a dearth of research on the experiences of working mothers in higher education, with few researchers asking

women to recount the factors that contributed to their success working in higher education. Specifically, Gerdes (2010) mentions the changing atmosphere for faculty women dating back to the 1970s, with research on the barriers to academic women but little research on the achievements of academic women. The questions explored by Gerdes (2010) are open-ended and ask 98 participants to describe what has motivated them in the workplace. Gerdes (2010) used a mixed method approach to capture the motivation, satisfaction, and accomplishments of faculty women. In support of this gap in the literature, policymakers, university administrators, and mothers must understand factors in the work environment that contribute to the motivation of mothers on the higher education tenure track. By understanding factors present within the work environment, administrators and policymakers can foster supportive workplaces in which working mothers have improved chances to obtain or retain tenure. Ultimately, changing higher education policies and environments to support mothers on the tenure track could result in more working mothers in higher education leadership roles.

### **Statement of Problem**

Most women working in higher education decide to enter motherhood; however, the challenge of timing motherhood during their academic careers is presented in the literature (Mason & Goulden, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). The American Association of University Women details the representation of women in the academic workplace fulfilling positions as tenure track professors, university presidents, and college instructors, as cited by Bichsel and McChesney (2017). Moreover, data from The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) details 44% of women fulfill tenure track positions in higher education (AAUP, 2018). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) found that 87% of working women become mothers

during their careers (AAUP, 2001). Women working in higher education may feel conflicted between remaining childless or becoming a mother while on the tenure track (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2017). Comparatively, literature details the challenge mothers encounter when working in higher education while raising a family and balancing a career (AAUW, 2016).

The representation of female faculty in higher education work roles has improved recently (Stepan-Norris & Kerrissey, 2016), as an increasing number of women have obtained tenured positions. Although more women are working in higher education, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010) showed that female faculty are less represented in tenure track positions than their male counterparts across public and private institutions (38.0% female, 54.6% male), and at four-year public institutions. Relative to public institutions, the percentage of tenured female professors at private institutions is 35.2% for females to 50.6% of male tenured faculty members (NCES, 2010). More recently, the AAUP (2018) highlights 36% of females are tenured professors across 1,018 institutions surveyed. With respect to the representation of females in higher education, the challenge of deciding to enter motherhood and the impact on the job motivation of women needs further exploration (Gerdes, 2010).

The AAUP provided comprehensive policies for mothers within higher education to ease work-family conflicts (AAUP, 2001). According to the AAUP (2001), policies fall within two categories: general (i.e., family care leaves, institutional supports, and overall family responsibilities) and specific (i.e., stopping the tenure clock and active service with modified duties). NCES and AAUP recommendations show the importance of addressing working mothers when examining equality within education, particularly regarding the tenure process.

In a phenomenological study, Mason and Goulden (2002) examined equity in professional and familial outcomes of women in higher education revealing aftereffects of motherhood on women working in higher education when striving for tenured positions. By examining data from the Survey of Doctorate Recipients and surveying 8,500 active faculty across nine California campuses, Mason and Goulden found the timing of childbirth in a woman's career within a higher educational setting has an impact on career trajectory and reaching tenure. Thus, Mason and Goulden's research further exemplifies the need to address how women, especially mothers, are represented and supported in the higher education field as working professionals. This study aimed to capture the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track in higher education and the influence of identified barriers on their motivation.

The data represented in this research study is useful to higher education administrators and other stakeholders in the higher education field. However, it is important to address the limitations of the current study. Each participant described her own experience with motherhood during the tenure process. Therefore, each response is a perception from the participant and is not intended to be generalized across all universities or colleges. Rather, this research should be used to better inform higher education work climates and policies in an effort to retain working mothers in academia roles.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Motivational factors, if effective, can motivate an employee to excel in workplace productivity (Herzberg et al., 1959). Factors of challenging work tasks, possibility of advancement, responsibility, personal growth, and perception of achievement can serve as motivational factors for employees in the workplace (Chu & Kuo, 2015). However,

working mothers in higher education encounter barriers to obtaining tenure (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). Struggles with barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace may cause decreased motivation in working mothers on the tenure track (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). The possible intersection of these identified barriers to tenure and motivational factors may influence the tenure track experience for women in higher education. Little research shows the effects of motivation on mothers seeking tenured positions in higher education. Guided by three research questions, this study will fill the gap in research on working mothers' lived experiences in higher education:

1. What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?
2. How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?
3. What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

A qualitative phenomenological study is used to explore the influence of barriers on career motivation of mothers on the tenure track in higher education. Mothers across various disciplines at universities participated in semi-structured interviews aligned with qualitative research practices to describe their experience during the tenure track phenomenon (Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013; Van Manen, 1990). By exploring the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track, a

greater understanding is reached on the potential intersectionality of barriers experienced during motherhood and the influence on career motivation.

Working mothers face a slow trajectory of obtaining tenure due to family-life constraints (Redmond et al., 2017). Thus, further research is needed to obtain insight into the motivation of working mothers striving for tenure in higher education. College and university administrators could use the findings of this study to change or adopt new policies to better support and increase the number of working mothers with tenured university positions. Research on the motivation levels of working mothers pursuing tenure is also critical for workplace equality. Most of the available research on college and university tenure track mothers pertain to gender comparisons (Mason & Goulden, 2002, 2004) and barriers working mothers face in seeking tenured positions (Williams, 2005, 2010). As a result, the experiences of working mothers on the higher education tenure track and the influence of motivational barriers remain unexplored in higher education.

### **Definition of Terms**

Defined below are the terms used often within this research:

**Herzberg's two-factor theory:** A theory on motivation with two components: maintenance and motivational factors (also known as hygiene factors). Motivational factors correlate with intrinsic motivators, while maintenance factors are extrinsic motivators present in the workplace (Waltman et al., 2012).

**Higher education:** Education provided above the secondary level; a public or private institution (20 USCS 1001a, n.d.).

**Motivation:** A drive to take actions to satisfy unmet needs (Mitchell, 1982).

**Policies:** The course of action taken regarding guidelines on tenure status and duties in higher educational institutions.

**Stop-the-tenure clock:** An AAUP policy by which faculty members can pause their careers twice for up to 1 year each time to care for a newborn, while receiving their full salary (AAUP, 2001).

**Tenure:** Appointment at a higher educational institution that can be terminated only for cause or under extraordinary circumstances, such as financial exigency and program discontinuation (AAUP, 2001).

### **Theoretical Framework: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg was the first scholar to discuss motivation in a theoretical way (Owens & Valesky, 2015), developing a motivational theory incorporating the concepts of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Until Herzberg, researchers presented job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction as opposites. Herzberg theorized that job dissatisfaction is “no satisfaction,” correlating levels of satisfaction with specific workplace factors (Owens & Valesky, 2015). The framework detailed by Herzberg's two-factor theory encompasses motivational factors of challenging work, achievement, responsibility, advancement, personal growth, and promotion. Likewise, maintenance factors of work climate, salary, supervision, fair and competitive rewards, and policies and attitudes of administration, are also of equal importance when assessing the motivation of an employee (Chu & Kuo, 2015). Previous research discusses the alignment of Herzberg's two-factor theory within the field of higher education (Giese & Avoseh, 2018; Ghazi et al., 2013; Lacy & Sheehan, 1997; Waltman et al., 2012). Complimentary to the available research on job motivation, Herzberg's two-factor theory provided this study's framework for

researching barriers working mothers face on the tenure track and their feelings about motivational influences.

Deductive reasoning captured the essence of the shared experiences of job motivation during the tenure track process and provided the foundation to explore identified barriers to tenure as a component to job motivation as the literature on employee motivation has been extensively researched. Yet the research on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track is limited. Thus, an inductive data analysis to understand the experiences of workplace factors, motherhood, and life on the tenure track is appropriate to gather emerged themes, interpret the problem working mothers face, and show how to promote change in the workplace to benefit mothers on the tenure track at a college or university (Creswell, 2013).

The working mothers in this study are the interacting variables of Herzberg's two-factor theory because they are employees in the organizational structure of a higher educational institution. Herzberg asked his participants to describe a time when they felt a positive or negative experience in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959). Then, Herzberg analyzed the results into trends known as motivational factors and maintenance factors (Herzberg et al., 1959). It is essential to the theory to have maintenance factors satisfied for motivational factors to act as drivers toward a goal (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Motivational and maintenance factors can predict the achievement of work-related goals (Herzberg et al., 1959). Research by Andersson (2017) discusses the use of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory in analyzing overall motivation in the workplace. Research using Herzberg's Two-Factor theory is heavily quantitative in nature and suggests more qualitative studies be done using the theory (Andersson, 2017). Comparatively, previous research by Ghazi et al. (2013) suggests more research on

administrative policies present in Herzberg's motivational theory to guide future workplace policies in higher educational settings. As such, a study focusing on the motivational factors experienced by working mothers in higher education could provide a better understanding of how university administrators can best support mothers working in or seeking tenured positions.

### **Motivational Factors**

Professional extrinsic motivational factors are the workplace influences that indicate overall job satisfaction (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Owens and Valesky (2015) reviewed motivational factors, building from Herzberg et al. (1959). These factors by Herzberg et al. (1959) include challenging work, achievement, responsibility, advancement, personal growth, and promotion. According to Herzberg et al., employees fully engage when given challenging work; achievement is how proud an employee feels after completing assigned work; responsibility is the level of accountability entrusted to an employee; advancement is an employee's chances for promotion; and personal growth is the opportunity to learn new skills. Owens and Valesky (2015) defined promotion as employee advancement for demonstrating appropriate competencies. Motivational factors influence a person's job satisfaction and act as drivers toward an end goal only when maintenance factors are achieved (Herzberg et al., 1959). Thus, for mothers on the tenure track in higher education, the influence of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001) may hinder their efforts to reach motivational factors, causing an impact on their motivation in the workplace.

## **Maintenance Factors**

Maintenance factors can remain at minimal levels but are necessary within the workplace to avoid employee dissatisfaction. Owens and Valesky (2015) discussed five maintenance factors, or extrinsic motivators, within the workplace: work climate, salary, supervision, fair and competitive rewards, and policies and attitudes of administration. According to Owens and Valesky (2015), the factor of work climate includes employee relationships and rapport, while the factor of salary is the employees' feeling about compensation they are receiving for their time. Along similar lines, supervision is the level of employee autonomy, while fair and competitive rewards include employee benefits. Lastly, the factor of administrative attitudes and policies refer to appropriate relationships between supervisors and employees. The presence of motivational factors indicates high levels of employee satisfaction (Owens & Valesky, 2015).

## **Conclusion**

Herzberg's motivational and maintenance factors may be shown to correlate with the identified barriers of mothers working in higher education. Further research could provide ways to support working mothers in higher education and increase overall female faculty within the workplace. Additionally, higher educational institutions could use the information presented in this research to better inform them about how to improve morale and performance of female faculty who are fulfilling dual roles as mothers and employees. Chapter 2 includes an examination of the existing literature on motivational barriers working mothers in higher education face and is essential to provide foundational knowledge for this study. As suggested by previous research in higher education (Andersson, 2017; Ghazi et al., 2013), Herzberg's motivational factors and maintenance factors will underlie this exploration of the barriers faced by working mothers. Previous

research on mothers details accounts of barriers to tenure (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), yet motivation for faculty mothers is underexplored. The chapter will present how motivational factors, maintenance factors, and tenure correlate with the challenges and successes of higher education, thus showing the significance of research on the motivational influence of identified barriers on mothers on the tenure track and highlighting the need for this study.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Exploring the research on the barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001) faced by working mothers seeking tenured higher education positions is essential to answer this study's research questions. The literature review in this chapter includes an analysis and synthesis of the research on these barriers. The literature indicates a correlation between the barriers faced by mothers on the tenure track in accordance with Herzberg's motivational and maintenance factors. Lastly, this chapter presents the current research on motivation in higher education and concludes with a review of tenure and motivation within higher education.

### **Motivation in Higher Education**

Researchers define motivation in various ways: psychologically (Jones & George, 2017): internally, as a stimulus that produces an action to achieve a desired goal (Ormrod, 2016); and as the persistent course of action an individual takes on a path to achieve a goal (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Multiple definitions contribute to various motivation theories. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs presents the motivational factors that individuals need for personal satisfaction; as individuals fulfill basic needs, they advance to higher-level needs (Kovach, 2018; Maslow, 1943). Thus, identified workplace barriers could indicate reduced personal satisfaction and motivation levels. For the purposes of this study, motivation will be considered as a process that could lead to job satisfaction (Ghazi et al., 2013). By understanding what employees think and how they feel, a direct link between job satisfaction and motivation can be addressed (Ghazi et al., 2013).

## **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory in Higher Education**

Re-examining Herzberg's two-factor theory in educational settings occurred in a study conducted by Ghazi et al. (2013). A quantitative approach was used to better understand the levels of job satisfaction and motivation of university teachers in Pakistan. A survey instrument tool rating each motivational and maintenance factor present in Herzberg's Two-Factor theory was created by Ghazi et al. (2013) and analyzed by SPSS software. Interested in teacher retention and teacher performance, Ghazi et al. (2013) designed the study to capture job satisfaction and motivation of 108 university teachers across public institutions in Pakistan. Overall, Ghazi et al.'s study found the maintenance factors to be a predictor of job satisfaction and motivation. The university teachers felt the fulfillment of maintenance factors led to a high level of motivation (Ghazi et al., 2013). Results indicate job motivation for the university teachers relied more heavily on fulfilling maintenance factors than on fulfillment of motivational factors (Ghazi et al., 2013). The maintenance factors of administrative policies and attitudes and salary showed significant satisfaction by the university teachers (Ghazi et al., 2013). Likewise, for motivational factors, achievement, responsibility, and growth were satisfactory to the university teachers (Ghazi et al., 2013). In contrast, teachers felt dissatisfied with opportunities for advancement (promotion) within the workplace (as a driving force for behavior (Ghazi et al., 2013). This research highlights motivational and maintenance factors present in the workplace environment for faculty mothers. Additionally, it gives insight into possible motivational and maintenance factors that may influence the work productivity of mothers in higher education. As such, this study considers the research recommendations of Ghazi et al. (2013).

Further research recommendations are suggested by Ghazi et al. (2013), including improving work environment conditions; for university teachers: ensuring up-to-date facilities that foster more enjoyable working conditions, offering more administrative support of opportunities for advancement in the form of incentives, rewards, and promotions; and a need for administrators to focus on fulfillment of Herzberg's maintenance factors within the workplace, as they are perceived to lead to a greater level of motivation and overall satisfaction (Ghazi et al., 2013).

The recommendations by Ghazi et al. (2013) are supported by this research study. Mothers in this study were asked to detail experiences within the workplace about various motivational and maintenance factors including interactions with administrators, possibility of advancement, and work climate. Thus, the insights gained from this study will help bridge the gap in the literature for motivational studies in higher education.

Previous research on higher education shows the factors that indicate job satisfaction and workplace commitment (Ott & Cisneros, 2015); however, there is an absence of scholarship on the overall motivation of working mothers on the higher education tenure track. Lacy and Sheehan (1997) found Herzberg's two-factor theory to be applicable in higher education settings, whereas Locke et al. (1983) discounted the theory's relevance to higher education. However, Waltman et al. (2012) suggested that many higher education researchers accept Herzberg's theory and its dependency on motivational and maintenance factors. Likewise, researchers in higher education have discovered many of the factors that Herzberg first identified (Waltman et al., 2012).

Waltman et al. (2012) studied family responsibilities and child-rearing in exploring Herzberg's motivational factor of challenging work. Findings showed that nontenured mothers valued career flexibility more than their tenure-track colleagues.

Additionally, participants structured their work schedules around their familial responsibilities, which supported Herzberg's motivational factor of a manageable workload. Waltman et al. (2012) found that the pressure to publish and sit in on committee meetings with tenured faculty presented barriers to child-rearing and productive careers, also in line with Herzberg's theory. Participants also reported high levels of satisfaction from their professorial responsibilities, including teaching and mentoring students. Female professors in the study who were mothers felt they had more flexibility than tenure-track colleagues, showing an increased level of the identified barrier of family-work balance through a motivational lens. Participants reported job dissatisfaction due to unclear, inconsistent, or nonexistent employment policies and unwelcoming environments. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, a negative work climate influencing employee dissatisfaction can lead to a lower level of employee motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). This underpinning was also touted in more current research on motivation in higher education. Giese and Avoseh (2018) studied non-academic employees at community colleges in Iowa. Surveys of 952 participants were completed and analyzed using a regression analysis. The analysis revealed the motivational factors of the work itself and responsibility as significant predictors of motivation and job satisfaction. This study asserts the importance of this finding for educational leaders to be mindful of the *work itself* being perceptual to each employee. Therefore, this study encourages educational leaders to recognize that what is motivating to one employee may not be interesting to another. In support of this research study, exploring the experiences of mothers on the tenure track could better inform educational leaders of varying motivational interests to mothers and lead to a more supportive work climate for mothers in higher education.

## **Motivation and Leadership in Higher Education**

The organizational structure and leadership within higher education can influence work motivation of employees (Rawung, 2012). Research suggests employees must embody high productivity and high motivation to be successful in the workplace (Rawung, 2012). An employee must feel their personal goals can be satisfied (also known as *motivation* defined by Mitchell, 1982) within the workplace environment to feel a sense of obligation to the workplace organization. Employee motivation includes individual feelings relating to group collaboration and personal attitudes (Rawung, 2013). Hence, research suggests the leaders of an organization need to enhance the motivation of employees to promote positive outcomes (Rawung, 2013).

According to Rawung (2013), positive outcomes relating to employee motivation are related to leadership style. Rawung (2013) addressed four leadership styles in relation to work motivation in higher education. Previous literature on leadership in higher education sought to explain the relationship between leadership style and work motivation within a higher education setting (Rawung, 2013). A survey and interview questionnaire were used to gather data from academic administrative staff across various higher education departments (Rawung, 2013). Authoritative, consultative, participatory, and autocratic leadership styles were explored in relation to personal attitudes of employees' perceptions of work motivation. Overall, the study by Rawung (2013) suggests leaders use a transformational leadership style and strive to be agents of change in promoting employee motivation in the workplace.

To capitalize on Rawung (2013)'s leadership findings, this study addresses relationships between faculty mothers and higher education administrators in an effort to understand the influence of positive and negative supports. Additionally, the maintenance

factor of family policy is addressed within the current study. Lastly, work-family balance is also explored. By illuminating the experiences of working mothers surrounding the factors of administration, family policy, and work-family balance, recommendations on beneficial work practices to help working mothers be productive and retained in tenured faculty settings in higher education are prioritized within the findings of this study.

In support of the current study, understanding the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure-track in higher education may lead to deeper knowledge of how mothers on the tenure-track think and feel about motivational and maintenance factors in regards to the leadership styles explored by Rawung (2013). Overall, this study could benefit administrators as they consider policy guidelines and leadership styles to better support mothers working in higher education.

### **Job Satisfaction and Identified Barriers**

The factors that indicate job dissatisfaction (Waltman et al., 2012) correlate with the barriers that working mothers face in higher education (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Young & Wright, 2001) and Herzberg's maintenance factors of work climate, benefits, personal growth, and policies and attitudes of administration. Waltman et al. (2012) explores the demand of tenure positions requiring a higher level of research versus teaching commitments. In Waltman et al.'s (2012) study, focus group participants reported feeling dissatisfied with uncertain job security and few advancement opportunities related to personal growth and salary. These findings indicate dissatisfaction in the workplace is present for nontenure track faculty while working in higher education. Furthermore, Waltman et al. (2012) mentions how these emergent themes are factors from Herzberg et al., 1959.

The emotional satisfaction resulting from workplace factors in the literature lead to questions of why individuals stay with or choose to leave their current position. A study by Paul Spector (1985) seeks to measure job satisfaction in the human services field versus the human organization sector. Thus, Spector (1985) developed the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) to measure nine aspects of job satisfaction using a 15-item scale related to employee commitment to the workplace.

Spector (1985) surveyed 3,148 respondents on the Job Satisfaction Survey from public and private human service organizations and measured their level of agreeability with factors in the workplace (Spector, 1985). Factors of salary, relationship with supervisor, autonomy, promotion, benefits, and rewards correlate to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) and Waltman et al. (2012). Spector (1985) affirms the need for more research within the human services field on job satisfaction.

In summary, Spector (1985) illuminated the need for a job satisfaction scale for use with the human services field. Thus, the creation of the job satisfaction survey tool explored the level of employee satisfaction across various aspects of motivation found in Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. By measuring the level of satisfaction with benefits, salary, personal growth, performance, and other motivational and maintenance factors, the need for research on employee motivation is exemplified (Spector, 1985).

Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey was used in a study by Alfayad and Arif Mohd Suriani (2017) to address the influence of "employee voice" on job satisfaction levels of 300 employees working in the public sector in Jordan. Employees who felt their opinions and ideas were valued by the administrators in their working environment were shown to have increased motivational factors in the workplace and did not contribute to job dissatisfaction as a maintenance factor (Alfayad, & Arif Mohd Suriani, (2017).

Transitioning to higher education, Waltman et al. (2012) explored the job satisfaction of nontenured university faculty by interviewing full-time and part-time nontenure-track faculty in various career paths. Although Waltman et al.'s findings showed the correlation between job satisfaction factors (Herzberg et al., 1959) and university faculty members, they did not include working mothers at higher education institutions. Thus, research on motivational influences and identified barriers to mothers seeking tenure in higher education is essential to fill the literature gap.

Reviewing the literature on the barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace that working mothers in higher education encounter is central to understanding this population's experiences in higher education and the influence of motivation (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). Likewise, research on working mothers within higher educational institutions on the tenure track is relevant for understanding the barriers to working mothers' motivation levels while seeking tenure.

### **Mothers and Tenure in Higher Education**

The National Center for Education Statistics (2000) data shows the gap between the percentages of tenured female faculty members and tenured male faculty members that has continued over the last ten years. Statistics further showed the lower proportion of tenured women faculty to tenured male faculty (NCES, 2000). More recently, the NCES indicated that the gap between tenured female faculty members and tenured male faculty members has grown larger over the last three decades. This gap is highlighted in the data, with male faculty holding tenure track positions at four-year institutions above female faculty at 13.9% greater capacity (AAUW, 2016; NCES, 2010). By illuminating

the experiences of mothers and the influence of identified barriers on job motivation, this research is an effort to close the gap in representation of mothers in the workplace.

### **Mothers Underrepresented**

Mothers are underrepresented in tenured higher education positions (Mason & Goulden, 2002). This underrepresentation is a possible outcome of the “baby gap,” the timing of childbearing years in a woman’s career, whether early, mid, or late (Mason & Goulden, 2002). Results from the study showed that women who had babies later in their careers were more likely to achieve tenure than women who became mothers early in their careers (Mason & Goulden, 2002). Most women who achieved tenure at any point in their careers did not have children (Mason & Goulden, 2002). Given these results, Mason and Goulden (2002) concluded that women with at least one child were less likely to achieve tenure than were men with children.

### **Performance and Productivity**

The intersection of work and family roles are discussed by Bruening and Dixon (2007). This intersection leads to mothers discussing challenges about their own performance and productivity in relation to what is believed to be adequate for their profession as scholars (Bruening & Dixon, 2007). Likewise, the idea of “publish or perish” is exemplified in the literature on mothers on the tenure track struggling to meet the demands of performance and productivity in the workplace while balancing motherhood (Walker & Fenton, 2013).

Tressell (2015) discloses an experience being on the tenure track during her journey of motherhood. In her personal recount, Tressell (2015) remembers feeling stressed; she emphasized the worry of not achieving tenure due to her demands as a mother and feeling that her productivity had decreased in comparison to the expectation

of her workplace. Overall, Tressell's (2015) autoethnography noted a lack of research on being a parent and a scholar, illustrating the importance of exploring the experiences of mothers on the higher education tenure track and the influence of motivation (Tressell, 2015).

The exploration of working mothers in tenured higher education positions remains of interest to educational leaders. Due to the underrepresentation of this topic in the research, it is essential to explore the implications of tenure for working mothers and further analyze gender equality within higher educational institutions. Because tenure is an ever-present goal within the ranks of higher education, and because women's biological clocks and tenure tend to overlap, scholarly inquiry into the overall motivation of working mothers could contribute to identifying family-friendly university policies. Motherhood affects performance and productivity (Mason & Goulden, 2002; Tressell, 2015); thus, the following section shows the successes and challenges of tenure and motivation.

### **Successes to Tenure and Motivation**

Research is limited on the successes of working mothers on the tenure track. Connelly and Ghodsee (2014) discussed the possibility of achieving an appropriate balance with coping strategies. Although they did not delve into coping strategy specifics, availability of mentors and understanding demands of publishing, research, and teaching commitments prior to tackling a career in academia were discussed as suggestive approaches leading to success of mothers on the tenure track.

Career paths present new challenges as well as opportunities for new successes. Respondents in a study by Larson et al. (2019) reported higher levels of success when they understood their tenure and promotion expectations and communicated those

expectations with their department deans. Tenure expectations may affect career trajectories. Awareness of the aspects of tenure and promotion could lead to higher levels of job satisfaction (Bauer et al., 2007; Ponjuan et al., 2011). Respondents felt that seeking mentors within their departments could improve their success on the tenure track; similarly, participants stressed the importance of building relationships within the academic community (Larson et al., 2019).

Larson et al.'s (2019) strategies for success are in line with Darwin and Palmer's (2009) research on working mothers within higher education and the need for mentoring support. Working mothers on the tenure track may receive more support through mentoring relationships, which ultimately contributes to their motivation on the overall maintenance factor of work climate (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Martin (2000) asserted that the number of women who successfully navigate the tenure track will not increase if their needs remain unaddressed. Despite these studies, it is still essential to capitalize on the under researched area of motivation for working mothers in higher education.

### **Challenges to Tenure and Motivation**

Bess (1998) discussed the organizational contract between an employee and an employer. Bess (1998) noted that employees attempt to fulfill job satisfaction, personal goals, and personal interests in exchange for a particular pay scale, social rewards, power status, and/or career potential. These findings correlate with the barriers working mothers face on the tenure track, indicating the need to understand the motivations for tenure during motherhood.

Achieving tenure does not equate to improved productivity; rather, Bess (1998) suggested rewards to reinforce performance. Bess discussed how the maintenance factors of achievement, personal growth, and responsibility contribute to job satisfaction. It is

also necessary to value and embrace the maintenance factors of work climate, salary, supervision, benefits, and administrative attitudes and policies in the higher education system to motivate faculty members, with or without the option of tenure (Bess, 1998).

Following a study of mothers and their uncertainty to pursue tenure, Connelly and Ghodsee (2014) suggested that differences between female faculty members may have negative influences on the ideology of mothers succeeding in higher education. Mothers who choose not to pursue the tenure track may do so for personal reasons instead of believing motherhood inhibits their careers in higher education (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2014). In their recommendations, Connelly and Ghodsee (2014) encouraged mothers to pursue tenure-track careers.

Larson et al. (2019) explored the challenges to and successes in reaching tenure at a higher educational institution. Respondents on the tenure track after their graduate studies reported “transitioning identities” as they struggled to adapt to new research expectations and adopt work-life balance strategies conducive to their tenure-track roles (Larson et al., 2019). The researchers found issues with balancing responsibilities and transitioning identities amplified by insecurity and unclear expectations (Larson et al., 2019). Respondents often felt insecure upholding publication expectations and were unsure if their writing was sufficient for publication guidelines (Larson et al., 2019). Tenure-track respondents reported receiving unclear expectations from both written and unwritten tenure and promotion rules, thus struggling to understand their roles (Larson et al., 2019). Most participants faced challenges of mentorship within their tenure-track experiences (Larson et al., 2019). Participants disclosed a lack of mentors with whom they could discuss ideas and receive advice, which they saw as further adversity (Larson et al., 2019).

Overall, working mothers' reports of feelings of insecurity and unclear expectations (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2014; Larson et al., 2019) show the importance of research on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track. Working mothers on the tenure track face many challenges. Identifying barriers to their success and exploring the effects of these barriers on their motivation is essential for research about mothers seeking tenured positions.

### **Identified Barriers to Tenure for Mothers in Higher Education**

Working mothers face many barriers in seeking tenure. A woman's life significantly changes when she has a child. Mothers must alter their schedules and provide necessities and other valuable resources to their children, often to the disruption of their own self-care and work routines. It is necessary to understand the barriers working mothers face while striving for tenured positions as well as the impact of these barriers. This study could provide information to higher education administration to support working mothers on the tenure track.

This study will fill a gap in the research on working mothers who seek tenure-track positions in higher educational settings and the influence of motherhood on their job motivation. Mothers face barriers in the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), such as struggles to balance their roles as higher education professionals with their duties at home (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Professional mothers may find themselves in work climates without family-friendly policies (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Mothers seeking tenure may feel uneasy with stop-the-clock tenure policies and thus worry about taking time off from academic responsibilities to care for their families (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Reentry into the higher education workforce

poses another barrier, as working mothers need to explain a lack of publications due to caretaking (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

### **Family-Work Balance**

Family-work balance poses a barrier faced by working mothers on the tenure track. Family-work balance is the equilibrium between an individual's role as a caretaker and employee (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Employers predominantly view ideal workers as primarily committed to their jobs and not as committed to their families (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). One participant from research by Mason et al. (2013) noted a conversation with her department chair who described being granted leave from teaching duties as "exceptional." Thus, mothers in faculty positions face difficult expectations working in higher education. There has been a slow trajectory of working mothers striving for tenure due to family-life constraints (Redmond et al., 2017). Obtaining tenure requires substantial time and commitment, with caretaking leaves of absence often perceived as a lack of commitment to work (Redmond et al., 2017). Moreover, women seeking tenure may feel stressed by the second shift at home. In a book titled *Academic Motherhood*, an account of mothers' experiences with tenure track, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) noted that mothers feel as if they are solely responsible for the second shift of caretaking and chores at home. Mothers working in higher education are often physically and psychologically exhausted by these responsibilities. Working mothers seeking tenure then cannot avoid the barrier posed by seeking family-work balance (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Mothers who work in higher education spend 35.5 hours per week performing childcare duties, whereas their male faculty counterparts spend 20 hours a week caring for their children (Mason et al., 2013).

Performing second-shift duties and maintaining high work expectations cause feelings of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion (Young & Wright, 2001).

Young children have unpredictable schedules. In a study of mothers on the tenure track, one participant shared sometimes having to miss important meetings to pick up a sick child at daycare (Young & Wright, 2001). Mothers on the tenure track are often exhausted trying to balance the schedules of childcare and work obligations (Young & Wright, 2001). Accordingly, mothers in Young and Wright's (2001) study emphasized the importance of having backup childcare plans if primary childcare fell through.

Balancing motherhood and obtaining tenure present disadvantages. A participant in Young and Wright's (2001) study shared the guilt she felt about having limited time with her daughter as well as limited time to research and publish. As physically difficult as the second shift is on working mothers, the emotional toll of switching back and forth between work and home is emotionally taxing (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Children must connect with their caregivers during the early stages of their lives. When mothers choose to work an extra hour or maintain a constant rate of research, they may feel guilty (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Many participants in Ward and Wolf-Wendel's (2012) study spoke about the exhaustion and pressure of obtaining tenure while raising children.

Mothers may worry about how other faculty members view their family commitments. When a mother has family commitments, colleagues may negatively perceive her choice to leave work at a set time each day, which can cause a disconnect within the workplace. Consequently, the constant challenge of balancing work responsibilities and family life increases, creating an overwhelming and revolving door for working mothers in faculty positions. How other faculty members perceive mothers on the tenure track has direct effects on workplace culture (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

A quantitative study by Santos (2016) also illuminates the career barriers to success in the workplace. Santos (2016) interviewed men and women from public and private universities. Their findings suggest gender differences in career expectations and balancing multiple roles between a successful career and family life. The implications of Santos (2016) assert the importance of considering multiple factors at the organizational and personal level when researching career success. For educational leadership personnel, understanding of workplace factors is underscored by Santos (2016) and could aid in creating adequate policies for mothers working within higher education.

### **Work-Family Culture**

Working mothers also encounter the barrier of work-family culture. Thompson et al. (1999) defined work-family culture as “the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family life” (p. 394). A supportive work-family culture is crucial within an organization for employee satisfaction and family-work balance (Thompson et al., 1999). Anderson et al. (2002) stated that many women feel less supported by their university and reticent about the work-family policies currently in place. Mothers in the study viewed their work-family cultures as less respectful and responsive than their counterparts’ (Thompson et al., 1999). Those in leadership roles may diminish the importance of family obligations, leaving working mothers in faculty positions feeling stressed, inadequate, and dissatisfied with their work trajectories. An unwelcoming work-family culture at a university is another challenge for mothers working to obtain tenure (Thompson et al., 1999).

Riger et al. (1997) argued that university staff members undervalue female faculty members’ family obligations, thus creating barriers to career achievement. Comer and

Stites-Doe (2006) noted that the added stress of work-family culture could cause job dissatisfaction among female faculty, who often felt inadequate to fulfill both tenure-track responsibilities and family obligations. Negative work-family cultures within organizations can lead to disengagement and burnout (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006). Working mothers feel disengaged and burned out due to unwelcoming work-family cultures at their universities and may thus have reduced chances of tenure. Overwhelmed and disengaged working mothers may feel discouraged on the tenure track, yet still be expected to complete their work within predetermined deadlines.

Tenure-track faculty members must publish a certain amount of research and teach a specified number of classes (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Higher education provides more flexibility of when and where to get work done (e.g., home versus office). Tenure-track faculty members have less defined schedules and can better adjust their time around their families' needs. In *Antecedents and Consequences of Faculty Women's Academic-Parental Role Balancing*, Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) stated that female faculty members struggle to find time with their children, overstaying the course with their research while on the tenure track. Consequently, the mothers who choose to spend more time with their children publish less (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006).

Tenure-track faculty members must attend meetings and advocate their expertise within their fields (Munn-Giddings, 1998). If mothers feel inadequate in their work environments due to negative views of their family commitments, they may struggle to stay positive and focused in order to complete work tasks. Munn-Giddings (1998) reiterated the impossible scenario of both meeting family commitments and reaching promotion and tenure.

Working mothers in higher education struggle to balance the demands of growing children, tenure expectations, and rest and recuperation time. Knowing that they work in supportive environments could help alleviate the demands of pursuing tenure (Sallee et al., 2016). Otherwise, the lack of support from faculty leaders presents additional barriers to working mothers seeking tenure (Sallee et al., 2016).

In contrast to Thompson et al.'s (1999) research on work-family culture focuses on the benefits of family roles and academic roles for mothers. Working mothers enjoy the advantages of motherhood in higher education (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), indicating the work-family enrichment model. Work-family enrichment occurs when the experiences in one role enhance the quality of life in the other role. Some mothers think bidirectionality between work and family roles indicates an improved quality of life (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), causing a holistic sense of well-being for mothers' roles within their families. Underscoring the intersectionality of roles investigated by Greenhaus and Powell (2006), a study conducted to explore the relationship between work-family conflict and work-family enrichment assessed the benefits and drawbacks to parenting and working (Cooklin et al., 2015). Mothers of young children were interviewed and participated in a multivariate survey to explore the relationship between work-family conflict and work-family enrichment in the workplace (Cooklin et al., 2015). Results of Cooklin et al.'s (2015) study suggest a mother's inability to provide optimal parenting when high work-conflict environment is present. Additionally, the study suggests satisfaction gained in the workplace may enhance interactions between a mother and child (Cooklin et al., 2015). The concept of work-family enrichment shows the need for research on mothers' lived experiences on the tenure track and the influence of motivation.

## **Stop-the-Tenure-Clock**

Identified barriers can impede working mothers on the tenure track (Sallee et al., 2016). However, university leaders can proactively assist mothers with policies to negate barriers to their family roles (Sallee et al., 2016). The stop-the-tenure-clock policy is a barrier to mothers on the tenure track (Albrecht et al., 1999; Allen & Russell, 1999). Parents use the AAUP's stop-the-tenure-clock policy (2001) for the birth of a child, with the option to extend the tenure clock twice for up to one year each time during their tenure track journey.

Gender roles are changing in society; however, women's biological clocks overlap with tenure expectations. A 30-year-old woman newly hired at an institution is likely familiar with the push-pull of starting a tenure-track career or a family (Sallee et al., 2016). Most institutions provide stop-the-tenure-clock policies in which mothers can choose to stop tenure advancement due to childbirth (AAUP, 2001; Manchester et al., 2010; Norrell & Norrell, 1996). Some universities offer female-only policies while others offer gender-neutral policies available to men and women on the tenure track in higher education (Antecol et al., 2018). Thus, a mother can perform full faculty duties with salary and care for her child without the pressure of the tenure clock (AAUP, 2001). However, this policy has shown to have adverse effects on working mothers' career trajectories in higher education due to the perceptions of other faculty members and the receipt of career bonuses (Albrecht et al., 1999).

The timing of academic leave is an important contributor to the access, use, and ease of requesting leave during tenure (Albrecht et al., 1999). The AAUP dictates that institutional leaders should provide paid disability leaves for pregnant mothers working

in higher education (AAUP, 2001). Also indicated was the significance of changing institutional needs over time, as family life is varied (AAUP, 2001).

Darwin and Palmer (2009) highlighted the importance of higher education policies that include program variance. The stop-the-tenure-clock policy may have negative implications; women may feel stressed that faculty administration members, colleagues, and students view their leave as troublesome (Norrell & Norrell, 1996). Additionally, universities prefer that women coincide leaves of absence with semester breaks (Norrell & Norrell, 1996). Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) found that only 30% of university faculty members use the full amount of paid time off following the birth of a child, with 40% of faculty members taking no paid leave at all. Several women mentioned that parental leave for infant care would have negative professional consequences, even for those of tenured status (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006).

According to Solomon et al. (1998), only six percent of the faculty members surveyed at 31 universities took advantage of the stop-the-tenure-clock policy available at their institutions. The researchers suggested women underuse the policy because “it doesn’t alter the underlying expectations for promotion and tenure” (p. 140), indicating that workload commitments should take up most of an academic’s time. Stopping the tenure clock does not provide a solution for the pressures of being both a present and good mother and an achieved professor. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) stated that mothers take on a notable “juggling act” when caring for their children and maintaining work responsibilities.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) further discussed the disadvantage of using the stop-the-tenure-clock policy when asserting one’s level of academic expertise. By the time academics reach tenure, the assumption is that they are experts within their

specializations. However, for women who choose to use stop-the-tenure-clock policies, leaves of absence still require the same number of publications. One faculty member reported only having four publications during the year spent with her children, which the university viewed as insufficient (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Overall, even with a stop-the-tenure clock policy, career successes and tenure may be hindered when working mothers in higher education focus on family commitments.

A quantitative study exploring gender neutral and female-only stop-the-clock policies of men and women employed as assistant professors by Antecol et al. (2018) found stop-the-clock policies more beneficial to men than women. Men who exercised the stop-the-tenure-clock policy had higher rates of productivity than women. Thus, the men were 17% more likely to achieve tenure at their university than a mother who used the same stop-the-tenure clock policy (Antecol et al., 2018).

### **Reentry Into the Workplace**

Working mothers may struggle to reenter the workplace after stop-the-tenure-clock policy leave. Reentry into the workplace is thus another barrier to mothers on the tenure track (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Women who choose to utilize the stop-the-tenure-clock policy face intense demands to research, review, and publish, even when on leave (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Wilson (2001) reiterated that women could not be credible full-time professors and full-time mothers. In terms of meeting tenure deadlines, female faculty members with children at home generate fewer publications than male colleagues with children do (Carr et al., 1998). Women with young children striving to be committed mothers often cannot meet the high demands of tenure or the fundamental expectations of academic institutions (Munn-Giddings, 1998). Whereas women who use

stop-the-tenure-clock policies can extend tenure review by six months (Norrell & Norrell, 1996), they find significant delays to tenure and struggle to reenter higher education.

Mothers on the tenure track may feel inadequate when compared to childless colleagues. One mother surveyed by Young and Wright (2001) reported her biggest struggle to be a persistent worry that her colleagues did not understand the challenges she faced as a mother and a tenure-track professor. A lack of understanding between colleagues presents an additional hurdle for working mothers reentering the tenure track (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

In conclusion, working mothers on the tenure track may struggle with family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). Childrearing has unique implications during the tenure process. More women are pursuing careers in higher education (Stepan-Norris & Kerrissey, 2016); thus, research on working mothers in higher education faculty positions is necessary.

Working mothers on the tenure track may experience adverse emotional and physical effects while struggling to balance work and family life. Previous research showed the barriers and the challenges of working mothers on the tenure track but did not indicate their motivational levels (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). The following section presents Herzberg's motivational factors of challenging work, achievement, responsibility, advancement, personal growth, and promotion along with Herzberg's maintenance factors of work climate, salary, supervision, benefits, and administrative attitudes and policies as they correlate to the barriers faced by mothers on the tenure

track. This analysis with Herzberg's motivational factors and maintenance factors further shows the gap in the literature on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track.

### **Critique of Identified Barriers and Motivational Factors**

The identified barriers to motherhood, tenure, family-work balance, stopping the tenure clock, and reentry into the workplace align with Herzberg's motivational theory. Family-work balance is the equilibrium between family duties and workplace responsibilities (Thompson et al., 1999). Similarly, work-family culture is the overall work climate in relation to family obligations (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Thompson et al., 1999). Women who use the stop-the-clock policy can halt the tenure review process for six months to one year to have a child (Norrell & Norrell, 1996). Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) shared that women face reentry barriers when they return to their careers in higher education and may feel uncertain about their workplace responsibilities.

### **Responsibility**

One of Herzberg's motivational factors is responsibility (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Employees must feel a certain amount of responsibility toward their jobs. Satisfied employees feel accountable for the work that they do and want challenging, but manageable, work tasks. Working mothers on the tenure track who experience negative views of leaving work to care for family may struggle with their responsibilities. For example, the perception of a mother who leaves a faculty meeting to pick up her child to avoid a late pickup time fee may be that she is irresponsibly managing her time and work duties. Women continuously struggle to maintain the responsibilities of growing households and publishing works. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) noted that women feel concerned about the tenure track and its endless tasks. Moreover, female faculty often feel remorseful when they need to leave work due to family obligations (Ward & Wolf-

Wendel, 2012). Such remorse often leads to feelings of diminished levels of personal responsibility to their jobs, which may cause job dissatisfaction.

Effective time management is essential for adhering to the demands of tenure (Young & Wright, 2001) and is a working mother's responsibility. Working mothers must watch the clock due to family needs, schedule work tasks around family time, and shortchange work friendships to arrive home at realistic times (Young & Wright, 2001). Working mothers on the tenure track may struggle with time management and university requirements to publish a certain number of articles within the seven-year university timeframe (Young & Wright, 2001); these struggles may have adverse effects on their motivation to achieve tenure. Working mothers face the constraints of completing work-related tasks and scheduling family needs and may find time management difficult. Young and Wright's (2001) research provides the foundation for addressing working mothers' motivation on the tenure track and supports Herzberg's motivational factor of responsibility.

### **Achievement**

According to Owens and Valesky (2015), Herzberg viewed the motivational factor of achievement as a leading component of job satisfaction; an employee feels pride for what they achieve. Research by Hur (2018) uses Herzberg's Two-Factor theory to test maintenance factors and motivators on a sample of public managers. The managers did not find maintenance factors contributed to their level of job satisfaction. Thus, the study suggests more research involving motivating factors to see if a change in organizational structure or policy guidelines could influence the amount of pride employees feel from their achievements (Hur, 2018).

Higher education faculty members who are new mothers may struggle to commit themselves to work and meet tenure expectations. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) discussed the challenges of stopping the tenure clock and how external tenure reviewers perceive the resulting productivity gap. The researchers discussed the lack of achievement with regard to the “no slack policy” of national tenure experts (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). For working mothers who choose to stop-the-tenure-clock, the inevitable productivity gap raises questions. Moreover, this slower tenure trajectory may hinder achievement. As a result, working mothers on the tenure track could feel less motivated to strive for tenure, as their level of workplace satisfaction decreases.

### **Personal Growth**

Personal growth is an important motivational factor for working mothers on the tenure track. Bilimoria et al. (2006) discussed the importance of institutional mentoring, the relationship between a higher-level faculty member and a less experienced one. The quality, support, and satisfaction with the mentor relationship directly correlates to career satisfaction levels. Working mothers on the tenure track need a support system to succeed. As such, committee members need to support working mothers on the tenure track (Bilimoria et al., 2006).

Workplace inclusion also affects job satisfaction levels and personal growth. Often, women face the perception of being less valuable within the workplace; accordingly, they may not be part of the inner circles of faculty relations (Bilimoria et al., 2006). Professional and collegial connections facilitate improved teaching performance and research goals (Bilimoria et al., 2006).

## **Promotion**

Most organizations use a hierarchical structure of advancement (Hur, 2018). Employees are motivated by the hierarchical structure to ensure advancement and growth to reach promotional opportunities (Rainey, 2014). Herzberg et al., (1959) suggests career training and opportunities related to an employee's needs. Opportunities for promotion positively correlate with mentoring relationships in higher education (Gardiner, 2005). Quality mentor relationships indicate the attainment of extrinsic rewards, including accelerated research productivity (Johnson, 2002), increased self-confidence (De Vries, 2005), and personal satisfaction and growth (Ehrich et al., 2004). Darwin and Palmer (2009) discovered that mentoring relationships in higher education settings led to improved faculty motivation.

Additionally, working mothers on the tenure track may experience promotion barriers when reentering the workplace (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Demands remain high when mothers return to their tenure-track positions and hope for advancement after taking a break from full-time duties (AAUP, 2001). New mothers may struggle to keep up with the publishing demands more than their childless colleagues (Hunter & Leahey, 2010). In turn, fellow faculty members might see working mothers struggling to keep up and express disapproval, which could lead to higher levels of job dissatisfaction for working mothers on the tenure track.

Achievement and promotion slow down during motherhood. Workloads continue to grow, even when working mothers utilize the stop-the-tenure-clock policy (AAUP, 2001). Tenure-track faculty members must teach, research, and perform service for a given university during their time on the tenure track (Barat & Harvey, 2015). Institutional leaders should provide support for faculty members with families and

monitor the use of the stop-the-tenure-clock policy to ensure its use as appropriate (AAUP, 2001).

New mothers must work around their children's schedules; as such, they may find it challenging to catch up on publications and research when they reenter the workplace. Slowed achievement and negative attitudes of family leave policies may cause a working mother to feel inadequate on the tenure track (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Young & Wright, 2001). When tenure-track professors' job satisfaction decreases, their overall motivation declines, as well.

To summarize, the motivational factors of Herzberg's two-factor theory indicate the impact of an individual on an organization (Herzberg et al., 1959). In this chapter, Herzberg's motivational factors served as a framework to explore barriers faced by working mothers on the academic tenure track. Research implies that without the possibility of advancement, performance raises, promotion, etc. also known motivational factors (Herzberg et al., 1959), higher education faculty are more likely to leave their positions (Christian et al., 2011; Costa, 2009). Likewise, maintenance factors are equally important in Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg's maintenance factors of work climate, salary, supervision, benefits, and administrative attitudes and policies contribute to the motivation levels of working mothers on the tenure track. Maintenance factors show the correlation between an individual's level of motivation and the overall organizational work environment (Herzberg et al., 1959). Women may struggle to pursue tenure during motherhood due to the barriers of balancing family and work roles, publishing demands, the influence of policy, and work-family culture. The impact of work environment on working mothers on the tenure track also underwent analysis in accordance with Herzberg's maintenance factors.

### **Critique of Identified Barriers and Maintenance Factors**

Ott and Cisneros (2015) examined the workplace atmosphere in higher education and the common experiences of higher education employees. They discussed maintenance factors among higher education faculty and the influence of benefits and climate on higher education faculty job outcomes (Ott & Cisneros, 2015). The maintenance factors of benefits, climate, and administrative attitudes and policies may predict the levels of job satisfaction and overall motivation levels of working mothers on the tenure track.

#### **Benefits**

Herzberg et al. (1959) stated that benefits increased motivation levels in the workplace. Young and Wright (2001) examined the impact of available benefits and identified various limitations to mothers on the tenure track. Young and Wright asserted that mothers on the tenure track receive limited benefits. Female participants in their study discussed their low salaries while on the tenure track, which indicated additional challenges in providing for their growing families (Young & Wright, 2001). Of the mothers interviewed by Young and Wright, the majority reported a lack of university childcare hours. Working mothers on the tenure track need drop-in care because their schedules vary throughout the semester. Additionally, women in the study complained about not receiving benefits for their partners (Young & Wright, 2001). Furthermore, tenure track mothers reported a lack of affordable housing close to university campuses (Young & Wright, 2001). Young and Wright (2001) illuminated the experiences of mothers working in higher education and the limitation of adequate benefits offered to a mother working at a university. The lack of benefits offered by institutions may indicate lowered levels of motivation for mothers working in academia within the proposed study.

Young and Wright's (2001) findings indicate a need to address the benefits provided by institutions to mothers on the tenure track in higher education.

### **Climate**

Mothers in Young and Wright's (2001) study struggled to balance their tenure-track positions and family responsibilities. Although the AAUP advocates for family-work balance within higher educational institutions, workplace and family demands are still difficult to balance (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007). Faculty members who use institutional family-work balance policies often face career penalties (Drago et al., 2006). Stockdell-Giesler and Ingalls (2007) discussed how institutional leaders must assert family-friendly policies and establish formal documents to ensure the full implementation of these policies. Under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, employers who provide short-term disability must partially pay for faculty members on maternity leave (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007). Women with careers in higher education find a lack of consistent family-friendly policies across institutions (AAUP, 2001; Norrell & Norrell, 1996).

Some institutions provide partner benefits and campus child-care facilities; however, these benefits vary by the institution (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007). The lack of family-friendly policies can lead working mothers on the tenure track to struggle to achieve family-work balance (Young & Wright, 2001). Maintenance factors deserve further exploration, including the lack of individual and partner benefits, the shortage of family-friendly policies, and how they indicate motivational levels in working mothers on the tenure track (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007; Young & Wright, 2001). Researchers should address the influence of Herzberg's maintenance factor of benefits to provide insight into policy changes or additional support for mothers on the tenure track.

## **Policies and Attitudes of Administration**

Herzberg et al. (1959) and Owens and Valesky (2015) discussed policies and attitudes of administration and the influence administration and work policies have as a motivator for an employees' level of job satisfaction. Research by Bystydzienski et al. (2017), involving a 38-item questionnaire and follow-up interviews to deans and department chairs highlights the transformational leadership model developed by Burns (1978) to assess how leadership style influences work culture. The study engaged female and male university administrators in effective training practices on promoting achievement and individual needs within the workplace (Bystydzienski et al., 2017). Results suggested female participants in the post survey felt a greater level of dissatisfaction with social relations and experiences with adequate mentoring in the workplace versus male participants (Bystydzienski et al., 2017). Overall, the study suggests meaningful shifts occur in the culture of the workplace when deans and administrators value and promote inclusive policies and practices in higher education (Bystydzienski et al., 2017).

According to Bilimoria et al. (2006), internal relational supports lead to increased job satisfaction. Faculty members feel positive and achieve academically with a support system of respectful and trustworthy colleagues (Bilimoria et al., 2006). Historically in higher education, women faculty are not supported by policies and attitudes of their administration (Bystydzienski, et al., 2017). For mothers working in higher education, this lack of support could impede their motivation in the workplace.

Mainstreaming inclusive policies by deans and administrators could benefit working mothers in higher education. When mothers choose to use the stop-the-tenure-clock policy, negativity from colleagues and faculty may occur (Bystydzienski et al.,

2017; Young & Wright, 2001). Young and Wright (2001) suggested that women feel they need to overcome their doubt about fulfilling both mother and professorial roles and worry about being viewed as incompetent or not responsible enough to handle their academic workloads. A lack of support from colleagues provides an additional barrier for mothers on the tenure track (Young & Wright, 2001).

The AAUP (2001) defines the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in the Statement of Principles. FMLA is available to organizations with more than fifty employees (AAUP, 2001). To be eligible for the 12 weeks of unpaid leave, an employee must have twelve months of employment history with the organization prior to taking the leave (AAUP, 2001). Moreover, the employee can only use the leave to care for children, spouses, or parents with severe health conditions (AAUP, 2001). Liston et al. (1997) argued that the Family Medical Leave Act is not useful to mothers working in higher education. Working mothers in higher education worried that using the policy would cause a productivity gap, leading other faculty members to perceive them as less committed to academic work (Lester, 2016; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Gerten (2011) championed the work of Kirchmeyer (1993), stating that individuals' satisfaction with nonwork roles indicates their level of satisfaction with work roles. Working mothers in higher education who lack support from administrators and colleagues may experience more negative emotions with work. Ultimately, as Herzberg et al. (1959) theorized, the lack of motivational factors affects job satisfaction.

In conclusion, an analysis of Herzberg's maintenance factors shows that low motivation levels could correlate with the identified barriers of work-family culture, work-family climate, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Maintenance factors of benefits, climate, and policies and attitudes

of administration are essential for thriving workplaces. Understanding the role of each maintenance factor for working mothers in higher education is critical for working mothers on the tenure track. According to the AAUP (2001), working mothers should be able to use the policies at higher education institutions to receive the same opportunities as their male colleagues. Working mothers on the tenure track struggle to navigate their family needs and workplace policies and pressures (Liston et al., 1997; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Young & Wright, 2001). Thus, exploring the influence of identified barriers is critical to understanding the motivation levels of working mothers on the higher education tenure track.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this study is to present the influence of identified barriers on the motivation levels of mothers on the higher education tenure track. An analysis of the maintenance factors of benefits, promotion, and policies and attitudes of administration (Herzberg et al., 1959) and their impact on mothers working toward tenure in the field of higher education, could result in policies that offset or enhance the motivation levels of this population. Such research may provide further insight into the motivation levels of tenure track mothers. This study on the lived experiences of mothers pursuing tenure at universities and colleges could produce information leading to increased motivation levels for working mothers. Furthermore, policymakers could use this research to improve higher education policies and foster positive associations with motivation and productivity for mothers on the tenure track in higher education.

This literature review presented the lived experiences of working mothers during the tenure track process and the barriers of work-family culture, family-work balance, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell

& Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). However, a gap in the literature exists on working mothers' motivation. Existing research provides insight into the lived experiences of mothers on the higher education tenure track and the identified barriers they face. However, there is a lack of research on how the barriers affect working mothers' motivation, or lack thereof, while working toward tenure at a university. The correlation between Herzberg's motivational and maintenance factors and the identified barriers provides the foundation for exploring the motivation of working mothers on the tenure track.

This study's results will provide a guide for the patterns of the identified barriers and the possible motivational influences of mothers in higher education. These motivational themes may correlate with previous research on the barriers faced by working mothers on the higher education tenure track. As a result, leaders in higher education could use this study's insights to provide working mothers on the tenure track with policies and resources to foster the presence of motivational factors and encourage academic success.

The literature review showed barriers to working mothers on the higher education tenure track; however, there is a lack of research on the influence of motivation on mothers working in academia. Findings from a study on the influence of the barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001) on working mothers seeking tenure could ultimately lead an increased number of women pursuing jobs at colleges or universities.

Additionally, Herzberg et al. (1959) discussed the maintenance factors of benefits, climate, policies and attitudes of administration, promotion, and responsibility. It would

be beneficial to learn how working mothers on the tenure track are affected by these maintenance factors. The overall goal of this study is to provide a guide for a positive and attainable tenure track process for mothers. This study's research on the tenure challenges and successes of mothers in higher education and their motivational experiences will broaden the existing literature on mothers working in higher education (Larson et al., 2019). A phenomenological approach to illuminate the influence of identified barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001) and the possible effect on motivation to mothers on the tenure track in higher education could provide further suggestions to research institutions and lead to an increase of working mothers in tenured roles in higher education.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Proposed Research Design

Research design requires philosophical assumptions and scientific methods or procedures to explore research questions or test a hypothesis (Creswell, 2014).

Quantitative research focuses on a research design to state a claim or hypothesis, uses a reliable instrument to test the claim or hypothesis, and indicates a failure to reject the hypothesis (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research seeks to understand a social problem within life or work and suggest meaning from the lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative questions are broad and general to make meaning out of human experiences (Creswell, 2014). Thus, a qualitative phenomenological approach is appropriate for research into the motivation levels and barriers of working mothers on the tenure track. A limitation of this qualitative study is the perception of motivation and experienced barriers in the workplace as unique to each mother. Therefore, the dynamics present in the workplace are perceptual to each participant. Although studies have occurred on the identified barriers faced by mothers working in higher education, there is an absence of research on the overall understanding of how working mothers experience motivation on the higher education tenure track. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers on the higher education tenure track. The study included the personal lived experiences of working mothers to answer the following questions:

1. What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?
2. How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

3. What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

### **Rationale for the Methodology Selected**

A qualitative study requires an inquiry process to understand a social or human problem using words and detailed informant accounts obtained in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994). More specifically, phenomenological research is used to describe lived experiences of participants and develop meaning from the shared phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). A phenomenological study aligns best to explore what factors are motivating to mothers on the tenure track and how motherhood has influenced the tenure track experience at colleges or universities.

Herzberg's two-factor motivational theory is presented in the literature within the field of higher education. Moreover, most research suggests an alignment between the theory and the higher educational workplace (Chu & Kuo, 2015; Ghazi et al., 2013; Lacy & Sheehan, 1997; Waltman et al., 2012). Few studies using Herzberg's two-factor theory are of qualitative design (Andersson, 2017). Given the purpose of the study to explore what factors are motivating to mothers working in higher education, and the influence motherhood has on job motivation, a qualitative study to understand the social phenomenon is presented.

Working mothers on the tenure track face barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace. However, no researcher has explored the motivational experiences of mothers on the tenure track (Bilimoria et al., 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2014, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001). Further research could provide an in-depth understanding of the motivation of mothers on the tenure track. Qualitative research used in this study will help to further investigate the

motivation of working mothers on the tenure track by exploring the phenomenon of meaningful experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological studies present the lived experiences of each person. Researchers use phenomenology to identify essences or the elements of lived experiences common to members of a societal subgroup (Creswell, 2014; Eichelberger, 1989; Patton, 2002). Qualitative phenomenological research is appropriate to present the lived experiences of working mothers on the tenure track and the influence of identified barriers on their motivation levels.

Phenomenological scholars explore a specific phenomenon experienced by a group of individuals (Creswell, 2018). A particular segment of the population experiences the phenomenon of mothering while on the tenure track, thus justifying a phenomenological approach. It is essential to ensure validity during a qualitative study for legitimate, accurate results. In other words, researchers must compose interview questions (instrument of choice) to represent the population and to fulfill the study's purpose. Creswell (2013) suggested gathering rich data descriptions through semi-structured interviews to ensure a study's validity. Additionally, Seidman (2013) described the validity of qualitative research as the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. A researcher achieves validity by allowing interviewees to review their comments, subsequently comparing each interviewee's responses against those of other interviewees. Overall, if the responses make sense to the interviewee and the researcher, then the interviews are considered valid (Seidman, 2013). Lastly, researchers using phenomenology are concerned with the factual accuracy of participants' accounts of their experiences.

## **Description of the Methodology Approach**

In-depth interviews with members of society who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest allow a researcher to uncover the essence of a phenomenon or shared experience (Patton, 2002). Detailed descriptions obtained through semi-structured interviews provide a better understanding of a specific human phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon provided information to answer the research questions on the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track.

A written consent statement was obtained, Appendix A, to conduct semi-structured interviews, approximately forty-five minutes long, before engaging participants. The wording of the interview questions is such to elicit participants' lived experiences regarding "what" or "how" a mother experiences the tenure track versus "why" a mother chooses the tenure track (Creswell, 2013). The interview questions are open-ended to gather information about how mothers construct the meanings of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Van Manen (1990) suggested producing lived-experience descriptions by asking participants to:

- Describe the experience as an individual lived through it, avoiding casual explanations, overgeneralization, or abstract interpretations.
- Describe experiences from the inside; a state of mind: including the mood, emotions, and feelings.
- Focus on a specific event, experience, or happening.
- Capitalize on a standalone experience.
- Focus on feelings of the body, and other senses (smell, sound).

## **Participants and Sampling**

Participants for this study are English-speaking mothers of children ages zero to five who are active candidates for tenure at a college or university. The intersectionality of the tenure clock and the timing of entering motherhood suggests faculty mothers on the tenure track at colleges and universities care for young children (Mason & Goulden, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Thus, children ages zero to five are identified in the participant sample. To capture the lived experiences of tenure track mothers, purposeful sampling via Facebook through a posting on the Tenure-track moms' group were the means used to recruit working mothers on the higher education tenure track.

### **Study Participants**

Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to select participants who are willing to participate in the research and ensure the participants are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Patton, 2002). To ensure rich descriptions from participants were gathered, eight to fifteen participants were recruited for this research study (Creswell, 2003). The inclusion criteria include English-speaking mothers with children between the ages of zero to five years who are active tenure candidates within their department at a given college or university.

### ***Rationale for Selecting Participants for the Study***

To best understand the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university, participants were selected based on the following criteria: English speaking mother of a child aged zero to five, and an active candidate for tenure at a college or university. Previous research on the barriers to tenure for mothers presents the challenges of obtaining tenure while caring for young children

under the age of five (Larson et al., 2019; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001).

### **Context**

Eligible participants shared the phenomenon of being an active candidate for tenure at a college or university, and a mother of a child/children ages birth to five years old. A semi-structured interview approximately forty-five minutes in length was conducted through a password-protected, recorded, Zoom video call after informed consent was obtained from recruited participants. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted through a Zoom video call. Participants chose the setting most appropriate for their situation. All participants were interviewed in a room chosen at their own discretion. Specifically, seven mothers were in secluded rooms, alone, at their home with the use of individual headsets for audio and video purposes. Two mothers participated in the Zoom video call located at individual offices.

### **Rationale for Selecting the Research Sites**

The research sites were chosen due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Center for Disease Control guidelines on social interaction for individuals. During the timeframe of this research study, worldwide limitations on human interaction in close proximity prevented the opportunity to interview participants in a face-to-face setting. Thus, recorded Zoom video calls with each participant was most appropriate to ensure all Center for Disease Control guidelines were followed, and the safety of all participants were paramount during this research study.

### **Sampling Procedures**

Recruitment of mothers on the tenure track occurred via Facebook by posting the Qualtrics link on the Tenure-track moms' Facebook group homepage. More specifically,

the purpose of the study and relevant information of study design and eligibility, contained in Appendix A, without a signature line, to introduce the research study to the members on the Tenure-track moms' Facebook group homepage and the Qualtrics link were posted on the Tenure-track moms' Facebook group homepage. Then, members of Tenure-track moms' Facebook page completed the Qualtrics survey. Qualtrics screened for eligibility of being an active candidate for tenure at a college or university and an English-speaking mother of a child/children ages birth to five years old. After eligibility was screened by Qualtrics, and participants' names were verified by the primary investigator on given college or university website, participants received an emailed copy of the letter to participants, Appendix A, and a copy of Appendix D, outlining the study's purpose and confidentiality. Prior to starting the interviews, participants reviewed and electronically signed informed consent, Appendix D, before sending a scanned copy for review by the primary investigator. The forms were sent back to the primary investigator by email. The participants received pseudonyms to protect their identities. The master list of pseudonyms, viewed only by the primary investigator, were kept on a password protected device. The primary investigator is the only individual with access to the password with stored data (video recordings of interviews, informed consent, and master list of pseudonyms) for the research project. The recorded Zoom video interviews were kept on a flash drive only accessed by the primary investigator and stored in a locked drawer, in a locked office, only accessible to the primary investigator. Further privacy came from the storage of data on a password-protected server, with subsequent destruction when no longer needed after a period of five years. The password for use of the protected server was kept in a locked drawer, in a locked office, only accessible to the primary investigator. The interview questions, Appendix B, were electronically sent to

each participant prior to conducting the interview. The interview process commenced by reading the interview script, Appendix C, to each participant. Participants received copies of their interviews via email after completing the interview process. Additionally, the primary investigator emailed an interview transcript to each participant for verification of valid description(s). Members of the Florida Southern College Institutional Review Board approved the study, finding little risk to each participant due to the confidentiality of each interview and awareness of the research protocol to each participant by the primary investigator.

### **Instrumentation and/Materials**

To explore the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers pursuing tenure in higher education, a phenomenological study is used. Phenomenology focuses on a shared phenomenon by participants (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the timing of being on the tenure track during motherhood is the shared phenomenon between participants in this research study. To best address motivation, semi-structured interviews will guide the participant interactions. Previous research on motivation in higher education is heavily quantitative (Andersson, 2017; Giese & Avoseh, 2018). Therefore, using a qualitative approach is supported by previous research and will broaden the use of Herzberg's theory in higher education and qualitative research. A study sample between 8 to 25 participants is most appropriate for a phenomenological design (Creswell, 2013). The interviews will be recorded on the Zoom platform at a location convenient to the participant due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Center for Disease Control distancing protocols. Participants will review their transcripts for accuracy known as member checking and ensure validity of the interviews (Creswell, 2018). A researcher's journal was kept eliminating bias and bracketing any prior assumptions to maintain reliability of

the results (Moustakas, 1994). This semi-structured phenomenological approach to understand motivation of mothers is further detailed below for reliability and validity purposes.

### **Qualitative Data Collection Instruments**

Van Manen (1990) and Creswell (2013) guided the scripting of each interview question. Each of the proposed study's participants will respond to the following open-ended interview questions. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, phenomenological research suggests the use of a researcher's journal to eliminate bias about participant lived experiences. During each interview, notes about participant body cues, tone of voice, and any reactions to spoken words were kept in the researcher's journal. The validity of each interview question and the alignment of the instrument and the presented framework is illustrated within Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Interview Questions and Their Validity*

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RQ1: What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?	RQ2: How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?	RQ3: What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?
IQ1: Can you describe your experience with balancing work and family responsibilities?	IQ2: Can you describe any familial support as it relates to your professional responsibilities?	IQ6: How has your level of satisfaction, if any, changed during the tenure-track process toward your responsibility to teaching and professional-related commitments?
IQ7: What experiences have you had in the workplace that you feel are barriers to achieving tenure?	IQ3: What is your perception of family policy guidelines within your college or university?	IQ10: Is there anything else you would like to mention about your professional experiences during your time on the tenure track?
IQ8: How has your experience on the tenure track influenced your satisfaction, if any, with your personal growth and advancement opportunities?	IQ4: What are your experiences with using a family policy at your college or university?	
	IQ5: How have the benefits at your college or university impacted your satisfaction, if any, in the workplace?	
	IQ9: Can you describe your relationships with your colleagues, administration, human resources, or your department?	

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RQ1: What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?	RQ2: How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?	RQ3: What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?
Motivational/maintenance factors (Herzberg et al., 1959; Owens & Valesky, 2015)	Maintenance factors (Herzberg et al., 1959)	Productivity, workplace satisfaction (Bess, 1998; Herzberg et al., 1959; Owens & Valesky, 2015)

*Note.* Table 1 shows the alignment of each interview question to each research question. Additionally, the literature regarding workplace factors and identified barriers is listed to illustrate validity of the interview questions to the research questions within this study.

## **Validity and Reliability or Credibility and Dependability of Instruments**

Creswell (2013) suggests multiple strategies to obtain validity within qualitative research: extensive time in observing, rich data descriptions, member checking, clarifying researcher bias, and debriefing. Likewise, reliability of the study is of equal importance when addressing the credibility and evaluative purpose of qualitative research.

The interaction between a researcher and the participants must be addressed in qualitative studies for purposes of validity, reliability, and credibility. Seidman (2013) discusses this interaction when gathering interview data. It is the objective of the researcher to convey meaning to the participant's words while recognizing this reflection of meaning is partly due to the interaction between these two roles (Seidman, 2013). Complimentary to the available research on validity in qualitative studies, the validity of this study was strengthened by use of the reflective process (Creswell, 2013). To further validate this research design, the use of epoché minimized researcher bias (Moustakas, 1994). The Greek word epoché, a term coined by Husserl, indicates that the researcher steps out of any presupposed judgments about the experiences and focuses on capturing participants' lived experiences (Langdrige, 2007). Additionally, researchers should bracket prior assumptions of the participants' experiences to present phenomena as they naturally occurred (Moustakas, 1994). As Seidman (2013) suggests, reviewing the transcripts from participants and checking with each participant about their spoken words during the interview will provide a check for internal consistency. This check will ensure the statements are as the participant has experienced and therefore deemed valid by the participant (Seidman, 2013).

In phenomenological studies, researchers reduce data to view the experiences of participants through their words. Data reduction occurs by removing repetitive or vague

statements (Langdrige, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Through data reduction, researchers reveal clusters of meaning and common themes (Moustakas, 1994) within the structural text and the transcribed interviews. Microsoft Excel software is one tool implemented to reduce bias and develop structural data descriptions. The resulting structural data descriptions provided the meanings of the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track and the influence of motivation.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study provided a basic understanding of the research questions, guidelines, and results from eligible participants recruited on social media. Two participants completed semi-structured interviews in the pilot study. The interviews occurred at the participants' convenience by Zoom online video conferencing. Participants received copies of the interview questions, Appendix B, confirming that they understood each question and could discuss their motivational experiences on the tenure track. The pilot-tested questionnaire was understandable and appropriate to answer the research questions. The pilot study participants did not take part in the main study to avoid biased results. Pilot study participants were tenure-track mothers who worked in the education department and had children under five years old.

After gathering the data, the interviews were reviewed to eliminate repetitive statements, avoiding researcher bias (Moustakas, 1994). A horizontalization data analysis following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach produced descriptive, textual responses true to the experienced phenomenon related to the research questions. As horizontalization of data requires, each statement was given equal value in representing a specific meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the remaining statements, known as horizons (Moustakas, 1994), were categorized into common themes. Results of

the pilot study revealed mothers' experiences with the identified barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace, as well as the influence of Herzberg's Two-Factor theory. Additionally, upon review of participant descriptions, the research questions did not change after the completion of pilot data analysis.

Overall, the identified clusters of meaning indicate themes relevant to the experienced phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Common themes in the pilot study were the significance of relationships with colleagues, students, and mentors. Additionally, participants reported common work responsibilities, including publishing, and service obligations, such as conferences, as central to their work role at their college or university. Lastly, pilot study participants illuminated experiences of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their level of autonomy and workplace expectations. Each of these themes correlates with the presented research (Herzberg et al., 1959; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Young & Wright, 2001). Overall, this pilot study indicated understandable interview questions, validity through member checking participant transcripts, feasible recruitment methods, and comprehensive results of the interview data.

### **Procedures**

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers on the higher education tenure track. The study included the lived experiences of working mothers to answer the following questions:

1. What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?

2. How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?
3. What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

Through the use of purposeful sampling, a posted Qualtrics link on the Tenure-Track Moms' Facebook page pooled active tenure candidates who identified as mothers from various colleges and universities. Nine participants electronically signed consent to participate in this research study. Using the Zoom platform, each mother answered the interview questions during an audio and video-recorded interview. During each interview, a researcher's journal was kept, noting participant body expressions such as sighs or laughter. Additionally, the researcher noted any lingering questions about why a participant said a certain phrase, or any thoughts immediately following the interview. The transcripts were transcribed using a transcription service and sent back to each participant for review of accuracy. Then, each transcript was coded with a colored highlighter for initial phrases or words common to each transcript. Further reviews of the transcripts revealed additional significant phrases. Upon reviewing all transcripts, 487 meaningful phrases were identified and placed into an excel table. This excel table was reduced to twenty initial codes. Lastly, four themes developed from the transcript data.

### **Recruitment**

Participants were recruited using a Qualtrics link and the Tenure-Track Moms' Facebook page. By posting the Qualtrics link, interested members of the facebook group could answer questions regarding eligibility. Notably, English-speaking, active tenure candidates, and mothers of at least one child, could choose to participate in this research study. The Qualtrics survey was answered by 70 people. After reaching out to twenty

potential participants through e-mail, nine mothers consented to participate in the research study.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Zoom video interviews were conducted with nine participants. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes long. Participants were e-mailed an electronic copy of the interview questions prior to conducting the interview. Additionally, each participant introduced herself prior to answering the first research question and gave relevant background information about their department, years on the tenure track, and number of children. The recorded interviews were stored on a flash drive, on a secure device, only accessible to the researcher. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity, and the master list of participants was only available to the primary investigator of this research study to protect the confidentiality of participants and the integrity of this research.

### ***Timeline for Data Collection***

This phenomenological research study required a flexible timeline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over a period of three months, eligibility was screened, and data was collected on each participant. The researcher needed to be accessible to the study participants at a time that was convenient for the participant. Given the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, there was limited access to the participants. The virtual context and distancing required for this study presented the need for multi-tasking in data collection procedures. Thus, multiple types of data were collected simultaneously.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

Data collection procedures for this qualitative phenomenological study were virtual due to the Covid-19 pandemic. First, eligibility was determined through the use of

a Qualtrics survey. This Qualtrics survey was posted on the Tenure-Track Moms' Facebook group. After reaching 70 potential participants, the survey was closed and potential participants were verified. Each potential participant was asked to provide an email address with an education domain (.edu) to verify each participant as faculty at each college or university. Next, potential participants were contacted through e-mail to initiate further interest in participating in the research study using the letter to participants, Appendix A. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, written consent of each participant was electronically collected through e-mail. Participants chose a virtual interview time and place convenient to them. Additionally, each interview was recorded using the Zoom platform.

Each interview started with the interview script provided, Appendix C. Mothers prefaced each interview with background information detailing their department and number of children. Nine mothers participated in this research study. All mothers are considered faculty at their institution and are active candidates for tenure. Peggy works in the media department with four children. Robin is working toward tenure in the geosciences department with a toddler. Josie is seeking tenure in the German department. Amy is a sciences department faculty member with two children. Carla actively seeks tenure in the public science and health department with four children. Carol is pursuing tenure in the geosciences department as a mother of two children. Bonnie seeks tenure in the psychological sciences department with one child. Kim is the mother of a young baby seeking tenure in the criminology department. Natalie works within the psychology department and is the mother of one toddler aged child. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

After each Zoom interview, recordings were kept on a secure device. The interviews were transcribed using a transcription service. Afterwards, each interview was sent to the respective participant for verification of accuracy. During each Zoom interview, a researcher's journal was kept to write down anything about facial expressions, body cues, and tone of voice to aid in understanding each participant experience and list any prior bias about the participant experiences to ensure the data is true to each lived experience by the participant.

### ***Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Procedures***

In an effort to ensure validity and reliability during data collection, multiple procedures took place during the interview process. A researcher's journal was kept during each recorded interview to note the participant's body cues and phrasing in answering each question. Additionally, the researcher's journal provided insight into any bias held by the researcher to strengthen the credibility of the study in bracketing out prior assumptions, described by Moustakas (1994) as epoché. Each transcript was reviewed by the interviewee to ensure accuracy of described lived experiences and asserted as true to each participant (Creswell, 2014). Thus, each transcript is considered as *valid* in the eyes of the interviewee. Furthermore, multiple sources of data were gathered (recorded interviews, researcher's journal) to engage in triangulation of the data and maintain reliable results (Creswell, 2014).

### ***Design-Based Decisions***

An important decision during the data collection procedures is to ensure data saturation. Thus, no "new" data is appearing upon review of the transcripts. For this research study, by review of the third interview, participant phrases were aligned to one another and the research questions of motivation, maintenance factors, and influence of

motherhood. As a result, asserting confidence in reaching data saturation was achieved from the gathered participant data. Moreover, participants shared phenomenon of the lived experiences relating to motivational and maintenance factors as outlined within Herzberg's motivational theory, underscoring the use of this theoretical framework to guide the research questions.

### **Processes to Ensure Valid/Dependable and Reliable/Credible Results**

Each semi-structured interview was guided by Van Manen's (1990) approach to data collection, validating a credible approach to aid in the reliability of data results. To ensure valid results, the use of a researcher's journal to bracket prior assumptions was used during each participant interview (Moustakas, 1994). Moreover, participants verified each transcript through member checking (Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2014) to confirm the accuracy of each transcript and maintain internal consistency (Seidman, 2013).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Each participant took part in one semi-structured interview with the possibility of a follow-up interview for clarification. The interviews took place at each participant's convenience by the video conferencing platform, Zoom. Audio-recorded interviews underwent review with auditory playback followed by transcribing by a transcription service. The comparison between the first interview and a possible follow-up interview, as well as between participants, provided an understanding of the influence of various motivators on participants. A colored highlighter was a means to indicate similar statements as potential common themes arose. A second review of the transcribed interviews using inductive coding searched for meaning in the participants' phrases, which next underwent categorization into themes. Through the process of inductive

coding, the raw data categorization produced themes, which were connected to the research questions (Moustakas, 1994). Themes imported into an Excel table underwent analysis to uncover common motivational experiences. Moustakas (1994) suggested systematic and procedural phenomenological research. These steps include a review of relevant literature, constructing a set of interview questions, conducting and engaging participants throughout the interview process, and intentionally analyzing the data for common themes or elements (Moustakas, 1994).

The data analysis showed the influence of various motivational factors on mothers on the higher education tenure track. The analysis included member checking (Carlson, 2010) where participants were provided copies of their interviews to verify the accurate transcriptions of their experiences.

During this data analysis, barriers regarding family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure clock, and reentry into the workplace (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001) should emerge. Additionally, the identified barriers may be more motivational or less motivational to mothers on the tenure track.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Each transcript was reviewed with a colored highlighter to identify meaningful statements. Each subsequent review of the transcripts further revealed significant phrases or words between transcripts. The interviews were reviewed to eliminate repetitive statements, avoiding researcher bias (Moustakas, 1994). The data were put into an excel table and reduced to twenty initial codes. From there, themes emerged from the data. A horizontalization data analysis following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach produced descriptive, textual responses true to the experienced phenomenon related to the research questions. As horizontalization of data

requires, each statement was given equal value in representing a specific meaning (Moustakas, 1994). After each significant statement was identified, the data was put into an excel table. Upon further review of the significant statements, identification of categories led to a greater understanding of the data. The statements, known as horizons (Moustakas, 1994), were then categorized into common themes. Lastly, visual representations of the initial codes and the emerged themes were created to further assist in disseminating the data in figures one through four included in this study. Three initial codes, husband support, childcare, deans, were coded into the categories of family support, benefits, and work climate, as represented in figures one through four. Thus, a total of 17 categories are represented within the figures displaying each of the four emerged themes.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research study's methodology. Also included was a detailed description of the rationale for phenomenological research on the identified sample. Data collection and analysis techniques outlined based on Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994) indicated a comprehensive, verified approach to understanding mothers on the higher education tenure track and the influence of motivation.

## CHAPTER 4: EXPECTED RESULTS

### Introduction

This study was a portrayal of the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track in higher education and the possible influence of identified barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001) on their motivation. Exploring the interaction between barriers and motivation with mothers on the tenure track in higher education revealed the importance of working mothers in higher education. A qualitative phenomenological approach was suitable to capture this phenomenon of interest. The findings present mothers' voices and perspectives of their unique time on the tenure track in higher education. To best investigate the phenomenon of mothers on the higher education tenure track and the influence of identified barriers on their motivation, this study addressed three research questions:

1. What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?
2. How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?
3. What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

Chapter 4 presents the findings that emerged from semi-structured interviews with nine English-speaking mothers who were active candidates for tenure at their college or university and had at least one child between the ages of birth and 5 years. The participants provided rich descriptions of their lived experience and the barriers and motivators encountered during the tenure track process. Analysis using first round in-vivo

coding facilitated the identification of meaningful statements (Saldaña, 2013). Second-round descriptive coding helped to reduce the meaningful statements into categories while ensuring participants' words and lived experiences remained true to the phenomenon of interest (Moustakas, 1994). Data analysis led to four themes of passion and performance, comradery and context, a motherhood mentality, and benefits and policies.

Data analysis began with immersion in the data through multiple readings of each interview transcript. Multiple sources of data were reviewed including the researcher's journal and interviewees' recorded videos depicting individual body cues and voice tones. This triangulation of the data by comparing multiple data sources led to a comprehensive understanding of the shared phenomenon of the influence of workplace motivation between participants (Saldaña, 2013). Phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994) entailed eliminating repetitive statements and identifying meaningful units. Descriptive coding produced patterns of phrases and words present within and across interview transcripts. The final step was to cluster patterns into 20 categories, reduced to four themes.

### **Summary of Participants**

The phenomenological study's findings stemmed from nine recorded Zoom interviews with mothers actively on the tenure track at their college or university. Purposeful sampling using Qualtrics and the Tenure-Track Moms' Facebook group increased the probability of participants having experience with the phenomenon of interest. Eligible participants were those who were (a) English-speaking mothers, (b) actively on the tenure track, and (c) parents of at least one child ages birth to five years.

The sample of nine mothers was of various college and university departments. None of the participants shared the same academic discipline and had varying years of experience on the tenure track. One mother was close to tenure review, two mothers were out on maternity leave, three mothers were in their third year, two mothers had started tenure at previous institutions and transferred previous years of service, and one mother was new to the tenure track experience. All participants worked at a teaching college or university rather than a research institution; in summary of participant words, time spent teaching courses was valued over research as a priority. Additionally, the mothers were part of the sciences, education, criminology, and media and communications departments at their institutions.

This research study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most higher education faculty have been impacted by COVID-19, forced to work remotely and care for their children (Krukowski et al., 2020; O'Reilly, 2020). Research surrounding COVID-19 and parenting includes challenges with balancing societal expectations of screen time for children, schooling children, and performing scholarly duties (O'Reilly, 2020). These unique measures were part of the participants' narratives of their tenure track experiences. However, research involving the influence of COVID-19 in higher education is still developing, and this study did not include an analysis of COVID-19 findings.

### **Participant Narratives**

Qualitative inquiry provided an opportunity to understand the tenure track phenomenon as an investigation of the interaction of barriers on motivation and how participants perceived their experience. Detailed lived experiences from mothers on the tenure track addressed the following research questions:

1. What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?
2. How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?
3. What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

This phenomenon of experiencing motherhood during the tenure track was illuminated during the interview process. Throughout the interviews, mothers shared individual expressions and body cues, such as shrugs and laughter, indicating a sense of individualism within this shared phenomenon. The following narratives give an insight into each participant's everyday life.

***Peggy***

Peggy is an active candidate for tenure and a mother of four children, who currently works in the media and communications department. She described herself as wanting to make a difference in the world. She purported to be a curious person who pushes boundaries. Peggy shared that fulfilling both roles as a mother and a professional has an unclear boundary of societal expectations on how a mother should perform. Peggy asserted,

You can be inquisitive, just not too inquisitive. Or you can be ambitious, just not too ambitious. If you're a woman and you're inquisitive and ambitious, that's great, yet there is a lot of pushback. Sometimes it's hard to know what the boundaries are.

### ***Robin***

Actively seeking tenure at a teaching college with a toddler, Robin works in the geosciences department. She is passionate about teaching and feels she is in a family-friendly department. Robin advocates for other mothers, particularly where union contracts are concerned. She is up to date on contract negotiations and desires further accommodations. Robin disclosed,

I am glad to be in academia. There [are] now even breastfeeding rooms at conferences. I got an e-mail about it. I thought that was amazing. In grad school, I would have never gotten an e-mail or even heard of it publicized. I'm thinking, well, good. That's what needs to happen. Hopefully, it keeps going in that direction.

### ***Josie***

The mother of a newborn, Josie teaches in the German department. Having grown up in Germany, she described her active tenure track experience in the United States from a global view. She identified privilege, discrimination, and a global perspective relevant to her experience on the tenure track. She underscored the importance of building relationships and showing support for other mothers. Josie related, "I feel that the tenure track is more secretive than open. More transparency would be appreciated. I'm satisfied, but we can do better, especially if we want to educate the leaders of the world."

### ***Amy***

An active candidate for tenure in the sciences department and mother of two children, Amy spoke of a collaborative feel in her department, which contributed to her feeling respected. Her passion for teaching resonated as she described her dedication to teaching and planning. She proffered, "I'm lucky to be where I am. My department

collaborates really well, and that's what keeps me here. I feel respected. There's a huge collaborative feel."

### ***Carla***

Carla is an active candidate for tenure in the public science and health department and a mother of four children. She serves on the Faculty Welfare Committee, advocating for employee policies and benefits. Although she feels valued and supported at work, she speaks up for all women working in higher education. She asserted, "There are things we can do to make it a better culture for women to change the culture and make them feel successful." Carla suggests mothers are struggling to balance work demands and caring for their children by stating, "They're barely falling off the end of the treadmill."

### ***Carol***

A mother on the tenure track with two children, Carol works in the sociology department. She respects her students and stresses the importance of making them feel heard and valued. Carol believes mentorship is an essential piece of a successful tenure track experience. She explained, "I carried a mentorship with me from my postdoc, which has been more helpful to me than my department. I feel supported, but I think more mentorship would be helpful."

### ***Bonnie***

A tenure track mother in the psychological sciences department, Bonnie underscored the importance of relationships and interactions within her community. Bonnie exemplifies her passion for teaching, describing how she loves every minute of it. She retorted, "I have high-quality relationships with hundreds of people in this town that work on this campus. I have really close friends that work here that I consider my family."

### ***Kim***

A new mother on the tenure track serving in the criminology department, Kim loves teaching and describes her institution as having a collegiate feel. Kim identifies her relationships with colleagues, her chair, and even her husband as important throughout the tenure track experience. She explained, “I feel supported. I am really grateful for my current experience. I’ve had a very good experience.”

### ***Natalie***

Natalie, an active candidate for tenure in the psychology department and the mother of a toddler, expressed feeling supported within her department. Additionally, she described having quality relationships with her students. Natalie related, “I get satisfaction from relationships with my students and community friends on campus. I’ve been lucky.”

## **Emerging Themes**

An in-depth analysis was appropriate to investigate the data collected. To better understand the influence of barriers on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track in higher education, multiple rounds of coding were conducted. Therefore, an immersion of the data took place. Clustered categories through repetition were identified until theme emergence was achieved. In-vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013) helped identify meaningful statements from participants’ words. Next, descriptive coding allowed for reducing statements into 20 related categories. A review of the codes, and placing them into a frequency table, allowed for further exploration of the data and captured participants’ experiences in their own words. By engaging in horizontalization of the data (Moustakas, 1994), member checks, keeping a research journal, and a review of categories relevant across all participants, validity and credibility of the data was verified (Moustakas, 1994).

Finally, the clustered categories provided the basis for four emergent themes. The first theme of Passion and Performance developed from the participants' rich descriptions about their passion for teaching and ability to perform work tasks. The second theme of Comradery and Context emerged from participant experiences within the workplace, building relationships with colleagues, administration influence, and climate of the work environment. The third theme, A Motherhood Mentality, details accounts of participant voices about the balance of motherhood and performing work related tasks, as well as societal and institutional expectations around working mothers. Lastly, the fourth theme, Benefits and Policies, describes the experiences involving institution benefits and policies around healthcare, FMLA, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace after maternity leave. Microsoft Excel was used to organize and analyze all data and create tables for the four emerged themes.

### **Data Coding**

Through data analysis, 487 significant statements were identified. By reviewing each statement in relation to the research questions, 20 categories of meaning were developed. The categories were: parental leave, maternity leave, balance, expectations, childcare, teaching, family support, husband support, policy, colleagues, advancement, growth, responsibilities, workload, dean, human resources, flexibility, health care, FMLA, and tenure clock. The clustered categories appear in Table 2. The frequency chart with each review of participant transcripts was updated upon each review of the transcripts.

Table 2

*Categories Frequency Table*

Category	Number of times mentioned
Teaching	18
Colleagues	17
Maternity leave	15
Expectations	12
Policy	12
Human resources	11
Balance	8
Parental leave	7
FMLA	7
Family support	6
Growth	6
Tenure clock	6
Childcare	5
Dean	5
Advancement	4
Flexibility	4
Healthcare	4
Husband support	3
Responsibilities	3
Workload	3

*Note.* Table 2 shows the identified 20 categories as they emerged from participant transcripts. Moreover, the table displays the number of times each category was mentioned by participants from all interview transcripts. With each transcript review, the categories were further reduced until four themes emerged.

### **Research Questions**

The three research questions that guided this phenomenological study were means to illuminate the lived experiences of tenure track mothers and the influence of identified barriers on their motivation.

### **Research Question 1: What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?**

The participants answered three interview questions describing motivating factors during the tenure process. Mothers on the tenure track expressed motivation related to the work task responsibilities, such as research and teaching, and their accomplishments with publications and student engagement. The women experienced a greater motivation for their jobs when they had positive relationships within their departments or with their colleagues. In addition, participants (three) who reported negative interactions with human resources still spoke positively about their colleagues and department relationships. Flexible work schedules were a motivating factor for mothers to stay at their university. Additionally, participants (five) discussed their lived experiences with personal growth, advancement, and feelings of pressure to overperform due to having a child during the tenure track process. All nine participants mentioned feeling motivated to stay at their workplace if they felt valued and respected within their department. The feelings of respect and value exuded in participants' discussions about relationships.

#### ***Relationships***

Relationships with students, colleagues, and within departments were topics of conversation. Positive relationships of collaboration and support generally resulted in feelings of satisfaction and motivation to perform well at their institution.

Josie described relationships within her department serving as a motivator, saying, "I have wonderful colleagues, love them. Don't have any problems. They challenged me; I hopefully challenge them. We are not shy to criticize each other. I'm super satisfied." Also describing workplace relationships as a motivator, Robin detailed,

I feel supported at my job—like I said, by my department and, most of all, our dean, in particular. If you can't tell, I love my department. The few experiences I've had with human resources has been good. Administrative relationships are good. Even the provost—the experiences I've had with him have been fine. I haven't had any problems with anything from them, and they always seem supportive. I'm definitely lucky in that sense.

Similarly, Amy mentioned her experiences with relationships during her tenure track process:

In general, I feel like everyone here is really collegial, both within and outside of the department. I think everyone in our department gets along really well and is willing to collaborate on things really well. It's a good place to be. That's what keeps me here. Everyone here is so amazing, and it makes you really want to stay where you are.

As mothers discussed their responsibilities working on the tenure track at teaching colleges or universities, experiences with teaching courses and students unfolded. A primary task of their workday is the responsibility to teach courses. Participants (nine) mentioned their “love for teaching” and the importance of showing the students “they are valued and heard” throughout the learning experience. In addition to enhancing the learning experiences of students, participants (five) found satisfaction at work by collaborating with colleagues and investing time in positive relationships with their colleagues.

### ***Performance, Autonomy, and Growth***

Mothers on the tenure track described lived experiences that enhanced their learning and growth. Most participants detailed daily accounts of publishing,

conferences, and teaching as identified work tasks. Additionally, participants (three) spoke of work hours and the autonomy to create a schedule to complete their work. All mothers interviewed in this research study discussed personal and professional growth from opportunities available to them through their college or university. Peggy mentioned going to conferences as a professional learning opportunity to increase her knowledge and motivation in the workplace. Additionally, service expectations were a positive motivating factor for participants.

Natalie discussed her experience with personal growth and service:

My experience on the tenure track and working toward tenure, generally completing my job every day feels really closely tied with my sense of personal growth, and part of that is in really good ways that aren't necessarily even specific to the college. I do a lot of service at the national level toward the profession that serves my own ethnic community, and that's actually work that is really meaningful to me on a personal level, and it's valued professionally.

Promotion and leadership roles in the workplace were also motivating factors for participants. The mothers mentioned opportunities to serve on committees and work promotions in multiple departments as contributing to their motivation.

Bonnie recalled her experiences with work tasks and her promotion:

I love every minute of teaching, research, and service. I've had opportunities here. In my home academic department, it won't matter how hard I work or how much extra I do; I won't go anywhere. But over here, if I keep working hard, they keep doing things with me. So, they made me a new position in August, and they've talked to me about where I want to be in 5 years.

The flexibility and autonomy provided to mothers on the tenure track led to greater motivation within the workplace. Mothers described being able to pick up their children at a specific time and canceling class if their child was sick as positive contributors to motivation.

Natalie mentioned the motivator of schedule flexibility as to why she chooses to work in higher education:

The flexibilities and stability that my job allows is a big part of why I entered academia. If circumstances are such that the commute becomes too long for me or something like that, I would really hold out as long as I could.

Last, participants described lived experiences with publications and an increased sense of performance expectations in the workplace. Peggy stated, “I like to accomplish things. I like to see my name in print.” Comparatively, Robin detailed her experience with a greater sense of intrinsic motivation to overperform due to having a child at home:

I think it’s just because of the way academia is, the way that it has been, and the perception of who is successful. I think way more than probably what I need to just to say [is], Hey, look what I can do. I can do it all. And I have a kid at home. It will probably help me get tenure. But it puts all kinds of pressure on yourself that is unneeded.

**Research Question 2: How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?**

Participants discussed barriers such as less motivation and, in some instances, a search for a new tenure track position. Feelings of dissatisfaction and lower motivation escalated during periods of poor treatment at work and institutional tensions due to performance or age. Participants described lived experiences in relation to benefits,

policies, relationships with administration and human resources, workplace climate, and attitudes of administration.

### *Institutional Tensions*

Literature on mothers on the tenure track indicates pushback from institution faculty toward mothers' quality of work and ability to perform given work expectations. Participants in this study detailed frustrations with ambiguity of research expectations, possible ageism from older tenured faculty, and overall questioning their professional ability. Thus, unclear research expectations and performance inquiries resulted in mothers (five) discussing the influence of institutional expectations on their motivation.

Carla suggested leadership style as a potential barrier to workplace climate for mothers on the tenure track:

I think it comes down to leadership styles of the chair, and then the culture that the chair has built has directly influenced how department members interact.

When we had the really good chair, his leadership style—everybody was collaborating, and the morale was high. Autonomy was high; creativity was high.

When we had a horrible chair and a medium chair, a lot of their leadership styles were very toxic, and then the culture became very toxic.

Bonnie discussed revealing her pregnancy and the administration's negative reactions, ultimately influencing the workplace climate. She recalled,

I got pregnant and was going to have a baby like a few weeks before my last year on the tenure track, which should be my most productive year. I was pulled aside by the department head in our college and told that, at a dean's meeting, they asked how long I was going to be out. And they said, you know, a few weeks or something, and they made fun of me. They said, "I don't know if she knows how

hard it is to have a baby. Her productivity's about to go." They said all kinds of inappropriate things. And I just felt that I wouldn't have support if something bad happened.

Participants also mentioned leaving previous tenure track positions due to a lack of support to start a family. Kim shared, "I just knew that the culture was a little bit different than the last [institution] I was at. I also knew that it was going to be time for us to want to have kids."

### ***Institutional Contracts and Expectations***

For mothers in this study, dissatisfaction occurred when institutional contracts and expectations were unclear. Additionally, dissatisfaction increased when mothers felt resistance toward their ability to perform their work.

Robin disclosed her experience using the FMLA institutional policy and the possibility of adding a second child:

It was okay. Like I said, I made it kind of a point to not disrupt the academic year again as much as I could and try to have a second baby in the summer. I wouldn't have to have colleagues cover my work. I wouldn't have to try to cash in all that time to have a leave. Right now, we're going through contract negotiations and they're trying to strip a lot of that away. It's very minimal anyway, and they're trying to take what is there away and I don't know what our family policy is going to be after our contract negotiations. I mean, we have a pretty tough union. But they just sent their proposal over, and it's awful what they want to take.

Similarly, Peggy talked of her challenges with utilizing maternity leave during her tenure track process:

[With] my first child, I was not able to get any maternity leave or family leave because I was a three-quarter-time employee and I had not been employed for over a year. For my fourth child, because of my contracts at the first university, I was not able to take leave until he was six months old because that's when I was able. So, I took leave when he was seven months old.

Josie provided a global perspective to maternity leave policies:

I think we need the choice as mothers. In Germany, you have a year that you can get with 80% of your salary or something like that, but you can decide to go back to work earlier if you want to. I think we need a year that is paid at a certain amount of my previous salary, and I can make the decision if I want to go back at whatever time. I find it horrible that my college says, "Hey, look at what we got at other places. You bring your kids to daycare at six weeks." I want to vomit over that. My perception of it is tainted by my cultural background.

When participants brought up tenure clock policies and overall tenure expectations, added concerns and perceptions of ageism arose. Mothers (two) detailed struggling with older (tenured) faculty's perception on younger faculty during the tenure process. Both mothers described being unsatisfied with the treatment from tenured faculty and the lack of understanding regarding the desire for changing policies or expectations for tenure track mothers.

Peggy spoke of tenured women in her department negatively commenting on the increasing number of opportunities available to tenure track mothers now than in the past. Ageism during the tenure track process was further detailed by Josie, who spoke of tenured faculty trying to "hold on" to their positions and causing delay in policy changes for those currently pursuing tenure. Participants felt greater dissatisfaction with unclear

tenure expectations, the struggle of balancing both work and motherhood, and frustration with faculty members' attitudes.

Carol spoke about tenure clock expectations and the potential for pessimism with administration:

I have wondered about tenure clock stops and additional years. When are they being suggested? When are they being discouraged? There is generally the idea that when you stop the tenure clock, you get more time to publish, but at the same time, you also delay a certain advancement. I think as my personal experiences, having had a child right before my second review, I wonder if there is some politics to it that we, as tenure-track people, don't know about. I'm wondering if it was a smart idea to delay a year, or would it have been smarter to delay another because I was pregnant? Nobody really talks about that. It's a secrecy with the level of nose-pulling you have to do to get some information. I'm a little bit annoyed. I feel that the tenure track in general is more secretive than open. It should be more open.

Mothers on the tenure track also shared their lived experiences balancing an academic career and motherhood. The idea of an eight-hour workday and impromptu meetings led to lower satisfaction. Participants discussed the societal expectations of being able to do it all and do it all well. Josie shared her experience with creating a habitual family-work balance:

I said I want to get my work done in six hours a day. Before I made the decision, I worked at an old 75 hours a week or something like that. And I had physical-like symptoms that told me I was under stress. When I set the six hours a day, I was looking into the future. When I have a child, I want to spend time with them.

Amy shared her experience of being self-critical and wanting to do the best at her job. She detailed the added conflict of being a good employee and a good mom. Carla described research expectations at her institution in relation to motherhood:

There's a lot of dissatisfaction, not just among young mothers, but across the board. The people without kids are having a hard time keeping up, let alone those with families. I would say my satisfaction is decreased. It's more general to the university culture changing, shifting, than anything else. Research expectations are ramping up, and the extra burden of research has made it harder to manage.

Carla continued, disclosing content with her productivity:

Once I had a mentor who said she would put her kids to bed, and then she would work from 8 p.m. to midnight every night. And I said, "I can't. I'm out of energy." She only had two kids, a six-year-old and her newborn. There was a bigger spacing. She wasn't continually pregnant or breastfeeding for six years, which I was. I can't run that type of treadmill, and I'm just going to do the best I can. If the chips don't fall where they should, it's okay. I'm going to be there for my kids.

Natalie related the ambiguity of expectations as a barrier to her success on the tenure track:

I think sometimes some of the ambiguity about what's required versus what's highly valued is problematic. If you're trying to prioritize different responsibilities, whether various work responsibilities or home life, plus work things combine. I'm sometimes afraid to look bad.

Integrated with the motivating factors and influence of barriers, mothers discussed their overall experience of motivation as feeling satisfied or dissatisfied. Participants

expressed dissatisfaction with unclear research expectations and limited access to professional development programs. Satisfaction was high when mothers discussed supportive climates, clear family policies, and opportunities for growth.

**Research Question 3: What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?**

Participants described how motherhood had influenced their motivation on the tenure track. Interviewed mothers mentioned overall satisfaction, productivity, and opportunities. In participants' words, motivation was an internal mentality to reach a goal, coupled with external workplace influences.

***Mentality***

Mothers described a mentality of internal motivation to perform well on their work tasks. Carol discussed her experience of motivation as a "mental power" to be present in writing and data analysis. She found that the challenge motherhood created was "being present" when she was tired and overwhelmed. Carol described how motherhood gave her a more balanced perspective, saying, "I have to remind myself [that] I choose how much work and life that I choose to do. I think that's just a mental thing. You have to mentally say, 'I'm okay with this.'"

This experience of balance and time management on work tasks because of being mothers led to greater satisfaction, as mothers described realizing the productivity of themselves as well as their colleagues.

Bonnie disclosed needing to readjust and her internal motivation of productivity: I would say I readjust the way I work. In some ways, I think I'm more productive now because I have to be. But there are still other things on my mind when I'm working, and those other things are my daughter. I have to kind of quiet my mind

down. That's one of the things that I've had to learn to do. It was a skill I had to practice.

Mothers also described lowering their expectations to match department productivity levels. Regardless of their internal motivation, reducing expectations to match workplace productivity led to greater satisfaction. Participants (four) felt more motivated when their productivity levels were acceptable by their institution, which provided more of a collective vibe.

Josie mentioned scaling back as being acceptable at her institution:

I have seen colleagues who are higher than me being less invested in community-building through teaching and in service. I think I had to adjust my expectations, too, in order to be satisfied. Before that, I thought everybody was doing way more. It was really hard for me. I'm scaling down, and I think I'm more satisfied with that, knowing that I don't have to do so much.

Last, mothers described the positive feelings a job in academia had on their children's and family's lives. Mothers detailed experiences of satisfaction with performing their job well and being a better mother due to dual role fulfillment. The external motivation of being good at their job and having a flexible schedule to enhance their role as mothers was common among participants.

Bonnie was overjoyed for the opportunities her son will have in life, saying, I am really excited for the opportunities that my son will have by having a mother that is in academia. I am home some more during the summer. We get to travel. We have a little bit more security and some flexibility. I'm thankful for that.

The descriptions participants gave provided information to answer the three research questions in this study. The detailed accounts regarding a passion for the work

itself, a sense of comradery, work climate, relationships, family-work balance, and work expectations influenced the motivation of mothers within this study. The participants' descriptions of the above-lived experiences led to the development of four themes.

### **Development of Themes**

Following Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach led to the development of categories and themes. First, participants reviewed their video interview transcripts to ensure the statements were true to their lived experiences. Second, thoughts and ideas were kept in a researcher's journal to avoid potential bias. Third, in-vivo coding was used to review the rich descriptions and identify significant statements from the data. Fourth, multiple reviews of the data using colored highlighters based on horizontalization of the data allowed for the identification of significant categories within and between participants. The remaining categories and statements underwent review and comparison across all participants, sorted into overall themes and meaningful units (Creswell, 2013).

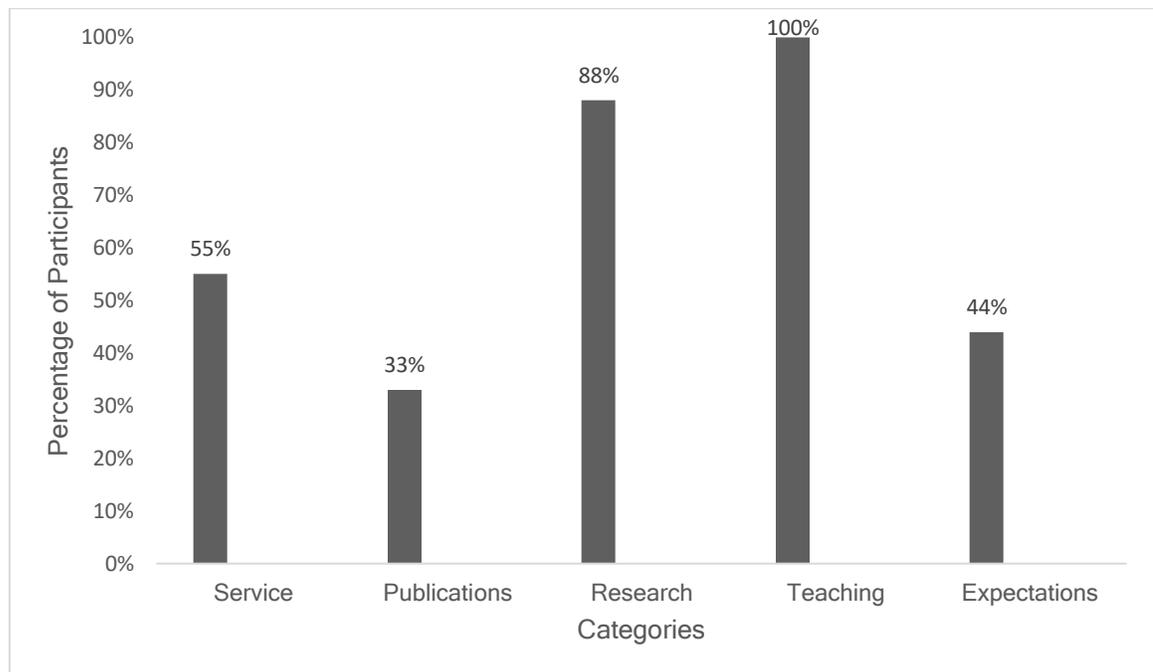
Structural and textural descriptions of the data were in a separate document to refine categories and themes. The textural and structural descriptions provided full immersion in data and led to a greater understanding of the phenomenon of interest. These descriptions were also necessary to understand the themes concerning the experiences and motivation of mothers on the tenure track.

The review of participants' transcripts led to the identification of 20 categories, which were reduced to four themes. The first theme of passion and performance detailed the mothers' experiences with relationships, performance, teaching, publications, and expectations. The second theme, comradery and context, developed from accounts of interacting with colleagues, work climate, family support, interaction with administration,

and reentry into the workplace. The third theme, a motherhood mentality, includes participants' experiences with balance, and societal and institutional expectations. Finally, the fourth theme, benefits and policies, includes mothers' experiences with institutional policies, stop-the-clock policies, Family Medical Leave Act, and healthcare policies.

### **Figure 1**

*Theme 1: Passion and Performance*



*Note.* Figure 1 displays the initial categories identified from participants' transcripts. The percentages represent the number of transcripts containing each category listed out of the total number of nine participant transcripts. The theme of passion and performance emerged from participant voices.

### **Theme 1: Passion and Performance**

One of the central themes that emerged from the experiences of mothers on the tenure track was the passion for teaching and the job itself. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), the work itself would be a motivator to greater job satisfaction. Herzberg et al.

identified the actual work of employees as fostering a sense of self and accomplishment. Figure 1 shows the accounts of participants who mentioned experiences with various work tasks and performance in the workplace.

Mothers detailed experiences of teaching, research, and publications. Participants disclosed working at colleges and universities that valued teaching over research as a priority. Of these experiences, descriptions of their performance on work tasks, and their “love of teaching” was mentioned. Within the work itself, 88% of mothers detailed experiences around fulfilling research duties. These mothers spoke of a burden of research, which led to a less satisfied experience, or a positive research task and an overall enjoyment meeting this work task. In comparison to research work tasks, service tasks were described by 55% of participants. These participants talked of service opportunities positively as they contributed to their motivation and negatively as they lessened their motivation to fulfill service work.

Each mother detailed experiences with teaching, making up 100% of the coded data under the teaching category. Mothers described positive teaching experiences and building relationships with their students. As participants detailed stories around teaching, positive work motivation was described in experiences of lesson planning and creating a positive learning atmosphere for students. Parenting and providing learning opportunities for students was mentioned by 11% of participants as an “intertwined” role, adding positively to the motivating factor.

Publications were an area of performance mothers mentioned as an experience on the tenure track. Detailed accounts of publishing uncertainties and successes made up 33% of participant data. Mothers felt motivated to perform at work when they saw their name published. Likewise, the expectations around work tasks, in particular publishing,

research, and service requirements, encompassed descriptions from 44% of participants. The work tasks expectations led to a more satisfied and motivated mother as experiences told of clear expectations and value for their performance.

Peggy described her teaching as having a reciprocal relationship with her students. She mentioned that “students have to want to watch the videos you create” and take the time to perform the expected work. Additionally, she described a passion for research, noting that her subject area is “really interesting” to her.

If participants did not enjoy the work related to the job itself, they expressed lower satisfaction levels. Josie shared her experience with teaching and less satisfaction with the work:

I had to teach a lot of new classes about stuff that I’ve never thought about. The stretching apart of knowledge, my expertise. Then I am observed, and somebody tells me, “Hey, you don’t know enough about that.” I don’t because it’s not my expertise.

Central to the work of tenure track mothers are the professional learning opportunities within the workplace. Mothers described having a sense of pride when they felt valued for their work through monetary incentives or departmental promotions. Additionally, mothers disclosed feelings of satisfaction as they engaged in collaborative work within their departments on specific projects. Bonnie found her satisfaction and promotion affected, in part, by her collegial support. She said, “I surrounded myself with people that I thought were really supportive. I actually factored that in when I made the decision to accept a new position on campus.”

Alternatively, mothers felt less satisfied when they did not have access to professional development opportunities or did not feel valued for the work they put in.

Participants mentioned an older mentality from already-tenured faculty not recognizing their accomplishments. Carla described her experience as a postdoc and the disadvantage of prior research not counting toward tenure accomplishments. She discussed,

The issue of bringing in prior years. Since I was a postdoc, I didn't have a tenure track. But those years after PhD and those publications don't seem to really matter as much. They still want me to do the full tenure clock, which for me, looking at my record and my publications, the numbers, there's no reason really why I couldn't [get tenure] early.

Additional descriptions detailing work tasks were the experience with institution representation and the service, grants, and conferences available to mothers on the tenure track.

Conferences and service contribute to the value employees feel from their workplace, and mothers on the tenure track felt strongly about those work responsibilities. At her institution, Amy had an additional incentive for completing her work, explaining, "There's an additive monetary incentive to include people from other departments, and so that's really helped me network a lot."

Mothers like Amy shared the ability to attend conferences as enhancing their knowledge base, providing value in their expertise, and being part of a collaborative environment. This responsibility towards work commitments and service captured job satisfaction and external motivators as participants described accomplishments in the workplace and availability of professional development opportunities.

Motivation was lower in certain instances when mothers could not participate in professional development opportunities. Amy described access to programs as inhibiting work tasks:

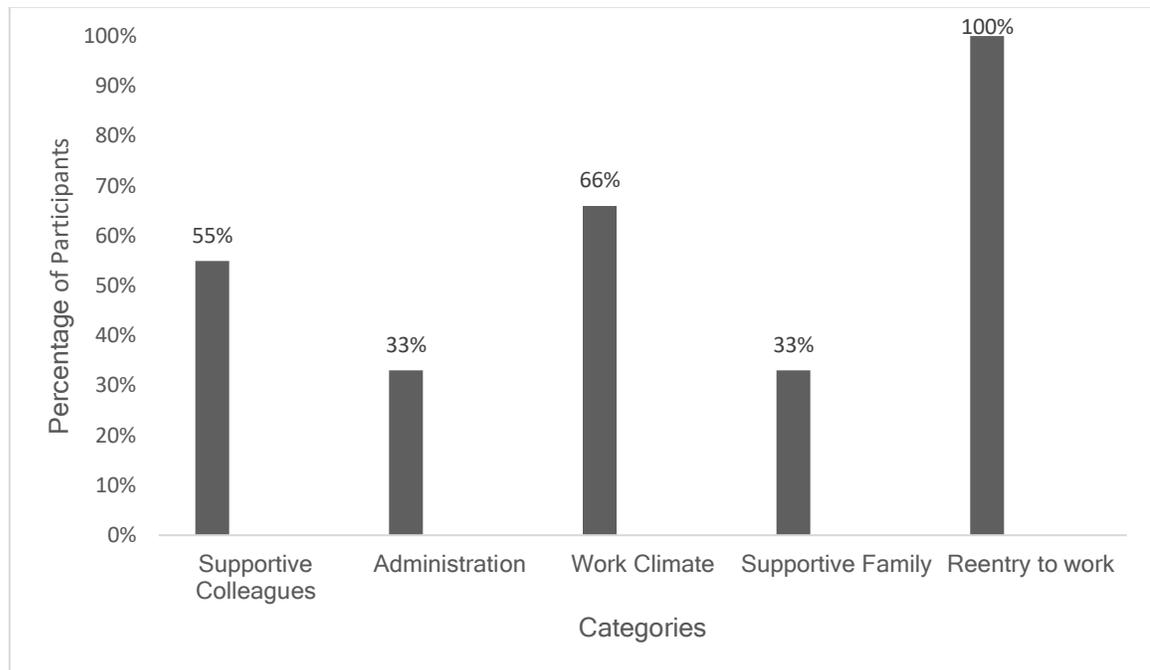
Some of them were just things that we don't have access to. We don't use the Google platform; we're limited in that sense. Everything has to go through some sort of approval process. I feel like we do have professional development funds that we can use, but a lot of us end up using it to pay students to do work or go to conferences.

Peggy echoed Amy's dissatisfaction with growth and service opportunities, saying, "There hasn't been a lot of service obligations, either." Bonnie identified the advancement opportunities in her home department as "poor."

Overall, the theme of passion and performance encompasses the experiences mothers on the tenure track have had as they fulfill their work tasks of teaching, research, and service commitments. Positive motivators for the participants in this research study included opportunities to attend conferences, building relationships with students, and autonomy to perform work tasks. As mothers (nine) described responsibilities at work, a predictor of their motivation also included lived experiences with work climate and relationships within the workplace as detailed in Figure 2.

## Figure 2

### Theme 2: Comradery and Context



*Note.* Figure 2 shows the initial categories identified from participant transcript. The percentage of participants shows the number of mothers who spoke about each category out of the total number of nine participants transcripts.

### Theme 2: Comradery and Context

A significant emergence gleaned from the data analysis was experiences of support, relationships, and context of the work environment. Within this theme are the initial categories of colleagues and family support experienced by tenure track mothers in this research study. Figure 2 shows percentages of tenure track mothers who experienced relationships, work climate, and reentry to work, positively or negatively in the workplace, and the impact this had on their motivation.

As mothers detailed experiences within the workplace, 55% of mothers underscored the importance of positive relationships with colleagues and having a support network within the workplace as a motivating factor. Also an important support

system for some mothers, 33% of participants discussed a supportive familial structure to help with child-raising responsibilities. These positive support relationships with colleagues and family led to greater feelings of motivation. Participants described the work climate as positive or negative in relation to a family-friendly atmosphere. Of mothers who described work climate, 66% of participants, 33% of mothers experiencing work climate as a factor, felt less motivated and left previous institutions when family-friendly climates were nonexistent. In contrast, family-friendly climates with flexible scheduling, and allowance of children in the workplace made 33% of mothers feel content and more motivated to stay at their institution while raising a family.

The category of administration in the workplace was mentioned by 33% of participants. Mothers detailed accounts of supportive administrators who were also mothers and created more of a mentoring atmosphere at work. These mothers felt more valued and motivated in the workplace. Alternatively, mothers who detailed toxic leadership styles and less positive work-family culture with scheduling and family needs were less motivated and “cautious” of asking their administrators for guidance.

Reentry to work was mentioned by all participants as they described experiences reentering their work roles after maternity leave. For some mothers, positive experiences of relating to other working mothers within their departments created a sense of comradery in the workplace. Moreover, mothers who had a negative experience returning to work ultimately left their original departments or institutions for more positive work climates. Thus, the timeline and context surrounding reentry into the workplace has a direct impact on motivation for the mothers in this research study.

Tenure track mothers shared the social aspect of their job experiences. Mothers rely on relationships to get their jobs done. Faculty and familial support affect their

ability to interact, network, and collaborate in the workplace, leading to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The mothers in this study identified supportive colleagues as an essential motivating factor in their job satisfaction. Natalie described strong, positive relationships with her colleagues. Peggy mentioned, "I'm able to collaborate on a lot of projects." Higher-up faculty also expressed the importance of working relationships. Kim credited her supportive dean as central to her motivation, explaining, "She gives grace for all kinds of things. I would imagine that is not the case for all chairs and deans."

When asked about familial support related to their job responsibilities, many mothers mentioned having supportive partners. Carla said her husband's unwavering support was imperative to her success. She related,

He's been largely a stay-at-home dad, so he primarily cooks for dinner for all of us, but he has started a part-time job. So those responsibilities have shifted a little bit more. He's been a huge support for my profession.

Robin discussed her husband's support:

He's been really involved, and we kind of take turns dealing with the difficult stuff. He knows the pressures of trying to get tenure and being an academic. He knows my job doesn't just stop at 4 [p.m.]. He knows it's something that's just kind of an ongoing thing all week. I'm fortunate in that way; I know others are not.

Mothers also mentioned the importance of workplace relationships in networking, collegiality, and collaboration. Kim referenced a "collegiate environment" and supportive colleagues as reasons she enjoys her work. Peggy detailed her relationship with a

colleague who also identified as a mother and how they had completed projects together and collaborated in the workplace:

Jane is the colleague that I've collaborated with a lot that has five children. I feel like she's a really great friend. She's kind of like a big sister to me academically because she's just a couple of years ahead of me.

Mothers felt less empowered when they saw more tension between faculty and their department. Participants identified negativity around leadership and problems derived from a lack of concern. Bonnie, Carla, and Natalie mentioned tensions around administration. Robin noted that her department lacked a good relationship with higher-ups, particularly the Board of Regents. Peggy went into detail about her negative experience in the workplace at her previous institution:

There's always personality conflicts. It's hard to tell if it's a gender dynamic or it's a power dynamic. There was one woman I was struggling with, and I actually had to go to Human Resources because there was an issue where she said something to my chair. She said I was emotionally unintelligent [and] I didn't care about people. And so he brought me in and was like, "This is a con; this is a problem that this person has noticed." I went and talked to HR and they basically just told me to kind of keep my head down and not make anybody angry.

Collegial relationships in the workplace and family support indicated the importance of collaboration and support. Mothers described the workplace context as a contributor to feelings of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation. Work-family culture and reentry experiences after maternity leave were common topics shared by participants.

Mothers talked about the family-friendly atmosphere of their departments. Carla discussed the work-family culture at her institution and the acceptance culture around creating family-work balance:

Culturally, it's a very balanced university in terms of work-life balance. A lot of people spend time outside and spend time with their family, so there isn't that pressure to be working all the time. That's more of a cultural [thing], even up to the provost. They talk about that balance. I feel very supported in that way that, by having kids and things, it doesn't put me at any type of disadvantage.

Robin also mentioned feeling supported by her department and the "family-friendly" culture at her workplace. Amy described a work-family culture that was "super flexible." She detailed a collaborative effort around supporting families:

I am very appreciative of that; we can bring our kids in. It is not uncommon to see someone in the classroom with their kiddo in a little carrier, teaching class. It's not uncommon for kids to be in offices and one of the faculty members to say, "Hey, I've got to do this. Do you mind watching him for a second?" We're a small program and we all know each other and our department pretty well. The kids all know each other. There is kind of an unspoken policy of "do whatever you need to do to make it work." We all make it work together, which is nice.

Mothers experienced greater dissatisfaction in departments with less family-work culture. Carol described her experience at an institution that did not value family-work culture. She said, "I would prefer to have a place that's more supportive of mothers. It feels like there's not a lot of women at work that have young kids."

Mothers variously expressed satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation with reentry into their tenure track positions after maternity leave. Participants described the

“fast pace of academia” and sleep deprivation. Most mothers felt overwhelmed at first, trying to “juggle it all”; other participants expressed contentment remembering what life was like “before I became a mom.”

Mothers in more supportive family-work cultures described their experiences of returning to work more favorably and did not feel “discredited” due to having a child.

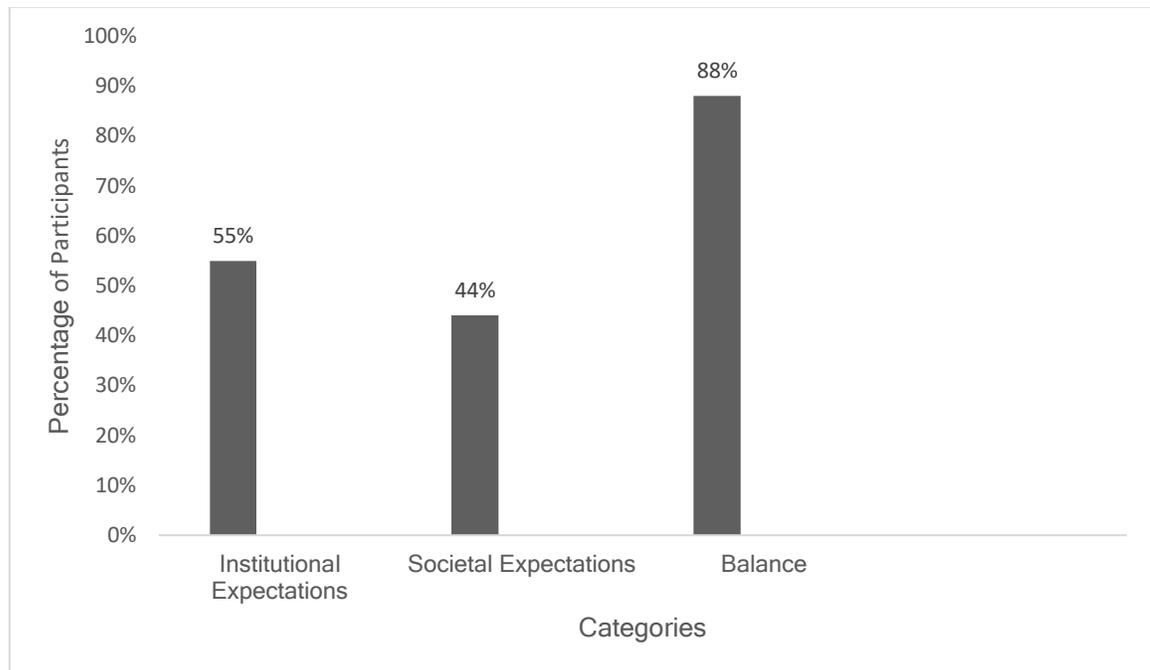
Amy recalled returning to work and being unsure of what the higher-ups would accept:

I think, informally with my colleagues, it’s really understandable. People are really flexible and understanding. But I don’t know if that’s something I can put in writing to the proposal that the president of the board of trustees reads; I don’t know at what level that becomes unacceptable.

Contrasting lived experiences arose as mothers described times on the tenure track when they transferred institutions due to unfavorable experiences regarding work-family culture. Ultimately, mothers were less motivated to stay at their institution due to negative reactions upon returning to work. Kim described her experience at a previous institution with a less positive work-family culture, saying, “I ended up at a different job first that was not a good fit. I was there for three years, and then I moved to my current job.” Additionally, Peggy discussed hearing, “She’s really on the mommy track. She should be taking more time for her children.” These experiences led to mothers feeling less motivated and leaving their institutions for a more positive work-family culture as they continued on the tenure track. As mothers described relationships and the workplace culture, the topics of work performance, balance, and overall motivation emerged, illustrated below in Figure 3.

### Figure 3

#### *Theme 3: A Motherhood Mentality*



*Note.* Figure 3 visually represents the initial categories identified from participant transcripts. Additionally, the percentage of participants shows the total number of mothers who mentioned each category within their transcript out of the nine participant transcripts in this research study.

#### **Theme 3: A Motherhood Mentality**

The influence of motherhood influenced participants' satisfaction in various ways. Participants expressed feelings of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation related to internal pressures of achievement, underperformance, and overperformance. Mothers discussed institutional expectations, perceptions, and societal expectations of working mothers.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of participants who mentioned the identified categories within the theme of A Motherhood Mentality. Displayed are the three identified categories from the initial coding of institutional expectations, societal

expectations, and balance. Mothers described their experiences with each of these factors within the workplace and how it impacted their motivation.

As shown, 55% of participants described institutional expectations during their tenure track process. Three mothers mentioned working in departments with lower institutional expectations around publications and research combined with the challenge of added ambiguity around what their department expects in terms of research and publication requirements for tenure. Peggy spoke of being permitted to bring in two years on the tenure track from her previous institution and 14 publications, making her feel comfortable about meeting her tenure expectations. Likewise, Josie discussed needing seven publications by her third-year tenure review. Josie also mentioned the challenge to publish interdisciplinary articles and the length of time it takes to complete each article for publication. Similarly, Carol disclosed her feelings about going up for tenure early and the uncertainty of what happens after she has tenure in terms of her salary and job security. Oppositional perspectives to tenure publication requirements were described by two mothers who felt their institutional expectations of research and publications were “unrealistic” and an added burden to their work tasks.

The influence of motherhood affected participants’ satisfaction in various ways. Participants expressed feelings of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation related to internal pressures of achievement, underperformance, and overperformance. Mothers discussed institutional expectations, perceptions, and societal expectations of working mothers. Thus, internal and external work factors contributed to participant motivation within the workplace.

Carla spoke about being “very active” in raising her kids, structuring her schedule in “chunks of time” to fulfill her motherly role by “taking the kids to school and those

types of responsibilities.” Mothers also expressed institutional expectations and how motherhood has impacted some workplace commitments. Carol discussed needing to be okay with saying “no”:

If I was already post-tenure, it would be a lot easier to say no. Sometimes I feel like I can’t say no to certain things. I’m home at nights and weekends. I don’t do as many hobbies where I’m learning something, like I’m growing in that way, but I work out, and I have a good social support and do a lot with my kids.

Peggy and Robin detailed expectations around service obligations and motherhood. Peggy talked about the challenge of understanding research boundaries and learning to be a “really good mom” and “do it all” well. Robin explained, “I know there are expectations there, but I’m at a teaching university, and there’s more of a push to accommodate families. If you go to conferences now, there are breastfeeding rooms.” She also shared thinking she could “achieve more,” but it would take away from her family time.

In contrast, Carla detailed feeling less motivated on the tenure track due to policy, expectations, and societal norms placed on tenure track mothers. Carla made suggestions to accommodate mothers, saying,

I feel like there’s things that universities could do, whether it’s from policies, from coaching chairs, from the tenure clock, extensions to realistic research—it’s communication and expectations that would make it a better culture for women, for women to feel more supported while they’re going through the process. I’ve just always been made to feel like I’m not never doing enough.

Previous researchers have discussed lower productivity compared to childless counterparts not needing to go through tenure clock stoppages (Mason et al., 2013).

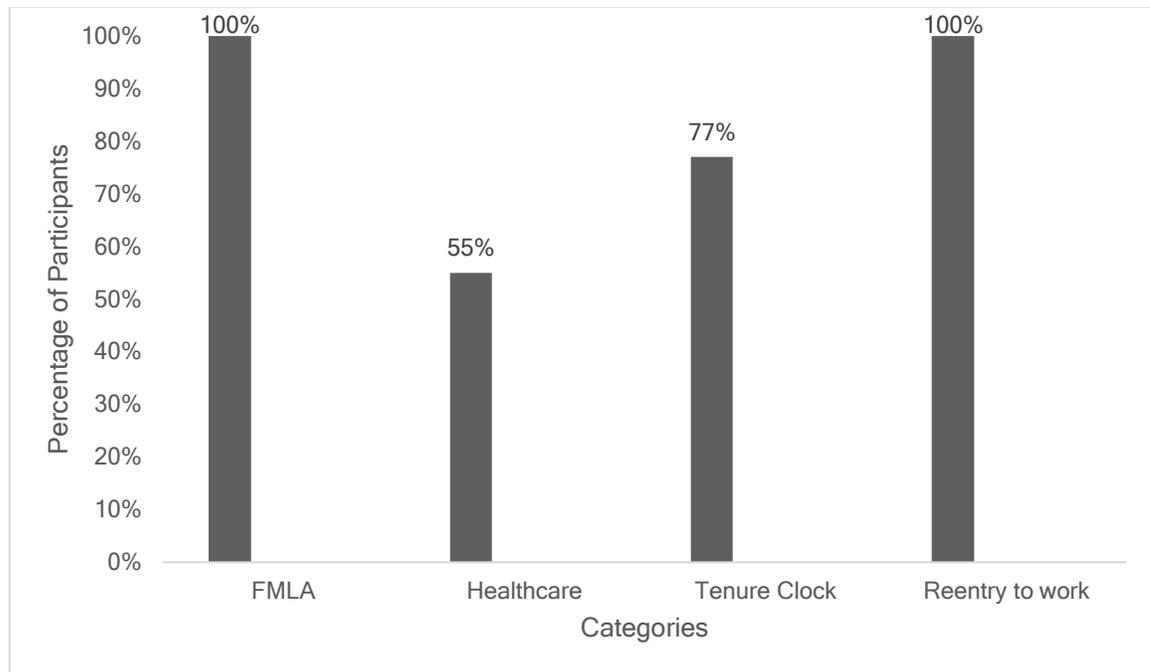
Likewise, Carol shared the influence of motherhood on her motivation on the tenure track:

The workload itself, I think, is hard. Mentally, you have that affirmation because you see people who either don't have kids or men that are having kids that [are] obviously not having to take the breaks. They're not working through brain fog. They're not working through nausea, and you can see their output, and you have to tell yourself, "I'm okay with the output that I'm putting in." Or I see my friend's willingness to work most weekends, which I'm not.

Mothers' discussions about lived experiences with institutional and societal expectations regarding motherhood also included feelings of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation influences regarding institutional benefits and policies, shown in Figure 4.

## Figure 4

### *Theme 4: Benefits and Policies*



*Note.* Figure 4 displays the initial identified categories from participant transcripts. The y-axis shows the percentage of participants who mentioned each category out of the overall total of nine participant transcripts.

### **Theme 4: Benefits and Policies**

The last theme to emerge from the data is Benefits and Policies. Mothers described experiences with Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), healthcare, and tenure clock policies. Figure 4 displays the percentage of participants who detailed accounts of experiencing these benefits and policies while on the tenure track. The most experienced benefit described by 100% of participants in this study was their experience with the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) policy at their institution. Mothers defined the federal policy as twelve weeks unpaid leave as “standard” at their department. Of these mothers, experiences were less satisfying and left each mother desiring a choice of paid time (other than using personal time) to cover their maternity leave. Only one mother

interviewed described a positive experience with FMLA and maternity leave. This experience was perceived as “good” and she did not feel any pressure to do work while on maternity leave.

Healthcare policies for mothers on the tenure track were described by 55% of mothers in this research study. Mothers who had more positive experiences with healthcare mentioned the importance of healthcare for their children and viewed the benefit as a reason to stay at their institution and try to have additional children. Negative experiences with healthcare costs for some participants led to higher turnover in the workplace and an added burden of performing hiring duties in their department. The description of high turnover and rising healthcare costs was a negative perception towards the institution benefits; 11% of mothers interviewed shared their disappointment with department colleagues leaving due to a lack of benefits accommodating to families.

An additional policy in the workplace mothers mentioned as an influence on their motivation is the tenure clock. Of the mothers who described tenure clock usage, stoppage, or reviews, 66% of the 77% of participants who mentioned tenure clock policies had negative experiences during their time on the tenure track. Mothers felt experiences of ageism and had an added concern of how their maternity leave will “look” on their tenure review. These mothers found it difficult to adapt to the tenure system. As participants detailed accounts of experiences with tenure policy, 11% described feeling the tenure system was not built for women.

Herzberg et al. (1959) theorized motivation as a two-factor concept involving motivational factors and maintenance factors. In this study, mothers mentioned satisfaction and dissatisfaction with university benefits and policies, both notable

maintenance factors. Overall, employees who are satisfied with workplace benefits and policies are motivated by their work (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Participants described institutional policy, such as FMLA and the ability to take a maternity leave following the birth of their child. Kim recalled a positive experience using her university's maternity leave policy, indicating a feeling of satisfaction:

I think that they're pretty good. I get a whole semester off. Luckily, I had my baby the first week of the semester, too. I've essentially had three whole months with her. That's been really great. I'm almost positive dads also get that, which is nice.

Natalie talked about her dissatisfaction with benefits and policy while on the tenure track. She identified her institution as not having a set policy. Natalie felt fortunate her chair was also a mother, as she explained,

They were just—it would be sort of individualize. You work it out case by case, which was the current procedure at the time that I had my child. And I was really lucky to have a department chair who I've known for a long time, who I really trust, who is also a mom.

Amy echoed dissatisfaction with her university's health care policy and the high cost of coverage for her family. She discussed how poor health insurance was negatively affecting her university:

I was a bit shellshocked when I found out those that coverage fee had essentially tripled. If it was just me that affected, I probably would just suck it up because we love where we are. But I just see it all the time. There's people that leave all the time, and that's a major reason.

Josie described her institution's policy with FMLA and the guidelines of a paid 12 weeks off. However, she was dissatisfied from a global standpoint, having grown up in Europe:

I was born and raised in Germany, so I come from a completely different cultural background of a family policy. My institution offers to every faculty or staff member the normal 12 weeks paid and that we as faculty can make these decisions of what I described earlier: the teaching load and the terms where we want to do it. I think it's flexible enough if I could compare it to America in general.

Robin was highly satisfied with her university's benefits and underscored her willingness to stay at her current job due to the benefits for families. However, she shared current contract negotiations and the possible changes to maternity leave, and other benefits she feels are crucial to mothers on the tenure track and the negative impact it may have. She explained, "Family Medical Leave, maternity, adoption leave—it's all on the chopping block in contract negotiations. It's awful what they want to take."

Tenure clock policies receive coverage in the literature about mothers working in higher education (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Participants discussed feelings of content and uncertainty with tenure clock extensions and overall policies as they have worked on the tenure track as mothers. Mothers related experiencing satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation related to tenure clock policies.

Carol referenced mothers who need to use a tenure clock extension, saying, "I understand it's important for people to be able to extend their tenure clock, especially when they're not able to do their research. It's also kind of a penalty if you want to go up early or go up at the normal time."

Providing a more positive perspective on the stop-the-tenure-clock policy, Kim stated, “If I want to stop my clock because of maternity leave, then [I’ll] just do it.” Carol also shared a desire for a stop-the-tenure-clock policy at her university and the problem with departments setting policy guidelines. She explained, “Right now, there is no stop-the-tenure-clock policy, and some women are getting hit harder than others.” She spoke of advocating for her university to create fair policies for men and women to use for the birth of a child, including tenure clock stoppages.

Mothers considered benefits and policies to be important aspects of their experiences working on the tenure track. Such considerations and perks impacted how they viewed their own work achievements and the sense of professional value held by their institutions.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provided a detailed description of the findings from participant interviews revealing the factors and experiences relating to job motivation for mothers on the tenure track in higher education. Four themes emerged from the data related to the passion tenure track mothers have for their jobs (Theme 1), relationships in the workplace (Theme 2), the mentality of motherhood on their motivation (Theme 3), and the impact of benefits and policies (Theme 4) on their motivation. The findings showed that mothers wanted to feel valued for their work performance and part of a supportive department. When mothers did not feel valued at their institution, they were less satisfied with their tenure track experience.

This study’s findings showed key ideas related to tenure track mothers’ job satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation. Personal growth and advancement for mothers were motivators for mothers on the tenure track. Additionally, positive

experiences with collaboration and support in the workplace also contributed to job satisfaction and motivation. Mothers experienced dissatisfaction and lower motivation when not fulfilling expectations or working in negative institutional climates.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to illuminate the lived experiences of tenure track mothers and the influence of identified barriers on their motivation. This study fills a gap in the literature to better understand the motivational factors contributing to mothers working on the tenure track. Nine working mothers from various higher education institutions and departments took part in semi-structured interviews about their tenure track experiences.

This research study was an exploration of three research questions. Chapter 5 presents the key findings, limitations, and implications, including how this study contributes to the theoretical, empirical, and educational understanding of job motivation for mothers on the tenure track. The chapter concludes with educational leadership suggestions for further research.

### **Summary**

The context and themes of this study provide the foundation for understanding motivation as it relates to identified barriers and mothers on the tenure track. Four themes—passion and performance (theme 1), context and comradery (theme 2), a motherhood mentality (theme 3), and policies and benefits (theme 4)—emerged from articulations of motivational and maintenance factors of interviewed participants and provided the framework for understanding the research questions:

1. What factors are motivating to mothers pursuing tenure at a college or university?
2. How do identified barriers influence maintenance factors in the workplace for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

3. What influence has motherhood had on job motivation for mothers on the tenure track at a college or university?

Mothers in this study expressed job motivation in terms of satisfaction or dissatisfaction related to the actual work they performed, including teaching and research. Participants felt satisfaction from teaching and building positive relationships with their students, ensuring their students felt valued. As they discussed their work responsibilities, the mothers conveyed a sense of pride and accomplishment. Dissatisfaction or reduced motivation resulted from perceived barriers of research, tenure expectations, and unappreciation in the workplace.

Participants also described supportive familial and collegial relationships as motivators to their job. Motivation occurred during colleague collaboration on research projects and via network of mothering support from peers who were also mothers. Mothers who were not supported by their institutional faculty experienced dissatisfaction within the work climate. Positive relationships were a contributing motivator to work for all interviewed mothers.

The emergence of a “motherhood” mentality developed as mothers discussed experiences of a mental barrier to overperform, restructure productivity, or challenge societal expectations of motherhood and tenure track experiences. Mothers described not wanting to be “discredited” or needing to “overperform” because they have had a child, which affected participant job motivation.

Last, participants’ experience with the maintenance factors of institutional benefits and policies led to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Mothers described maternity leave, stop-the-tenure-clock policies, and health care contributing to their motivation. Most mothers revealed positive experiences with flexibility and being able to

bring their child to work or pickup their child from childcare, as needed. Less job satisfaction was apparent when mothers described utilizing stop-the-tenure-clock policies and the perception of penalties against them, as well as negativity from the administration about pregnancy and productivity levels in the workplace. Additionally, the maintenance factors of unclear policies and fewer paid maternity leaves led to lower job satisfaction.

Multiple reviews of the data, horizontalization of transcripts across participants, and triangulation of various data sources (transcripts, researcher's journal, member checking) led to the emergence of four themes. The four themes emerging from mothers' lived experiences on the tenure track in higher education have received attention in the literature. A worthy contribution to the literature on the emerging themes is the impact of specific factors on mothers' motivation in this phenomenological research study. The arisen themes of work passion and performance, comradery and work context, motherhood and the impact on one's mentality, and institutional benefits and policies are underscored as influential to the motivation of mothers on the tenure track. Higher educational institutions can benefit from department and institutional leaders who proactively seek to build inclusive work climates, provide opportunities for growth, and formalize policies outlined for working mothers on the tenure track.

### **Key Findings and Conclusions**

This qualitative phenomenological study exploring the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers pursuing tenure in higher education identified workplace factors leading to a lower or greater sense of motivation for working mothers. Motivational factors of challenging work, relationships with colleagues, and autonomy around creating a flexible schedule led to mothers feeling more motivated to stay at their institution. In contrast, maintenance factors of high healthcare costs, limited childcare,

and negative work climate evoked feelings of dissatisfaction which led to mothers feeling less motivated to stay at their institution.

More favorable work factors were presented as mothers described their experiences with work tasks while on the tenure track, a passion for the work itself (i.e., teaching, service, and research) permeated their words. Many participants spoke of a love for teaching and building reciprocal relationships with their students, which created feelings of satisfaction and motivation to work. This workplace factor of passion regarding work tasks is congruent with the literature on university teachers and a passion for teaching and relationships with students as a contributor to motivation (Ghazi et al., 2013).

Next, lived experiences of work responsibilities also included mothers describing publishing requirements and their overall productivity on the tenure track. Publication requirements varied for each participant. Mothers in this study spoke of the unclear publication requirements. Three mothers detailed accounts of one publication a year, while two mothers spoke of published articles from a previous institution counted towards their current tenure review. One mother discussed some people waiting five or six years to go up for tenure while “overachievers” go up for tenure within three years. Overall, the lived experiences of mothers feeling satisfied with publications requirements for tenure influenced participant motivation to stay employed by their institution.

Fulfillment of professional responsibilities, including tenure expectations, was also present in previous literature by Waltman et al. (2012). Mothers felt greater satisfaction and overall positive motivation when completing articles for publication, either solo or collaboratively. Workplace relationships was a contributing factor to work task completion mentioned by all participants in this study. Herzberg et al. (1959) found

relationships to be a maintenance factor. More recently, studies have shown relationships within higher education working environments as a motivating force for employees (Rich, 2015).

The factor of work climate was present in detailed narratives of lived experiences by mothers on the higher educational tenure track. Experiences including relationships with faculty, colleagues, and administration resonated with working mothers as they retold of collaborative work projects, toxic administrators, or family-friendly environments. The data showed intersectionality between the relationships mothers experience at work and the perception of the overall work climate. Participants detailed the importance of a work-family culture within the workplace that embodies a positive family vibe. The influence of work-family culture and work climate also appears in the literature (Rawung, 2013; Thompson et al., 1999).

Mothers described wanting to stay at an institution led by an administrator who valued them as both faculty and mothers. In contrast, participants mentioned toxic leadership and colleagues' negativity as reasons they left previous tenure track positions. Stressing the importance of leadership style and relationships between administrators and faculty, Tu and Lu (2016) emphasize the importance of effective leaders building relationships with employees to have a greater influence of retention in the workplace and a desire to stay employed at their institution.

This study contributed to the more recent notion of relationships being a motivating factor if fulfilled positively within the workplace. Combined, supportive relationships of colleagues and family comprised 88% of participant experiences within the workplace. This finding shows relationships and workplace support as a strong positive or negative predictor of motivation. Moreover, participants discussed

relationships with deans and chairs as positively or negatively affecting their motivation and willingness to stay at their workplace. Mothers within this study were less motivated to stay at their institution when their dean or chair was negatively influencing their ability to perform at work. Specifically, mothers spoke of a less family-friendly atmosphere and leadership style influencing their decision to leave their institution. Machado-Taylor et al. (2010) discussed relationships with colleagues as a motivation for higher education faculty. In this study, mothers described feeling supported by colleagues and mentors who identified as mothers. Building relationships, supportive mentorship, and effective leadership are present within the body of literature on motivation for mothers working in higher education (Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Larson et al., 2019; Tu & Lu, 2016).

Lower job motivation was described by participants as they detailed accounts of higher educational tenure policies. Participants in this study voiced experiences of unclear and ambiguous tenure expectations regarding number of publications, tenure reviews, and steps of the tenure process. This uncertainty differentiated the performance experiences of mothers on the tenure track. Mothers detailed lived experiences with being permitted to bring in years on the tenure track from previous institutions, needing a certain number of publications, and how they are perceived during tenure reviews by other faculty and administration. Participants spoke of a mental barrier to overperform in order to compensate for having a child while on the tenure track. Other mothers discussed a mentality to lower their performance expectations and realize the influence motherhood has had on their family-work balance.

The number of publications, going up for tenure review, and steps from assistant to associate professor were discussed as mothers detailed accounts of ambiguity around tenure expectations. Larson et al. (2019) also discussed these mentalities of tenure

expectations. Additionally, research has shown that an awareness of expectations, including tenure requirements and promotion, leads to higher satisfaction levels (Bauer et al., 2007; Ponjuan et al., 2011). All participants in this study discussed the influences of institutional benefits and policies on their motivation on the tenure track.

The strongest predictor within the theme of motherhood and mentality affecting participants' motivation was balance. Mothers (eight) described experiences with finding a balance between motherhood and the workplace. Readjusting work schedules, prioritizing work tasks with family care, and striving for an overall ease of managing two roles was described by participants. Mothers who had a more family-friendly work climate were more content with not having a "perfect" balance between work and home life. Participants describing a less favorable work climate felt achieving a balance was simply "unrealistic". The guilt of striving to reach a balance in the workplace for mothers is present within the literature (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). For this study, workplace balance is one of the strongest predictors of motivation for mothers in higher education.

This study's findings showed the influence of institutional benefits and policies on mothers. Participants described positive and negative impacts on their satisfaction and motivation resulting from university benefits and policies. Previous researchers (e.g., Mason & Goulden, 2002, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Young & Wright, 2001) discussed stop-the-tenure-clock, health care, and childcare policies available to mothers in higher education. The literature acknowledges the struggles shared by mothers in this study about feeling less satisfied when negativity followed their requests for maternity leave (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Young & Wright, 2001).

Additionally, mothers discussed high health care costs and lack of childcare as negatively affecting their desire to stay at previous universities. One mother spoke of the

added burden of high turnover due to her university's inadequate health care benefits. Congruent with the body of literature on benefits for families in higher education (Young & Wright, 2001), these maintenance factors heavily influenced the mothers. In a study of university teachers, Ghazi et al. (2013) found a substantial reliance on maintenance factors to feel satisfied in the workplace, thus affirming the mothers' voices in this study on the influence of benefits and policies on their motivation. Previous research helps signify the contributions of this study. However, the analysis of this study revealed limitations.

### **Limitations**

A central limitation to this research was its timing, taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the study design needed to be conducive to current health guidelines of social distancing. Semi-structured interviews with participants took place using the Zoom platform. It was a desire to engage in journaling participant reactions (body and facial cues) for unbiased analysis, the true essence of face-to-face interviews was not possible.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, mothers were working remotely and simultaneously caring for their children. Ultimately, this affected recruitment efforts. Participants had to plan interviews around their work and childcare schedules. As a result, not all mothers on the higher education tenure track could find time to participate, limiting the potential pool of participants. Additionally, findings of this study did not analyze the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 on the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track.

Another prominent limitation was not requiring the participants be from primarily research universities or teaching colleges; the study included nine tenure track mothers

from solely teaching colleges and universities. The study results are not generalizable to research-intensive universities regarding active candidate tenure experiences or overall faculty policies. Given the limitations of COVID-19 pandemic, and participant selection, future research could benefit higher educational institutions and working mothers.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

This phenomenological study of the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track has theoretical, empirical, and educational implications. Consistent with previous literature, readjusting the motivating and maintenance factors in the workplace could better support tenure track mothers and positively affect motivation. The following sections present the intersectionality of this study and the theoretical implications relating to Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). There is an exploration of empirical implications to explain previous research on identified barriers and tenure track mothers as it relates to job motivation and the current findings. Lastly, a discussion of suggestions for further research details how higher education institutions could support tenure track mothers and serve as a contributing factor to increase overall job satisfaction and motivation.

### **Theoretical Connections**

This study captured the lived experiences of tenure track mothers and the influence of identified barriers to their motivation. Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) provided a foundational framework, aiding in the comprehension of how motivating and maintenance factors affect job satisfaction and overall motivation. This study fills the literature gap by illuminating the lived experiences of higher education tenure track mothers and the barriers they face influencing job motivation.

Herzberg's two-factor theory identifies the motivational factors of performance, personal growth, and autonomy (Herzberg et al., 1959). Mothers within this research study highlighted experiences with these workplace factors. Participants described a greater feeling of motivation as they engaged in enjoyable work tasks of research and teaching. Chu and Kuo (2015) also verified the motivator of work performance in enhancing motivation of teachers. Additionally, the flexibility of scheduling and greater autonomy mentioned by mothers in this study led to a greater motivation for work performance. The autonomy and work performance of teachers is an area of further research discussed by Chu and Kuo (2015) as needed within the body of literature on work motivation in higher education.

Lastly, this study captures the need for motivational studies on the factors of autonomy and growth for teachers (Chu & Kuo, 2015). The lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track underscored motivating factors of autonomy, growth, performance, and the intersectionality of benefits, policies, and work climate. This interconnectedness between the influences of work factors is applicable to Herzberg's two-factor theory and contributes to the validation of the framework in today's work context of higher education.

The work tasks and value an employee provides within the workplace directly benefit the higher educational institution. Participants in this study valued their performance on work-related tasks (the work itself) through positive experiences in building relationships with students and having opportunities for professional growth and advancement. Herzberg identified performance (the work itself) and advancement as motivating factors, something found in this study. However, according to the two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), relationships are a maintenance factor. For mothers on the

tenure track, the maintenance factor of relationships became a motivating factor, as it directly influenced the work tasks performed.

In this study, mothers on the tenure track also perceived the maintenance factors of policies and attitudes of administration, work conditions, and benefits as contributing factors to motivation. Participants described experiences influenced by these maintenance factors related to productivity and how valued they felt by their institutions. Mothers described family-friendly work climates and the level of support offered by administration as they detailed lived experiences around coordinating childcare and work schedules. Additionally, mothers spoke of the maintenance factor of benefits and policies and the influence of FMLA, tenure clock stoppages, healthcare, and the tenure policies leading to their feelings of job motivation. Thus, each maintenance factor contributed to participants feeling a greater sense of job motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959).

### **Empirical Connections**

In this study, the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track and the influence of identified barriers on their motivation were consistent with the literature. The findings affirmed the importance of understanding job motivation and the direct relation to how employees engage with their workplace. Previous researchers of tenure track mothers addressed the barriers of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Norrell & Norrell, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016; Young & Wright, 2001).

Participants in this study who described less motivation often left previous higher educational institutions, as presented in the literature (Christian et al., 2011; Costa, 2009). When mothers experienced negative attitudes from administration and colleagues upon workplace reentry after using FMLA or stop-the-tenure-clock policies offered by their

institution, they felt less motivated. This finding is consistent with previous research on higher education policies and the implications for working mothers (Bystydzienski et al., 2017; Mason & Goulden, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016).

Also consistent within previous research was the finding that negative experiences with utilizing university benefits created lower motivation (Young & Wright, 2001). Participants described ambiguity with tenure expectations as a barrier to their success. Larson et al. (2019) also discussed this experience.

Most importantly, this study fills the gap in motivational research in higher education settings for mothers on the tenure track. Mothers within this study illustrated lived experiences of the influences of family-work balance, work-family culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace barriers on their work motivation and factors.

Detailed accounts by participants spoke of positive and negative experiences with each workplace factor and barrier in relation to motivation as active candidates on the tenure track. Mothers in this research study underscore the importance of effective leadership, work climate, relationships, and challenge of work tasks.

### **Educational Implications and Recommendations**

This phenomenological study was an exploration of the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track in higher education. Data analysis indicated factors contributing to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and educational implications to higher educational institutions and administrators as well as working mothers in higher education.

Employees desire to fulfill work tasks when they feel valued by their workplace. In contrast, employees tend to leave workplace environments with negative climates and

perceptions of feeling less valued. Some mothers in this study spoke about leaving previous institutions during their tenure track to pursue a more pleasant work environment. Participants listed factors of policies, relationships, and negative work climate as reasons to leave. Bystydziński et al. (2017) echoed the influence of policies and administrative attitudes on the satisfaction of higher education faculty.

Mothers articulated lived experiences with effective administrators who embodied positive leadership skills. Present in the literature on leadership in higher education, Rawung (2013) asserts the importance of leadership style and employee motivation. Leaders with a more transformational style in support of employees are shown to have a more positive effect on motivation. These findings are echoed by the mothers' lived experiences in this research study. Thus, higher education leadership practices can benefit from understanding how leadership style influences motivation and job satisfaction of working mothers.

Another benefit to colleges and universities is the contribution of these findings regarding formalized policies. Mothers within this study detailed accounts of frustration and ambiguity around which policies are firm with their institution versus an "unwritten" policy from their department. The participants in this study desire restructuring family-friendly policies and work climates to promote a high family-work balance. Research by Hollenshead et al. (2005) supports these findings towards institutions striving to create formalized policies more inclusive of a balanced family-work climate for mothers working in higher education.

Motivation for mothers on the tenure track was a complex experience involving contributing factors represented in the literature. Mothers described positive experiences with teaching and research as motivating factors. Additionally, participants mentioned

flexibility to work around their child's schedules as a motivator to stay at their current institution. Family-work balance is essential to mothers' success on the tenure track (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, 2016). Mothers in this study discussed their experiences with balancing motherhood and the tenure track as it relates to their motivation, describing contentment and challenges.

This study presents insight into the lived experiences of mothers on the tenure track in higher education and the influence of identified barriers on job motivation. Although the findings provide new understanding contributing to work motivation and motherhood, more research is necessary to understand the motivation of mothers in higher education.

### **Future Research**

Researchers are starting to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on higher educational faculty (Krukowski et al., 2020). An article by Andrea O' Reilly (2020) discusses the impact COVID-19 has had on mothers who are scholars and the challenge of providing childcare for their children while working remotely. More specifically, the research addressed by O'Reilly (2020) on mothers in academia working remotely during COVID-19 details challenges with the push and pull of fulfilling parenting obligations and work roles during the pandemic. To address the difficulties the pandemic has placed on mothers in academia, the AAUP has amended their stop-the-tenure-clock policy to include an extension to reflect the effect COVID-19 has had on teaching, service, and publishing obligations (AAUP, 2020). This study did not analyze the influence of Covid-19 on the participants. Future studies on how the pandemic affected the working lives of mothers in higher education seeking tenure could be beneficial in developing additional inclusive policies of remote work and motherhood.

This was a qualitative study on the lived experiences of identified barriers to the motivation of mothers on the tenure track in higher education. Future research on mothers on the tenure track using a quantitative approach to measure which factors contribute to higher or lower levels of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and motivation could be beneficial to higher educational institutions. Thus, administrators and policymakers could positively address factors of high influence in the workplace.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This chapter included a discussion of the findings and theoretical, empirical, and educational implications of this phenomenological study exploring the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track in higher education. By gaining an understanding of the influence of barriers on the motivation of mothers on the tenure track in higher education, working mothers can feel supported, and institutions can have a greater representation of mothers in the workforce.

This qualitative study on the influence of identified barriers, work-family balance, family-work culture, stop-the-tenure-clock, and reentry into the workplace on the motivation of mothers pursuing tenure highlighted the influence of motivational and maintenance factors and the influence on job motivation.

For mothers working towards tenure, the motivational factors of work tasks, responsibilities to teaching and research, opportunity for promotion, autonomy of scheduling, and relationships in the workplace, led to a positive sense of motivation when mothers were afforded the flexibility to collaborate in an inclusive environment in the workplace with their administrators and colleagues. Mothers on the tenure track feel greater motivation when they can collaborate and build positive relationships with colleagues and engage in personal growth, such as professional development

opportunities and conferences. Additionally, mothers spoke of lived experiences and the positive self-fulfillment completing work tasks and maintaining mothering duties. Thus, the realization of self-fulfillment in the workplace, provided a greater sense of achievement and overall job motivation.

Likewise, the maintenance factors of benefits and policies, including childcare, healthcare, Family Medical Leave Act, and tenure clock policies, were influential to whether mothers stayed at their institution throughout their tenure or left an institution for a more inclusive workplace environment. Most mothers described a desire for more inclusive healthcare and childcare policies, as well as a more favorable tenure clock policy. Mothers expressed negative lived experiences when ambiguity around tenure clock extensions and unclear tenure policies including number of publications, steps from assistant to associate professor, and uncertainty of tenure reviews. Interviews also showed that mothers desired to feel valued by their institution and administration through a positive work climate.

This study capitalizes on the significance of job motivation in the workplace for mothers pursuing tenure in higher education. Leaders in higher education should be proactive by acknowledging the barriers mothers face in the workplace and the influence on employee motivation. By transforming institution policies and work climates to enhance the experiences of mothers in the workplace, faculty mothers will be better represented in higher education. The efforts to recognize job motivation of mothers in higher education can lead to a more inclusive, positive workplace for working mothers. Additionally, higher education institutions can benefit from more family-friendly policies and positive work climate to help support working mothers and increase retention rates for working mothers.

Ultimately, as higher educational policymakers focus on building positive relationships and begin to understand the importance of leadership style through the lens of motherhood, women can feel greater motivation in the workplace and an increased sense of purpose. Actively changing tenure policy, work climates, and systematic practices to be more fluid and transparent for parenting needs will undoubtedly lead to a larger percentage of working mothers who feel valued and committed to their tenure track institution.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Letter to Participants

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a current Educational Leadership doctoral candidate at Florida Southern College. In order to fulfill the requirements of my degree, I am conducting a research study on the influence of motivation on mothers on the higher education tenure track.

To obtain information for this study, I would like to interview mothers on the higher education tenure track. If you agree to participate, I will interview you on the online platform Zoom. The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Your participation and identity will remain confidential. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and information will be kept on password-protected services and in locked cabinets. I will provide a copy of the transcribed interview by email so you can verify their accuracy and make any necessary corrections. When the study is finished, I can send you a copy of the study results. As the participant, you understand the potential risks and how confidentiality will be maintained during and upon completion of this study. Please sign and electronically return this letter by email to the primary investigator, Christa Jodon at: [cjodon@mocs.flsouthern.edu](mailto:cjodon@mocs.flsouthern.edu).

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Primary Investigator

Date

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your experience with balancing work and family responsibilities?
2. Can you describe any familial support as it relates to your professional responsibilities?
3. What is your perception of family policy guidelines within your university?
4. What are your experiences with using a family policy at your university?
5. How have the benefits at your university impacted your satisfaction, if any, in the workplace?
6. How has your level of satisfaction, if any, changed during the tenure-track process toward your responsibility to teaching and professional-related commitments?
7. What experiences have you had in the workplace that you feel are barriers to achieving tenure?
8. How has your experience on the tenure track influenced your satisfaction, if any, with your personal growth and advancement opportunities?
9. Can you describe your relationships with your colleagues, administration, human resources, or your department?
10. Is there anything else you would like to mention about your professional experiences during your time on the tenure track?

## Appendix C

### Interview Script

Hello, thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. This research study is designed to illuminate the personal experiences of working mothers, who are active candidates for tenure at their college or university, and gain an understanding of the barriers they face, and the influence the barriers may have on their motivation levels. As a benefit to participating in today's interview, leaders in higher education could use this study's insights to provide working mothers on the tenure track with policies and resources to foster the presence of motivational factors and encourage academic success. By participating in this research study, you will be asked the interview questions electronically provided to you. Is there anything you would like to discuss with me before we start the interview?

## Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

**Title: A Qualitative Study Faculty Mothers and Identified Barriers Influencing Motivation: Experiencing Tenure in Higher Education**

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### Overview

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Christa Jodon who is a doctoral student at Florida Southern College. This person is called the Principal Investigator. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Lynda Wolverton. As such, Dr. Wolverton may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at Florida Southern College and is supported/sponsored by the institution. The purpose of the study is to explore the influence of identified barriers on the motivation of mothers working on the tenure track in higher education. Subjects will be asked by email to complete a 45-minute virtual interview through the online platform Zoom.

Subjects: You are being asked to take part because you are an active candidate for tenure at a college or university and the mother of a child/children between the ages of 0-5.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student status, course grade, recommendations, or access to future courses or training opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will not be compensated. This research is considered low risk. This study does not ask about any sensitive topics or experiences such as trauma or sexual related events. Additionally, the subjects are not considered to be part of a vulnerable population as identified by The Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR 46.111(b)) and Food and Drug Administration (21 CFR 56.111(b)).

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential.

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### **Why are you being asked to take part?**

You are being asked to take part because you are an active candidate for tenure at your college or university and the mother of a child/children between the ages of 0-5. Your participation will assist in research regarding the influence of identified barriers on motivation of mothers, on the tenure track, working in higher education.

### **Study Procedures**

You will be asked to complete a 45-minute virtual interview using the online platform Zoom. After screening eligibility through Qualtrics, you will be asked to electronically sign the informed consent form. After signing and emailing the informed consent form back to Christa Jodon [cjodon@mocs.flsouthern.edu](mailto:cjodon@mocs.flsouthern.edu) you will be sent a Zoom link with a password to conduct your recorded video interview. Once conducted, you will be emailed a copy of your interview transcript for your review. After the study is completed, you will be emailed a copy of the study results. Data will be kept on password protected devices of which the Primary Investigator has sole access. The devices are kept in a locked office. All data relating to the study will be destroyed after a period of five years.

### **Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**

You do not have to participate in this research study. You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student status or course grades.

### **Benefits and Risks**

You will not receive compensation for participation. However, the field of higher education could benefit from your participation in this study. This research is considered to be low risk.

### **Compensation**

You will not be compensated for participation in this study. You may withdraw for any reason from the study before completion.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are: the Principal Investigator, Advising Professor, and Florida Southern College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Your identifiers will be removed from your private records or your samples. Your information or samples could be used and/or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional consent from you or your Legally Authorized

Representative.

It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses because you are responding online. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet. However, your participation in this virtual interview involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. Subjects identifying information will be removed from all data and data will be stored on password secured devices.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, contact Dr. Lynda Wolverton at [lwolverton@flsouthern.edu](mailto:lwolverton@flsouthern.edu). If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, contact the FSC IRB by email at [fscirb@flsouthern.edu](mailto:fscirb@flsouthern.edu) or the Office of the Provost at 863-680-4124.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are. You can print a copy of this consent form for your records.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by proceeding with this consent form that I am agreeing to take part in research and I am 18 years of age or older.

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Signature of Investigator Date

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Signature of Subject Date

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Research at Florida Southern College involving human subjects is carried out with the oversight of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. Address questions regarding these activities to the HS-IRB Chair, email: [fscirb@flsouthern.edu](mailto:fscirb@flsouthern.edu); or Office of the Provost; phone (863)680-4124.