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Not Appropriate for Children: A Look At the Composition Practices and Rhetorical Strategies of Single Moms in Academia

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how single mothers in higher education across geographic locations, academic ranks, disciplines, and identities build support systems and draw on rhetorical strategies derived from their embodied knowledge to survive and navigate in academia. Single mother experiences are underrepresented in scholarship about parenting in higher education. This absence is evidenced in policies, systems, and structures that prioritize the needs of heteronormative family units. The lived experiences and material realities of single mothers reveal how their lives outside academia shape and are shaped by their lives within it, including scholarly activity, interactions with colleagues, and relationships with their children. This dissertation argues that higher education needs to make shifts to better support single mothers, thereby benefitting others who are marginalized due to race, class, gender, and ability.

In the introductory chapter, I incorporate autoethnography to explain the exigency for this research, and the context and purpose of this work. Chapter one provides insight about the underrepresentation of single moms in academic scholarship, as well as an overview of the theoretical frames for this dissertation: feminist standpoint theory, an ethics of hope and care, and intersectionality.

Chapter two, "A Literature Review of How (Single) Mothers Move Through and Experience Higher Education" offers a conceptual review of the literature that my work contributes to including work that represents mothers and single mothers in academia across disciplines, and single mothers in Composition and Rhetoric scholarship more specifically. In addition, Chapter two argues for the need to consider intersectionality when developing supportive policies, systems and structures by detailing how the experiences of single mothers and mothers of color are given limited consideration in conversations and research around policies and practices for families.

Chapter three, "Being Other: The Experiences of Single Academic Moms in Higher Education" argues for the need to change higher education institutions through offering greater

support systems and structures, and through acknowledging the people within academic institutions who support single moms and do the work to sustain higher education. The chapter focuses on the primary challenges single mothers experience related to money, time, childcare, and the second shift, and then explores what support means to single moms within the context of higher education.

Chapter four, "Moving Mountains: The Composition Practices of Single Moms," argues that single moms' lived experiences and material realities shape their composition practices. Drawing on interview data where single moms talk about how, when, and where they complete composition work (or not), I use testimonios as described by the Latina Feminist and a first-person narrative style, to share single moms' stories. My intention is to honor their stories as told by them, to allow readers to see not only what these women have experienced but also the words they use to describe those experiences.

Chapter five, "Do This or Crumble: Looking at the Rhetorical Strategies Single Moms Draw on to Push Against Intersectional Inequities" draws primarily on interview data, but also pulls in survey data to show how single moms respond to various rhetorical situations that emerge as a result of their experiences in higher education. In my analysis, I show how their embodied knowledge and their lives within and outside of higher education are intertwined, informing and shaping the rhetorical resources they draw on as they respond. The chapter draws on counterstory as a method, invoking "autobiographic reflection" as described by Aja Martinez (2020).

Chapter six, "Supporting Single Moms in Academia: Creating Institutional Structures and Systems" synthesizes the conclusions drawn from the data in each chapter to offer specific ways single moms in academia could be better supported. In this chapter, I explore some of the family-friendly policies and support systems already in place, and then suggest new directions for developing support systems and structures at classroom, departmental, disciplinary, and institutional levels to support single mothers, as well as individuals with marginalized subjectivities. Building from

the perspectives of the single mothers I surveyed and interviewed, I suggest not only new considerations of policy, but also how to shift the culture forward.

The Epilogue, "Keeping it Together While Falling Apart: Single Parenting During a Global Pandemic" uses survey data from single moms during the pandemic, and also incorporates popular articles and scholarship written about the experiences of single parents in academia during this time. It argues that the ability to improvise a solution to a problem when faced with a lack of resources (mêtis), and the rhetorical resilience (Flynn et al. 2012) single moms implement in the face of the pandemic strengthens the need for higher education to acknowledge their value and contributions, as well as develop institutional support systems and structures that show family-friendliness across parenting identities.

NOT APPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN: A LOOK AT THE COMPOSITION PRACTICES
AND RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF SINGLE MOMS IN ACADEMIA

by

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"Though their burdens—financial, social, and emotional—are considerably greater than those of two-parent families, they face the same fundamental issues as mothers face today…Rather than being a breed apart, single mothers are, I suggest, the proverbial miner's canaries" (Sidel 184).

In January 2017, I went from being a mother in academia to a single mother in academia. With a 2 ½ year old daughter and a semester into my doctoral program, I began to navigate the academic world I had known without regular support from a partner. I learned how to maximize 15-minute intervals to write seminar papers, how to compose emails to faculty and colleagues asking for extensions on assignments and incompletes and reschedules of meetings, how to explain class absences due to a sick child, and how to maneuver on an uphill campus with a stroller and a 2 ½ year old when she couldn't go to daycare. I grew comfortable with attending conferences for the shortest amount of time possible to ensure I could limit the childcare burden on family while I was out-of-town, and I learned how to respond to social event invitations with, "I can come if it's okay to bring my daughter," or, "That's a little late for me to bring Olivia, so we won't be able to make it." I accepted that my daughter and I being on screens at the same time was a means of academic survival if I wanted to finish my work, and I learned that reading Comp/Rhet scholarship to her was a good strategy for getting her to go back to sleep when she resisted bedtime.[1]

When I began this path of single motherhood in academia, I had no idea what lay ahead of me. I quickly learned that a graduate TAship salary is not enough to support two people, especially when one of them is in daycare full-time, and the other is commuting two hours multiple times a week for courses and teaching. I learned that I would need student loans to survive, and that I would need to adjust the expectations I set for myself when it came to parenting and academic work. I learned how to ask for help from my parents, my friends, my colleagues, my therapist, and social

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[1] A version of this introduction also appears in "Career Killer Survival Kit: Center Single Mom Perspectives in Composition and Rhetoric." *Composition Studies,* vol. 48, no. 1, Spring 2020, pp. 34-52.

services. I relied primarily on my own strategies and tactics, as well as the support of friends, family members, and departmental colleagues to continue moving forward. Within this network was a group of women in social media who all identify as single moms in academia, and it was the combination of my own experiences and reading about theirs that I began to realize how single moms struggle because of a lack of support in academia, and how single moms are incredibly resourceful, implementing their own composition practices and rhetorical strategies to get by.

Part of the need for this resourcefulness is because there are not always resources already in place to support parents of varying identities in academia, including single moms, so we need to create our own. Part of the need is out of a desire to avoid paying a motherhood penalty, which is evidenced in the ways women with children are paid less than their childfree colleagues, are perceived as less competent, less committed to their jobs, less dependable, and therefore, less likely to receive promotions and more likely to find the quality of their work under greater scrutiny (Correll et al.; Ward and Wolf-Wendel). Strategies for how to avoid the motherhood penalty can be found in books about motherhood in academia, which occasionally offer advice and guidance about how to avoid paying it—one such strategy is hiding the existence of pregnancy and/or children. In *Professor Mommy: Finding Work-Family Balance in Academia*, Rachel Connelly and Kristen Ghodsee suggest that even visual evidence of having a child can cause others to question a woman's commitment to her academic work, as they advocate for the absence of pictures of or by children in a mother's office, and they explain that "Senior members of your department may have pictures of their children in their offices, but colleagues and students will not perceive them as being less committed to their work if they have kids" (Location 2456 in Kindle Edition). Relatedly, Mary Ann Mason, Nicholas Wolfinger, and Marc Goulden describe how "many female respondents to the University of California survey recommended that faculty mothers maintain a low parenting profile" (76). Even as instruction shifted online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty were

encouraged to "curb parental pride" and rehang their "family picture gallery elsewhere" as academic spaces entered their homes through zoom meetings and class sessions (Barchas). Many books about the experiences of moms on the job market detail stories about hiding pregnancy or a newborn through strategies like leaving a nursing baby at home, not disclosing to a committee the need for regular pumping breaks, wearing loose clothes to hide a pregnancy, or drinking milk to soothe a nauseous stomach (Schell; Schnitzer and Keahey; Téllez; Ward and Wolf-Wendel). The motherhood penalty creates a culture in which hiding motherhood can sometimes be the most effective strategy for resisting the penalty; however, this strategy is a type of "self-defeating resistance" in how mothers "engage in behavior that is not transformational and in fact helps to re-create the oppressive structures from which it originated" (Solórzano and Bernal 317). By allowing power structures to persist without critique, the burden falls to academic mothers to be resourceful and continue to find ways to exist in academia.

Hiding motherhood is also seen in how women engage in "maternal invisibility" as a way to avoid being stigmatized; they "avoid talking about family life in their departments and do not bring their children or spouses to department gatherings, even family friendly ones" (Ellis and Gullion 153). Mothers may also work to resist the motherhood penalty through "being hypervisible in departments," so that if their maternal status is discovered, it can't be held against them as a scapegoat for why they didn't do something (ibid 153). By implementing maternal invisibility in combination with hypervisibility in academic contexts, mothers in academia work to protect themselves against the motherhood penalty. Single moms are not immune to the motherhood penalty, and due to the stigma associated with being a single parent, they may be inclined to try and limit the disclosure of their parental status just as much if not more so than their partnered colleagues. They have been described by Jillian Duquaine-Watson as engaging in "stigma

management," an approach in which single moms "…use a variety of strategies to manage their identity that include passing, using techniques of information control, and covering" (146).

While some single mothers engage in stigma management, others practice stigma resistance by openly talking about their single mom status to challenge stereotypes (Duquaine-Watson). Duquaine-Watson uses stigma resistance to refer specifically to single mothers, but this approach can also be seen in what Mothers of Color in Academia (MOCA), in borrowing from Grace Gámez, describe as "fierce mothering": "a response to forceful forms of institutional violence that mothers must address, such as lack of access to childcare, inadequate lactation spaces, or invisibility on campus" (Cisneros et al. 289). Both stigma resistance and fierce mothering are forms of "transformational resistance" where mothers of marginalized identities push back so they are not pushed out (Solórzano and Bernal 316). The actions of these women "illustrate both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice" as they can be seen "bringing their children to work in academic contexts, nursing in public, or choosing to make identities as mothers visible when they are told to closet those identities" (Solórzano and Bernal 319; Cisneros et al. 289; Keahey and Schnitze 29). Stigma resistance and fierce mothering can be options for single moms who may not be able to rely on stigma management. Engaging in stigma management and being able to "pass as normal," implies that interference due to parental responsibility can be managed in a way that may be unique to some single mothers. In other words, not all single mothers have the available resources to conceal their single parent status; they bring their kids to work with them when childcare falls through because they lack have no other option. They ask for additional funding to speak at an event because otherwise, they cannot afford to attend. They explain that they cannot attend social events because they do not have the disposable time.

When I was new to the identity of single mom, I practiced stigma management because I did not want those around me to think I was less capable due to my parenting status. I practiced

"conformist resistance" by "addressing the symptoms rather than the structural causes of the problem [and] striving toward social justice within the existing social systems and social conventions" (Solórzano and Bernal 318). I blamed myself for the situation I was in, rather than recognizing issues with the social systems and structures, and I modeled for others how single parents can survive within the existing structures, rather than working to create new ones.

For example, at my first conference as a single mom, I had to arrive later and leave earlier than other attendees because of childcare challenges; when a faculty member told me it is really best to get to the conference earlier to engage in valuable networking opportunities, I did not emphasize that such an option was not available to me because of my limited accommodations with childcare. I was able to practice stigma management in this instance because I could afford the cost of an airplane ticket to the conference at a time that was convenient for me, and my shared custody schedule meant that my absence coincided with my daughter's dad's time. When I was co-authoring an article with three of my peers, and they wanted to video conference about revisions at peak dinner and bath time because one of them had a birthday the following day and didn't want to schedule anything work-related, I did not say that a 7:00PM video conference wouldn't work for me because of my parenting responsibilities. Instead, I fed my daughter spaghetti, as she sat on the counter beside my computer. The decision to accommodate my peers without children is not unique to me. In their research, Margaret Sallee, Kelly Ward, and Lisa Wolf-Wendel found that, "Mothers felt apologetic when they had to leave work to do something for their children. The mothers indicated that they used the autonomy privilege sparingly because they did not want those around them to think they did not take their academic careers seriously" (194). Like these mothers, I did not want those around me to think that I was not committed to the work in the same way as them, not realizing that commitment to work takes many different forms and is evidenced in a variety of ways. While I tried to "pass as normal" like my peers in this instance, I ultimately failed because I was

trying to feed my daughter dinner, while also giving her a bath during the conversation moving my computer from one room to the next before finally deciding that I would be better off leaving the video call, as both my daughter and my peers were not benefitting from my divided attention.

I even practiced stigma management with those outside of my program and department. When an admissions administrator told me that she knew of a mothers' group in the area that she could connect me with, but she was unsure of how helpful they could be because the group was comprised of predominately affluent, married women, implying that despite our shared mother status, I as a single, low-income, graduate student mother would have nothing in common with them, I hid my left hand underneath a notebook. But then I realized that while stigma management offered some protection to me, it was a self-defeating and conformist resistance in how it also perpetuated a culture that made me feel unsafe in being open about my single parent identity, and as a white, able-bodied, cisgender woman, I also realized that my embodied identity offers me protections not afforded to all single mothers. I decided that if I wanted to help support a shift in the way single moms are thought of and understood, I needed to change the language, behaviors, and practices I used about my own single mom status. I needed to engage in transformational resistance.

This shift means that when I need something because of my single mom identity, I own that identity. When a celebrity political commentator and television host was coming to speak at the university, and I was offered one ticket to a private dinner and public ceremony he was presenting at, I asked for a second ticket because I needed to bring my daughter due to an absence of childcare; I made clear that I am a single mom. When I wanted to attend two different invited talks but couldn't because they conflicted with my daughter's bedtime, I asked if the talks would be video recorded or if there would be transcripts available because I am a single mom and did not have childcare. With each of these emails and requests, I either received no response, or was politely told

"no." While I do not think my being turned down or ignored is because I am a single mom, I do think that the lack of accessibility for those who cannot physically attend events but would still like to experience them speaks to the culture of academia and who is included. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred after my experiences, has made visible how inclusive practices are possible, they just weren't convenient (see Epilogue). I also think that by being open about my needs because I am a single mom, there is the potential for considering the need for greater accommodations and accessibility that would benefit not just single moms, but folks of various identities like those with elder care responsibilities, as well as health and mobility considerations.

My own experiences help build this story, but they are not *the* story. As I spoke with single moms in interviews and read their responses to survey data, I found myself thinking of the road carpets often found in elementary school classrooms and public libraries. The colorful kind that allow kids to create racetracks with matchbox cars on the floor with roads that intersect and diverge, coming together and apart. Single moms' stories are like those roads. While we share similar challenges, we each have unique family, institutional, and overall life contexts; our responses to those challenges, shaped by our unique contexts, often go in varying directions.

In this study, I conceive of single mothers as women who are divorced, widowed, or unmarried who single parent their children. I understand mother as an identity to be inclusive of a range of embodied experiences including but not limited to "othermothers,[2]" "geographically single mothers,[3]" transgender mothers, adoptive mothers, egg-donor mothers, and gestational, or birth mothers. I also recognize that single mothers may encompass a combination of these identities. For

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[2] I borrow this term from Patricia Hill Collins to refer to "women who support children who for various reasons cannot remain with their bloodmothers" (120).

[3] This term comes from Claudia García-Louis, whose husband was in the military and stationed in Germany during her doctoral work in Texas.

example, Nefertiti Austin describes her experience in *Motherhood So White* as an adoptive, single mother by choice, and mothers featured in Sagashus T. Levingston's *Infamous Mother* show readers the range and complexity of single mothering identities. In asking women to participate in this work, I drew on Tamsin Hinton-Smith's idea of single mothers as a concept that is self-defined (25). In this study, rather than creating a set of criteria to categorize single mothers, I allowed participants to claim the identity for themselves based on their understanding of the concept. In this way, participants in this study opted-in based on whether or not they saw themselves as single moms.

This work tells the story of how single moms across geographic locations, academic institutions, disciplines, and single mom identities respond to challenges they face in academia because of their parental identity. Based on autoethnographic work, as well as survey responses from and interviews with single mothers conducted between early 2018 and early 2019 (pre-COVID-19 pandemic), and survey responses from single moms in Fall 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic) these pages show how single moms in academia survive. Even though scholarship within higher education has often been less concerned with the lived experiences and material realities of single mothers, their perspectives suggest that there is much to be learned about how their composition practices and rhetorical strategies are often intertwined, a complex interconnection of their lives within and outside of academia, if we are willing to listen. Composition[4] practice refers to the composition work single moms do and how they get that work done. Composition work may include but is not limited to—the grants, articles, emails, lab reports, conference presentations, course lectures/preparatory materials, and invited talks single moms write, and the composition work they engage in that isn't encompassed in writing—audio recording notes, painting for

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[4] I use "composition" instead of writing to be inclusive of the range of ways single moms might create and complete work. For example, one single mom with a traumatic brain injury is unable to write and instead paints to express her ideas. Another single mom relies on an audio recorder to take notes verbally. Additionally, having conversations with others about challenges and circumstances related to a single parent identity requires composition and rhetorical skill that may not be reflected in the term "writing."

processing reading materials, the conversations they have with their children, etc. Within composition practice is how single moms complete their work—how they move between tasks, manage and organize their time, navigate childcare while completing their composition work, find physical and temporal spaces to compose, connect their composition work with their children, etc. To complete this composition work, single moms implement rhetorical strategies. Such rhetorical strategies often draw on their single mom identities and experiences as a resource to enact institutional change. There is rhetorical savviness in the composition practices of single moms in academia and how they self-advocate, whether that self-advocacy is supported by higher education institutions or not.

While support for parents in higher education is increasing, the voices of these single moms reveal how there is still room for improvement. As institutional policies and systems fall short of single moms' needs, this work reveals how these women find support from individual people within and outside of academia; their stories make visible how it is people, like single moms and those who support them, who maintain and sustain institutions. Because this project prioritizes the perspectives of those who have been absent from research, it has multiple goals.

The first is to make visible the work single moms and those who support them do to maintain higher education. If nothing else, this visibility is intended to give some credit where it is long overdue. If we can better understand this type of work, we can work towards developing better institutional systems, policies, and structures that account for single moms' experiences and needs. Additionally, we need to recognize that their "laboring presences make universities legitimate—without them, [universities] can, and do, burn" (Tuck and Yang, 2018).

My second goal is to offer insight into what composition practice looks like when we take into consideration material realities and lived experiences of single moms. While their composition practice may challenge traditional ideas of what is valued within higher education, and Composition

and Rhetoric in particular, understanding their practices from their perspectives can help us to shift ours. Such insight can inform and shape how we mentor, teach, and support our students and colleagues. Finally, in making visible the voices and experiences of these single moms, my intention is to advocate for changes in higher education that are more inclusive of single moms and others with marginalized identities. I believe that whether we are parents or not, there are needs of single mothers that if met, would benefit us all. By detailing the experiences of single mothers in variety of contexts, I hope to not only make a case for the importance of supporting these women, but also to offer specific ways that academia can be more inclusive and supportive of them.

A Case for Single Moms in Academic Scholarship

What is known about single-mother experiences in academia is limited. According to Michelle Téllez, "No data on single-mother faculty members in the academy exist" (80). Stories of single mom experiences can be found in edited collections like *Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory, Mothers in Academia, Mama, PhD: Women Write about Motherhood and Academic Life*, and *The Madwoman in the Academy: 43 Women Boldly Take on the Ivory Tower,* for example. This information is informative and telling about single-mother experiences and acknowledges that single-mother experiences are unique to the individual. However, within these edited collections, chapters that focus solely on single mom experiences are in the minority, with single moms being referenced or being the entire focus in an average of three in 30 chapters. Work that focuses primarily on single mothers in academia can be found in scholarship like *Sole Parents Students in Higher Education, Mothering by Degrees, The Chicana M(other)work Anthology,* and *Lone Parents' Experiences as Higher Education Students.* However, even these collections are limited in that they often focus primarily on the experiences of white, able-bodied, heterosexual women predominately in the Humanities. While single moms share experiences and challenges with mothers in academia more broadly, focusing on their specific experiences is important, as Ruth Sidel writes, "People who are denigrated and

marginalized are more sensitive to dangers in the environment that have the potential to hurt us all. Therefore, paying attention to the problems and needs of single mothers will help us more clearly understand the problems and needs of all families" (185). This position echoes Kimberlé Crenshaw: "If [those concerned with alleviating the ills of sexism and racism] began their efforts with addressing the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged and with restructuring and remaking the world where necessary, then others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit" (167). In other words, a better understanding of how to support single mothers will not just benefit single mothers but parents of various identities, especially because while mothers are marginalized in academia, "single faculty mothers are even more marginalized" (Mason et al. 75).

Research about the composition practices and rhetorical strategies of single mothers creates an opportunity for further conversation about what support looks like and how it can be strengthened. Additionally, as academia continues to tout commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, there needs to be an understanding of the varied populations on campuses. A 2008 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* focusing on the importance of chief diversity officers, emphasized how diversity includes a range of identities including, "race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, nationality, religion, and a host of other dimensions" (Williams and Wade-Golden). In 2012, Sara Ahmed published *On Being Included,* a book that focuses on the experiences of diversity and equity practitioners in Australia and the United Kingdom, and in 2016 the Supreme Court "issued its ruling on *Fisher v. University of Texas,* a case which spoke to the heart of challenges to higher education's diversity and inclusion commitments; the decision was the continuation of an appealed ruling made in 2013" (Cyr 17). Most recently, higher education has found itself having to account for its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion due to "dual national crises—the pandemic and racial-injustice" that have especially impacted low-income and BIPOC students (Brown). That is all to say that the representational commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education

has a long history, and that diversity is a term intended to encompass those of multiple marginalized identities—including single moms. In writing about the experiences of single mothering in the academy, Robin Silbergleid makes clear how single mothers are often left out of these conversations:

> For all the conversations about intersectionality in the university and for all the awareness about privilege (race, class, sex, and gender), there is very little acknowledgment of the way that couples (regardless of sexual orientation) are privileged in discourse and in the practicalities of everyday life, particularly including the so-called family-friendly university as a workplace. (113)

In *Mothering by Degrees,* Jillian Duquaine-Watson writes, "When the experiences of a stigmatized group are excluded, their perspectives, experiences, and unique knowledge are both devalued and cannot inform the theoretical and practical aspects of university matters as they relate to academic and student services" (158). A better understanding of single mom experiences and expectations creates the potential for greater retention of them in academia. Of the total student parents at the undergraduate level, 43 percent are single moms, and less than one third of them complete their college degrees (Kruvelis et al.). At the graduate level, "graduate student mothers are at a higher risk of attrition than almost any other group" (Ellis and Gullion 153), and in the tenure-track, "20 percent of all tenured faculty are single mothers" (Mason et al. 75). Data about the percentage of single moms in non-tenure track and/or untenured positions is unclear, but in my survey of single mothers in academia, 59 of 117 respondents or 50% were not yet tenured or in non-tenure track positions; this is not including graduate or undergraduate students and postdocs, which would increase the total to 69%. This data demonstrates that single moms exist and are a significant component and population across higher education. Better support of single moms can help increase retention, as well as recruit smart, capable, and strong scholars at various levels.

Academic culture needs to think about how to better support parents at all levels and of various identities; if single mothers, who are one of the most marginalized identities in academia, are given greater consideration, parents in academia at all levels will benefit. A change is not only about benefitting parents but also academia—"Unless the old academic culture, which discourages family formation at all levels but is particularly unfriendly to graduate student parenthood, and especially to women, radically changes to welcome families, we are in danger of losing many of our best and brightest minds" (Mason et al. 23). Continuing to neglect the needs of single mothers risks the loss of academic scholarship and work from women across disciplines and academic institutions. A better understanding of the needs of single mothers in academia, means an increased likelihood of them being in the 44 percent of mothers in tenure-track positions. It also means they're more likely to be well supported and less likely to encounter the kinds of microaggressive and discriminatory experience and comments they shared with me.

As single moms navigate academia, they are often left with little guidance in the process, yet their responses to various rhetorical situations is informative. The ways single moms assert their identity or do not, the ways they interact with administrators, colleagues, and students because of their identity, the ways they construct conversations, emails, and text messages give a sense of how higher education is or is not supporting them; these rhetorical strategies also act as a potential resource for other single moms. There is no guide or collection of suggested strategies for how to communicate with others about your needs as a single mom. There is value in collectivity, in single moms in academia coming together to develop a better understanding of their emotional, mental, and academic labor as single mothers and academics. There is a need to look at their rhetorical strategies in their composition practice to become more familiar with how single moms in academia engage in work to support themselves, one another, and work towards supportive systems and structures in higher education.

Listening with the Heart

How do single moms complete research, teaching, and service, while also raising children in a space that often renders those same children invisible? And what do they see as necessary to help alleviate the challenges they face when their dual academic-single mom identities are seen as conflicting rather than complimentary? To answer these questions, I turn to three theoretical frameworks: feminist standpoint, intersectionality, and an ethics of hope and care. These theories ensure that this work starts and ends with single moms, building from what they know and their experiences.

I apply feminist standpoint as an epistemology, to understand who can make knowledge and how knowledge is made (Harding 3). In focusing on the experiences of single mothers in academia, standpoint theory provides a way to "acknowledge that participants' identities, backgrounds, and locations— as well as our own — can serve as powerful sources of knowledge" (Kirsch 17). Feminist standpoint accounts for how single mothers in academia, including myself, produce knowledge based on material circumstances, as well as embodied and lived experiences. Similarly, this epistemological approach "…invites those on the margins to come to the center of research, both as participants who can make their voices heard and as researchers in their own right who can study their own communities and cultures" (Kirsch 15). Feminist standpoint allows for some of the most marginalized women in academia to be at the center of creation, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge. By understanding that "…what we do shapes and constrains what we know," feminist standpoint positions single mothers in academia as experts (Harding 185).

One of the critiques of standpoint theory is the risk of essentialism by focusing on one single standpoint while ignoring the possibility that individuals have complex identities encompassing multiple "allegiances to different groups" (Kirsch 15). To account for this limitation, I turn to Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (139). Crenshaw's theory is positioned in legal

studies and specifically focuses on the experiences of Black women. In applying her theory, my intention is not to conflate Black women's unique experiences with all women. Instead, I see intersectionality as a valuable framework to understand how discrimination is experienced beyond a singular category. An intersectional theory of single motherhood provides a way of looking at how single mothers experience marginalization that resists a homogenization of a single mother identity. It's important to account for the complex identities single mothers have and to recognize that "single mother" is often just one among many, especially in understanding how the challenges they face and the kinds of supports they need vary by class, race, sexuality, gender expression, and ability.

Because of my connection to this work and the participants, I draw on "an ethics of hope and care," described by Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa S. Kirsch as a theory where:

> the effort is to assess current situations, contexts, and institutional forces; to recognize the strengths, limits, and challenges of present arrangements; to inhabit a sense of caring about the people and processes involved in the use of language by immersing ourselves in the work, spending time thinking broadly and deeply about what is there, not there, and could be there instead. The effort is to think beyond the concrete in envisioning alternative possibilities in order that we might actually work, often collaboratively, toward enacting a better future. (145)

My primary aim in studying single moms is to better understand their working conditions and experiences to see what "the strengths, limits, and challenges of present arrangements" are in completing their academic work. Ultimately, I want to develop a better understanding of how they are being and can be better supported. An ethics of hope and care as a theoretical framework meant that when I interviewed these women, we talked about not only their academic lives, but also their lives as single mothers. I saw glittery reading nooks made for kids out of former closet spaces, said hello to an aging dog cuddled up on the sofa, asked a mom to not apologize for crunching on ice

over the phone as she explained being anemic, and tried to hold back tears as a mom shared her efforts to protect and support her son after his dad reached out after years of radio silence, wanting to reconnect. I scheduled and rescheduled conversations due to sick kids and things like dental and doctor appointments on my end and theirs, confided in these women with my own challenges related to custody, an increasingly independent kindergartner, and being a graduate student divorced mom. I entered their lives as much as they would allow me, not for the purposes of my research, but because I wanted to listen and connect with them as people. I listened to them in a way that moved beyond the head and into the "heart, backbone, and stomach…making feminist rhetorical action a fully embodied experience for both the subjects of the research and the researcher" (146). These three frameworks are important because they allow me to show the connections between research participants and myself, while also acknowledging the complexities of our identities. These frameworks resist essentializing or homogenization, while also focusing on a marginalized group within academia—single mothers.

Chapter Overview

In the following chapter, I use "critical imagination" to look at research from the past 20 years that has considered the lived experience and material reality and practice of mothers in higher education (Royster and Kirsch 20). Critical imagination acts as an "inquiry tool" for the current scholarship, "to see the noticed and unnoticed, rethink what is there and not there, and speculate what could be there instead" (20). With minimal scholarship focusing exclusively on single mothers, there is a need to expand out and consider the experiences of mothers in higher education more broadly; however, even in this broadening, the uniqueness of the experiences of single mothers as well as Mother-Scholars of Color is still emphasized (Hernández-Johnson et al. 131). Looking at what has been written about single mothers provides an opportunity to better understand how they have or have not been supported in higher education and how they respond in the absence of

support. The chapters that follow (3-6), build from the past scholarship to focus on single mother experiences in academia from their perspectives.

In Chapter Three, I argue that academic institutions need to change not only by offering greater support systems and structures but also through acknowledgement of the people within them who support single mothers and do the work to sustain higher education. I turn to survey data as well as interview responses to focus on the primary challenges single mothers identified related to time, second shift, childcare, and money. I then shift to describing how single moms develop their own support systems with the people in their lives, most often friends, family members, and themselves. I conclude with the stories of Kelly and Tricia, two graduate student single moms who describe how what they need is not just institutional support structures, but also people within the institution to provide support through acknowledgement and validation of their humanity. I also explore how individual action can lead to institutional change by modeling for others what is possible.

In Chapter Four, single moms share how their composition practices are shaped by their lived experiences and material realities. As their stories indicate, understanding such practices can benefit teachers, mentors, and colleagues in our support of these women. Through a *testimonio* style as described by the Latina Feminist Group,[5] single moms show their range of composition practices, and make visible how they complete substantial composition work beyond what is counted in academia—writing for their jobs outside of the classroom, writing to kids' teachers and administrators, and writing feedback on student assignments, for example. In their efforts to compose in a "publish or perish" world, single moms share how they compose best, with CFPs, collaboration, and fellowships, and the kind of support they need in their composition practice to

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[5] *Testimonios* are, "a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure" (Latina Feminist Group 2).

get the work done. These composition practices can help inform the development of syllabus policies and pedagogical practices that include single moms, while also working towards consciousness raising in workplaces and institutions in and out of academia.

In Chapter Five, I use "autobiographic reflection" as described by Aja Martinez in *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* to show the rhetorical practices single moms enact and how those practices are deeply influenced by their lived experience and material reality. In their efforts to respond to rhetorical situations that emerge because of their single mom identity, like poorly scheduled meeting times and mistreatment from faculty, single moms draw on "upfront" and "pushback" rhetoric. These rhetorical strategies act as a means of rhetorical resistance that work to change systems and structures within higher education. The way these rhetorical strategies are yielded and responded to reveals single moms' resistance and higher educations' rigidity and flexibility depending on the context. They also reveal how such strategies by individuals can be engaged for collective purposes, raising institutional awareness about the affordances and constraints of single mom identities, making space for what counts and is valued in hiring and promotion criteria, and shaping how higher education thinks about inclusive practices.

The concluding chapter suggests that assessing the effectiveness of current support systems and structures for single moms is best done through their experiences and perspectives. Building on these perspectives, I offer specific ways single moms in academia could be better supported. I explore some of the family-friendly policies and support systems already in place, and then draw on my conversations with single moms and my own experiences, to suggest new directions for developing support systems and structures at the classroom, departmental, and field/discipline (professional organizations) level. In suggesting new directions, I offer not only considerations of policy, but also of how to shift the culture. Ultimately, policies alone do not make single moms feel

supported (Mason et al. 97). Viewed from a single mom vantage point, they become one piece of a larger puzzle in institutional inclusion, acceptance, and understanding.

Following the conclusion and considering the COVID-19 pandemic, I offer an epilogue that explores how single moms show rhetorical resilience as they draw on mêtis in response to kairotic moments that have surfaced due to the pandemic. The chapter uses survey data from 14 single moms across geographic locations, academic ranks, and single mothering identities to show their experiences. I also emphasize how mothers across identities in higher education have come together to offer concrete suggestions to academic institutions that can help ease the strain parents, but especially single mothers are experiencing due to the closure of childcare centers and schools during the pandemic. Understanding the individual experiences of single moms can help show the importance of collective efforts, as well as make clear how institutions have access to concrete suggestions and policies they could implement to better support parents.

As an interdisciplinary field often involved in campus-wide initiatives and programs like first-year writing and writing across the curriculum programs, as well as writing centers, composition and rhetoric is uniquely positioned to have power in helping to enact changes to better support single mothers. Additionally, research on composition processes is limited in how it considers the experiences of those with marginalized identities including single parents, yet such research could help inform the development of more inclusive pedagogical practices. Finally, familiarity with the rhetorical strategies of single mothers can help us recognize the breadth of possibility when working to enact change; it can help us reflect on how identities that are often divided can be united for rhetorical purposes, and also how audience responses (or lack thereof) communicate something rhetorically. Across three years of research and over 100 single mom perspectives, these chapters make visible the experiences of those often rendered invisible and emphasizes the continuing need for higher education to develop support systems and structures to support single moms.

Chapter 2: A Literature Review of How (Single) Mothers Move Through and Experience Higher Education

"The experiences of sole parents in postgraduate education are largely invisible in the literature and often within their own institutions of higher education." -Genine Hook

"Few colleagues have expressed interest in my maternal life, before or after my divorce. Caring about the struggles and challenges of single moms in academia and elsewhere is important cultural work." -Survey Participant

On Saturday, March 16, 2019 at the World Christianity Conference held in Princeton, NJ, Dr. Sonja Thomas gave a keynote lecture entitled, "Feminist Ethnography and 'Studying Up' in World Christianity Studies." About a minute and a half into her keynote, Dr. Thomas began to express her appreciation for all that had been done to not only bring her to Princeton but also her daughter. It is here that she takes four-minutes to briefly describe what it has been like for her to be a single parent in academia. Specifically, Dr. Thomas focuses on how the challenges of being a single parent are most felt when attending conferences and invited lectures, especially because she does not have any family nearby who can watch her daughter while she is traveling; as she emphasizes, she must bring her child with her to conferences and invited talks. In self-advocating for resources to support this travel for her and her daughter, she describes continually running into "institutional red tape," and then going to great lengths to accommodate academia and cut through that tape. As Dr. Thomas concludes this introduction to her talk, she tells the audience: "I urge you, if you don't know what your institutions are doing to support single mothers, and especially single mothers of color, find out what kind of things your institution does do and urge them to do something else…this shouldn't be this hard" (Princeton Theological Seminary, 00:07:05 – 00:09:02). In some ways, Dr. Thomas's urging, her argument that more needs to be done to support single mothers, and particularly single mothers of color, shows the progress that has been made in higher education—as Dr. Thomas acknowledges, work was done by her as well as Richard Young, an Associate Professor at the Princeton Theological Seminary, to bring her and her daughter to the conference. She was supported as a single mom keynote speaker. However, that she needed to make

this statement at all, that she needed to vocalize the exigency to support single moms in higher education suggests how much work is still to be done.

Dr. Thomas's keynote comes 45 years after the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a statement entitled "Leaves of Absence for Child-Bearing, Child-Rearing, and Family Emergencies." This statement called for institutional policies that acknowledged faculty members had responsibilities to their families, and academia needed to make space for those responsibilities. 27 years later in 2001, AAUP issued a "Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work," which included more specific recommendations of institutional support for families, including childcare subsidies or on-campus childcare, tenure-clock stoppage, adequate parental leave time, flexible work policies and schedules, and the potential for active service with modified duties, for example. In 2002, Eileen Schell's article "Feminist (Un)Motherhood: Reigning Rhetorics of Mothering Inside and Outside of Academe," showed what AAUP's 2001 statement could look in practice, as she shared how she was promised a decreased course load, which meant running a doctoral program, with full compensation for six months after her daughter was born (408). While progress has been made, that progress is intermittent, inconsistent, and lacking across higher education. Little exists that considers the needs of parents of marginalized identities, and because of my own history, experience, and interests, I look at this issue from the perspective of single mothers. Single mothers are one of many marginalized parenting identities that have been given limited consideration in scholarship focusing on parenting in higher education. Within composition and rhetoric, the perspectives of single mothers are extremely limited, even though single moms draw on unique rhetorical strategies derived from their identities and embodied knowledge to navigate higher education. Additionally, the composition practices of single moms across disciplines show that there is much to be learned about how, when, where, and

why (or why not) these women are composing. They reveal feminist composing processes that are inextricably tied to and shaped by personal and professional intersections.

Understanding single mothers, their experiences, and how those experiences are described, is an opportunity to learn about discriminatory practices and attitudes in higher education, how single mothers subvert these practices and attitudes (often through rhetorical means), as well as practices and policies that cause single moms to feel included and/or excluded. Being familiar with these experiences can provide an understanding of how higher education currently is and can be better designed to make space for those of marginalized identities, with single mothers in academia as one potential starting point.

By looking at research from the past 20 years that considers the experiences of mothers in higher education[6], we can gain a better understanding of how single mothers' experiences have (or have not) been represented. We can glimpse into the unique experiences, strategies, tactics, and practices that they engage in to navigate higher education. As the scholarship reveals, historically, higher education was not designed with women in mind, and so, by looking at what has been written about single moms' experiences, we can better understand what practices and policies within higher education benefit single mothers, as well as the rhetorical ecologies[7] single moms are working within as they work to change higher education to be more inclusive (Edbauer 2005). Given that such responses occur through single mothers' composition practices and rhetorical strategies, it is important to understand how their experiences within higher education have created an exigence for such practices. To develop an understanding of single mothers' experiences, I look at works that

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[6] Given the lack of consideration of single mother experiences in the literature, it is necessary to look at scholarship that considers the experiences of mothers in higher education as a whole; occasionally, such work includes references, even if only in passing, to single mothers.

[7] From Jenny Edbauer's framework, I use "rhetorical ecologies" because it allows for an understanding of the rhetorical situation that encompasses lived experiences, social histories, various events, encounters, and interactions, and moves beyond Bitzer's conception (1992) of the rhetorical situation as a collection of "discrete elements taken together."

capture the challenges mothers in academia face, including single mothers, works that describe the embodied experience and material practice of single mothers, as well as works that provide a sense of the policies in academia that impact or shape the experiences of single mothers. The scholarship is not exhaustive or comprehensive, but instead consists of notable works that often get referenced in conversations about motherhood in higher education (like *Do Babies Matter?* and *Mama, PhD*) and/or that provide more recent consideration of policies that shape and impact women's experiences in academia (*The Chicana Motherwork Anthology*). These works reveal the relationships between the academic institution, the people within it, and the interconnections between both.

To explore the experiences of single mothers in higher education as represented in the literature, I begin by looking at the factors that influence their experiences—the Ideal Worker Model and Policy, which I define in the next section. These factors are built into the institutional foundation of higher education, shaping single mothers' experiences. I first look at the ideal worker model and how academia's institutional history of being designed for a particular type of person (primarily a white, cisgender, heterosexual, man, who, if he has children, has a stay-at-home-wife), has shaped the policies and support structures and systems within it. Keeping in mind that academic institutions are not designed for single mothers, I then consider scholarship that looks at family-friendly policies in higher education and interrogate who those policies are friendly for and to what extent. After exploring the factors that influence single mom experiences, I look at single mothers' responses. To begin, I look at scholarship on the Strategies and Tactics mothers have engaged in to navigate academia before then focusing on how higher education might Redefine the Professoriate to be more inclusive of single mothers, their strengths, and their lived experiences and material realities. Due to the limited consideration of single mother experiences in composition and rhetoric scholarship, the work that informs these categories is interdisciplinary coming from Composition and Rhetoric, Sociology, Psychology, Education, Economics, STEM, and Women's and Gender

Studies. Together, these perspectives create a conversation about the embodied experience and material practice of being a mother in higher education that elucidates the common challenges, as well as means of support that exist in formal and informal systems, structures, and policies.

The Ideal Worker Model: A Problematic Foundation for Single Mothers in Academia

The ideal worker model was first described under that term by Arlie Hochschild in 1995, and is one aspect of higher education that many scholars maintain has created a culture where mothers are stigmatized and marginalized. Dr. Sonja Thomas argues that the ideal worker in higher education "is a cisgender man, who tends to be white, who tends to be heterosexual and has a stay-at-home-wife" (Princeton Theological Seminary, 00:08:22 – 08:27). Many scholars who address the experiences of mothers in higher education echo her argument. Carmen Armenti claims that much of the marginalization women academics experience is a result of this model, where the expectation is to devote the majority of one's time to an academic career and responsibilities, foregoing family and other life commitments (228). Such a model is even present at the student level and termed, the "bachelor boy," by Tamsin Hinton-Smith. Like the ideal work, the bachelor boy's time is only consumed by academics or leisure, allowing him to be a university student without any "conflicting responsibilities" (84). While the ideal worker has been theorized and named as such for almost 25 years, its history goes back much further than that, from the beginnings of higher education and the institutional exclusion of women. This history is built into the foundation of higher education and influences the experiences of single mothers.

Brenda K. Bushouse argues that the ideal worker/male/bachelor boy model has helped build inequalities into the bureaucracies of higher education, making motherhood and success seemingly impossible achievements (214). Nora Cisneros, LeighAnna Hidalgo, Christine Vega, and Yvette Martínez-Vu acknowledge how the model is not only built into bureaucracies but is also visible in physical structures on campuses, as evidenced by a lack of lactation rooms, changing

tables, high chairs, and child friendly spaces, as well as the prominence of narrow hallways, steep steps, distant buildings, and expectations around how one should inhabit those physical spaces— quietly, calmly, and with limited disruption (299). Even though much of the work of universities is made possible by women's "support work" and despite more women receiving doctoral degrees than men, the ideal worker in higher education is pervasive (Schell; Mason et al.). This pervasiveness means that academic culture does not reflect those within it. By perpetuating the ideal worker model, higher education impedes mothers' ability to advance at the same rate as men and/or women without children, while also reinforcing sexism (Powell; Nora et al.).

While the ideal worker model exists across discipline, it especially impacts those in the STEM. This is in part because STEM fields "are some of the most male-dominated professions in the US and have diversified more slowly in other fields," and also because of cultural beliefs that "families are supposed to support STEM professionals work, not the other way around" (Cech and Blair-Loy 4183). Such culture is reflected in the expectations that those in STEM put in long hours at the lab; while the collaborative nature of lab work can make "lulls in productivity due to having a baby or family-related issues" less evident, it can also create a sense of "lab togetherness" where everyone is putting in long hours and then socializing afterwards, an option not available to single parents (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 95). Such "long hours at the lab and are required to secure competitive funding" (Mason et al. 49). In other words, labs need funding to run, and they need to be productive to maintain that funding, which "puts pressure on faculty members" to meet deadlines, maintain productivity, and remain current on their research (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 109). Such funding, particularly federal grants, "offer little accommodation for childbirth and motherhood" (Mason et al. 49). The influence of the ideal worker model is strongly felt in STEM and reflected in the attrition rates in the field where "43% of women leave full-time STEM employment after the birth of their first child" (Cech and Blair-Loy 4182).

For single mothers and mothers of color, the ideal worker model is especially problematic. In 2004, Carmen Armenti wrote, "Institutions systematically favor White males and oppress females" (215). This argument is expanded in Thomas's 2019 keynote, as well as in Michelle Téllez's 2013 article where she writes, "the Western culture education system privileges, supports, and validates the experiences and bodies of white, able-bodied, middle-upper-class heterosexual males" (80). The ideal worker model has a substantial history, and this history has contributed to the creation of the maternal wall, a barrier for women that they need to scale before they can even smash the glass ceiling. The maternal wall is a type of gender discrimination experienced by mothers that acts as a "formidable barrier to career advancement" (Rodino-Colocino et al. 200). Shaped by competing cultural ideologies that ideal mothers are entirely devoted to their children and ideal workers are entirely devoted to their careers, the impact of the maternal wall can be seen in the leaky pipeline where women leave academia, the amount of women in contingent faculty positions, as well as how women's timing of childbirth influences their survival in academia (Rodino-Colocino et al. 200). This type of gender discrimination is especially felt by single mothers and mothers of color— "Intersecting systems of race and gender thicken maternal walls, driving down wages and status for women of color and erecting institutional barriers. Mothers of color report hitting the maternal wall more often than White women, 63% to 56%" (Rodino-Colocino et al. 200). The impact of the ideal worker model on women is undeniable, however, the impact of the ideal worker model is not the same for all women, which is why it is important to understand how women of color, who are often excluded from conversations about the experiences of mothers in higher education, as well as single mothers, experience the impact of the ideal worker model. When considering the experiences of single parents and the ideal worker model, Jane Juffer recognizes that all parents feel the ideal worker norm, but, "it is particularly onerous for single parents, who are more likely to be mothers" (97). To work towards changing the culture of higher education to be more family-friendly, Margaret

Sallee, Kelly Ward, and Lisa Wolf-Wendel argue that ideal worker norms need to be challenged, especially if academic institutions want to attract and retain ideal candidates who may decide to leave higher education for more family-friendly career options (199). Relatedly, Michelle Téllez argues, "By de-centering white married men as the ideal university intellectual, a transformative understanding of diversity can begin" (90).

Policy: The Affordances and Limitations of Institutional Support

One way in which we can see higher education shifting towards being more inclusive of parents is through policy. Informed by statements like the one made by AAUP in 1974 and again in 2001, policy efforts in higher education provide evidence for the slow but steady change that is being made to support families in higher education, and these changes, while imperfect, demonstrate the kind of institutional support that exists for families, including single moms. However, existence of policies does not necessarily mean that they will be utilized.

The existence of supportive policies for families can seem encouraging in higher education, but such policies can be indicative of representational rather than structural change. Scholarship on the experiences of mothers in higher education considers how and why policies that are intended to support families are not taken advantage of. Oftentimes, the hesitancy is due to a fear of unspoken repercussions. Michelle Rodino-Colocino describes how despite being offered assurance that she would be able to stop the tenure clock, when she made the request, she was told that articles accepted and published during that time would not count towards her tenure (202). Other scholars describe how women do not take advantage of tenure clock stoppage and/or parental leave policies for reasons like those described by Rodino-Colocino, as well as concerns that if their work is counted, it will be minimized in value (Conley and Carey 203; Eversole et al. 165; Gabor et al. 103; Sallee et al. 195; Téllez 88; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 191). Another challenge is that the implementation of the policies can sometimes be left to the discretion of departmental chairs, deans,

and/or other administrators, which can lead to an inconsistency in how the policies are implemented and utilized, especially when such positions are often held by white, cisgender men. One way to resolve this challenge is to educate those in leadership positions to ensure their familiarity with family-friendly policies and supports, and to also enable them to be openly vocal and supportive of the use of such policies and supports (Bushouse 219; Comer and Stites-Doe 507; Sallee et al. 199).

While parental leave and tenure clock stoppage policies can be beneficial to parents following the birth or adoption of a child, once mothers return to work, a shared and common challenge is childcare. When colleges and universities have policies or formal systems of support to aid in childcare, parents of all identities benefit, including single mothers. Such policies and formal support systems can exist in childcare subsidies, onsite childcare, and ensuring that there is adequate room available so that faculty, staff, and students do not need to be wait two years before a space becomes available (Nora et. al. 139; Schell 408 2002; Téllez 88; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 210).

When institutions lack support related to childcare, single moms are often left with few options—they may end up relocating for quality childcare, withdrawing from school because affordable childcare is not available, leaving a tenure-track position, or bringing their children with them to campus (Duquaine-Watson 120-123; Martinez 40; Richardson). In contrast, partnered mothers have slightly more options including the option of coordinating schedules with a partner, so one person can care for the child while the other is working (Cucciarre; Connelly and Ghodsee; Gabor et al.; Pantelides). The difference in experiences of single and partnered mothers related to childcare provides a small glimpse into the necessity of family-friendly policies that are friendly to *all* family types.

Given that family-friendly policies in higher education exist in a system rooted in the ideal worker model, all mothers do not experience them equally. Jane Juffer acknowledges the benefits of family friendly policies while also recognizing their limitations for single parents: "I do not want to

dismiss the importance of policy and structural change for *all* parents, but rather to stress that in order to support different family structures—something which many academics would, in theory, advocate—it must be acknowledged that the needs of single parents differ from those of couples who can extensively rely on each other's labor and emotional support" (103). Single mothers and mothers of color have written about how family-friendly policies in higher education do not fully take into consideration their needs or experiences. Michelle Téllez's article captures how even though academic policies can seem neutral, "they are actually based on raced, classed, and gender assumptions, which, in effect, penalize marginal faculty members and create obstacles to their full contribution to academic life and scholarship" (81). Téllez writes about her own experiences with such penalization as a single mother of color; she explains how women of color already face obstacles such as isolation and a lack of mentorship, and so they often suffer the most when their roles as mothers and academics are not recognized or supported (89). Relatedly, considering whose voices are included and excluded in the development of family-friendly policies is important.

Much of the work in the *Chicana Motherwork Anthology* captures this, but it is especially evident in "Mothers of Color in Academia," where Nora Cisneros, LeighAnna Hidalgo, Christine Vega, and Yvette Martínez-Vu quote Reyna Anaya, "Women of Color experiences (i.e., Graduate Student Mothers of Color) are often silenced on university campuses by the dominant white culture's socially constructed ideals of gender rules and ethnic/race assumptions" (293). Such silencing is evidenced through the invisibility mother-scholars of color (MSOCs) experience in a variety of ways including but not limited to being the only "female student of color in a historically white, male space," having meetings with advisors that focus on "progress on course work, latest conference proposals, writing projects, and research agendas" while needs as a MSOC remain invisible (like the need to ensure children "maintain strong tribal connections"), receiving monthly living stipends that fail to "take into consideration the added cost of children" while also "placing

caps on the amount of income one can make on a yearly basis as a PhD student" or contractually requiring PhD students to only work for their university, limiting the potential to have additional income to cover childcare expenses (Hemans et al.).

If policies are based on select voices, there is a risk that they benefit select people, and there is also the potential that if those outside of the dominant group try to use such policies, they will experience repercussions. Juffer emphasizes the need to revisit and redesign policies because as many of them are currently written, they exist to benefit certain kinds of families— "Interventions into university policy are especially necessary if the policy is to include all families because as they are now written, much policy and discourse shaping it assumes that families are composed of heterosexual couples" (109). Téllez, Juffer, Anaya, and Hemans et al. are like puzzle pieces that, when put together, reveal a bigger picture of the state of higher education for single mothers and women of color—family friendly policies are not designed for them.

In addition to considering the role policies can play in supporting faculty, considering the value of policies to benefit single parent students is also important. Developing policies at the student level can help reshape the institutional culture early on in one's educational experience. Perry Threlfall offers five specific suggestions that professors can consider to help support single mothers, such as having syllabus policies that consider family responsibilities, revisiting policies around phone usage, being strategic in configuring group project members, being conscientious of book expenses and how those might be especially burdensome to single parents, and connecting with students ("5 Ways Professors Can…"). Vanessa Fonseca-Chavéz, Trisha Martínez, Joan Doris, and Christina S. Wilson also offer suggestions specific to single student parent needs, encouraging professors to have language in their syllabi showing flexibility for single parents, institutions to provide scholarships offsetting financial responsibilities, as well as back-up childcare, and, similar to Threlfall's advice,

developing supportive policies and systems that prioritize single parents' voices ("In Their Own Words…").

When writing about the need to change academic culture and policies to be equitable towards women, and especially single mothers, Michele Schlehofer writes, "We've changed the players, and yet despite the establishment of more family-friendly workplace policies at many institutions, the basic rules of the game have not changed" (122). Even though women receive more PhDs than men, numbers are not enough to change the system and eliminate the discrimination women, mothers, and single mothers experience. Her point also shows how challenging and slow it is to change the academic institution. Even with the development of family friendly policies, there is still substantial room for improvement, and this room is vast for single mothers in higher education.

Strategies and Tactics: How Single Mothers Respond to an Absence of Institutional Support

When there is an absence of supportive policies and systems in place within higher education, mothers and single mothers must often turn to themselves, as well as people within the institution. Oftentimes, this can be seen in how they develop support systems in and through the people around them. For example, in "Mentor, May I Mother?," the authors describe the importance, value, and gains of being mentored as mothers by mothers. Support from departmental colleagues and faculty, as well as family members, friends, and partners is also important for mothers, so that they have others to help them advocate for what they need, as well as to help lighten the load of their academic and parental responsibilities (Colbeck and Drago; Comer and Stites-Doe; Ellis and Gullion). In other words, support from people within the institution can help mothers and single mothers to develop more structural and systemic means of support, which can benefit those of various parental identities in and out of academia.

Support networks are important for all mothers, but they are especially important for Mother-Scholars of Color (MSOCs), because "Women of Color in higher education tend to be

'overused, misunderstood, and underappreciated" (Hernández-Johnson et al. 131). Such importance is reflected in the *testimonios* shared in "Mothering in the Academy" from *The Chicana Motherwork Collective* where the authors emphasize how "…forging support networks was imperative for [their] success" (139). Additionally, Trisha Martínez writes about how "Ethnic support centers have validated [her] sense of belonging in higher education," because, "The white privilege that dominates the academy perpetuates a very unwelcoming experience" ("In Their Own Words"). If we look at support networks from the surface, they appear to be fairly similar—support networks are one strategy all moms in higher education benefit from; however, when we look below the surface, the necessity of support networks for academic survival are not identical. Intersectionality allows us to see how moms in higher education may be battling an array of challenges because of the varying facets of their identity; mothering has been thought of as a singular identity, but it is multiple, and a singular perspective does not fully represent the complexity that the identity holds.

While academics are encouraged to network, and while social networking and building support networks is an important for moms in higher education, single moms may not be able to participate in such network building activities in the same ways as their partnered colleagues. Single moms know support networks are important, but building such support networks takes time, and they're hard to find (Juffer 36). While Tamsin Hinton-Smith and Jillian Duqaine-Watson both write about the challenges of building a support network from the student perspective, Christina Wilson writes about this from her position as a medical faculty member; having to use her night and weekend times to complete work meant that she "rarely attended work social events, participated in recreational activities or served on university committees," which also meant she had limited opportunities to engage in social events that foster many networks.

Christina Wilson's time saving strategy is reflective of a challenge many single moms have that requires them to be innovative with solutions—time. Strategies around time and motherhood

begin even before a baby is born. For many mothers, timing of pregnancy has been a strategic move since the 1980s, when women opted to have babies in the month of May so as not to disrupt the academic year (Armenti). While women have become less concerned with disrupting the academic calendar since then (thanks to maternity leave), their attentiveness to when they give birth has not disappeared but shifted. Now, women prioritize having babies post-tenure (Armenti 219). Strategies around timing pregnancy and childbirth are regular topics in literature about mothers in higher education— *Mama, PhD: Women Write about Motherhood and Academic Life, Professor Mommy: Finding Work-Family Balance in Academia, Do Babies Matter?, Academic Motherhood in a Post Second Wave Context: Challenges, Strategies, and Possibilities, Academic Motherhood: How Faculty Manage Work and Family, Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory: Women Scientists Speak Out,* and "Feminist (Un)Motherhood: Reigning Rhetorics of Mothering Inside and Outside of Academe," are among the sources that consider this topic from a variety of angles including intentionally being strategic in planning one's own pregnancy to receiving unsolicited advice about how to plan pregnancy and childbirth so as not to interfere with an academic career. Once women give birth, their attention to timing continues, arguably influenced by how time-focused higher education is throughout all aspects of an academic career—the tenure clock, annual reviews, etc.

Many mothers strive to maximize even the smallest amount of time available, writing emails or proofreading drafts of proposals in blocks of time as small as 15-minutes, or doing as much as they can in three-hour blocks of time when their children are in daycare (Cuciarre et. al. 43-44; Evans and Grant; Pantelides; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 60). Because every minute counts, much of the scholarship includes narratives about completing work at all hours of the day including early in the morning or late at night when children are sleeping, or, if children are of school-age, during the daytime when they are in school (Colbeck and Drago; Ellis and Gullion 158; Evans and Grant; Fonseca-Chavéz et al.; Nora et. al. 137). Like their partnered colleagues, single mothers try to find

blocks of time to do their work early in the morning or late at night after their children have gone to bed. However, working during these times is especially difficult for them. They are often exhausted after managing so many different facets of academic and parenting life alone that working during night hours is extremely challenging (Hinton-Smith 62).

To maximize their available time, mothers also multitask—giving feedback on student papers while holding a baby, writing a thesis while nursing simultaneously, using toys, and other forms of entertainment to keep children occupied while doing work (Cuciarre et. al. 54; Marquez 78; Perlow 119). Many mothers describe how a partner can be integral in helping create blocks of valuable time to complete necessary work by watching children and/or fulfilling childcare responsibilities (Cuciarre et. al. 46; Evans and Grant; Gabor et al. 102; Marquez 77; Pantelides). Single mothers who do not have a partner may rely on older children to create those necessary blocks of time that mothers may be able to create through the help of a supportive partner. This means that single mothers might "study while children entertain themselves, do their own homework…, 'play out' with friends, or at times, are kept entertained by game consoles or DVDS" (Hinton-Smith 61). In addition to being attentive to how they allocate and manage time, mothers are also cognizant of how they organize their time. For example, they might job-share with a colleague, work additional hours to make-up time for being absent after the birth of a baby, or schedule classes around children's school and extracurricular activities (Cucciare et. al.; Gabor et al.).

Like time, money is a finite resource that often requires those in higher education to be resourceful. Financial issues are especially central for single mothers often maximizing one income to support multiple people. As a result, they become adept at finding ways to stretch every dollar. Their strategies to increase their available income include working multiple jobs, collecting cans and bottles, and finding ways to save money, such as finding used school supplies in recycling bins, and living on food provided by a local food bank or purchased with SNAP or WIC (Duquaine-Watson

67 and 77; Martinez 40). Single moms are also no strangers to student loan debt; Kate Vieira references having "Student-loan Debt in Excess of $90,000," (2); Jillian Duquaine-Watson writes about how some of the single moms she interviewed have taken out "the maximum amount of student loans" (76), and Tamsin Hinton-Smith notes that "Lone parents have been indicated to be the student group with the highest loan uptake…" (110). While policies, such as prioritizing giving need-based scholarships to single mothers can help alleviate some of the financial strain, until such practices become the norm, single moms must be innovative in their strategies and tactics.

In addition to balancing time and finances, a fair amount of the scholarship gives attention to balancing work and family. Rachel Connelly and Kristen Ghodsee's *Professor Mommy: Finding Work-Family Balance in Academia* is one example of a book centered around guiding those interested in having a family and being an academic about what it takes to balance both. Similarly, research studies like, "Antecedents and Consequences of Faculty Women's Academic-Parental Role Balancing" by Debra R. Comer and Susan Stites-Doe emphasize the concept of "balancing," as a way to acknowledge that achieving "balance" is not something one achieves but is a continually ongoing process (498). Their article emphasizes the idea of interrole facilitation, where the responsibilities of an academic and parent complement one another. This means that rather than a mother feeling drained by each of her roles, she feels fulfilled by both, because her needs as a parent and an academic are recognized and validated (506). Much of this fulfillment is a result of supportive practices and policies from university administrators, such as clear parental leave policies, on-site childcare, class schedules that are coordinated with school hours (507).

Comer and Stites-Doe begin to push against ideas of balance as an absolute, attainable concept for mother academics. Relatedly, Kelly Ward and Lisa Wolf-Wendel tell readers in *Academic Motherhood: How Faculty Manage Work and Family* that, based on interviews with 120 women, balance is not a realistic goal, but instead, "people strive for harmony and understand that at any one point in

time, their lives won't feel balanced, but may instead feel integrated" (235). This is not unlike Eileen Schell's referencing Athena Perrakis and Cynthia Martinez's idea of sustainability as opposed to balance. Sustainability acknowledges the longitudinal nature of work and makes space for women as complete people who also need to address their own needs and curiosities, not just the needs that will benefit stakeholders (Schell 324 2019). While the scholarship that gives primary attention to partnered mothers regularly considers balance or some iteration of it, research that focuses on the experiences of single mothers provides a somewhat different perspective.

In an interview with Kate Vieira, a single mom in Rhet/Comp, she responds to a question about balance with laughter and her own question: "Sorry. Balance?" Vieira describes an approach to her roles as mother and scholar as compartmentalizing and containing "many moving parts." Balance is not something she is working towards; however, both Vieira's perspective and the scholarship about experiences of partnered mothers shows the need to fulfill multiple roles at various times, which is part of the reason why mothers in academia need strategies and tactics to meet the responsibilities of those multiple roles. They need to have ways to get the work done. Knowing why mothers in academia have strategies and tactics is informative because it provides a sense of the culture[8] where they are working. In this context, a culture where there is an expectation that parents and particularly mothers, balance their dual roles.

Sometimes the strategies and tactics that mothers in higher education develop are because academia is not designed for mothers and not receptive to them. Oftentimes, these strategies and tactics involve things like hiding pregnancy or children as a means of self-protection against discriminatory practices in higher education, as discussed in the introduction. Carol L. Colbeck and Robert Drago describe this strategy as one of "bias avoidance," which includes not only hiding a

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[8] By culture I mean the collective values, understandings, and approaches to getting work done that exist among a group of people in a specific context; in this case, scholars in higher education.

pregnancy or family commitments but also delaying or minimizing them on the job market and in professional contexts more generally (14). This means hiding the need to leave meetings early to pick-up a child, or not sharing that the reason a mom needs to stay home is because her child is sick. This also means not displaying pictures or children's artwork in offices.

The strategy of hiding or concealing is common for mothers, and single mothers also practice it, in part because the stigma of being a single mom differs from that of being a partnered parent. Virginia L. Lewis explains in *Mothers in Academia* how disclosing a single mother identity risks being seen as a "second-class worker" (57). In the same year that Lewis shared her experience, Michelle Téllez expressed a similar one from a slightly different perspective— "As a Chicana single mother, achieving academic excellence, maintaining credibility, and modeling the professionalism and respectability demanded of me within the university culture meant unnaturally hiding my pregnancy and my motherhood" (83). While Lewis does not disclose her race or ethnicity, Téllez's attention to her Chicana and single mother identity suggests the role intersectionality plays in the need to conceal an identity. The stigma Lewis and Téllez experienced is still present today, as Christina S. Wilson, an African American medical faculty member and psychologist shares in a recent interview, "Single parents and their children experience professional and community stigma and negative messages. Although the academy would benefit from more diverse perspectives, when I became a single parent, some co-workers suggested that I resign." Wilson emphasizes her single parent status as the reason her co-workers suggest she resign, but it seems important to acknowledge how her being an African-American woman in a racist and sexist institution might also factor into the suggestion from her co-workers. Exploring the range of mothers who feel pressured to hide their pregnancy or parental status demonstrates how context matters. While the outcome may be the same—mothers withhold, conceal, cover, hide, and/or try to pass as childfree, and the motivation may be shared as well—to avoid discriminatory treatment, the stakes are higher for some mothers

than others. While mothers may choose to hide their pregnancy or parental status for fear of being seen as less serious about their jobs, single mothers, and single mothers of color, may feel pressured to hide their parental status for fear of losing their jobs. For single mothers who are also students, Jillian Duquaine-Watson has written about how some leave higher education because of the stigmatization they experience when they are unable or decide not to hide their parental status (176). The decision to engage in bias avoidance is indicative of the need to change academic culture and redefine the professoriate to be more inclusive of those who do not fit the ideal worker model that acts as the historical foundation of higher education.

Changing Academic Culture and Redefining the Professoriate

The benefits and needs of challenging and eliminating the ideal worker model of higher education are clear—there needs to be a redefining of who can be an ideal academic and what that looks like. Part of this redefinition involves recreating the norms in higher education, particularly around what types of work are valued and how that work is measured. For example, rather than weighing research more heavily than teaching and service, Michele Schlehofer argues that there be greater flexibility in how such responsibilities are weighed so that faculty can allocate their time "to better-reflect their values, priorities, skills, and interests" (123). This is particularly important given that women in higher education do the majority of service work, and yet, the way the current academic system is structured, they are not rewarded for this work in the same way they would be if they took the time they spent on service and instead allocated it to research, even though their service work is crucial to sustaining much of higher education. As Jennifer Heinert and Cassandra Phillips point out, there is a "systemic problem in the ways that value systems are structured in academia" (261); these systems privilege research and discourage service while perpetuating gender inequity (263). Heinert and Phillips propose a restructuring where "the way work is valued at an institution depends on institutional contexts" rather than the current model where value systems are

static across higher education (267). Additionally, they emphasize the importance of giving attention to how service requires unique expertise. For example, service related to writing programs requires a unique set of knowledge, training, and experience. Service is valuable to teaching as well. Teaching is improved by service of colleagues who offer insight about how to revise a syllabus or curriculum, and research about (Heinert and Phillips 271-272). Like Heinert and Phillips, as well as Schlehofer, Jane Juffer argues in favor of the need to change academic culture, particularly related to tenure requirements. Writing from the perspective of a single mother academic, she describes the need to value collaboratively authored publications, and organizational work (often considered service), "as much as single-authored books" (111). Schlehofer, who is also writing from her perspective as a single mother, advocates for an increase in collaborative work as well. For Schlehofer, an increase in collaborative work increases the potential for and the number of women's voices and presence (124). Juffer argues that if academics begin to shift away from valuing single-authored publications, particularly in the Humanities, there is a greater potential to value a wider variety of work in higher education; this would also allow for greater consideration of the types of skills mothers develop because of their parental experience, like organizing. Like Juffer and Schlehofer, Cucciarre et.al. also see a need "to expand the definition of scholarly success to include teaching, advising, and mentoring" (58).

In addition to expanding ideas of what constitutes academic success and academic work of value, scholars who emphasize the experiences of mothers in higher education also argue for a need to have greater transparency and flexibility with tenure review criteria. Based on her research at a Canadian University, Carmen Armenti asserts that research, teaching, and service are not always clearly spelled out in terms of what is required for tenure and promotion. For example, the number of publications required and in what types of journals can be vague, and as she writes, "junior faculty are socialized to think that teaching is undervalued" (227). Armenti not only argues for clarification

around these requirements, but clarification at "all possible career trajectories: full-time, part-time, and job sharing" (227). This position is reflected by Carol L. Colbeck and Robert Drago, who "call on departments and institutions to make more transparent the criteria and processes for reviewing faculty for tenure, promotion, and merit raises" (17). If faculty are left to play a guessing game of what is important for tenure and promotion, they are at a great disadvantage. Given that mothers, and single mothers in particular, lack time but are very skilled at organization, transparency and specificity around tenure and promotion would help them avoid spending time playing the guessing game of what is expected, and allow them to organize their work and limited time in such a way that is more congruent with the expectations of tenure and promotion. However, as previously mentioned, clarity and specificity are not enough; there also needs to be flexibility in considering what is valued and to what extent.

In addition to expanding tenure and promotion criteria, and being transparent and clear about what those criteria are, there is also a need to make space for the various lives academics have outside of higher education; this is especially the case for single mothers. Michelle Rodino-Colocino et al. argue that part of redefining the professoriate involves knocking down the maternal wall, and in that knocking down, making room for the demands that exist outside of work, not just making room to meet the "ever-growing work demands" of academia (206). Colbeck and Drago share this perspective as they claim that academic institutions need to make accommodations for "the ebb and flow of faculty members' nonwork responsibilities over the life cycle" (17). Such accommodations could include encouraging mothers, especially single mothers to "make the case in their promotion and job market research narratives as well as their CVs that their caring duties are in fact a testimony to their exceptional productivity, which is part of the standard grant and promotion application in Australia under the heading 'research outputs relative to opportunities' and 'statement of career breaks'" (Ségeral 152). Making space for lives outside of academia also includes ending

stigmatization of part-time and non-tenure track positions, which as Krystia Nora et al. acknowledge are positions often considered to be "second-tier" and predominately populated by women[9] (142). These positions also need to have greater stability, include benefits like health insurance, and pay a living wage, as much of academia relies on this work to exist. Nora et al. advocate for hiring, tenure, and promotion policies that take into consideration mothers who may have taken time off or accepted full-time non-tenure track positions because of their parental status, rather than dismissing them for having gaps on their CVs (142). For Schlehofer, this advocacy is important, but it is also important to reconsider what a successful academic career looks like to include careers at traditionally "'less prestigious' types of academic institutions, such as community colleges" (123). When it comes to who has the power to make these changes, to redefine the professoriate and change academic culture, Gabor et al. place power in the hands of mothers— "We shape the culture in which we work" (110). For them, part of changing the academic institution involves taking advantage of policies designed to support mothers, rather than playing the role of "supermom" and acting as though no support is needed. Scholarship that emphasizes the experiences of mothers in higher education recognizes the need for collaboration and pushing from the inside out to change academia, redefine the professoriate, and resist/eradicate the ideal worker model.

Making Space in Scholarship for Single Mother Perspectives

Ignoring the progress that has been made in higher education to support families seems dismissive and unfair. Since the 1974 statement from the AAUP, higher education has become a more family friendly space. In both institutions I have worked, a SLAC and an R1 university, I have brought my daughter into my office, cancelled classes because she was sick, and been videoed into

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[9] These "second-tier" positions have been historically referred to as "the mommy track," a term that originated in the late 1980s from an article by Felice N. Schwartz where she categorized women into two groups—those who are dedicated to their career and those who need greater flexibility due to the birth of children. However, this flexibility has often translated into putting working mothers into "dead-end, lower-paying jobs" and also contributed to the ideal worker/supermom dichotomy (Lewin 18).

meetings I could not physically attend because of parenting responsibilities, all without penalty, and many as an openly single parent. However, my experience is not universal—all women in higher education do not experience family friendliness equally. As scholars have argued, when family friendly policies fall short, those who feel the fall most, single mothers and mothers of color, draw on their resourcefulness and resilience as tools to continue their path in higher education. Mothers and single mothers have written about how such tools include family members, mentors, self-created support networks, and strategies and tactics related to finances, childcare, and completing academic work.

While some single mothers in higher education may benefit from family friendly policies, when they do not, this shortcoming reflects the deep-rooted history of the ideal worker model that plagues higher education. This model has created a culture where there is an assumption that the only demand on an academic worker's time aside from their job is leisure; it has created an environment where academics are expected to work endless hours and have unlimited availability. Perspectives of various scholars recognize how changing academia is a slow and monotonous process, one that requires not only a change in policy, but also a change in consciousness, awareness, and how the professoriate is defined. Scholars have suggested reconsidering tenure requirements, what is valued in publications, and how service, research, and teaching are weighted in tenure and promotion. They have also expressed how making changes at the classroom level for students who are parents can help shift the culture towards one that is more receptive and understanding of caregivers and their responsibilities. In order to make these cultural shifts and create an academic culture that is family friendly to *all* families, academics representing a range of familial structures need to have a voice in the development of policies, and support systems and structures in higher education. Making space for the experiences and perspectives of single mothers is one starting point that would allow for the development of support systems, structures, and policies that would benefit

more than just single mothers. The experiences of single mothers within higher education are relevant to composition and rhetoric not only because composition and rhetoric is situated within the institution of higher education, but also because single mothers' experiences create rhetorical situations—opportunities to challenge dominant ideas and expectations about what it means to be an academic, as well as inform others about their experiences, and define what academia in the 21st century will look like (Vinson 165). As readers will see in the next chapter, including a greater range of the experiences of single mothers can help us better understand the rhetorical situations single mothers respond to and the rhetorical actions, composing strategies, and material practice single mothers of varying identities draw on to develop systems of support.

Chapter 3: Being Other: The Experiences of Single Academic Moms in Higher Education

"The university continues to valorize the public intellectual without acknowledging that domestic work makes possible the public visibility of scholars." -Jane Juffer

Oftentimes when we think of institutions, we think of the offices within them, the policies that help organize them, the structures that have been put in place to keep them functioning. Many of us don't take into consideration the people who keep the institutions functioning, like the person in the Registrar's office who processes a name change, the program chair who reviews multiple instructor schedules to determine course assignments, or the faculty member who allows a student to bring her child to class, so she doesn't fall behind. Institutions depend on humans—human design, human interaction, social behavior, and individuals. If, as Geoffrey Hodgson writes, "institutions depend for their existence on individuals, their interactions, and particular shared patterns of thought," then bringing into focus the experiences of those on the margins will allow us to fully understand what goes into maintaining, as well as changing an institution, and in this case, higher education (7). We need to have multiple perspectives to understand how academic institutions work in their entirety. If we only see them through the perspectives of a select few or through objectified representations, then our perspective is limited. Including the perspectives of single moms helps us more fully understand how institutions work, and to what extent single moms' experiences within higher education create an exigence[10] for change.

In *On Being Included,* Sarah Ahmed describes institutions as a frame, and according to her, in order to fully grasp how things happen within that frame, we need to narrow it, to focus on, among many things, bodies (50). We need to look at the material contexts of the people living and functioning within that frame. Talking with and exploring the experiences of single mothers in

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[10] In using the term "exigence," I draw on Lloyd Bitzer's definition: "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be…an exigence is rhetorical when it is capable of positive modification and when positive medication requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse" (6).

higher education is a way of narrowing the frame; it allows us to see the recursive nature of their relationships to academia, how they bring their lives outside of the academy within, and within the academy out. This chapter focuses on accounts from seven single mothers read alongside survey data from 102 single mothers across geographic locations, institutional types, disciplines, ranks, and single mother identities. What these survey responses and interviews reveal is how single moms function within the institution of higher education, the challenges they face, as well as the solutions they locate through their material practice, rhetorical action, and composing strategies, and in some aspects, ways towards institutional change. I start the chapter with the lived experiences of single moms in academia, and the challenges they face to make visible why there is a need for support. I then describe the experiences of single moms in being supported.

I share the stories of Kelly and Tricia, two single mom PhD students who, despite having similar single mom identities, have very different experiences with support. I include Kelly and Tricia as case studies because I was struck by how similar they are—they're both in the Sciences at R1 institutions, divorced with primary custody of a son (Kelly's son is a toddler; Tricia's is 10 years old), actively involved in on campus politics, and in their early to mid-30s. Their experiences effectively illustrate how institutional and even programmatic contexts really shape experiences; their stories emphasize the importance of having consistency across higher education in supporting single moms. Additionally, embedded within their stories are many of the challenges single moms face that I describe in this chapter related to time, second shift, childcare, and money.

I end this chapter by sharing where single moms feel their support systems reside, to reveal how the relationships between people are what foster change within higher education, as well as help maintain it as an institution. To fully understand higher education, we need to pay attention to the actions of the people within the institution, particularly those who are on the margins. Composition and rhetoric, as an interdisciplinary field, has much to gain by giving attention to how single moms

situate themselves within higher education as an institution. If we pay attention to how single moms build support networks, we can see the unique rhetorical strategies and composition practices they draw on; such knowledge can benefit our teaching, mentorship, and research to be more inclusive and attentive to the resources single moms bring with them to academia. Additionally, as an interdisciplinary field often with connections across the curriculum, composition and rhetoric is in a position to implement change for the benefit of single moms and people with marginalized subjectivities, not only through the development of inclusive policies, but also through our everyday practices and interactions.

Centering Single Mom Perspectives

To better understand the shared challenges of single moms in academia, I analyzed the survey and interview data using grounded theory. Kathy Charmaz describes grounded theory as an analytical approach that centers the participants by drawing on their words and actions to create the codes (49). Having the participants serve as knowledge resources and drawing from their language and actions allowed me to maintain a feminist methodological approach, enhancing rather than interfering in the participants' lives (Kirsch X).

By centering the participants, I was able to better understand the common challenges single mothers in academia share even though their single mom identities, academic institutions, geographic locations, number of children, academic rank, and academic discipline may differ. However, this understanding is limited; I am not claiming that the experiences described here represent the experiences of *all* single mothers. To address these gaps and limitations, I have provided perspectives from the literature, as well as supplemental data sources, as seen in Chapters One and Two. Given the racial and gender disparities in higher education, even if I had been able to gather data representing the perspectives of each single mother in higher education, the chances are

high that white, cis-gender, heterosexual women would have been overwhelmingly represented[11].

Still, the survey and interview responses begin to, as described in the introduction, fill a gap in the

representation of single mom experiences in higher education, and using grounded theory to

interpret the survey and interview data allowed me to draw on personal experience and the

narratives of single moms to make meaning and produce knowledge (Castañeda and Isgro 9).

Primary Challenges

"Whatever you have to do to get it done is kind of what we do," Katherine, a geographically

single mom of two children tells me, as she describes how she navigates attending conferences.

Katherine's single mom identity is unique; she's married, but her husband, who is in the Navy and

works in explosive ordnance disposal ("he's a bomb tech"), is gone anywhere from six to nine

months of the year. While Katherine may have the type of *financial support* that many single moms

without a partner lack, the challenges she faces are like single moms with a variety of identities—she

rarely feels like she ever has enough *time*, she struggles with the *second shift*, and she knows all too well

how the availability of *childcare* can shape experiences in the academy. Having moved soon before

our conversation, Katherine shared with me how her house was a mess because she and her kids

had jumped right into their new life in the South Atlantic United States after being abroad with her

husband. Katherine had just started a new job, and her kids had just started at a new school, which

also meant their participation in extracurricular activities (her daughter is on two soccer teams, and

her son is in Boy Scouts, both activities that require Katherine to taxi her kids back-and-forth).

Katherine's assertion that single moms do whatever they have to is not only applicable to her

experiences as a geographically single mom trying to attend conferences; it is applicable to single

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[11] According to the NCES, "of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in Fall 2016, 41 % were White males; 35% were White females; 6 % were Asian/Pacific Islander males; 4 % were Asian/Pacific Islander females; 3% were Black males, Black females, and Hispanic males; and 2 % were Hispanic females."

moms in academia with a range of identities as they work to navigate the challenges they encounter. As I learned in my conversations with single moms, this mentality speaks to their epistemology— their willingness to do whatever is needed is how they develop the resource knowledge they draw on in the future to support them in a variety of situations, how they "come to know what they know" (Schell and Rawson 3). For single moms in higher education, their challenges influence and are influenced by their embodied experience and material practice. Like their lives in and out of the academy, these challenges are not unidirectional; they have the potential to shape higher education, as they shape the way single moms function within it. Neuman refers to these behavioral patterns as recursive and argues that day-to-day habits structure the institution, and "in turn, institutions encode and imprint their own meanings and behaviors on individuals…" (140). Looking at the shared challenges of single moms allows for a greater familiarity with what shapes their day-to-day habits and in-turn, the institutions in which they function. These shared challenges are the focus of the following subsections: time, second shift, childcare, money, and support.

Time

At least twice a week, Erica makes the three-hour drive from her academic institution to where her kids attend school. She does this because she is divorced with 50/50 custody. Given that she's been doing this for four years, Erica has a strong understanding of the value of time; her material circumstances and embodied practice shape her perceptions of time and how to fit all the tasks she needs to complete within what she has available. Erica's attention to and awareness of time as a finite resource can be seen in how she strategizes to save time; from the white board she uses to plan her schedule to how she thinks about dinner. In our conversation, Erica talked about meal planning as a strategy to save time, something she regularly incorporates into her weekly routine. She also mentioned crockpot meals as a tool to make the day "less stressful." Here, we can see how Erica is strategizing to save time by anticipating what might take her time in the second shift. While

the assumption might be that second shift tasks like dinner only consume time when they're happening—cutting up vegetables, measuring ingredients, preheating an oven, for example, Erica, as well as other interview and survey participants, revealed how, when you are the sole person responsible for these tasks, they can take time in other spaces. Erica acknowledged that as a result of her single mom identity, she is good at time management, but in being good at it, she also needs to be able to work deeply, as she explained—"To work deeply, to really try to like limit distractions, and to give myself over to, if I'm doing work right now, I'm not thinking about what we're going to have for dinner tonight."

Patricia Thornton, William Ocasio, and Micahel Lounsbury, acknowledge how institutions shape the way people allocate their attention "by shaping what problems and issues get attended to and what solutions are likely to be considered in decision making" (89). Erica's approach to dinner shows how the influence of the academic institution occurs even at a micro level of action. Dinner does not seem related to the institution, but it is. Time is the common denominator that both share, even though they occur at different times and places—a crockpot meal can save time that can then be allocated to institutional tasks like grading papers, working deeply on revising an article means not thinking about what will be for dinner. The institution counts on this domestic labor happening elsewhere so as not to affect is operations. Just as the institution impacts the time Erica has available and how she thinks about time management, her life as a single mom also shapes the way she thinks about time.

To help with time management, Erica uses a whiteboard to create a weekly schedule. One day each week is devoted entirely to writing (that's Mondays), and then the rest of the week is blocked off for various tasks like planning, grading, office hours, or being present on campus. She does the whiteboard schedule because she knows if she doesn't "something will get neglected." But Erica is not just an academic, she is also a single mom, and these different identities have different

goals, so in addition to Mondays being her day for writing, they are also the day where she tries to do special play time with each of her kids, so that they get some one-on-one time (Thornton et al. 79). This also means that, as she explained, when she is with her kids "every moment, every waking moment, there's something to do. It's a constant choice of where is my energy gonna go right now? Is it reaching that critical time of day where I really need to be thinking about a little bit of prep for dinner? That means I have to stop writing or that means I have to stop prepping for this class."

As Thornton et al. explain, institutions shape individuals' focus of attention (90). For Erica, this is reflected in how she thinks about allocating her energy, in how she regularly asks herself, "Where is my energy going to go?" As she comes up for tenure review, this decision about how to spend her time and where to focus her attention has become especially apparent. For Erica, time is lost when there is a discrepancy between what the institution claims to be expecting on paper versus what occurs in practice. Institutions are comprised of rules and norms, so while there may be rules for tenure and promotion, the norm may be to leave those rules open to interpretation (Hodgson 7). This is where, in coming up against the institution, Erica must make a choice about where to focus her energy. Erica needs to have this level of attention to time, not only because of the influence of the institution, but also because of her identity as a single mom, "if there's something that I have to get done Monday, I don't have a partner to say, take the kids out of the house for a day, while I get this thing done, you know, whatever it is." Her material circumstances outside of the institution shape her attitude towards and actions within it. When Erica looks at the tenure and promotion requirements of her academic institution, she looks at and follows them as they are written on paper. She does not "have time to play the game, to fix something that isn't written anywhere," to figure out the difference between what something says versus what she should actually do.

Erica's challenges with time as a single mom are not unique to her. Time is the most common and shared challenge for single moms regardless of discipline, academic rank, institutional

type, or geographic location. Many feel like there is never enough time to get everything done, and they are cognizant of how their available time differs from their childfree and/or partnered colleagues. This awareness creates a dual sense of pressure and inadequacy as they work to "compete with the amount of hours others put in," but ultimately feel like they are still coming up short—"I just don't have the time I need to do some of the things that make me competitive, like publishing," and "I am always worried that my institution will not renew my contract if I don't do more work than everyone else." These responses illustrate the norms of the pre-existing academic institutional world that single moms enter (Hodgson 7). They also reveal Hodgson's point, in referencing John R. Searle, that an institution's existence is dependent on people having "particular and related beliefs and mental attitudes," as well as structures of labor and support (4). There is this belief that academics are and should be spending time beyond work hours on academic work, and this belief is born out of an institutional culture that was formed long before single moms had the presence in academia that they do today. If there is this institutional world that is based on and perpetuated by the beliefs and mental attitudes of those who inhabit it, then there is also the potential to change it.

As much as Erica may be working within an institutional environment that she did not help create, her resistance to devoting all her time and energy to her work within that institution indicates the potential for change. Danielle, a single mom to a 12-year-old working part-time on her undergraduate degree, shares this mental attitude and belief. Danielle is aware of how time management is a challenge many college students face; however, "as a single mom they are amplified." Danielle has become skilled at adapting to situations because "When things are always changing regularly you have to come up with a way to make things work almost like an improv skit." This means that when her son decided to do soccer last year, she would sit in her car at the field waiting for him with her papers sprawled out over her front seat, the dashboard, and the floor. While Danielle can bring her work anywhere and complete it at any time (she reads books while

grocery shopping), she also draws a hardline between how much time she'll let her academic work consume from her personal life. "His needs come first," she said when describing her son's first heartbreak, "life can't hold for homework. At the end of the day his needs for me to be his mom outweigh any and everything." While Danielle did not explicitly state that this prioritizing of his needs over everything else means that she prioritizes allocating her time to him, she didn't have to. It was clear when she described comforting him when he and his first girlfriend broke-up, it was clear when she detailed corresponding with her son's teachers, disability counselor, and superintendent to ensure he was getting the support he needs, and it was clear when she shared talking with her son every day when he would call her at work with concerns about his summer classes. The mental attitudes, shared beliefs, and embodied practice of Danielle, Erica, Julie, and Katherine are a disruption of the institutional norms of academia because of their material circumstances. Our sense and experience of time is going to vary depending on the individual; these single moms' experience with time shows their attention to how it is allocated and what is available. The expectations surrounding time in academic culture are felt across facets of their lives, including the second shift, which reveals how work hours extend beyond the typical workday.

Second Shift

When I first talked with Julie, she was in her office at the community college where she works in the English Department. As a single mom of two children, Julie teaches a 6-6 load, has an advising role in collaboration with a nearby R1 university, teaches night exercise classes at the local YMCA, and in addition to her children, cares for two "big dogs" and one cat. At one point, she was doing all of this while also working part-time on her PhD. I felt exhausted just hearing about all of the things Julie was taking on, and I quickly began to realize how her time after the workday ends, is simply the beginning of another type of work—the second shift. Coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in her 1989 book *The Second Shift,* the title term refers to care for the household and

children occurring after paid work hours. Of the single moms I surveyed and spoke with, 40% face challenges related to the second shift. Without a partner at home to assist with household and childcare responsibilities, single moms are left to take on the entirety of second shift tasks, except when they ask a parent, friend, or babysitter to help (or in the case of Katherine, when their well-intentioned partner asks a friend to help in their absence).

"Tuesdays are my day of madness," Julie explains as she shares how her son's gymnastics class and her exercise class both start at 5:30. For Julie, this means getting her son to his class a half hour early so that she can get to her own class on time (they're at two separate locations), only to arrive home at 7:30 to make dinner. "I get like this nice window from about 3:30 until quarter to five where everybody exhales, and then we're off and running," she says. "The only kind of time I get to myself is after the kids go to bed, and the older they get, the shorter that window gets, honestly. If they're not going to bed until 9:30/10:00, it's maybe 30-minutes, and that can be hard." In addition to limited time to herself, getting everyone where they need to be at the right time is a problem. Despite these challenges, Julie's response about her typical day reflects the ability of single moms to problem solve, to figure out a way to do what needs to get done.

As Julie shared the madness of her Tuesdays and what her typical day looked like, I became curious about how she managed her work. There didn't seem to be any time for grading papers, planning classes, or responding to student emails when she was driving her children to extracurricular activities, teaching fitness classes in the evening, and preparing dinner. This contrasted some of the single mom survey responses where they described how they need second shift time to get work done, but it often becomes filled with second shift responsibilities—"There's their dinner and homework and baths and cleaning before I can even attempt to study or lesson plan…" and "It is a deep struggle trying to do all of the standard 'Mom' things like taking the kids to dentist appointments or to the doctor AND completing work…" When I spoke with single moms,

it became clear that the necessity of the second shift was due to the ideal worker norms of higher education as an institution—these norms shape the expectation that academics can devote themselves entirely to work without the constraints of childcare and household responsibilities. This attitude is not lost on single moms. Many emphasized how the norm of academic culture is to take work home with you, regardless of what point one is at in their academic career[12]. Kelly, a third-year PhD student explained to me:

> I think it's just fundamental to the fabric of academic culture here that there is an assumption that academia is your number one priority. Period. They assume that you don't have anything else that's more important, and so the assumption is that you can work all the time, and people who do work all the time get rewarded for working all the time, which is fine. But I just think that it's not a healthy culture.

> Similarly, a tenured faculty member in Classics wrote in her survey response: "A professor is now 'on-call' 24 hours a day and during weekends year-round (even when students are not on-campus). This is a much more difficult load for a single mom to bear than for a professor whose partner can help with children." Despite these norms being felt across academic institutions, departments, and ranks, Julie's approach to the second shift gives a glimpse into the potential for how that time might be viewed beyond space for additional work.

"I get all of my work done while I'm at work," Julie explained to me when I asked her about her work strategies. "I have had a very longstanding personal policy that when I go home for the day, work does not come with me." As Julie explained, this policy arose out of her work as a PhD student, "I had to draw a really bright line between my workday and my student day. It's something

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[12] This belief that work should be constantly ongoing and any free moment should be spent on work is an effect of late capitalism experienced by mothers and people across industries, not just in academia (see "Why Women Still Can't Have it All" by Anne-Marie Slaughter and "Why It's So Hard to Be a Working Mom. Even at Facebook" by Eliza Khuner).

that I've worked really hard to maintain," even after recently completing her PhD. Due to her material circumstances as a single mom, Julie has created her own constraints around when she does work. These constraints are not a secret. She is clear about them with her students and colleagues, letting them know, for example, that they can email her at 9 o'clock at night, but she's not answering, and she isn't checking her email on Sunday mornings. Julie's material practice, her approach to when work gets done and when it does not, is a form of rhetorical action. Her life circumstances outside of the institution shape how she works within the institution. Her move to only do work during work hours demonstrates a willingness to practice possibilities beyond traditional academic worker norms. She has created a life in which bringing work home is the exception, not the norm.

Julie is not the only single mom I spoke with who had this strategy. Katherine also shared that her workweek ends Thursday evening, and she gives herself at least a day, if not two, completely off from work. Katherine's approach also represents a tipping of the needle towards a change in academic culture, where the norm is never taking a day off. Like Julie, Katherine's strategy is a result of her material circumstances and her embodied experience. For her, the mentality that an academic should always be working, even when they're not at work, "isn't healthy, especially in the situation we're in where you're the person that takes on all of the emotional labor. You've gotta give yourself time to rest and breathe." Katherine recognizes the value of a "mental break" for everyone, but especially single moms who take on all the emotional, as well as material, labor in caring for children. While the responses of other single moms about the second shift reflect Porter et al.'s assertion that "Institutions change slowly…," because they still feel substantial pressure to do work at home, Julie's work within and outside of the second shift indicate that change, albeit slow, is possible (628).

Through rhetorical action that is a form of resistance to institutional norms, Julie and Katherine push institutions to think about what they're asking of faculty, students, and staff—what

does meeting institutional expectations require of people's lives beyond the institution? These actions challenge ideal worker norms and redefine what being an ideal worker means. Katherine and Julie push for the creation of boundaries, particularly around things like email, which have created the expectation that faculty, staff, and students will (and should) respond to messages well beyond the typical work day. Ultimately, through their actions, they're asking institutions to modify how they measure productivity, and to hire more employees or adjust their expectations so that work does not and should not come home.

Childcare

In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich writes about the institution of motherhood. She explains that while most institutions are embodied in architectural structures, there are some that are not seen but instead felt. The institution of motherhood is one of them (274). As Andrea O'Reilly explains in *The Encyclopedia of Motherhood,* the institution of motherhood "has specific social, cultural, and political goals that work to benefit and perpetuate patriarchal society" (O'Reilly 571). While the institution of motherhood exists in various ways in the institution of academia, one explicit manifestation is in the lack of childcare (Rich 276). For so many single moms, childcare impacts their work in and out of the institution. Childcare can often determine when single moms teach or take their classes, if they participate in after-hours activities like faculty meetings or candidate dinners, and whether they attend conferences. Childcare shapes to what extent single moms can be involved in the institution. In this way, the institution of motherhood, as described by Rich, is constraining their behavior, at the same time as they're trying to adhere to the rules and norms of their academic institutions.

Childcare is an ongoing challenge for single moms. Oftentimes, childcare challenges are seen as starting and ending with pre-Kindergarten children; the dominant narrative is one of struggling to find quality, affordable childcare that is conveniently located. However, childcare is a challenge even

when children are school age. Many single moms described how they struggled with childcare when school is suddenly closed or their child is sick. When faced with these struggles, single moms' material circumstances come up against the academic institution. What does this look like? For some single moms, it means ignoring university rules and policies. The community college Julie works at has a policy of not allowing children on campus, but there are times when Julie has ignored this rule because "[the kids] are just sick enough to not be at school, but they're not sick, sick, but they don't meet the threshold for going back" or "the K-12 system is off for the day and we're not, and we don't have childcare." Julie's choice to bring her children to campus despite the college policy reflects how rules are "*partial* guides to action, because life—experience—always overflows authority" (Berk and Galvan 552). In other words, her material circumstances, her lived reality, override her adherence to institutional rules.

While some single moms like Julie challenge institutional rules and norms in the face of childcare challenges, others work creatively within academic institutions drawing on their available resources. One single mom described keeping her vacation time as a reserve not for vacation but for when one of her kids gets the flu, and she needs to be out of work for the week. Other single moms described cancelling classes and then moving them online or finding other ways for students to complete work for that day despite not meeting in-person. Amy, a single mom at a Small Liberal Arts College (SLAC) in Gender and Sexuality Studies explained how cancelling class due to a sick kid or unexpected school closing requires doing "a series of mental calculations—Okay, how do I catch up on this? What am I going to drop in the future? How can I condense this information?" In this way we see how single moms are working as bricoleurs as described by Berk and Galvan, "rummaging through the available resources…to cobble together a new solution" (554). When the institution does not offer explicit solutions for single moms, they create their own based on their own resources as well as institutional ones. Single moms' material circumstances require them to

work within the institution to find a solution to their childcare problems, even as those problems persist and resurface.

While childcare is a struggle for many parents, single mothers face unique childcare challenges when attending conferences—they need to pay to bring their child with them or pay for childcare while they're away, and if their child(ren) come, they also need to pay to feed them, which can often become costly given that major conferences are typically hosted in large cities. Oftentimes, the combined financial and childcare costs mean being strategic in conference attendance, whether that's being selective in what conferences to attend or for how long. When Julie was describing the impact her single mom identity has on her as an academic, she explained that she doesn't travel for conferences as much as she would like. There's no childcare available for people who have younger children, and if a single parent has older children, like Julie, there isn't much for them to do—"they hang out, I guess, in the hotel room all day, while I go to work. I don't know if that's a good solution." For Julie, this means being "a lot pickier" about the conferences she attends. Katherine has a different strategy, managing her conference attendance by shortening it—"I usually stay for as little as I need to be there." This approach to conference attendance may decrease the childcare strain, but it still comes at a cost. In my own experience, I have felt (and been told by senior faculty) how limited attendance at a conference means limited networking opportunities, which are integral to professional development and career building. Limited attendance also means missing out on panel presentations that could help strengthen research and build collaborative writing and presentation opportunities, and it also means often missing out on social events. Single moms prioritize attending conferences because they are a norm of the academic institutional structure.

Sara Ahmed describes institutional norms as "the explicit rules or norms of conduct enforced by an institution (through a system of awards and sanctions)" (38). Conference attendance is an institutional norm. One single mom wrote that the logistics of attending a conference,

particularly securing childcare, make the process especially difficult, even though such attendance is "expected and required for merit evaluations and promotions." Her response demonstrates an awareness of the institution and how her material circumstances make adhering to institutional norms simultaneously challenging and necessary. Yet, some single moms expressed how the institution seems to be unaware of the challenges they face when it comes to childcare— "Conferences in our field do nothing to support bringing kids, which I would like them to," and, "I wish my institution had an understanding that I have childcare expenses. Even though my kids are older, they still can't stay by themselves all day." In some ways what we see here is the institution of motherhood informing or shaping the norms within the institution of higher education. If one aspect of the institution of motherhood is a lack of childcare, this characteristic is reflected in the institution of higher education as these single moms describe in their childcare challenges. A lack of childcare constrains what a single mom can do within the institution of higher education. Yet, childcare is necessary for them to be able to participate. When single moms make visible the way their lived experiences override institutional rules or the way they become bricoleurs to develop solutions, they apply pressure to the institution to rethink the rules and norms in practice versus the lived reality of single moms.

Institutions can account for these insights by ensuring that single moms have a voice in conversations about development of supportive infrastructure, policies, and practices. They can turn to research about these experiences, look at statements and testimonios written by parents more generally to get a sense of what policies are beneficial, and they can follow-up on how their supportive policies and practices are benefitting single moms and/or could be strengthened. For example, CCCC Feminist Caucus provides childcare grants to eligible applicants to offset childcare expenses in attending the conference. Following the conference, recipients are asked to submit a short report of their experience at the conference, which highlights how the grant supported their

participation. This information provides insight into how the grants benefit recipients, and what changes can be made to strengthen the support. Such an approach could be implemented within academia more broadly by regularly seeking input and perspective from all caregivers, which would, undoubtedly include single parents. In collecting this information, institutions could ask participants to specify their caregiver status. This could also be done within professional organizations, departments, and programs. Space needs to be made for these voices so that they can be heard.

Money

"Financially, we know about single moms, that we're much more financially stressed then our partnered counterparts," Erica said, midway through explaining what could be done to better support her as a single mom. Erica, like many of the single moms I heard from, is often paying childcare costs to work. As one single mom put it, "I literally have to pay to go to work functions." While much of this is the norm—many parents, regardless of their work or parental status, pay for childcare during work hours—there are some aspects of higher education and being a single mother that make financial expenses and strains unique. Over the summer, Erica was asked to complete a report for her college's accreditation. When Erica asked to be paid for this work, she was told no. This is one place where institutional norms and expectations come up against the material circumstances and lived realities of single moms. Erica's kids do not have school in the summer, so to work on the report, she needed to find and pay for childcare; however, childcare is not a reimbursable expense, and her college was unwilling to financially compensate her for this work even though she should have been. Hodgson writes, "institutions can carefully create stable expectations of the behavior of others" (2). The interaction between Erica and her academic institution reveals expectations around financial compensation and service work. There is an expectation in higher education that faculty will participate in service; however, an individual's context, their material circumstances and embodied experience, are not taken into account in how

that service will be completed and what cost to the individual. Academic institutions may not be thinking about material circumstances, like money, when they create the expectation of service, but they should be. By asking her institution to compensate her for the work she was doing, Erica forced her institution to think about it, but thoughts do not equate action.

Financial challenges for single moms are not isolated to those at the faculty level; undergraduate single moms experience them as well. As Danielle and I sat drinking tea in a historic hotel lobby during her lunch hour, she explained the financial burden she faces as a student:

> They could make [the books] more affordable. I paid $200 for one book and the sell back was only $30.00. Affording this isn't always feasible if you are a single mom working full time, not receiving child support, paying your bills to keep a roof over your child's head and food in his belly as well as trying to make it so your child can at least play a sport and enjoy being a kid because then you need to pick and choose what has to be cut for a month so you don't fall behind in class.

The expectation that students purchase books for their classes is a norm in higher education. Students who purchase the books then have access to necessary reading for their classes; they are awarded for being able to participate in classes and learn the material, and their grades, which depend on their access to material resources, act as an incentive to adhere to institutional norms. For a single mom, as Danielle describes, purchasing a book can be a choice made within the institution that impacts life outside of it—do I purchase this book for my Psychology class or pay for my son to play soccer? Given that "Norms are deeply and often implicitly sewn into the institution's fabric," resisting them means challenging expectations and facing the risk of institutional repercussions (Neuman 141). However, for single moms and as Danielle describes, what may seem like resistance within the institution is actually a choice being made related to life outside of the institution.

The relationship between life outside and within the institution is also evident in how single moms work to resolve their financial challenges. One single mom working at a comprehensive university in Political Science shared how she teaches five classes a semester "to make ends meet," another shared how she has 1-2 additional part-time jobs in addition to working full-time at a community college, and another shared how she had to "piece together adjunct work, clinic work, and borrow money from family" to financially survive. These women's experiences show how they turn to resources within the institution such as teaching additional classes, to support their lives outside of it, while also benefiting and maintain academia. Additional classes are often paid at an adjunct rate and do not include benefits. But their experiences also show how women turn to resources outside of the institution by taking additional jobs and turning to family members for monetary support. Their ability to locate resources for support allows them to maintain their positions within the institution while also continuing to single parent their children. However, academic institutions should pay a livable wage and account for the unique financial needs of single parents. They should ensure that *all* work, including service and research is compensated, and compensated according to the needs of the individual.

Support

As mentioned in the introduction, institutions depend not only on individuals but also on their interactions (Hodgson 7). Thornton et al. extend this by recognizing that social interactions are what shape the social practices, norms, and structures within institutions, including the work that happens there and the way things are organized (84). For single moms in academia, interpersonal relationships, the people they connect with, are where they find their support. Erica explained this succinctly when I asked her who or what makes up her support system: "The support comes from the people."

For many single moms, the support must come from the people, as they feel they are not well-supported by their academic institution[13]. This means that most of them find support in friends, family members, and most commonly, themselves[14]. Within academia, many single moms experience feelings of isolation, as they struggle to find other single moms or even single parents in higher ed to relate to, and they also notice that colleagues (parented or not) either avoid talking about children with them or express little interest in their maternal lives. The absence of support and the feeling of isolation are experienced across academic ranks, and begin as early as the PhD level, if not sooner.

Kelly is a divorced single mom with primary custody of a toddler working on her PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences at an R1 university. When I asked her about what institutional policies, systems, or structures had been helpful to her, I was met with almost 30-seconds of silence. "Individual people have been helpful to me," she said, when the silence finally broke. Given what Kelly shared with me about her first year in the program, I wasn't surprised. When Kelly started her PhD, she was given the illusion of support. She was offered half an assistantship, which she accepted, after making clear her constraints to those on the hiring committee—she was a single mom to an 8-month-old, working on her PhD full-time, and also working two clinical positions out of financial necessity. The faculty told her none of this would be a problem, "We love your little son. The only requirement is that you bring him in to come visit us." This vocal support was then followed by a series of contradictory actions. Despite Kelly telling them that because of her various commitments, she would not be on campus all the time, they still expected her to be, even though they had told her otherwise. When they couldn't figure out technology in meetings that they knew Kelly couldn't attend, they still contacted her, asking her to come help them figure it out. At one

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[13] The majority of survey participants, 42% sometimes feel well supported; 34% feel rarely or never well supported by their academic institution.

[14] Of 102 respondents, 93 identified their own strategies and tactics as a source of support, 78 identified their friends, and 56 identified their family members.

point, Kelly was assisting them with a substantial research project by aggregating data, something Kelly is really good at[15]—"I'm good at organizing and making things easy to look at and easy to go through." She took data that was a mess and "put it all together, and organized it in this immaculate spreadsheet." However, Kelly noticed there were gaps in the data. When she pointed this out to the faculty, they preceded to dictate the data from memory. Essentially, what they wanted Kelly to enter into the excel sheet was quantitative data measuring kids' communication skills that they claimed to have memorized. They then shared that they were going to present the data at a national, not child-friendly, conference so Kelly would have been unable to participate[16]. While the faculty had seemed understanding and supportive of how Kelly's life outside of academia would shape her work within it, their actions communicated that this was not the case. This illusion of support only continued throughout Kelly's assistantship experience.

At one point, the faculty scheduled a viewing of a recorded conference presentation. Kelly told them, "I can't do it on that day, and I just want to confirm that it's okay I won't be there. Since I have the link, I'll watch it later."

"Yeah, yeah. That's fine," they told her.

To be sure, Kelly told them at least three additional times she wouldn't be there. Yet on the day they had the meeting, they sent her four emails asking why she wasn't there, when was she going to get there, and could she come help them with the technology? The final email came from a faculty member who wrote, "As the wife of a pilot, I understand what it's like to be a single mom because he's gone all the time. If you need help keeping track of your assistantship hours, let me know." While the faculty member may have seen this as a gesture of support by showing a sense of

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[15] Kelly is incredibly modest, and she said, "I'm not trying to brag about myself," before she shared this personal strength.

[16] Since data from the project was fabricated, Kelly would not have gone if they had invited her because, as she said, "I do not feel like it would ethically have been okay to present that data, and I don't want my name on it."

understanding and an attempt at interpersonal connection, it is actually quite the opposite. As Kelly recognized, this email was unsupportive, microaggressive, and threatening. After responding via email, Kelly met in person with the faculty member and made clear that she had no problem talking about her work, but she wanted her son left out of the conversation. The faculty member offered a plethora of unsolicited advice about how to be a PhD student, including: "To be honest, I don't even know if you should be in this program right now. And maybe you should come back later when you know how to prioritize your career, over, well, sorry, you've already told me that I can't talk about him." When Kelly pointed out that what the faculty member was doing was illegal, that given their work with people with disabilities, the faculty member should know this, the faculty member said, "Oh, give it up, Kelly. Get off your high horse. Not everything is some damn crusade."

"I believe that is when I left," Kelly told me before explaining that the faculty member requested to be off her committee. When Kelly went to the chair to make clear she was uncomfortable with what happened, the chair told Kelly, "Well. I really just think she's looking out for you." Kelly responded:

> This is not looking out for me. This is aggressive. This is against the law. I will absolutely never in a million years prioritize this program over my kid. It will never happen. I would quit this program seven thousand times before I would even consider putting this above my kid. It will never be above my kid. I care about relationships and the people who are important to me. If I look back on my life, I don't want to say, I gave up on my kid's first and second and third year, so that I could be in a research lab, 24-hours a day, helping people with technology. I'm not going to do that. If anyone is going to ask me to do that again, I am done this year, so if you want me to be in this program, that's fine, I'm going to be in this program as a mom.

Kelly's experiences reflect the brick wall Sara Ahmed refers to when "the institution becomes that which you come up against" (26). Kelly came up against the people who help comprise her academic institution. Her life outside of the institution, much of which is shaped by her single mom identity, shaped her life within in, and the treatment she faced. At the time she took the half an assistantship, Kelly was not making enough money to support herself and her son, so she worked two clinical positions. This work, which happened outside of the institution and was influenced by her financial needs as a single mom, created constraints around her availability within it. When the faculty did not show up for Kelly, when they failed to support her, she had to support herself, to turn to her own strategies and tactics. What she needed, however, at the most basic level was acknowledgment of her humanity.

The faculty never took the time to ask Kelly what she needed, but if they had, they would have found the response to be an uncomplicated one:

> For me, the most important thing is talking to me and treating me like I am a capable
> human…I don't necessarily need people to guide me through things when it comes to
> academic work. I do need people to be like, 'you are a human with value.' Just if something
> does happen that's frustrating, someone that I can talk to and trust with that information.
> Just people who I enjoy being with who understand my experience in some way.

She acknowledges that her identity is complex, and not everyone can connect with each facet, but they can connect and work to understand her experience "in some way." Kelly needed the people in her academic institution to support her, to recognize how capable she is, and how much she contributes. Her needs, the support she would benefit from, is like another PhD student almost 600-miles away studying Bioengineering. Like Kelly, Tricia is a divorced single mom with primary custody of a son, but she has experienced much greater support from her academic institution than Kelly has. In addition to being a single mom, Tricia is an Army Veteran, and as a PhD student, has

felt well supported by her academic institution. Her advisor has been understanding of her single mom identity and how that impacts her work within the program. In the past, Tricia had an active role on the student senate where she would bring her son to meetings and receive compliments from the Provost on the healthy snacks her son was eating and how well behaved he is. As Tricia put it, "I feel as supported as I could be. Any time I've ever had an issue or something come up whether it's a professor for a class or my advisor for my work, I've always been accommodated, no problem. No problem. I've never had any issues over the parenting thing." Tricia acknowledges that this support could be tied to funding and access to resources—"I come from rich departments. They have money, so if I need some sort of accommodation, it's not a problem. I'm paid, and it's still going to get done because there's a lot of people and a lot of money to make it happen." When we juxtapose the experiences of Tricia and Kelly, we see how there are inconsistencies in institutions, how "people are living in and through institutional structures," but in markedly different ways (Berk and Galvan 545). However, despite their differences in experience, Tricia and Kelly have almost identical support needs.

About a year and a half ago, Tricia went on medical leave due to a head injury, which has caused her to be unable to look at screens. She can't email or send text messages without pain. Now in addition to being a single mom, a Veteran, and a PhD student, Tricia is working to return to her PhD program. During her medical leave, Tricia has felt the isolation many single moms do. Her challenges with digital communication mean she has felt almost entirely cut-off from her colleagues and program faculty. When institutional norms are centered around digital communication, being unable to participate can result in disconnection, and this disconnection has Tricia feeling like "a ghost in the background."

While Kelly just wants to be told, "You are a human with value," Tricia wants "Acknowledgement that I still exist." Tricia understands the demands of being a PhD student, of

how it leaves little to no time to make friends or reach out to old colleagues to see how they're

doing, but she also acknowledges this as a problem of institutional culture—"I don't think they're

doing it on purpose. I think it's the way academia is structured that they just absolutely have no time

to slow down for two seconds to think about me still existing in the world when I have been out of

their world for a year and a half." Tricia's experience reveals how norms and expectations within the

institution shape what people have the capacity to do beyond it. Her experience also shows what

happens when someone's life in the academy cannot be divided from her life outside it. The same

applies to Kelly. What Tricia and Kelly want are not necessarily institutional support structures, but

people within the institution to provide support and acknowledgment of their humanity.

While people within institutions may fade into the background, becoming cogs that keep the

academic machine working, they are an integral part of an academic institution's existence. For Sarah

Ahmed, "things become institutional when they recede or become part of the background for those

who are part of an institution" (21). While single moms are a part of the academic institution, their

existence on the margins means that they depend on people within the institution; the people shape

their material practice and embodied experiences. Erica is able to teach at a college three hours away

from where her children go to school because the program chair who designs teaching schedules

makes sure that Erica can make her life work—"She schedules my classes however I need them

scheduled. I get one online course a semester, no questions asked. If it were not for her doing that,

this would not work." For Erica, this is a "concrete way" she feels supported. When Julie has to

bring her kids to campus because their school is cancelled or they don't meet the threshold for

returning to school after being sick, she knows she has a "close-knit group of colleagues" who can

keep an eye on her son or daughter while she's teaching class—"[My daughter] knows that her

godmother is on faculty here, so she can wander over to her office if she needs to. She goes over to

my dean's office and gets candy out of the jar." This is despite the college's policy prohibiting

children from being present on the campus; however, as Julie explained "faculty regularly violate that, single parent or not." Because the policy fails to consider the lived experiences and material realities of the people within the institution, it doesn't work. Ultimately, the support comes from the people. Like Julie, Amy finds support in colleagues related to childcare—"I've had colleagues who were willing to, if my daughter was sick and I couldn't go to class, who will step in and come up with something for my students to do during that class period. I've had colleagues babysit my child, so lots of tangible hands-on things have been really helpful." Amy acknowledges that this support is not built into the institutional structure, "It's still patchwork. It's still an individual, in the moment solution."

As Kelly and Tricia explained, these single moms recognize how tangible support is not the only valuable support coming from people—there's also emotional support, impacting how these single moms work within the academic institution. For example, much of Katherine's support as a PhD student came from group chats where she and her colleagues found comfort— "Those ended up being the most emotionally supportive relationships that I felt I had in the program," she explained. Such chats became spaces for venting about difficult conversations with a dissertation chair, processing feedback from a committee, or sharing challenges of getting a divorce while a PhD student. Similarly, Erica has found emotional support from the people she works with— "all of my colleagues were supportive through my custody battle, divorce process, all of that. But I have one colleague who, I can just go upstairs to her office and be like, 'I need a hug,' and I can hug her." Support is what happens at the individual human level for these single moms.

While many would welcome support in the form of better financial compensation, more time, and better childcare, there is something to be said for the way support from the people sustains these single moms in their work within and beyond the academy. When Amy described how her identity as a single mom impacted her work as an academic, she pointed to how she sees herself

in relation to the institution: "[Being a single mom] makes me often feel like an outsider, like this institution was not built with me in mind and doesn't really want to change to include and accommodate me, and so it's always a matter of working around and finding ways to make myself fit." Looking at the interactions single moms have with people within institutions shows the often-invisible work single moms do in collaboration with others to make themselves fit the ideal worker model. These interactions demonstrate how single moms' lives and the people within and outside of academia, shape their experiences within institutions, and how their material circumstances and embodied practice are an undeniable facet of their work within higher education.

Conclusion

When the system does not work for single moms, they find ways to work around it, and oftentimes, this work, done by people within the institution, remains invisible; however, this is the very work that sustains institutions. Higher education needs single moms. They are not a problem to be fixed; they are a necessary part of what makes institutions function. Being attentive to the needs of single moms and how to address those needs benefits multiple people of marginalized identities who are often ignored in the design of academic institutions. When Kelly talked about almost leaving her PhD program because of the discriminatory treatment she received, she told me, "We benefit from having different kinds of people, and that includes moms, and that includes single moms. We have a perspective that's really important and that's different." If diversity and inclusion are important to academic institutions, then they need to show that through their actions, by making space for the perspectives and experiences of people with various marginalized identities, including single moms.

Because, as Amy acknowledges, the institution was not designed with single moms in mind, they develop behaviors and material practice that allow them to exist within and outside the institution as single moms and as academics. As their work maintains academic institutions, they also

work to slowly change the institution through their rhetorical action—their behaviors and interactions. Just as institutional theorists recognize that humans make-up institutions, they also recognize that institutions are slow to change (Porter et al.; Ocasio et al.). Such change depends on humans, and as Danielle S. Allen acknowledges, "a shift in how people interact will inevitably also transform their institutions" (172).

Looking at and working to understand the lived experiences of single moms allows us to see the potential and the need for change in higher education. Single moms' lives do not exist inside a vacuum. When they enter an academic institution, their lives outside of it come with them, and when they leave the institution, their lives within the institution follow. Their personal and academic lives are intertwined, shaping multiple facets of their material practice and lived reality. Bringing attention to the poor timing of faculty meetings and getting them rescheduled, resisting policies that are discriminatory towards parents, advocating for teaching schedules that accommodate their single parenting lives, and challenging traditional ideas of who an academic is, are rhetorical actions single moms engage in, as they work towards developing an academic institution that is attentive and responsive to their lived experiences and material realities as single moms.

At the institutional level, colleges and universities need to work with the office of institutional research, as well as faculty governing bodies, student support services, and administrators to conduct research and gather information about the experiences of parents within their own institutions. At a panel presentation hosted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, administrators from Everett Community College and Delgado Community College, as well as a President and CEO of a nonprofit organization, Family Scholar House, shared how they work to prioritize receiving input from single moms at the institutional level. They described working with faculty from institutional research, as well as from academic support services, as well as prioritizing including single moms in conversations about developing supports that benefit them. They also

created cross-campus collaboration teams, which helped foster buy-in from stakeholders across the college; they described collecting data for student single moms by looking at FAFSA and Perkins data, identifying who the single moms are, and then reaching out to them for interviews. They also regularly release surveys across the campus to get input from parents themselves about their experiences. Additionally, college and universities like UC Berkeley and the University of Pennsylvania have student parent and family centers, which are offices dedicated exclusively to supporting graduate student parents. These are also venues where colleges and universities could make space for the stories single moms have shared in this chapter.

In the next chapter, I explore the composition practices of single moms, how their material circumstances, as well as lived and embodied experiences shape how, when, and where they get composition work done. Drawing on *testimonio* as methodology, I tell the stories of interview participants using interview data, piecing together a larger picture of what it looks like to compose as a single mom in academia.

Chapter 4: Moving Mountains: The Composition Practices of Single Moms[17]

> "Although my children understood the importance of education, I often felt like an unfit mother. I went to their events and participated as best I could as a single parent, but my laptop was always right there, powered up. Even when I was supposed to be helping them with their homework, my own work was always on my mind." -Elaine Richardson

I sit in front of my computer, trying to transcribe the last 15-minutes of an interview. At this point, I've done almost 18-hours of interview audio totaling 250 pages, and I am ready to be done. I feel so close to finishing this transcript, but I have something, or rather, *someone* else vying for my attention—my 5 ½ years of age daughter, Olivia. After getting home from school, she wants me to play with her, to engage in her role-playing game where she will reenact what happened that day.

"Just let me finish this transcript, and then I'll be happy to play with you," I tell her, while also encouraging her to do whatever she wants until I am done.

Instead of going off to do her own thing, she climbs under the dining table and into my lap, listening to the audio, and quickly picking up on how my "esc" key is my "play" and "pause" button. She is wiggly, anxious, and to her, 5-minutes feels like an eternity. I know this transcription will take at least 30-minutes.

Her little pointer finger lingers above the "esc" key as I type, as she integrates herself into the workflow.

"Go ahead and push it," I say, as I get to a point where I need to pause the audio.

She does, and after doing this a few times, starts to feel courageous. She reaches for a letter key, a "t" and then a "p" before I tell her to stop. She begins to slump down, arms crossed, and then whispers in my ear,

"Can I tell you a secret?"

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[17] Parts of this chapter also appear in "Making Space for What Lies in the Interstices: The Composing Practices of Single Moms," *Writers: Craft and Context,* vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 2021, pp. 31-40.

"Of course," I say.

"Are you mad at me?"

"No, honey. I'm not mad at you. This transcript has just taken me all day to do, and I wouldn't want you to accidentally undo all of that work by pressing the wrong key, that's all. I'm not mad at you. I love you."

I hug her and then ask her if she'll go back to being my assistant, to pushing the "esc" key for me. She does. And after half an hour, of this, of her and I pushing keys, of her asking questions about the voice coming from my computer, of her trying to match the words from that voice with the words on my computer screen, we finish and move away from the computer and into the world of her kindergarten classroom where she had a substitute teacher for the day who made promises of S'mores for snacks and candy math games.

This is a snapshot of my composition life. A glimpse into a world where, even as I desperately try to finish all of my writing when my daughter is gone, I still continually fall short of my goal. Livy and I have been doing this work-life dance for the past three years. One in which she is the "esc" key to my composing, where her absence and presence determines how, when, and where I write, or if I do at all. My experience is reflective of the composition practices of other single moms across disciplines, academic ranks, and geographic locations. In an interview with *Art, Lit, Lab Review,* Kate Vieira describes how her identity as a single parent shapes the way she completes her writing, how she writes first thing in the morning, but tries not to work "in the evenings or on the weekends" because that is precious time with her daughter, time for the two of them to "irritate the bejeesus out of each other." She acknowledges that in the moments when she does need to write and her daughter is there, that time is limited—"Sometimes I have 30 minutes Sometimes it's a couple hours. It's sacred."

Within composition and rhetoric, we don't see much into what the writing experiences of people with marginalized identities are like. While there was substantial scholarship on the process movement from 1976-1995, as Pamela Takayoshi points out, conversations around the topic have fallen into a lull since, with occasional process studies scholarship coming to the surface, like that of Paul Prior and Jody Shipka, and most recently, Christine Tulley (553). Such work explores academic writers' composition practices—how those writers get work done. Oftentimes, these studies involve interviews of students or writing scholars and the strategies and methods they implement throughout their composition process (see Rogers). Occasionally, such studies also involve longitudinal work that follows student writers, or other methods, like asking participants to create visual representations of their writing processes (see Prior and Shipka). Within this work, one "interstitial gap"— is evidenced through the absence of single mothers (Pérez 5). Christine Tulley acknowledges that looking at how gender affects writing within rhetoric and composition "is essential" (153). Her emphasis on this need comes from not only an absence of attention to the topic, but also the relationship between gender and parenting and how women are often disproportionately impacted in their writing "due to the birth of children[18]" (153). Additionally, such perspectives are important because they broaden the pool of knowledge that teachers, administrators, and scholars can draw on to make sense of writing experiences across identities, and as Pamela Takayoshi argues, "If teachers of writing are to effectively help writers learn to be effective and productive in contemporary academic and non-academic contexts, then we need to know what composing demands writers must negotiate" (573). The composing demands of single mothers call for a feminist understanding of composition practice, similar to what Laura Micchiche describes in her work on acknowledgments, where writing is "an ecosystem," one that "includes the

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[18] Tulley also emphasizes the need to consider how race "affects writing within rhetoric and composition," and acknowledges that women are disproportionately impacted as a result of "caring for aging parents" as well (153).

interplay of writers, readers, texts, and environments large and small" (38). Such a feminist approach

to composition asks that we recognize how "writing activities are frequently mediated by diverse

others [including children]" (Micchiche 6). It asks us to take into consideration how lived

experience, material reality, and the personal shape what composition practice looks like in and out

of the classroom.

In this chapter, I make visible the composition practices of seven single mothers. Their

composition practices indicate the value of paying attention to what is often unseen and beyond our

control as writers. What follows are their stories told in a *testimonio* style, described by the Latina

Feminist Group as, "a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived

realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure" (2). Like the Latina Feminist

Group, I see *testimonios* as a way for participants to bear witness to their experiences as single

mothers in academia, and through the sharing of their stories, to represent not just what has

happened in their personal lives, but also what has happened to them as a community (13). I

recognize that I take up this methodology as a white woman writing about the experiences of single

mothers who may or may not identify as Latinx. In doing so, my intention is not to conflate the

experiences of these two groups or the stakes of erasure that the Latina Feminist Collective

describes. Instead, as a methodology, I see *testimonios* offering a unique, decolonial way of sharing the

lived experiences of those who have been marginalized. It is a methodology that allows single moms'

stories to be part of a collective, rather than functioning as individual, separate narratives. This

collectivity reveals how the challenges of single moms are communal not individualistic,

strengthening the need to support these women as a group.

I have chosen to write the stories from the perspectives of these women, using data from

our interview conversations to weave together their narratives. In selecting excerpts from the

transcripts, I focused on participants' responses to interview questions about their composition

work and process. These questions asked participants about what types of composition work they regularly complete, how their single mom identity shapes their composition work, and what projects they were working on, as well as had coming up. Each participant's story is not an entire transcript, but instead a piecing together of various moments to communicate something about their context and their composing experience. I also looked for moments of overlap that might help create a larger picture of the experiences of single moms. For example, many of the participants have organizational and time management strategies like Julie, and many benefit from collaborative writing. They are also all organizing their composition work around their children. While each participant's story and experience can stand on its own, my intention was that it would communicate something more broadly about single moms and what composing is like for them. Additionally, I prioritized including themes that emerged in my conversations with each participant, and what they considered important for others to know. For example, in my first conversation with Amy, she had mentioned getting her book ready for publication in passing, but in our second conversation, the book had recently been published, and she spoke at length about that experience. Similarly, Tricia's head injury[19] was something that came up in both of our conversations, and it was an experience that greatly influenced all aspects of her life, especially her exclusion from academia. I wanted readers to recognize the material realities of these women, their embodied experiences, and the emotions they felt. The data I chose to include allowed me to do that. I also asked the participants if they were comfortable with this writing style, and I shared copies of all of the transcripts with them, which included edits of identifying information to maintain their anonymity (for example removing children's names, specific institutional locations and names, etc.). I asked them to let me know what

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[19] While this experience greatly influenced all aspects of her life, and while Tricia did mention having PTSD in our initial interview, she did not connect PTSD or any other service-related injuries to her head injury during our conversations.

information they would like me to remove and/or change, and aside from a clarification about student enrollment numbers, all participants approved this approach.

In telling these women's experiences in this way, my intention is to honor their stories as told by them, and to "promote increased attention to the specific ways participants construct their narratives, including the specific discourses they use to describe their lives and experiences" (Duquaine-Watson 41). I follow their narratives with my own analytical perspective of their stories. To signal the shift in tone and style, I use sub headers when a new story or analysis occurs.

Tricia's Story

Two years ago, I was starting the second semester of a PhD program in Information Science and Technology; this was after spending a semester working on a PhD in Bioengineering. I wanted (and still do) to do research on the creation of a wearable medical device focusing on mental healthcare, and I wanted to understand the implications of that. While I have had a consistent history of studying Engineering, in my undergrad, I minored in Writing and Rhetoric. Prior to that, I had served in the Army, including a tour in Iraq. When I got out, my plan was to go back to school, which I did. My son was 6-months old at the time. When I first started going to school and my son was really young, I would drop him off at daycare, and then I'd have such a long ride that I wouldn't want to waste my time. I would draw cheat sheets and kind of peek at them when I was driving to study for my exams. Once, I had to use an audio recorder, read a chapter from a book, and then play it back on my commute so that I could study. I imagine Homer Simpson in his car with his toaster and everything; as a single parent, you're trying to create this multi-tool where you're able to do all of these wonderful things at once and change the baby's diaper.

As a single parent (I got divorced three years into my bachelor's degree), it was all I could do to keep up with my schoolwork, much less research on top of it. I've always felt a little at a disadvantage because students who don't have a spouse or a child, they're just single in themselves,

and they don't have any other obligations outside of work, so they're able to produce maximum output. For single parents, it's just work, work, work all the time. There's no such thing as a day off. It's like having two full-time jobs. I just don't have time to be the rock star, super mom that I want to be, and be concerned about how my child is developing and growing and be affected by different things that he's exposed to, when I am busy with my academic stuff. You have to cut some corners, and so rather than focusing on my studies and getting straight As, I'm okay with having a B and having an extra four hours of my time every week. It's the same sort of sacrifice I have to make as a parent. I'm okay with my child being a little bit more independent and not being first in his class and a music prodigy and all these other things because I don't have the time to influence him in those ways, or to even think about the ways I could influence his direction in life. It's almost like an identity crisis because you're stuck between several identities: I identify as a mom, I identify as young scholar, I identify as a female veteran, and if you have all of these sorts of identities or personas, you can't just be one of those things. When you're in academia, always in the back of your mind, you're focusing on what's due tomorrow, what you have to do, you know your homework that's never done or your project you never started. You can never really shut that off completely and focus on other things when you're supposed to be performing those roles. I still have that anxiety related to academic roles, even though I've been on medical leave for almost two years.

During the second semester of my PhD, I was in my bedroom with my music on, doing a happy dance, excited about going to visit a fellow researcher outside of the country during Spring break, when I bent down to love on my dog, to pet her. I thought I had cleared the corner of my bed when I was bending down to put my arms on my dog; I didn't know that I was going to hit my head on the corner of my bed, but I did. I've been on medical leave for almost two years. I don't really do happy dances anymore; the last one changed so much about my life.

Now, I have photophobia and screen intolerance and some inflammation on the left side of my head. I used to read and write a lot, but since I've been on medical leave, I've been unable to. I am a writer, but I can't write. At first, I tried to read just to catch up on my schoolwork because I thought I was going to get better right away, so I was reading stuff for my class. I think I read for like 20-minutes, and then I had to sleep for 2 hours directly after I read because it exhausted me so much. I have notebooks, I have pen and paper, but when I try to go back to read and edit them, it hurts, just focusing my eyes on the contrast between the writing, it's painful, so I just kind of gave up. What I've been doing instead is painting. Paint is much easier for me. When I'm painting, the pain doesn't go away. The pain is constant. It just isn't aggravated or increased. My walls are full of paintings now, and I have lots of paintings (in acrylic) that have mostly words on them.

There are aphorisms in there, there are engineering equations, there are movements, and there are arrows. Rhetoric is one of the words in one of my paintings. One of my paintings says "Information." It was upside down. I flip them around because they don't really have sides, and when you flip them around, you can see different things. It's almost like a brain mapping, and a lot of it has to do with my research and trying to figure out a way to move forward with my thought processes. Some of it is listening to audiobooks and just me responding to them because that's what I used to do before I hit my head.

When I paint, I improvise. I pick a color that I feel like at the moment, and I just kind of have to fill up the canvas until it's not blank anymore, and sometimes as I'm kind of slapping paint around the canvas, something shows up or comes to my mind, like I'll picture something in the canvas, and then I'll paint that into it. I call it improvisation. I know nothing about art, a real artist would probably just laugh and roll their eyes, but it's fun. Before I went on medical leave, my writing process was pretty much like what I do when I paint—I didn't necessarily have a plan, I'd just sit down and start doing it. I wrote into or through my ideas. Then, my ideas would come out in

conversation, too. It always helps me to talk to different researchers and different people because that's when my random ideas will come up, and I would write them down real fast.

It's really hard when you're a writer, and you hit your head, and you become disabled, and you're not able to write anymore. Writing has been my outlet since I was a teenager; I used to keep journals and diaries or whatever, that's the tool I've always used, and it was taken from me.

Alex's Analytical Perspective

Tricia's story reveals the limitations of academia when it comes to composition. While Tricia can compose through painting, and she can talk at length about her research, she is unable to participate in her PhD program because looking at screens, and reading or writing on paper is painful. This is despite her deeply engrained identity as a writer and academic. But she still wants to compose, and so she's found another way to process her thoughts and express them through painting. Tricia's experience begs the question: How might we broaden our conception of composition practice to make space for the unexpected challenges people of all subjectivities encounter? How is it that higher education has become a space where accidentally hitting your head turns you into, what Tricia referred to as "a ghost in the background"?

Her story and experience echoes that of Nick, a student in Brenda Brueggemann's English 467: Writing and Learning that she describes in "An Enabling Pedagogy: Meditations on Writing and Disability," an article written twenty years ago; history keeps repeating itself. While taking Brueggemann's course, Nick injures his shoulder and learns that instead of the initial seven to ten days in a cast, he'll need surgery and be without the use of his right arm for three months. Through her narrative about Nick, Brueggemann describes how he struggles to get support from other faculty and the Office of Disability Services (ODS): "with the twist of his arm, a turn of luck, a nick of fate, Nick had gone from normal to not, from maker of money to coster of money" (797). Like Nick, without accommodations, Tricia has had no choice but to leave the university. She went from

someone who could benefit the university to someone who was seen as an expense, and she recognizes how academia sees her—a person of little to no value unless she can produce research and scholarship. She doesn't know if or when she will ever return. She has become "another disability made invisible" (Brueggemann 797). Someone who is unacknowledged, whose only means to maintain contact with students and faculty in her academic program is through a method that causes pain. Throughout her educational experience, Tricia found ways to maintain a presence in her various roles—she would go to veterans' social events, regularly complete her academic projects and have a strong presence in her research labs, and support her son as he learned to play an instrument and participate in Martial Arts. However, this presence was not without sacrifices. Tricia describes how she "cut corners," adjusting the expectations she had for herself as a student and a mom so that she could do the work of both. Her story shows not only how this finding a way, this "cutting corners," is present even after her head injury, but also how one's writing process can transfer into other facets of their composition work—she just sits down and composes her way into and through something, whether she is writing or painting.

Tricia is not only a graduate student veteran, she is also a single mom, and as a single mom, she developed strategies and ways of doing work that are reflected in her current practices. Creating cheat sheets to study for exams and self-recording audio files of assigned readings to use during a long commute are indicative of Tricia's resourcefulness—she finds a way. Similarly, using painting as a way to process and reflect on her research, and turning to audiobooks to continue reading show how Tricia is still finding a way, even as she is working alone without the support of an advisor, peers, or other people in academia. There needs to be space for composing practices like Tricia's in higher education. Space for students who may face an unexpected change in life circumstances but find innovative ways to engage in intellectual work despite that change. Tricia's way of working reveals how "writing is an embodied practice" and how "written texts are shaped by particular

circumstances of the body that produces and interprets it" (Lindgren 107). Focusing on what Tricia can do—have thoughtful, in-depth telephone conversations, express and process ideas through painting, and listen to audiobooks, might be a starting point for creating space for Tricia to continue to do the work she has been unable to as a result of the constraints of what counts and is valued in academia. Tricia may not be in composition and rhetoric, but are there ways ideas from here that might be used to inform and develop a broader understanding of what it means to complete composition work in other disciplines? For example, Jody Shipka in drawing on Kathleen Yancey's 2014 article "Looking for Sources of Coherence in a Fragmented World," describes composition as "a thing with parts—with visual-verbal or multimodal aspects—the expression of relationships and, perhaps most importantly, the result of complex, ongoing processes that are shaped by, and provide shape for, living" (17). Tricia's composition process, which is deeply influenced by her material practice, lived reality, and embodied experience fits Shipka's definition. Her paintings are things with parts that express relationships between what she listens to, researches, and experiences.

Tricia's experience also reflects theories in disability studies that "challenge a disembodied model of authorship" and focus on "adaptations necessary for the printed page to be written" (Fox 275). Such adaptations make visible how writing is a bodily practice, one that cannot be separated from the mind, and that "calls attention both to the material scene of writing and to the body as a locus of ideas" (Fox 275). As Bess Fox argues, if instructors can encourage students to recognize and discuss "multimedia compositions in the context of print narratives," they can "reinforce their status as 'writing'" (276). Such an approach can "defamiliarize writing and, in the process, create embodied writing situations that can transform students' models of authorship" (Fox 276). In drawing on Disability Studies in the context of writing, authors like Fox and Kristin Lindgren, illustrate how the composing process encompasses adapting, and how the work that results can take many forms; an approach that would include and validate Tricia's work.

Julie's Story

I work at a community college where I teach a 6-6 load, mentor the new online and hybrid teachers through our campus Center for Teaching and Learning, and I co-advise a transfer partnership we have with a nearby R1. I also teach an exercise class at the local YMCA and have full-custody of my two children. I recently finished my PhD in English, which I worked on for six years while also working full-time at the community college where I currently am. I needed a job while I got my PhD because otherwise, I would have had to make a choice between finishing the PhD and feeding the kids. You just can't feed kids on a grad stipend.

For better or worse, I've always been really Type A and really organized. Those have only become strengths as a single parent; it's how I manage the household with the kids. I also have a [ridiculous] color-coded calendar in my phone that I use to keep track of everything; if it's not in my phone, it doesn't exist. I've always been a fairly scheduled person, but because I'm a single mom, I'm very scheduled with my composition work. When I had a functional partner in the house, I had the freedom of being able to go into work if I needed to do something, or stay up extra late to complete whatever it is I'm writing and knowing someone will be there in the morning to take care of the kids. With my dissertation, I had set writing times, but the mom guilt was overwhelming at times. In fact, part of my acknowledgments in my dissertation are a bit of an apology to my kids, like, "thanks for being patient for all of the times I had to say, I'm sorry. This Saturday is mine; I cannot do anything." I was able to finish my dissertation because I got a very unexpected fellowship because I could see how it could have turned easily into, I can't do this anymore. I can't work all day and come home and take care of my kids and their needs and write all night and still be a sane functioning human being. Now that I'm done with the PhD, I have set work times, which means I get all of my work done while I'm at work.

My academic writing, I am thankfully in a lull right now. I thought I was ready after the dissertation to start writing again, and then the couple of times I sat down to write, I was just like,

"I'm still not, I'm still not there." My brain is just starting to bounce back. I'm kind of in the in-between stage, coming up for air right now, so most of my writing work is work-related, and it's not scholarship. Because I teach a 6-6 load, I'm constantly doing course prep. I also do some report writing and administrative writing for my work with the transfer partnership program at the nearby R1. I have a joint project that I'm working on, off-and-on with a co-writer, and a lot of my stuff is collaborative-heavy, but two of my co-collaborators are finishing up dissertations of their own, so that's on the back-burner, and another person that I'm collaborating with is applying for a tenure-track position, so she's got stuff going on.

I really enjoy collaborative work; it's nice to have the accountability that comes with working collaboratively. Part of the reason why I think I've been struggling with the collaborative projects that I have is that these are projects driven by us without an acceptance or deadline from somebody else. So if I know I've gotta turn something in to a journal by March, I'll start writing, but if it's just me and my friends playing around with an idea, well, that can always wait. If I'm going to work on a journal article by myself, I might let that rot for a while. Because nobody else is looking for it from me; it hasn't been accepted by anybody. It's just one of those things I float into the universe. What I like about book chapters instead is that I have accountability to my editors, right? They've got hard deadlines. I give them a proposal and they either accept it or reject it. That makes for a more structured work environment for me.

When I do write, I just start writing. My writing process is fairly sloppy in that regard. I'm not an outliner. I'm not a very good planner. I do like writing in response to CFPs, that's always helpful for me. I have more things to work on than I have time to do them. I'd like to do something with the dissertation either chopping it up or figuring out something to do with it. I've got some calls for book chapters that I'm interested in, and I've also got a couple of things that some colleagues of mine and I have been thinking about doing edited collections, as well. None of those

projects are off the ground, but they're all things that kind of keep churning in the back of my head when I think about what I want to do. I have published some articles in the past, and I feel like I should be looking for more things to write, but I have a job that doesn't reward writing, so there's kind of the biggest hurdle—I won't get a promotion or a raise or a title or anything else if I publish 15 books. I'm just enjoying the time that I have. This is the first semester since 2012 that I haven't been in the doctoral program, and it's just been really nice to go home and not have writing hanging over my head.

Alex's Analytical Perspective

Julie's story illustrates how someone can have the skills of a productive scholarly writer—organization, scheduling, and careful planning, yet still not complete, what she refers to as "academic writing," the kind that often gains recognition and praise in composition and rhetoric. Being a single mom at a community college shapes what Julie is able to do, how she does it, and why she chooses to do it (or not). Her experiences push against traditional ideas of what constitutes writing productivity, particularly as it relates to research. Despite not publishing recently, Julie is doing all kinds of composition work: administrative writing, course redesign, and written feedback that comes with a 6-6 teaching load of classes ranging from 22-25 students across academic levels and experiences. She is also engaging extensively in what Barbara K. Townsend and Vicki J. Rosser term "scholarly activity" (670). This scholarly activity is evidenced through Julie's re-design of courses—her willingness to take courses she has previously taught and update them drawing on recent knowledge she has acquired, as well as her approach to feedback on student writing, which evolves with the students she teaches, and her mentorship of new online instructors. Her experience encourages a reconsideration of how productivity is measured, what counts, and what is rewarded, a point made by Ernest Boyer in 1990. Boyer describes the history and evolution of higher education from one that focused on the development and preparation of undergraduate students to a model

that prioritized "the advancement of knowledge through research," a history that has had a lasting

impact (9). He advocates for a broadening of what encompasses "scholarship," and breaks it into

four categories: "the scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching," urging for "a

more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar—a recognition that knowledge is acquired

through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching" (16 and 24). Boyer's

work encourages us to think about scholarship beyond just research and publishing, a move that

would include *and* value work like Julie's across institutions.

The reasons for writing (or not) can be influenced by a myriad of factors. With Julie, it's not

just that her publication record has no bearing on her position, income, or responsibilities as a

faculty member, it's also that her writing is shaped by her context. As we saw in Chapter Three, Julie

is protective of the little time she has for herself, and at the end of a lengthy workday, followed by

getting herself and her kids to extracurricular activities, finding the energy to write is challenging. She

recognizes that with a functional partner, the space and opportunities for writing are different—she

could stay up late, return to work to finish something, or leave for a few hours on the weekend to

work on a project. However, as a single mom, these spaces and opportunities are no longer

available. As a PhD student, when Julie had to write for the degree, she found time as a single mom,

but that wasn't without the cost of guilt. Writing required the cooperation and understanding of her

children. Cooperation and understanding that was as crucial to the writing process as a keyboard and

a screen. Now, as Julie is "coming up for air," she is trying to enjoy the time she has gotten back

with her kids, which means writing, which is no longer required, has been moved to the back burner.

Julie's story provides insight into how a single parent at a community college completes

composition work—two areas Tulley asserts need greater research (152-153). She makes visible how

time, space, and material resources are certainly essential, but people can be just as much a factor in

composition work depending on one's context. However, Julie's experience pushes against

traditional ideas of what constitutes scholarly activity. Her story illustrates the importance of paying attention to and valuing the kind of composition that occurs outside of publications at a range of institutional types. As Julie explained, the community college where she currently works does not expect her to publish, and she won't be rewarded for it. However, if Julie wanted to be considered for a position at another institution that is not a community college (she did share applying for her "dream job" at a nearby R1 during our second interview), such a move would be difficult because of the lack of scholarship on her CV—"I'm not the kind of person that they're looking for," she told me. This is where we need to consider expanding our ideas about what we value in higher education more broadly. By having a narrow understanding of what is valued in higher education, we risk limiting the institutional mobility of academics who want to work at other institutional types, and perpetuate rewarding those with a unique set of privileges and circumstances. If academia is thought of as a pipeline, Julie's experience reveals how the "leaky pipeline" is not the only concern we need to have; we also need to pay attention to the blocked pipeline, and what happens when those who want to move up are unable to due to institutional norms and expectations.

Danielle

I am going to college to get my bachelor's degree with a brain injury, my son has ADHD, and I work full time as a paralegal. I have been a single mom throughout my whole college experience, but I wear a mom disguise in home and at school. I can't show my son my moments of difficulty, but I also can't show them at school, so I save them for the few moments I have at home alone. This experience has been difficult, stressful, exhausting, frustrating, tense, but it has also been an outlet for me. I recently took an introductory writing class online. The online part time option has been wonderful because it allows me to spend time as a mom and do my work when my son is sleeping or after he is taken care of.

I was really upset going into my introductory writing course because I write on a day-to-day level to very important people, and it's all professional writing—correspondence to Judges, Courts both Federal and Civil, attorneys, physicians; drafting subpoenas, pleadings, discovery, motions. I took a paralegal course to learn how to do the kind of writing I do for my job. When I started doing paralegal writing, I was like, "This sounds like you're a caveman. This sounds awful." I had to change the way I was writing to make it sound like caveman talk, so I asked at the firm, "Can I just make this sound a little bit better? Because I don't want to sound like a caveman anymore." The attorney gave me free reign to do what I wanted. He was super lenient because I think he just didn't want to do it, and then realized I'm actually pretty good at it.

In the writing I do at work, there have been times where I was given something and expected to produce a document with little to no direction or planning. Sometimes, I'll meet with a group of attorneys to discuss what needed to be done. For example, I recently met with three attorneys to discuss a legal process. I gathered and produced documents for review, and then went back to make corrections. There are some legal writings I do without seeking feedback, and it would be rather cumbersome to do so. In my writing class, the primary differences between workshopping and my writing for work is in the context, as you cannot compare meeting with legal professionals to meeting with your academic peers because their thought processes are on different levels.

In the writing class, we did visual analysis and reflection, and I learned a lot of different things, like blog writing, which I would not know how to do on my own. I didn't like it at first, I hated it, but once I finally got the grasp of blog writing, and what it was to draw people in, then I was able to pull it all together. It was a lot of working going into this thing. I'm proud of what I created, and I think it looks pretty cool. Actually, I used my writing as a tool to discuss plagiarism with my son.

He had to write a story, and he had his ideas, and he started writing this paragraph, but his teacher said, "It's very unique. It's really good, but you just have a little bit of grammar things to fix here and there," so I gave him my computer thinking he could just type out stuff. Well, he decided to go online, find a story, and then copied and pasted it and said, "This is mine." The teacher gave him multiple times to come clean, because she knew it wasn't his. His teacher ended up calling me and saying that he's not going to get written up, but he's getting no points for the entire project. I knew I needed to talk to my son about what happened, but before I did, I had to figure out how to approach the conversation. I don't like to come at him without a lesson to be learned because I feel that's how you learn. You learn through lessons. You learn through your mistakes. I ended up going through my project on my blog, and I had him read it, and I showed him, here are all the steps. It was like step 1 through 6. We had to keep revising over and over and over again. I showed him all the papers that I had scribbled on and written on and crumpled up and threw out—all of that. I took pictures of all of this, so that I could actually document it for a later project on my blog. With my brain injury, I have short-term memory loss, so documentation helps me remember all of the things I want to write about. Like sometimes, when I'm driving, I'll make voice memos on my phone so that I don't forget my ideas. The project I shared with my son was about a trip we had taken with other people, people who I saw as my community. My son read it, and he really liked it, and I said to him, "You know, I'd be really upset if somebody stole my work and said it was theirs," and we got into a discussion about stealing and why it's not right. When I showed him all those pictures I collaged, because it took me forever to get to my final product, I said, "Look at how hard I worked. I worked my butt off. This is many, many, many weeks of work, and for somebody to say that it was theirs, that would break my heart, that means my work was worthless." I asked him,

"Why do you think that it was okay to take somebody else's work?"

"Because mine didn't sound good."

"The teacher said yours sounded pretty good. It sounded great, actually," I told him.

"Well, I just wanted it to be the best."

His self-esteem is very, very low. It always has been, ever since maybe first grade, and this is where it comes in. It's just been extremely low. You keep going year after year and without any type of confidence boost, it's hard. Telling these kids that they're not good enough, they're going to do whatever it takes to be good enough, and if that means lying and cheating, they're gonna do it. It's not right. I'm hoping that doesn't happen again, but I get why it did.

I try to let my son know that he's not alone. I tell him, "I'm like you going through school right now with ADHD; it's almost the same thing because I've got all of this stuff going on." He is very supportive. There are times where I'll say, "Listen, I have this to do, and I need some quiet," and he'll be quiet for the whole entire time. He understands, and I try to support him, as well. In addition to writing for work and school, I also do a lot of written communication as far as email discussions between my child's school, the special education director, guidance counselor, and school assigned social worker. While everything I compose at work allows me to think about my intended delivery and what I am trying to convey to the reader, it is my life experiences and being a single mom, which allows me to put so much emotion behind the words I write.

Alex's Analytical Perspective

In thinking about David Russell's activity theory, Danielle's story illustrates how various activity systems can interact—her work, school, and family (3). In some ways, her story shows traditional ideas of transfer—how the writing she does for work has prepared and influenced the writing she does for school. Even though she wished that her professional writing had been given greater consideration when determining her writing requirement (she told me that she felt the curriculum needed more flexibility, that it was "set for a traditional student in what it requires") she still made the most of her writing class and recognized the way context shapes writing situations,

particularly workshop conversations. This understanding of the role of context in writing is something Adler-Kassner et al. point to as a "threshold concept" in transfer research, or one of five "ideas that are most important for writing in post-secondary institutions" and that enables writers to "distinguish one community of practice from another" (18-19). In other words, Danielle has a strong understanding of how even though she may be engaged in a similar task—workshopping writing, the context shapes the way the workshop and her writing develop (Adler-Kassner et al. 25). Danielle's experience also reflects traditional ideas about transfer in the role her prior knowledge plays. We can see how her knowledge in one activity system—work, influences her composing in another—school. Danielle is bringing into the writing classroom a wealth of composition knowledge from the various contexts she composes in, not only work and school, but also the composing she is doing to the various stakeholders in her son's education—the emails she writes to her son's guidance counselor, school principal, and assigned social worker, for example. Additionally, Danielle is bringing her embodied knowledge and experience as a single mom into her writing. While she identified her professional experience as the facet that "allows [her] to think about [her] intended delivery," it is her life experience as a single mom that allows her to "put a great deal of emotion behind her work." How might we account for this embodied knowledge that students carry with them and bring into our composition classrooms? By acknowledging how her single mom identity is an asset to her writing, Danielle is challenging traditional ideas that often stigmatize single moms and perpetuate a culture in which many single moms feel that they need to remain silent about this part of themselves.

Danielle's single mom identity is not only an asset to her in her writing. Through her story, we see how the work she did in her introductory writing class became an asset to her in her personal life when she needed to teach her son about plagiarism. As instructors, we might not anticipate that students will use the writing in our classes in the way Danielle used hers—a tool for fostering

empathy to teach a lesson. Danielle used the images of her writing process, photographs of her handwritten drafts, scribbled out, rewritten, rearranged, and pieced together over a lengthy period of time and a result of multiple workshops with her peers, to show her son all of the work that goes into a finished composition project, as well as to help her son consider the person on the other side of the page. Oftentimes, the strategies for teaching students about plagiarism in Rhetoric and Composition are around plagiarism avoidance—how to cite correctly, identify what plagiarism looks like, consider rhetorical context, document and track their research process, as well as follow school policies and understand the consequences (Hartwig "Discouraging Plagiarism". Danielle's identity as a single mom allowed her to approach teaching plagiarism to her son in another way, empathy with the original author. Such an approach resembles Sandra Jamieson's call to ask why students fail to "engage with ideas and formulate their own responses" instead of focusing on the student's "guilt" (106). Like Jamieson, Danielle saw her son's behavior as "an opportunity for pedagogical intervention, regardless of whether the plagiarism was intentional or 'accidental'" (106). Danielle's story shows the intertwined nature of the Composition classroom, professional life, and lived experience. Her story touches on very familiar and well-researched aspects in Composition— transfer and plagiarism in particular, yet she pushes these ideas in seemingly new directions. How might we account for the transfer of embodied knowledge in composition classes? If we approached teaching about plagiarism through empathy, what might happen? Danielle gives us a glimpse into what Composition can look like when it incorporates a single mom perspective.

Katherine's Story

I have not been a traditional graduate or doctoral student. When I finished my undergraduate degree, I knew I wanted to be an English professor, but soon after that, I met my husband, and it was at the time of 9/11. I didn't know how much that would completely shift his career to being deployed somewhere between 6 to 9 months out of every year for as long as we have

been together. We moved around almost every two years. I knew I wanted to get my PhD, but there was really nowhere to go. I finally found a chance to get my master's when we lived down South, and I thought I'd be happy with that. Seven years later we moved, and I started a PhD program. I only applied to one PhD program, and I got in. Again not a typical grad student; it took me 7 years to finish. My mentality is kind of, if it happens, it happens, and if it doesn't, it doesn't. I'm not on a traditional track of any kind, and sometimes that's hard. It's hard to see your friends go out and do all of the job market stuff, and I can't send my resume; I can't send my package to that university because it's not in my realm of where I could possibly live. There were times when I wasn't okay with the situation. I felt upset or resentful about it, but then over the time, and then now, thinking about it, I've got the PhD. I still have 25 to 30 years to work. It's not like I missed out on using my PhD to my fullest extent, and all of those years of teaching prepared me for what I do now. I would not have been prepared to pull the lesson plans together living on my own, busy, with two kids, if I had not had all those years teaching.

Because my husband is gone so often, I had to figure out how to manage all of these situations by myself. My kids and I, we have our routine, and any single mom, we have things we have to do to keep ourselves organized everyday all day. We're thinking through all day long how things are going to go, what I need to get done, when the bills are going to get paid, how they're going to. Anything we've ever had in my family; everyone comes to me. The center of the universe is this bubble around mama, what I do and who I am and me making decisions for them. I'm the consistency. I'm the consistent person, and so that's where it feels in a sense, very much like a lot of my single mom friends that I know. The consistent person is often the mom of the house. I'm trying to give consistency to my kids. When my kids were younger, I always had to plan my schedule around when I had childcare, and now, there's some freedom in I can plan my schedule to leave in the morning before they leave, and they can get themselves to the bus stop, things like that. It

doesn't necessarily eliminate the guilt because it's still like you weren't there to take me; you weren't there to pick me up. The interesting part about having someone you're still married to who's not there geographically is the guilt happens to me. I deal with all of the emotional labor.

The hard part is, especially having raised kids as an academic parent, we raise kids to question, to read, and to know that there's lots of sides and arguments. My daughter is really a prolific arguer. She's a great rhetorician. She's great at persuading. She was arguing with a substitute over immigration laws, and she came home, and she acknowledged that she was disrespectful to the teacher. Part of me was like "I'm so proud of you!", and another part of me was not happy. I've asked her teachers that have said she has problems, "Is she disrespectful?" They tell me, "No." What do you do with a kid like that who doesn't fit in the box? She is super bright, but also pushing all their buttons. The American school systems just really want them to behave; they want them to behave a certain way. They want them to fit into this cute little box, and when they don't, it's call the parent and tell them that.

I'm mentally exhausted. I'm like, okay, I've worked my days, and I'm writing the other days, and then I come home, and I can't ignore troubleshooting these problems. They're not just things like when they were little. Then, I could be like, "okay, it's a diaper change or whatever. I'm tired. You just want to lay on me and sleep?" Now, my kids are dealing with growing adult concepts. I need to navigate and move them through the almost adult world. It's just a different level of parenting.

When I write, I do it Monday and Wednesday. I used to force myself to write on the weekends. I don't anymore. There's too many sports and stuff like that. It's just a guilt trip. On the weekends, I'm trying to focus on the kids, trying to take them and do stuff. Everybody deserves a day or two to not be thinking, working, but not everybody can do that. I don't like writing in the evening because I feel like my brain can't work, so I try to remind myself, write first, write first. I

write in the mornings, before I'm thinking about anything or anyone else or opening emails or lesson plans. I can't do a Saturday session where I write from 8 am to 5 pm in a coffee shop or something like that, so I try to make sure I do some writing earlier in the day and make regular contact with my writing. Right now, I have four articles that I've submitted; I'm waiting to hear back on one, and then I have two more that I'm working on. I'd really love to push my dissertation into a book, and I have a couple of projects that have been put on the back burner, but I'd like to get back to them. If I have a project that I have to do, something's going on, then I try to squeeze in a couple hours on the weekend. A good part of older kids is if I do have a project on Saturday, and they just want to hang out at the house for a couple of hours, I can just be like, "Hey! Okay, you can have a couple of hours and plop in front of the TV or use your tablets." Whereas when they were little, I had to work around the chaos in the house, control them, control everything going on.

As far as my composing on a daily basis goes, I definitely keep in contact with my daughter regularly. She is a texter. She's at that age where it's hurtful as a parent because she says things to you that are mean or rude. At its core it hurts you. What I've found is that if she has an afterthought, she'll get on the bus, realize she was rude, and text me: "I love you" with like 45 hearts, or "I'm sorry I'll try better to get to the bus stop on time." Our texting communication has turned into a place where she has the capability of being more emotional with me than in these moments where she feels like she's just got so much going on. Obviously, as you can imagine, a lot of my relationship with my husband is online, chatting through messenger or something like that. A lot of my day, is what are you doing right now? I'll drive and send a voice text or something and say, this is what I'm doing. I feel like a lot of our relationship happens that way. There's a six-hour difference, and I don't have time, so it's actually like a commodity to have a phone conversation.

I think it's a balance as a geographically single mom. I think it's just finding the balance that works for you and what works for your unique situation. It's a growing process. Regardless, we

know how to get it done. We're doers. We know that it's okay to grade during soccer practice. We're okay with putting our personal needs aside, I think. We're like, "It's fine. We'll take care of ourselves in 2028, or something like that."

Alex's Analytical Perspective

Katherine's story makes visible all of the complexities that exist within a geographically single mom's experience, and help illustrate the context in which Katherine is composing. As a military spouse whose husband is often deployed, Katherine's experience reveals the importance of fully understanding military culture in order to support geographically single moms' (Borah and Fina 150). In other words, while geographically single moms have needs that are very similar to single moms as whole, it's also important to keep their unique circumstances in mind. For example, Katherine described adjusting to periods of her husband's deployment and then readjusting to his time at home, often for an inconsistent period of time, which is related to her single mom identity and shifts what she's dealing with on a daily basis. Similarly, Katherine's positioning as the center in her family is reflective of the "mission first" culture in the military where spouses "set aside their own needs" and prioritize supporting their families (Mailey et al. 2). While Katherine's husband offers support as he can despite the distance, the responsibility of helping her kids understand and navigate "the almost adult world" falls primarily to her. The impact of her life as a geographically single mom is evidenced in when she writes and where. When a mentor recommended to Katherine that she write first thing in the morning, Katherine's response was, "I am not a morning person. I do not want to get up at 5:30 to write." Now, this is when Katherine does her "absolute best writing." She's able to write for as much as an hour and a half before her kids get up to get ready for school, and she needs to shift away from writing. Like Julie, she prioritizes her writing during the week so that she is able to spend time with her kids on the weekends, but Katherine recognizes that because her kids are older, she is able to write more easily on the weekends if she has to. If her

children were younger, her writing constraints would differ. Regardless, Katherine's composition practice is not reflective of her personal preference, but instead of how she has adapted to her material reality and embodied experience.

Oftentimes when we think of composition practice, we focus on the material labor that happens, the planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, and feedback process; however, we do not always readily consider the aspects of one's life off the page and outside of academia that are floating around in the background as they compose. While related areas of scholarship like new literacy studies make space for the role of humans in writing, these areas often focus more on how people influence our writing content, and less on how and when we write. Scholars have explored how writing is used as a tool to connect with others across distance (Vieira 2019), how the potential to positively influence others creates an exigency for composing (Winn 2010), and how we talk with others throughout our writing process to receive feedback on our writing (Prior 2003), for example. Additionally, research has focused on writing that occurs in nonacademic contexts, which often means writing in professional settings or community writing spaces (Russell 1999; Lillis 2001; Spinuzzi 2008). However, Katherine's composition practice, and that of other single moms, reveals how one's own children influence one's composition practice. In writing about the composition practices of Composition and Rhetoric faculty, Tulley describes how many "writing projects seldom happen in isolation from other spaces of academic life such as teaching, serving on committees, and preparing for accreditation visits" (23). Katherine's experience shows how composition work seldom happens in isolation from other spaces of her personal life. Katherine has to set aside designated blocks of time in the day to write, much like Julie, and she needs to be strategic in when she allocates those blocks of time; otherwise, this writing won't happen[20]. As she copes with feelings of guilt, does

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[20] Tulley mentions four Composition and Rhetoric faculty she interviewed who have set writing times, like Katherine. Only one of them, Jessica Enoch mentions having a set writing time related to her parenting identity (66).

much of the emotional labor within her family, maintains her home, and works full-time as a Composition instructor at a university 45-minutes away, there's little energy left at the end of the day for any type of composition work. Even in the absence of academic writing, composing is still a necessary tool for her life to remain connected with her family. Texting and messaging allow her to have an emotional connection with her daughter and regular contact with her husband.

Katherine's story raises questions about what it would look like to acknowledge and make space for the personal when understanding composition practice. In particular, what does it mean to consider the emotional labor that a geographically single mom carries on a daily basis? Much of these parts of Katherine's life remain invisible from her colleagues. While they know her husband is often deployed and that she lives a distance from campus, they do not know the intricacies of her day-to-day. This disconnect is not uncommon for military spouses who are often relocating, and can also find themselves "surrounded by individuals with different values, backgrounds, and life experiences," which can cause military spouses to be hesitant to open up to those around them (Mailey et al. 7). Additionally, similar to single moms (like Kelly described in Chapter 3), well-meaning civilian friends may try to empathize with military spouses by making "comments comparing their husband's business trip to deployment," but such comments demonstrate a clear lack of understanding and can further the impulse to distance oneself (Mailey et al. 7).

When I talked with Katherine, she shared with me how, even though her colleagues do know to some extent what she experiences, she feels that many may think, "well they [single moms] must be used to it. This is just what their life is like, so they should be fine." In other words, doing consistent emotional labor, managing multiple facets of a personal and professional life, while also raising a tween and teenager, and being married to someone often deployed and completing dangerous work are all aspects a person becomes used to. For Katherine, this speaks to the ability of single mom to "keep it together on the exterior," so that it seems as though they really are "just

fine," similar to the "mom mask" Danielle wears. However, if we make greater space for all that single moms, like Katherine, are managing in their personal lives, it reinforces the need for strong support within the institution. It emphasizes the importance of workplace policies to support families in situations like Katherine's, as well as a range of other single-parent families. Additionally, paying attention to Katherine's non-traditional academic path helps illustrate the need for graduate programs to prepare students for a variety of job market experiences and also to broaden the purview of potential job opportunities beyond tenure-track positions at top tier institutions. Just because Katherine is skilled and adept at "getting it done" does not mean that she is resistant to support that might help ease the challenges she encounters in the process.

Erica's Story

I graduated with my PhD in 2015 and took a year just teaching adjunct for universities in the area because I didn't want to do the whole job process thing. I had two small children, and I was finishing up my dissertation, and I thought something's gonna suffer, and that's probably gonna be my family, so I decided to just teach adjunct for that first year and then do the job search. I'm just starting my fourth year as a tenure-track assistant professor in the counseling and human services department. This is my first full-time, tenure-track position. I actually asked for an extra year to go through my tenure process, so that's not scaring me quite as soon as it would be.

When I asked for that extra year, I didn't ask people's opinions. I really just sat with it myself. I decided to not think about all of those warnings I read. I don't want to work at a place that is going to look down on me for asking for this because I had a really horrible three years, and they have no empathy for that and don't care. I wrote a letter. I said these are things that have happened to me in the past couple of years (my dad's cancer, and then his passing, my divorce and ex-husband suing me for primary custody, my first bout of depression and going on medication for that), and I know that I'm not at my best because I've been trying to function and trying to get through life. I

had a mentor who was an associate dean, and I had her read it before I submitted it. It was a short process and my request got approved with no problems. Ultimately, I don't know that it will be fairly judged. But I also had to disconnect from all of the stuff I had read and heard discouraging women from asking for a tenure clock extension and all that. It is what it is.

Now, I'm trying to play catch up. I'm trying to kind of get myself to where I wanted to be in my fourth year. This is where my single mom identity impacts my research. It shapes the general volume of what I can do. I'm not gonna be that person that has 18-pages of publications in my vita, or the person at the thing who wins the award for best researcher because I've got 45 publications. I can't single author something very easily. I'm really great at working with people to create something. I think maybe if I wasn't a single parent, single authoring stuff would be a lot easier, but I can't. I don't know if anything would ever get finished.

When you're not a graduate student anymore, no one is helping you with your writing. It's like the day you walk across that stage, you know all there is to know about writing, and it's cool. There's nobody giving you feedback. There's nobody saying, "Hey write this a little bit differently." It's the scariest thing in the freaking world. I've got a lot of things I'm not good at, but writing is not one of the things, and it is still terrifying. The idea of writing a solo manuscript is something that I don't even want to conceptualize. I need someone to even just go back through, read my work over, and be like, "Yeah, this makes sense," or be like, "Hmmm, you know you're off on a tangent here." I just feel so much better when I'm working collaboratively on stuff, when I'm bouncing ideas off of people, and working in conjunction with someone.

When you work on your own, you can get your blinders are on because you're so immersed in what you're doing that you don't even notice or think about some of the changes that need to be made in your writing. I think the other piece is if you do combat that by working collaboratively with somebody, it's finding the right person to work with, and being able to partner easily and being

able to kind of have a similar style of writing, so that when they come in and take over and do their part, they're not like "Whoa, wait a minute." For me, working collaboratively helps with accountability. With writing, I'm not going to let my co-authors down. I think collaborative work is way more valuable. I am much smarter as an individual when I get a chance to talk through stuff with other people. I think heavily valuing single-authored stuff is part of cultural individualism that doesn't really serve us or the profession well. Fortunately, in my field collaboration for writing and research is pretty common. Over the past semester, I co-authored four chapters, two manuscripts from my dissertation, an article with four other co-authors that came out of a presentation we did, a chapter for my friend, and then research about unsolicited nude photos that is also collaborative. I know it sounds like I have a lot of things in the air right now, and I do, but like I mentioned before, I'm also playing catch up.

Most of my writing happens when I'm at home. Monday is my writing day, so I start when the boys get on the bus and stop when the boys get off the bus. I try to make that day really only for writing. Occasionally, like when I was kind of under the gun in the Fall, I designated a Saturday or two for writing, or another day. I try not to do any work when I have my kids. I'm pretty good about that. If I do something when I have my kids, I'll say, "Mommy has to grade," or I'll get up really early. I'll get up at 5:15 or so, and do it before they get up. Regardless, when I have my kids, I'm not writing. I can't think of a time when I have written with them around. That would be a disaster.

Alex's Analytical Perspective

Erica's experience makes visible the value and necessity of collaboration in various facets of her composition practice from academic articles to letters requesting tenure clock extension. When Erica acknowledges that after she finished her PhD, no one was there to help her with her academic writing for publication, what she means is that the type of support often found in a dissertation chair or committee or from a writing center was gone. She also lacked the institutional support, typically

found in faculty writing centers and centers for teaching and learning, that is often present in academic mentoring programs that encourage scholarly writing, research, and creative activity. However, as Anne Ellen Geller points out, "the resources and time for bringing faculty together to write and respond to one another's writing have become a luxury" with decreasing budgets and "writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines programs becoming more and more curricularized" (10). In the absence of institutional writing support, Erica had to find ways to create her own. We see this in how she asked her mentor who is also an associate dean, to read over her tenure-clock extension request letter. We also see this in how Erica collaborates with friends, colleagues, and/or graduate students on almost all of her academic writing for publication. Since Erica is in the Social Sciences, collaboration is considered the norm and usually seen as just as valuable as single authored pieces.[21] This is unlike Composition and Rhetoric, and the Humanities more generally, where collaborative work may not count towards tenure or promotion because it is not valued or understood (Ede and Lunsford 17).

Erica's experience makes clear the value of collaborative work. While she emphasizes how collaboration benefits her—"I am much smarter as an individual when I get a chance to talk through stuff with other people," those who collaborate with Erica also benefit. Erica's strength as a writer means she can offer valuable feedback to her co-authors. Additionally, because she has extensive experience with collaboration, she is familiar with how to effectively communicate with her co-authors about workload, and she is able to think through how to mesh writing styles and voices, as well as how to write on areas that aren't her primary area of expertise. There are also the logistics of scheduling times to discuss and review writing, as well as balancing the workload. That Erica writes with a variety of people speaks to her strengths as a collaborative author.

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[21] Erica did share with me how she sat in on a third-year review where someone was "taken to task" for not having a solo manuscript. She mentioned that she's not sure if this is one of the "hidden rules," or expectations in eligibility for promotion, but emphasized that collaboration is the norm in her field.

Many of the single moms I spoke with regardless of their field shared how important collaboration is to their research. Being able to work with others on published scholarship not only builds in accountability for single moms, it also helps make the workload more manageable, and provides them with an opportunity to have someone else review their writing, without having to do the additional work of reaching out and asking for writing support. Instead, such support is part of the process. Erica's experience makes visible what someone can accomplish when they are able to work with others, and when that work is valued in promotion and hiring decisions. Her identity as a single mom makes single authoring incredibly difficult, particularly as she balances a full teaching load, commutes three hours one way, and shares custody of her two children (who attend school three hours away from the university where Erica works). Not only do many single moms collaborate on academic scholarship, they often only respond to CFPs. For single moms in Humanities disciplines where collaboration is not valued but they need to publish for tenure and promotion, they find CFPs to be a helpful alternative for accountability. Because CFPs have specific prompts and clear deadlines, they build structure into the writing process.

Understanding the collaborative work Erica does in the Social Sciences and how that work benefits her is a learning opportunity for composition and rhetoric. While work the field has recognized the value of collaboratively authored texts, pointing especially to the potential to exchange ideas, as well as develop new ones, such work has also acknowledged how collaborative authorship does not count consistently across academic contexts (Day and Eodice; Duffy; Ede and Lunsford; Micchiche). Recent research in Composition and Rhetoric has explored the role of technology in collaboration including social media (Behles; Berry and Dieterle; Evans and Bunting; Hunter), as well as the need to further research how collaborative writing impacts the writing practices of faculty (Tulley). However, the value of collaboration in relation to tenure and promotion is still contested (Daniel and Sura). The value of a single-authored text is evidenced in graduate

school where students are encouraged and expected to write single-authored research papers and dissertations, and then continues into faculty positions where, as Kristine Blair explains, "the emphasis is still on the single-authored monograph and what that has to look like and who has to publish it" (Tulley 143). Privileging single-authored texts creates an unequal environment for academics, one in which individuals with particular material circumstances and embodied experiences are more likely to be rewarded and recognized for their work than others. Collaboratively authored articles, books, and other academic scholarship require a unique set of skills. Valuing them has the potential to create space for voices that may have been marginalized by traditional publishing standards, expectations, and norms. Not valuing collaboratively authored work equates not valuing people whose primary means of participation in academic conversations is through collaboration. Additionally, institutional support systems and structures for faculty writers would benefit not only the faculty and administration, but also the institution as a whole. Erica's experience makes visible the skills necessary for collaborative writing, as well as the importance of academic mentoring programs and faculty writing support.

Kelly's Story

I have an undergraduate degree in International Studies, but I couldn't really find a job in that field with a bachelor's degree. I tried to find something that was a little more marketable and ended up going back for my master's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders, which is basically Speech Pathology. When I graduated, I worked for two years, and in that time, I got married, got pregnant, and had a baby. I applied for my PhD because I saw a need for a lot of growth and research where needs weren't being met through my work in the school system. I was all set to start my PhD program but had to leave my husband three months before the program started because he was already emotionally abusive, and the door was opening for him to become physically abusive. I also found out he was lying to me about some pretty major things. I considered not

starting the program, but I decided to because academia and clinical research were really important to me and made me feel really good about myself. I decided it would be worse for me to not do it. I started my PhD program as a newly separated mom with a baby who was about eight months old.

I'm almost done with my program now, and in the final phases of dissertating. I hope to defend my dissertation in the upcoming semester. Since my undergrad was a liberal arts degree, I did a lot of writing; it was a little more flowery, more artistic, and then when I was in my master's program and then working, I had to learn to do clinical writing for my job. I've been working clinically for six years, and so that's what I've gotten used to. A big part of writing for my job is evaluation reports. With those, you have to say as much as you can in as few words as possible. Compared to academic writing, it's a lot shorter. There are more formulas. There's some boilerplate language that you can move from one evaluation to another; you can copy and paste between reports. Since I work with kids who have moderate to severe disabilities and need some kind of communication system, there are certain sections that have to be there about their sensory and motor skills. There's also a section that asks for your clinical impressions, which is a little bit more about clinical expertise. I have to give my clinical impressions, which are based on my training. It's not like an academic article that says a, b, c, and d, and here are my references and parenthetical citations. The evaluation report is more like, I gave the test, and this is what it said. Here are the things I observed. It's a lot shorter, more succinct, less theoretical more concrete. As I write my dissertation, I feel like I forgot how to move beyond that a, b, c, and d mentality, to develop ideas and expand on them in ways academic writing expects of you. I have a little bit of a hard time switching back and forth between the two, but I'm getting better at it.

From the beginning of writing my dissertation, I wish that I was getting feedback about how to be a good researcher. I told my chair, "I don't know how to write this dissertation. I don't know." I went, and I met with her, and I said, "I've looked at all the dissertations from our program, and

they're all different, and I'm wondering, what your expectations are. I want to write something that meets your expectations because I think different committees have very different expectations," and she just said, "You're a good writer. I've always liked everything you've written. I think you should just follow your gut, and write what you think you want to write, and then I'm sure it will be fine." It was not helpful, and I hope she sticks to that because she hasn't given me any feedback. Sometimes I feel like my committee is like my child in some ways. One time my son was laying in bed, and he said, "I'm hungry," and I said, "Okay, I'll go get you a snack. What do you want?" And he goes, "I want you to go into the kitchen and get me a surprise snack. I want you to choose what it is, but it also needs to be exactly what I want it to be." He said it almost verbatim like that, and I was like, "Oh. Okay." I went and I got him like this random assortment, I got him like a pickle, and a strawberry, and like Pirate's Booty or something like that. Sometimes I feel like that's how my committee is—"I'm not going to tell you what I want. I want you to go, and I want you to do what you think I want, but also it needs to be exactly what I'm thinking of right now."

One of the faculty members in the department that I teach in (not my PhD program) invited me to a writing group with her, and even though I haven't gone a ton, that has been really helpful. It's a women's writing group comprised of different female faculty from around the campus. At the beginning you state your goals and then write for thirty minutes, take a five-minute break, write for thirty minutes, take a five-minute break. I didn't think that model would be effective for me, but it was. I got more done in a shorter amount of time doing that than other things. What has made it helpful is the community aspect to it—even though I don't know the other women there, there is this sense of shared experience. We all know we need to get writing done, and we also all know that we don't need negative attitudes or criticism. We hold each other accountable by setting time to write, and then check in with each other and provide positivity and support for whatever progress

was made, or understanding if we made little progress at all. It's a non-judgmental, encouraging, quiet space for productivity.

Outside of the writing group, I work whenever I can. I do a lot of my work in my head. I think, this is how I'm going to write it, this is how I'm going to outline it, and that happens when I'm walking, when I'm driving. The mentality of, "I'm going to sit down and get in the zone," it takes time to get in the zone, and I don't have time for that anymore. Before I was a single mom, I used to be someone who was like, I'm gonna sit down for 10 hours and bust this thing out; you don't get 10-hour blocks when you're a single mom. Now it's like, okay, I've been thinking about this in my head in all of my free time for the last however many months or whatever, and then that helps me when I sit down to write. I'm like, oh I know this is how I was going to approach it. I prewrite a lot. I don't spend that much time writing once I get down to write because I feel like I've thought about it so much, and by that point I've drawn visual models in my notebook. Every now and then I'll scratch something down like, Oh that's interesting. I might see something in a movie, and I'll be like, oh that's a good concept I want to incorporate, and then I write it in my notebook.

Because I'm a single mom, I figured out how to divide tasks into shorter blocks of time, like this is something that I could get in the zone and finish in an hour. I have to identify what can I finish in a short amount of time, and what I need a longer amount of time to do. I need a larger block of time to write the dissertation, so that might be something I do on a Sunday. Working on my class, or working on my syllabi, that's something I can do in a shorter amount of time, so that's something I might do after my kid goes to sleep. I have to be able to divide up tasks based on how long I think they'll take me and realize which tasks are going to take how long. I also recognize when I'm not effective. If I'm too tired, or if I'm not in a place to work, or burnt out because I've been working too much, I recognize that I'm going to stop doing work, and read a book I wanna read or watch a TV show and not feel bad about it because I'm not being effective working. I'm going to

give myself the rest that I need, and that might mean it takes me a little longer to do something that I wanted to finish. For example, maybe I wanted to finish this chapter this week, but I'm not going to and not feeling bad about that. I also prioritize working when I'm not with my kid, so I can be with him.

Sometimes I write at home, but I get too easily distracted here. Housework distracts me. Text messages distract me. I really like to do creative things, like with my son, and so sometimes I'll do creative things when he's with his dad. He has a chalkboard in the living room, and he regularly asks me to, "Draw a surprise on the chalkboard." Sometimes I'll spend like an hour doing that. Reading distracts me. TV shows distract me. Just stuff I like doing better than I like writing. Sometimes I'll go to the library and write. Sometimes I'll go to a coffee shop and write. Sometimes I'll go to that writer's group and write. I haven't necessarily found a place where I can get into my zone. I really like going to the library, but parking is a nightmare on our campus. I might waste 45 minutes trying to find parking to go to the library, and then not get in there, so that's not necessarily that helpful.

Even though I've figured out a way to write, writing is the thing that suffers the most because I'm a mom. A lot of people are with mentors that are super prolific. They are working in the lab and on all these papers. My chair is not publishing anything. I worked with another professor and helped him code all his data and do all this stuff with this project he was working on, and he told me we were going to write it up together, but he's not doing it. I have several things that I've been working on and writing myself, but sometimes it's triage doing all these things with a kid, and the thing that gets left out is the writing because I don't have to do it, even though I really do to get a job. I need to write and submit these things, but that's also the thing that gets left. I have to be ready for class. I have to parent my kid. I have to go to the clinic and be ready for my clients. I have to write their evaluation reports. Those are not choices. I think the thing that would help me is more

funding and not having to work all the time. I mean, every year I have been working two or three jobs.

Alex's Analytical Perspective

Like Danielle, we see in Kelly's story how her work outside of academia impacts her writing within it; however, the writing skills Kelly uses in evaluative reports for her clinical work are not necessarily applicable to her academic writing. Even though Kelly's PhD program is preparing students for the kind of clinical work she currently does, the writing expectations for her dissertation are very different than the writing expectations for her professional work. While Kelly is positioned in a number of activity systems, in this instance two of her activity systems, school and work, have "contradictory motives" putting her in a double bind (Russell 534). At work, Kelly is expected to write succinctly and in a formulaic way; in contrast, for her dissertation, Kelly is expected to develop her ideas and write at length about her research. Her description shows the different expectations for content and style. Even though Kelly has experience with the kind of academic writing consistent with her dissertation, because she has been writing in a professional, clinical context consistently over the past six years, shifting from one activity system to the other has proved challenging.

Through her experience, we see the importance of ongoing and consistent writing support. While an absence of writing support is problematic for a graduate student at any level, for a single mom trying to complete her dissertation with the constraints connected to her identity, the support becomes even more necessary. The resourcefulness of single moms is evident in Kelly's independent research to understand the genre conventions of a dissertation by reading through multiple examples from her program. In the absence of direct feedback from her dissertation chair, Kelly found support through a women's writing group. While this support couldn't replace the feedback she needed from her chair, it did help Kelly get composition work done.

Writing groups can have a range of benefits for participants. For doctoral students in particular, writing groups are especially beneficial as they can become a source of social and emotional support, fostering the development of interpersonal relationships, and decreasing feelings of loneliness (Kinney et al.). Such groups can positively impact students' writing skills including— "[the] ability to offer peer reviews, structure the dissertation, and contribute to their discipline as conference paper and journal article authors" (Maher et al. 195). While the structure and organization of writing groups varies, what made Kelly's writing group effective for her was how the group extended generosity offering a non-judgmental, supportive, inclusive space where women experienced encouragement and understanding regardless of whether or not they meet their goals. The women's writing group Kelly participated in was a resistance to the often-competitive nature of graduate programs where the emphasis is on production and being selected for "scholarships, grants, jobs, and promotions" (Guerin 128). The writing group also provided a set writing time and location where Kelly could write. One free from the distractions that surface around her house, where she doesn't have to worry about not finding a place to write after taking 45-minutes to find parking.

As a single mom, Kelly's composition practices are shaped by her lived experience. While Kelly enjoys her clinical work and has a strong commitment to her clients, there is also a material necessity to the work—Kelly needs to be able to financially support herself and her child, especially given that she receives no financial assistance from her ex-husband. Since the funding from her graduate program is inadequate, Kelly has had to work "two or three jobs" every year of her PhD program, which impacts the time she can dedicate to her writing. Additionally, without adequate mentorship, Kelly's writing has suffered. Since the faculty Kelly works with are not currently publishing any scholarship, and this is the norm for graduate student publications in her field, Kelly has been on her own. Additionally, as described in chapter three, Kelly has been disregarded by

faculty in her program because of her single mom identity. Add to this the challenges Kelly faces in finding a place to write that works best for her, and it becomes clear how Kelly's context makes writing beyond her dissertation nearly impossible.

Despite Kelly's writing challenges, like the single moms throughout this chapter, she has been resourceful and found a way to make her writing work. Before her son was born, Kelly had a substantially different writing practice that she had to adjust after his birth, and again after she became a single mom; she has adapted her composition practice to her material circumstance and embodied experience. She prewrites substantially before putting any words on the page, she is strategic about how she allocates her time for various writing tasks, and she is consistently writing throughout her day-to-day, even if it is invisible to those around her. Such attention to her invisible writing practice makes clear the importance of making space in composition instruction for ways of composing that may not be evidenced in traditional prewriting activities (written outlines, bulleted lists, mind maps, etc.). We need to consider how to account for the work students do that cannot be documented.

Kelly's personal, professional, and academic lives are continually intertwined. Her material practice and embodied experience as a single mom are embedded in all the facets of her life. She knows that writing is important, even as it is placed low on her priority list. How can we make space to value the kinds of work Kelly is doing on a daily basis outside of academia within higher education? How can we ensure that mentors are prepared to understand and provide the unique support single moms need to be competitive in an academic context, especially single moms in graduate programs? That Kelly is able to do so much with such a little amount of time, yet this still seems inadequate seems to speak more to the limitations of academia than the limitations of Kelly.

Amy's Story

When I finished my undergrad, I worked at a feminist nonprofit abortion clinic for two or three years. I'd known that I wanted to get back into grad school, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. At the time, there weren't really any PhDs in Gender and Women's Studies, which was what I ultimately wanted to do. I applied to interdisciplinary Humanities programs, got into a Rhetoric program on the West Coast and went there. When I graduated, I started adjuncting while I was ABD because I had finished my comp exams and moved back to the Midwest. I also went back to work at the abortion clinic while I was dissertating. After maybe four years of adjuncting and like a year and a half after finishing my dissertation, I got a job as a visitor where I'm at now. It was a very strange thing because I had applied for a visiting position in Gender Studies and didn't get that. One of the people on the committee is the chair of the writing program, and he was looking for a writing visitor, so he called me and said "would you be interested in this?" I said, "Yes. I am all things to all people; I can do anything. Give me the job." I came here and then the person who had gotten the Gender Studies position got a tenure-track job after his first year and left, so then they did another search for a visitor in Gender Studies. I applied and got that. I was a visitor here for four years, and then at the end of my fourth year, my department, Gender and Sexuality studies, went through this extraordinary opportunity hire process, and got my line converted to tenure-track, which was pretty much unprecedented. I feel like a unicorn, but it happened, and so I'm now in my second year as a tenure-track here.

I'm up for review this year, so I've been putting together my dossier and trying to get some publications out the door. As far as my composition projects, I've been working on articles, just finished my first book, now I just have to start on my second one, and lots of grant applications. Also, grading papers. I give a lot of qualitative feedback. Although, I've been experimenting with just meeting with students after they finish a paper and talking through it to see if that ends up saving me time. I also send and receive a lot of email. Always email, so much email. Making syllabi is

a composition practice, and preparing my lecture notes for class. Those are some of the composition projects I work on regularly. Even though I'm doing a lot of composition work, and I am an excellent teacher and excellent at service, I have very few publications because I don't have time between teaching and parenting. I have the hours that my daughter is in school to work, and then once I have to leave to pick her up, that's it; I'm not getting any more work done. I can't stay late. I can't work on the weekends

The vast majority of time, I write in my office on campus during the workday. I close my door and just buckle down. I drop my daughter off at carpool at 7:50, I get to my office at 8, and then I stay there until I leave to go pick her up at 4:30. There have been times, very occasionally, if I'm on a deadline, I'll work on writing at home at night after she goes to bed. When it was crunch time, when it was the last week or two before my book manuscript was due, I would still write at the office all day, but luckily, my parents came down and stayed with her for two weeks, so that I could just do whatever I needed. There were nights when I would stay at my office until 10 pm, and then for the last week of it, I went and stayed at my girlfriend's house and was just writing at her house all day because she was off at work, there was no one to disturb me, and I didn't have to come home and do all of the second shift work that comes with being a single mom.

Very few people support me in the writing I'm working on. I have loosely sort of a writing group, which is all people I work with at my university. We mostly convene over the summer. We'll get together everyday at the library and just spend a few hours writing, but if I have something that I'm wanting feedback on, I can send it to any of them. I also have a friend in my field who's at another university who I can send stuff to. I'll get feedback at conferences. Although, that's not always the most helpful because oftentimes people's comments are about their own interests, which may or may not have anything to do with what you've been talking about. For the most part it's very much a solo practice, and you just hope for the best.

Most of my fall semester got eaten up by applying for sabbatical grants. There are three or four that I'm waiting to hear from. I spent a ton of time doing those grant proposals. Even though I wouldn't say I enjoy writing grants, I do appreciate the formulaic-ness of them. I know what I have to put in a grant, and so it's much easier to divide that up by section, and plug it into my schedule, like, "Okay, today I'm going to write the timeline section. Today I'm going to do the methods section." It all maps out very neatly, and I can break it down into bite-sized chunks pretty straightforwardly. There is a woman in the office of grants and contracts who reviewed every proposal I wrote and sent me feedback; she was very good.

At the very end of August, I was nominated by my university to apply for this huge $300,000 Mellon grant that was going to be life-changing for me; the deadline was like September 25th, so it was a very short turnaround time. I spent 20+ hours in September working on this grant proposal, and it's a very specific thing. I'm not going to be able to recycle this grant proposal and use it in another context. I worked so hard. I put my kid with babysitters on weekends, so I could work on this thing. At the end of the Fall semester, I got word that my application had been determined to be ineligible because of some screw-up on the part of an administrator who entered all the data for the application, and I just lost my mind. I have applied for and not gotten hundreds of things; it's not that. Had I not gotten it, I would have been like, okay. I did it, I tried, okay. But to not even be considered because of someone else's screw-up, and I emailed this administrator as diplomatically as I could to be like, "What happened?," and they were like, "Oh, sorry. That's a real bummer." I was like "A real bummer? A real bummer?" because they don't understand that I had to move mountains to carve out the time to do this, and it's not going to be of any use to me ever. I'm up for review this year. I could have used that time to finish an article, and submit it for publication. There are other things I could have done with that time, including not paying a babysitter to watch my kid, so I could actually hang out with her on the weekend. It's just so frustrating to not be seen in that,

and to just have it chalked up as like, "Oh that's a real bummer." It just highlighted for me the extent to which I as an individual don't matter in the context of the institution.

The email explaining the mistake wasn't even addressed to me. It was addressed to the administrator. Because this is something that the institution is invited to submit a nominee for once every three years, the email ended with something like, "But don't worry, we'll let you submit a nominee next year," so it doesn't matter because my university comes out ahead, but I don't. If I had gotten this grant, it would have been hugely prestigious. College Communications would have wanted to take my picture and do a write-up about me, but because it didn't happen it's like, wash my hands of it, no big deal, bummer. The institution will persevere. I think that that's a good metaphor generally for what it's like being a single mom in academia. You're just a little cog in this machine, and the institution is more than happy to take credit for your accomplishments, and to survive on the invisible service that you provide, but when you actually need something in return, it's like, you might as well not exist; they can't hear you.

Even with my book, I felt very much on my own. I had no idea what I was doing when I chose a publisher. No one had advised me on what I should be looking for. I went with the publisher who had contacted me once years ago because I was told I needed a book contract to have a better chance at a tenure-track position. I just really didn't know what I was getting into at all, and once I was in it, the whole experience made me feel very sour about academic publishing in general. I felt like I couldn't get anyone to respond to me at the publisher. They offered me no guidance at all. I paid them to have someone come up with an index that I had to do all over again on my own because the quality was so low. I got all of the publishing guidelines three weeks before my book was due. The proofs of my book looked worse than the draft form of it. Everything was a mess, and also they're not doing any marketing of it. I'm never gonna see a dime off of this. All I get out of it is a line on my CV I'll get tenure because of this book, which is great, but the whole thing felt just

really miserable from start to finish and just makes me wish that I could simply focus on teaching and advising my students because that's the part that I am best at and that I am most invested in.

Alex's Analytical Perspective

Amy's experience makes visible much of the effort, energy, time, and coordination that remain invisible in the composition practices of single moms. While Amy is very intentional in writing while she is at work, at "hunkering down" and doing all that she can between the hours of 8 and 4:30, this time is not always enough. Amy's attention to planning her writing process is not unique. We see it in the other stories from single moms, as well as research on composition processes, which has accounted for how writers coordinate and plan their writing. For example, in interviews with writing faculty, Christine Tulley makes visible how they compose in "brief stints throughout the day" in between things like teaching classes and yoga practice (36), meetings with colleagues, email responses, and letters of recommendation (51). She also provides insight into how writing faculty are strategic about where they do different aspects of their writing process, such as only in their offices like Amy (117), reviewing writing in print form on the beach (99), writing at a home office at the end of the work day (102), or writing in a coffee shop (128). In other words, Tulley's interviews make visible how writing faculty plan and incorporate writing throughout their day, as well as where they compose, yet we see little about the material constraints faculty face outside of academia that shape this writing process. There are mentions of distractions at home (128), carving out time for grandchildren (117), and how faculty used to communicate with their children the need for an hour to do work at home (134), but we do not see what it's like for someone with sole childcare responsibilities to compose. Amy's experience gives us a glimpse into that process, into what it's like to "move mountains" to write. We see how even though Amy's writing can be a solitary process, it often happens with the support of others. Amy was able to finish a substantial grant proposal and a book (which was 10 years in the making) in part because of the

childcare her parents provided during Amy's "crunch time," the uninterrupted space her girlfriend provided for work, and also due to a babysitter Amy hired. I point out these people because they are part of what help maintain institutions, and because organizing this care and access to working spaces required effort, energy, time, and coordination on Amy's part that often remains invisible. Amy lost both time and money to complete the Mellon grant proposal, due to an administrative error, yet this loss remains unacknowledged by her institution.

Amy's experience raises many questions: What if we included not only our successes—articles, fellowships, grants, etc., but also our failures? How could Amy include the 20+ hours she put into the Mellon grant that are now invisible from her CV? What if including space to account for all of the attempts even if they don't pan out was normalized and not something some institutions do while others don't? How do we make space to recognize and/or acknowledge the often invisible work single moms do to engage in composition work? What would it look like to include such work in annual reports, letters of support, and/or other review materials? The composition processes of single moms are part of an institutional system that depends on their composition work, and such work, whether it succeeds or fails, should be at the very least, acknowledged. Single moms, like Amy, work tirelessly to complete the requirements expected of them to maintain their existence in that institutional system, even when that work remains invisible and unacknowledged by the institution itself.

Conclusion

The composition practices of single moms make visible how inseparable their professional and personal lives are, how their material reality, embodied experience, and especially their children, shape their composition practice. These women write in their offices, take audio notes in their cars, prewrite in their minds after dropping their children off at daycare, and are intentional with scheduling when they write because they have to maximize what they have when they can. For many

of them, aspects like collaboration and CFPs are essential to completing the kind of composition work that is valued in academia—scholarly publication. However, they are also doing substantial writing beyond academia, like the writing Danielle and Kelly do for their jobs outside of the classroom, and the composition work Julie completes as part of her teaching and administrative work.

Single moms' composition practices also uncover the multiple components that make such practice possible. Single moms benefit from having people within academia to support their composition work, like the woman in the grants and fellowships office who assists Amy, or the women's writing group that helped Kelly. They also benefit from people outside of academia. We see this in the care Amy's parents provided her daughter, and when I spoke with Erica, Julie, Katherine, and Kelly, all shared how they have immediate family members and/or close friends who can care for their children during "crunch times" like what Amy described.

Being a single mom means that you often have to figure things out as they come, and this is reflected in the ways Tricia, Julie, Danielle, Katherine, Kelly, Erica, and Amy compose. When we look at the composing processes of individuals, we can see how, where, and when they compose, as well as what habits and skills they have developed to get their writing done. Such insight can inform how we understand, make sense of, and value different types of composition, and in turn, how we teach, mentor, and support students, colleagues, and peers. The composition practices of these single moms push us to think about what is possible when we are open to what can happen with composition practice and production. Even though our understanding of the writing process of those with marginalized identities is limited, these stories make clear the wealth of what can be learned by making space for what still lies in the interstices.

When I asked single moms about their composition practices, many described finding time and space to complete their composition work within an institution, which, as described in chapter

two, gives limited consideration to their material realities and embodied experience. Single moms shared how they spend time and money hiring babysitters, reaching out to family members, figuring out schedules, finding parking spaces, to create time and make money within academia. They described what they do—wake up early in the morning or stay up light, use voice memos to prewrite while driving or keep a notepad nearby to jot down ideas, and also what shapes that practice—their daily lives and the material circumstances and embodied experiences that exist within those lives. But *how* do these women create space for themselves and other single moms through their interactions with people within and outside of higher education? The next chapter answers this question by exploring how single moms lives within and outside of academia shape the rhetorical strategies they implement to challenge the norms and expectations within higher education. Norms and expectations that often exclude single moms and fail to consider how their lives outside academia shape their work within it.

Chapter 5: Do This or Crumble: Looking at the Rhetorical Strategies Single Moms Draw on to Push Against Intersectional Inequities

"I have to remain composed," Katherine told me as she described what happened when she arrived 15-minutes late to pick her son up from Scouts. After getting her daughter to soccer practice for one of her two teams, Katherine scrambled to get to her son's Scouts meeting to pick him up. But when she got there, he was gone. Someone else had already taken her son home, and the Scout leader shamed Katherine for not having someone there to pick her son up on time. With her husband deployed, Katherine was left to taxi both of her kids while working full time 45-minutes away. She had asked other parents to rideshare, but they had told her things like, "My husband's picking up my daughter today, so don't worry about us, we don't need a rideshare," not realizing that they might not need it but Katherine did. This was despite those same parents saying, "Let me know if you need help," but as Katherine recognizes, "That's just a thing to say, no one's really offering."

Spoken or unspoken, single moms make rhetorical choices everyday; as a result, they have developed a rhetorical savviness influenced by their lived realities and material circumstances. What they choose to say (or not) and how they read various interactions are influenced by their experiences. Katherine didn't explain to the Scout leader why she was late because, as she put it, she must "remain composed" and keep it together for her kids. She didn't want her son to think that the Scout master is "a horrible person" because of how the Scout master made Katherine feel. She didn't want to "pass on" her own feelings of guilt and shame to her children. Her silence is a rhetorical choice that is also influenced by her embodied experience. Similarly, as a result of her experiences, Katherine recognizes the comment: "Let me know if you need help," as an empty phrase, a meaningless rhetorical gesture. After hearing these types of phrases multiple times and still not receiving the help she needs, even after asking for it, Katherine recognizes that much like a

regular invitation for lunch that never comes to fruition, the help she needs is unlikely to come from other parents. Instead, she must turn to herself.

I open this chapter with Katherine's experience because it is reflective of a broader norm in single moms' lives—navigating rhetorical situations that emerge due to their single mom identities. Even though this experience is outside of Katherine's academic life, the skills she used to navigate it—reading and understanding her audience, determining how much to disclose and withhold, knowing when to ask others and when to turn to herself for help—are much like the ones she and other single moms use within higher education. Her situation foregrounds two questions at the heart of this chapter: How do single moms' lived realities act as a resource for their rhetorical practices within higher education? How do those rhetorical practices and therefore single moms work to shift academic culture? To address these questions, this chapter offers a look at how single moms respond to challenges within academia—what do they do when a meeting conflicts with a time they need to pick up their child from school? How do they advocate for support when they can't teach a class because their kid is sick for the second week in a row? How do they decide when to speak up and when to remain silent? In exploring single moms' responses, I focus on two types of rhetorical practices they enact, which I term upfront and pushback rhetoric.

Upfront rhetoric refers to how single moms choose to be open about and disclose their single mom identity. It's a rhetorical practice that single moms engage in as a form of self-advocacy to alter systems, structures, and/or policies to be more inclusive and considerate of those with a range of parenting identities. Similarly, pushback rhetoric is when single moms challenge norms and expectations in academia. Most often, pushback rhetoric occurs in relation to those in positions of power; it is a rhetorical tool to encourage critical thinking about held practices and ideologies. Pushback rhetoric is evidenced in moments where instead of going with the flow, single moms stop and engage in subversive practices and conversations. Both are rhetorical practices of resistance, and

both upfront and pushback rhetoric are terms derived directly from language used by single moms. These practices reflect a means of stigma resistance as described in chapter one (Duquaine-Watson 165). To show these practices, I draw on counterstory as a method to "tell stories of those people whose experiences are often not told" (Martinez 26). More specifically, I invoke aspects of "autobiographic reflection," from *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*, which Aja Martinez ascribes to Patricia Williams. I draw on this method to create a critical feminist counterstory where the personal is political, and where I narrate "sometimes as witness, sometimes as participant" (81 and 85).

In implementing autobiographic narrative, which is modeled after Martinez's "counterstory octalog" between eight "field-specific narrative theorists," I use quotes from interviews I conducted with single moms as well as excerpts from the survey data[22] to craft a dialogue between the women about their rhetorical practices (86). In this fictional gathering of women occurring over a video and audio online platform[23], I act as facilitator and moderator, adding questions and thoughts throughout the discussion. This approach is very similar to one I took during actual interviews. Rather than moving quickly from question to question, I often shared my own thoughts and experiences to guide the conversation. Similar to chapter three, this method allows me to center the participants' voices and allows readers to learn about the women's experiences from their perspective. Throughout the dialogue, I incorporate references to relevant texts to show how these women's experiences reflect scholarly theories.

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[22] While dialogue from the interview participants represents those individuals, the survey data is represented through a composite character, or one who is "written as composites of many individuals" and does not "have a one-to-one correspondence to any individual I know" (Martinez 25). Sonya is the composite character in this dialogue, reflecting responses from multiple single moms in the survey data.

[23] The fictional meeting takes place in a virtual space because in interviewing single moms, I only met with one in person in-person. This was in part due to geographical distance, but also because phone and/or video chat allowed the flexibility single moms need to have lengthy conversations.

The dialogue centers two major tenants from critical race theory: "challenge dominant ideology" and "a commitment to social justice" (Martinez 9). Through the conversation, these single moms critically engage and push against dominant ideas around gender equality in higher education, as well as demonstrate efforts to end experiences of gender oppression, particularly for single mothers (ibid 17). In their use of upfront and pushback rhetoric, they challenge "majoritarian stories" about what it means to be a single mom and resist the pressure to minimize or conceal that identity (Martinez 3). They also work towards creating a culture in higher education that is more equitable towards those who are marginalized and have a range of material circumstances and lived experiences.

Alex: [Looking at the Hollywood Squares style of boxes stretched across the screen] I'd like to start by thanking you all for taking the time to share your experiences as single moms in academia. I know your time is especially precious, and it means so much that you've taken some of that to be here today. Before we start, feel free to turn your video on or off, as well as mute or unmute your audio as we talk. I know some of you are joining this conversation via phone, so you might not have that option, but if you need to, I completely understand.

Erica: [jumping in] That would be me! I just got on the road to drive back home to be with my kids, so I'll be like this for the next three hours.

Tricia: I'm also joining via phone. I can't handle screens, so looking at a computer or phone is impossible for me.

Alex: [Reassuringly] It's no problem. I really appreciate you all being here, regardless of what form it takes. So, to start us off, I thought maybe we could talk through how open (or not) you are about your single mom identity within your academic institution. Is this something you share with others?

Amy: [Starts after a slight pause] I have always been very up front. It certainly does me no benefit to try to hide the fact that I have a kid.

Erica: [Responding enthusiastically] Oh, I'm pretty open about it. I'm not ashamed of it. It's part of my identity and also information about how I have to move through the world and the type of decisions I have to make.

Julie: I'm really open about it, and I think that's more of a personality trait than anything else [smiles].

Tricia: [Very matter of fact] I'm hugely open about being a single mom. If you're going to be keeping stuff secret, then you've got to pretend to be somebody you're not.

Alex: Right, and sometimes, that pretending can be more work than being up front. This reminds me of something I read in *The Chicana Motherwork Anthology* where the authors describe how hiding maternal identity is a form of "self-erasure" that is "destructive" to one's sense of self and spirit (Herrera and Mercado 165). But as someone who has felt the stigmatization that comes with being an openly single mom, I understand why being up front may not always feel like a choice, why it might feel safer and worth the work to keep things hidden.

Danielle: [Leaning forward] For me, it depends on how comfortable I am with the individuals I'm speaking with. I don't want anyone to judge me or think that I use being a single mom as an excuse or that I can't do something because of being a single mom [Pausing to take a sip of tea]. So, for example, I didn't share with my Philosophy class that I am a single mom because no one else was sharing personal things in that class, but in my Writing class, people were sharing more personal information, so I felt comfortable telling them I am a single mom.

As Danielle shifts back from the screen, I think about my experience as a writing instructor and what it means to create spaces where students are vulnerable and feel safe in their vulnerability. Writing can be inherently personal, especially in first-year writing course where assignments like the personal narrative are ubiquitous. Oftentimes, as bell hooks has pointed out in describing "engaged

pedagogy," instructors need to be vulnerable in order to empower students to do the same. Professors need to be willing to take risks and connect the personal and academic to show students how experience informs our ways of knowing (hooks 21). Similarly, Christina Cedillo and Phil Bratta write about the practice of positionality stories where instructors share their own lived experiences, which counter traditional ideas about who belongs in the academy (216). Such stories "demonstrate a productive vulnerability" in how they "invite students to see their instructors as also learners whose expertise is both the result of an extensive lived process and potentially achievable by others" (222). As Danielle spoke, I thought about how, on my first day of classes, I include a slide that has an image of me and my daughter because I want students to understand that my classroom is a space for us to be whole people, that who we are outside of the classroom does not (and often cannot) stay there; it comes with us. I let students know that my identity as a mom shapes my work as an instructor, and because I recognize they also have identities that shape their work as students, I am open to making the writing classroom accessible to those multifaceted identities. Suddenly, I find myself drawn back to the conversation by Kelly's soft, midwestern accent.

Kelly: I understand that level of caution, Danielle [pointedly]. I was very open and candid about being a single mom in my first year as PhD student, but I really changed my attitude after an experience I had with some of the faculty (see Chapter Three). Starting out, I was like, oh, this is just who I am, of course I can talk about this. I feel like that shouldn't be a mistake, but it was a mistake for me. After my freshman year, where a faculty member I was doing research with told me, 'You don't know how to put your CV above your kid,' I don't even mention that I have a kid until I know someone pretty well. And I definitely don't tell them about my divorce or anything like that.

Erica: I get that, Kelly. There's a danger in being open about who you are because then that can be used against you.

Julie: Yeah, I may have been a little bit more reluctant to talk about being a single mother if I knew I was hitting the job market right after I finished my PhD; I'd be worried about the damage that could do to me in the job hunt.

Kelly: Exactly. After everything I went through in my first year, I was talking to the director of my program, who was trying to understand my experiences. She told me that I shouldn't say I have a kid. 'We're in a male dominated field; you can't because they don't have the same respect for mothers that they do for other things.' Her advice was that I don't talk about my kid. For example, she said if I need to leave because I have to pick him up, I say, 'I have another obligation. I'm leaving now.' She told me to be firm, that my other obligation could be work or something else, but whatever it is, 'it's none of their damn business.' As I've learned, and as she told me, 'That's just how you have to be in this field.'

Alex: I've heard about that happening in other places, too, and it seems to happen regardless of whether someone is in STEM, Humanities, or the Social Sciences. I'm curious, Kelly, would you mind sharing what your field is?

Kelly: Oh, sure. My PhD will be in Rehabilitation Sciences, which is an interdisciplinary program that includes physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, and athletic training.

Alex: Thank you!

Kelly: No problem.

Amy: Like you mentioned Kelly, particularly in the Social Sciences and STEM, there's such a culture of women feeling like they have to keep their kids a secret. I'm very open and public about being a single mom because there are other people who feel like they can't. I'm in a Gender and Sexuality Studies department, so it's probably to be expected that they would be more attuned to these issues than many.

Erica: Right! I'm a counselor for God's sake, and I don't want to be somewhere if there's no room for understanding different circumstances. I feel for people who are in that situation where they have to be more quiet about it, and maybe I should be more quiet about it. Maybe it won't serve me well in the long run, but that's just not how I move through the world.

Sonya: I'm grateful to those who are willing to be upfront about being a single mom. I have a hard time being open because I feel a lack of parent comradery. I feel a sense of exclusion since I'm not viewed as an intact family. Parented colleagues in relationships avoid talking about their children with me, especially if they are complaining about workload.

Alex: That makes sense. I could totally see how, if parented colleagues are less apt to talk about their kids around you, it might make you feel like you need to be silent about your own kids and life as a single parent. It's like it creates a precedent that perpetuates the ideas that being a parent in academia needs to remain hidden (see chapter two).

Erica: That's exactly why I am open because I don't want to perpetuate that sense of pressure to remain silent.

Amy: Same.

Katherine: You know, Sonya and Kelly, both your points make me think about my own experience, which is like Kelly's but kind of reversed. Umm...hold on a sec, I'm going to close the door. One of my dogs opened it. There's people working on the power lines for like the last two weeks, so I was actually worried my WiFi would be out [Katherine gets up from her chair and walks behind her to close door before returning, cross-legged, to her chair]. So, I tried to keep my identity as a geographically single mom hidden, but then I learned that I needed to be open after a really bad experience. I was living in Maryland at the time and had accepted a full-time teaching position at a community college with a 6-6 load. My kids were 2 and 4 (they're 11 and 13, now). I was thinking I would plan it all around the days that they're in daycare. Within weeks of signing my contract, my

husband ended up getting a specific position where he would be gone probably 300 days of the year. He came home and said this job was being voluntold. He had no other option. He had to take this job or it would be a career ruiner. I was just baffled. This was my first full-time job since getting my Master's, and I was so excited. I was going to have my own office. But then I was on my own because he just left. I didn't tell the chair anything about what was going on. I made a friend who really helped me out. She was a first-year, didn't have any kids, wasn't married, and it was rock bottom for me. I couldn't do it. I wasn't answering student emails. I wasn't getting there. I was just struggling so much. My children were acting out, acting up. My son started biting people in preschool; I imagine from all of my anxiousness and anxiety. I felt out of control, and I've never felt so out of control. I was trying to contain all this because I wanted to be the perfect new faculty member, and then finally towards the end of the second semester I went to my Chair. I had to say, this is where I'm at, this is why I'm falling apart. My chair was like, 'why didn't you tell me from the beginning? My experience has been very similar.' I was like, what!? What? I've just been barely able to hold myself together. It was awful. I just remember I was screaming at the kids; it was a horrible, horrible time for them and for me. I just remember thinking, I will never do that again. And that was kind of my lesson learned, I need to say upfront what my needs are.

Alex: What you're saying his makes me think of this type of 'stigma management,' single moms are described as doing where they 'withhold information about an identity in order to pass as normal during various forms of social interaction' (Duquaine-Watson 156). It's like you said, you were worried that if you shared what was going on, you would be seen as less than the 'perfect new faculty member' so you tried to maintain the façade of having it all together. That's so hard. How has your experience changed since then?

Katherine: Well, when I worked on my dissertation after I had that community college position I just talked about, my initial Chair had also been a single mom going through her dissertation, so she

knew about my circumstances, but she was one of those that was basically like, 'if I did it, you can do it, too, so stop complaining or suck it up.' I don't think she understood quite the grasp of what my situation was, and she just really didn't want to. One time, my son was sick, and the next week my daughter was sick, and I couldn't finish a draft that was due. You could just see the look on her face like, 'well, you should have gotten up at 4 am to write then.' She ended up retiring at a good time for us to part ways. With my second dissertation chair, he has young kids, and he and I had conversations right upfront about our constraints. We respected them. With my new job as a visiting instructor, I was open to my chair here, and right away she said, 'I understand, so I'm going to set your schedule.' Had I not asked for it, I probably would have gotten a Wednesday class at 5 pm, but if I say no, I can't teach on Wednesday evenings because my kids are in soccer or whatever it is, then I am less likely to be assigned to classes I can't teach. I feel like most people have been receptive to how my life outside of academia shapes my life within it.

Julie: That has been my experience, too. As soon as things got set in motion with the separation and divorce, I immediately told my dean, and my department chair. Mostly because I needed the leniency of knowing I was going to be in and out of work sometimes. That I no longer had somebody else I could depend on if the kids were sick, and that there would be additional days that I would miss for court appearances, meeting with my lawyer. Plus, our department is very small; there's maybe 25 of us in the Liberal Arts and university transfer division as a whole. There's only like 6 of us in the English department, so even if I hadn't told anybody, everybody would have known.

Alex: Julie, it seems like you wanted to tell the information on your terms, to have some control over your own story that would inevitably circulate. I also wonder, since you were getting your PhD at the same time, how open were you with your Chair about what you were going through?

Julie: With my diss chair, I kind of sat on the news for maybe 3, 4 months just cause I didn't feel like explaining it to somebody else. I was tired of it. When I did tell him, since it was just my

dissertation chair I had to worry about at the time, I was really upfront about what was going on. I told him, 'You cannot expect chapters from me because I gotta get somebody out of my house, I gotta go to court.' I only had to be upfront with him and a little bit with the grad program director (gpd), but by that point in time I wasn't really dealing with the gpd anymore. It was mostly just my diss chair.

Amy: I had a similar experience with being really up front about what was going on and having a supportive department chair as a faculty member. I just didn't think too hard about it, and was just like this is what's happening, I can't be at X or Y thing because I'm a single parent now, and I was always very upfront about that. My department chair was also always very supportive.

Listening to these women talk about how they disclose or hide their single motherhood, I think about how often single moms theorize their lived experiences as a survival tactic. Their interactions with others, their embodied feelings, and their material contexts inform their decisions about what to share and what to hide. As they navigate their rhetorical strategies in our conversation, they shift in and out of academic language. They quote conversations they have had with colleagues from days, weeks, months, and years before. They reflect on their personal and professional contexts, how their choices are shaped by their past and have the potential to shape their future; they consider the stakes of each rhetorical move. Responding to Amy's experience with a supportive department, Erica's enthusiastic voice continues the conversation.

Erica: I have colleagues and our program chair who makes our schedules have always been really supportive and understanding of my being a single mom, but I still have challenges with unexpected disruptions, like when my kids are sick, and I need to find someone to cover my class.

Alex: Could you say a little bit more about that, Erica?

Erica: Sure! There were three Tuesdays in the Spring semester that I had a sick kid, and Tuesdays are the ones that it's really hard for me because I have to drive three-hours to my university on Tuesdays, and technically, I'm responsible for the kids until 5:00, so if they're sick on a Tuesday, it's super hard. I actually had to have somebody cover one of my classes this semester.

Alex: I think this is something we're all familiar with—having to figure out how to adjust a class because our kids are sick or have a snow day or school is cancelled for whatever reason. It's really hard. I know I have struggled with it as a graduate student because, like Katherine was mentioning earlier, I felt pressure to sort of fit in and perform at the same level as my other non-parent graduate peers.

Sonya: I have such a hard time keeping everything going when my kid is sick or has a snow day. I had to move several hours away from my extended family, which has been difficult. Being closer to grandma made a lot of things easier, but there were no jobs there. Last year, we had an absurd number of snow days, and they took a huge toll on how often I could be at work and the progress I could make with my writing.

Alex: It's so interesting to me how prevalent of a problem this is, yet how little support institutions offer. I know some places offer back-up childcare in these situations, but I wonder, is anyone at a place where you have a process or protocol in place for when you need someone else to cover your class for any reason, not just due to challenges with kids?

Erica: [Scoffs] No, and it's terrifying because like the two folks with tenure are older, males who aren't ever going to have to do this. I have one other friend who has kids, and is like, 'This just is what it is.' You're just kind of responsible for figuring it out, and I'm pre-tenure, so I'm the one who's constantly under a microscope, but if my kid is sick, my kid is sick. I felt terrible about having to do it. It's just...it sucks. So what I do is I start emailing people and asking as soon as I think I might need to stay home with my kid. If I have a sick kid home on Monday, and I think there's a

good chance he's going to be home on Tuesday, I'm gonna start on Monday. Usually, I'll start with a

group email to everyone who's qualified to cover my class because it's a clinical class, so it has to be

somebody who has some sort of counselor education background or some sort of clinical training

background; we're seeing actual counseling clients. If I don't get anything in response to my email,

I'll reach out via text message, and that's only certain folks. Those are closer people that I might say,

'Hey, is there any way you can do this?' I start as early as possible. I fully disclose why I need

someone to cover the class, explaining that I have a sick kid. I've heard people say pros and cons of

either one, but you know what? It is what it is. I'm sorry. If this is not a place where I can be a mom,

too, then this is not a place I need to be. The person who ended up covering is actually a friend of

mine who isn't in my program but still qualified to teach the class because none of the faculty in my

program were either available or willing to cover it.

      As the other women listened, I could see many of them nodding their heads in agreement, as

if to say, "I get what that's like. I've been there before." I imagined they were reminded of their own

experiences in similar situations; I know I was[24]. I could feel my chest tighten and my stomach knot

with the reminder of the fear I had felt when faced with a predicament early on in my single mom

experience.

Alex: I know what you mean Erica. I had a similar experience in the second year of my PhD

program. I was in an administrative internship and experienced a scheduling conflict—I had to do a

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[24] While this dialogue takes place in a pre-COVID-19 pandemic time, the anxieties and fears single moms share here reflect what many single moms have felt during the pandemic. Fears of being too sick to care for their kids, or of being hospitalized due to COVID-19, emerged not only in a survey I conducted in September 2020 (see Epilogue), but also in much of the work published on single moms' experiences. Specifically, Marika Lindholm writes about how solo moms have been terrified of becoming sick, and how this fear is very real because "one of the first people to die of COVD-19 in the U.S. was a single mom of four…" As Lindholm rightfully points out, this is a structural issue—"Failing to provide affordable childcare, family leave, healthcare or living wages, our nation tests the limits of [single moms'] strength and resiliency." For single moms in academia, who often relocate away from family for their jobs, the anxiety and fear of becoming sick is not only due to covering classes or academic responsibilities, but also due to a lack of a support network and trusted caregivers nearby.

TA observation and pick-up my daughter at the same time. Like you, Katherine, I wanted to be the ideal colleague, and I felt worried about my inability to fulfill the responsibilities of my job, especially because the reason was related to being a single mom and also because I was only one of two parents in the program. Fortunately, my supervisor at the time has three children, so I felt like I could be upfront with her about what was going on and ask her advice. She suggested I ask my two childfree, male colleagues if they might be able to cover for me. I sent them emails, but unlike you Erica, I never disclosed that my being a single mom was related to why I couldn't complete the observation; I just told them I had a "scheduling conflict" [shaking my head in shame]. That's the same thing I told the male TA when I learned the two colleagues couldn't cover the observation.

After I shared this story, I was silent, thinking about how instead of seeing the experience as an opportunity to make visible my lived experience, I chose to hide it. The other single moms looked at me with understanding not anger, which made me feel comforted; they saw and understood me. I felt a sense of empathetic validation, something I've found unique to my interactions with single moms. By living through and in similar circumstances and experiences, we're able to not only feel what other single moms are feeling, we're also able to recognize the value of validation as a source of reassurance and comfort, a validation that can remain unspoken. As we sat there in our separate physical spaces but together in this virtual one, I thought about how we are all constantly reading the rhetorical situations we're faced with, trying to get a sense of what we believe will give us ethos with our audience.

With my colleagues at the time, withholding my single mom identity felt like a type of protection from potential stigma or dismissiveness. Like Danielle, I feared that if I was open about being a single mom, that's all I would be seen as, and it would become viewed as a scapegoat for my inability to do certain things, like stay for an entire class observation. At the same time, I thought about all of the work Erica and I had to do to make alternative arrangements. We had to make

rhetorical choices because there weren't specific structures in place to accommodate childcare and family responsibilities.

Alex: As I think about all of our experiences, about how we communicate with others about our single mom identity and how that relates to what we need, I'm thinking about how we have to make all of these decisions not only as far as what we do, but also how we do it. We have to make choices about who to contact—colleagues, administrators, friends, when to contact them—as soon as possible or at the last possible minute, and how to make that contact—email, in-person, text message, or phone call. I also feel like we have to be especially thoughtful in how we compose our messages, especially how much we want to disclose about why we need a certain type of support or accommodation. And then of course, we have to do this multiple times, because we're often reaching out to more than one person. This is rarely a one-and-done process.

Erica: Right, and so, what ends up happening is I tend to be overly apologetic. Actually, super apologetic about it. Especially when it's people who don't have kids. My way of handling it is to say, 'I'm so sorry I'm asking you to do this. I really understand that it's a hassle.'

Alex: Me too. Just like you, Erica, I apologized to the TA when I let him know I would have to leave the observation early. I told him, "I'm sorry for any inconvenience this might cause."

Erica: But if it were my friend who has kids who was helping me, I'd just be like, 'Hey, thanks. I'll get you next time.' But with the people who don't have kids, I tend to feel like I owe them, but then it's very hard for me to pay them back because I don't have the time or I'm just not there.

Alex: Right, so you adjust your response depending on who you're emailing. That's how I felt with my supervisor—I trusted she would get it, so I didn't apologize. But now, I realize, I didn't need to apologize to anyone.

[Many of the women nod supportively in agreement]

Amy: As you're talking, I'm reminded of this experience I had at a job interview. It was several years ago at another small liberal arts college, and it was like my dream job. I was so excited, and I felt like the interview was going really, really, well, and then I met with the Dean of faculty there. He was like, 'So we see that you have an incredible record of teaching and service, but your publication record concerns me.' Right then and there I was like, 'It's over.' He said, 'There's a significant gap in your publications,' and I wanted to say to him, 'Yeah, I had a kid with a complete loser who contributed nothing and was abusive, and then I left him, and now I've been doing everything on my own, living 500-miles from any help,' but you can't say that, and I don't think it would have made a difference if I had.

When Amy shared that, I reflected on how single moms choose to be upfront, how we're making choices about who to disclose to, when, and where. Amy's point makes clear a question we continually ask ourselves in making that choice: Will it make a difference? For who and in what way? I thought about Stephanie Kerschbaum's work where she describes the complexities of choosing to disclose a disability, particularly in writing. While disclosing a disability and disclosing a single mom identity are two very different experiences, and I don't want to conflate the two, Kerschbaum offers a helpful perspective to understand how disclosure is about reciprocity—"Claiming an identity is not a singular accomplishment; it is a mutual accomplishment performed by speakers *and* audiences" (62). Disclosure is not just about asserting a "identity," but also about "interlocuters and audiences acknowledge[ing] that identity" (62). Amy knew that the Dean wouldn't acknowledge her identity as a single mom; there was no reciprocity there, and I felt the same with my male colleagues. In contrast, Erica knows there might not be any reciprocity due to her disclosure, but she also recognizes that not disclosing also eliminates even the potential for acknowledgment.

Alex: That seems like part of the challenge of academia, there's no way to extend generosity or account for accomplishments in your personal life. I would say leaving a bad marriage takes serious courage and intelligence and thought, and it's not seen in that way, and raising a child and all those things. The thing I wonder is how do we change that? What do we do so that the structure isn't set-up in this way? There's all these problems, they've been going on for a long time. What do we do to fix this? And I don't know.

Amy: I think part of it is [looking to the side and pausing momentarily in thought, choosing her words carefully] … pushing back.

Erica: [crunching over the phone] I'm starving, so I'm gonna eat some cashews. But also, I agree with you, Amy.

Tricia: Yes. You know the cliché, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and I hate to say that, but it's kind of true.

Alex: And I think that's part of the upfront rhetoric you all were talking about—in being open, there's also a pushing back against the norms in higher education and what identities are expected to remain visible or not. That openness is in itself a rhetorical act of resistance. Would you agree?

Katherine: Absolutely. I think part of what has enabled me to pushback is having experiences where I wasn't upfront. Like I was talking about with my initial dissertation chair; I wanted to please her because she was a big name, and she had so many people who thought so highly of her, so I hid a lot of stuff from her too, so again, lesson learned both in the dissertation process and in the first job that I am just really, completely crystal clear with people about what my life is like, which also means I'm clear when something isn't going to work for me because of my circumstances.

Julie: [Leaning forward over her clasped hands] I also think that sometimes, this pushback isn't just verbal. Like, I bring my kids to campus when I have to—school is closed unexpectedly or they're

not cleared to return after being sick—even though my campus has a policy of not allowing kids (see chapter three).

Alex: This is like Sara Ahmed's writing about diversity workers in *Living a Feminist Life*. Such a good book, by the way. But anyway, she describes diversity work as "pushy work," and then she explains how "pushy work" involves pushing against and pushing for something. She likens it to someone going against a crowd—"you have to push harder than any of those who are going the right way…If you don't push, it seems, at least sometimes, a possibility is what recedes" (109). And Julie, what you're saying about bringing your kids to campus is like this concept "fierce mothering," which comes from the *Chicana Motherwork Anthology.* The concept is all about fighting back against "systemic violence" through actions and practices like "bringing children to spaces they are not welcome," as well as "choosing to make mothering identities visible when we are often told to closet those identities" (Cisneros, Hidalgo, Bega, Martínez-Vu 289). I would argue that what we're talking about with upfront rhetoric and pushback rhetoric engages both.

Amy: Definitely, and I do pushback. At the beginning of this year, we have a new Dean of faculty, and he sent an email, or his secretary sent an email, that there was a mandatory meeting for anyone going up for second or fourth year review to meet with the new Dean, and it was scheduled for a Monday at 4:30 p.m., and I just emailed back to the whole list and was like, 'Could we do this not at 4:30? Because that's not doable for me,' and there were several other parents in the group and one other single mom, in fact, and luckily they offered a second meeting time, but it was just like, the lack of consideration.

Sonya: [Sighs] Yeah. I know what you mean. Meetings scheduled after hours are so hard. I feel like there's a disregard on the part of colleagues with no children about when meetings and other things are planned. But I'm apprehensive about saying anything because I'm a visiting faculty member.

Amy: I get that, Sonya. Any kind of event that's after normal business hours, I have to get a babysitter to do those things. It ends up meaning that I just don't go to many lectures or events on campus that I would like to go to. Again, I'm in a fairly unique position in that I'm in a Gender and Sexuality Studies department, folks are really understanding and supportive of my situation, but I can imagine some other departments even at my own institution where people would be like, 'Wow. She's really not collegial. She doesn't participate in the life of the department,' and that being a problem that could hold me back. In fact, there was a woman who several years ago, who was a single mom, and her contract did not get renewed, pre-tenure, I want to say her fourth year. I think she could have fought it and won, but she decided to just go, and now she's at another institution, luckily. I happened to have an office, and at the time I was a visitor, in that department's area, and I heard a lot of talk in the halls about like, 'Oh, she just doesn't show up for the department. She doesn't come for our events. She's never there for the visiting artist lectures,' and it's like, 'Okay. You're all old white men, and she is a young Woman of Color who is parenting a child on her own,' maybe, let's think about this, but that was not happening.

Alex: So it seems like the ability to pushback is shaped by privilege—racial, and also academic positionality. Where you are in the academic hierarchy—tenured, NTT, contingent faculty, what have you, can impact the security a person has in pushing back, and also how that pushback is received. It's like a certain positionality can also give you a certain ethos depending on the context. Like you mentioned, Julie, with the upfront rhetoric, you might have been more hesitant to be so open if you knew you were going onto the job market.

Julie: [nodding and raising her eyebrows enthusiastically] Mmm-hmmm.

Alex: What specific moments would you all be willing to share where you feel like you did pushback?

Tricia: I never really felt like I needed to pushback. I would bring my son to senate meetings and seminar classes, and if he couldn't come, I wouldn't bother going. I would say, 'Hey, either I can bring him, or I'm not going,' But I'm also pretty blunt.

Alex: Actually, Tricia, I know you don't feel like that's pushing back, but I think it is. Making your son visible in spaces where kids usually aren't is a sort of pushing back. You're challenging ideas of who is traditionally thought of in the space. I'm also so glad you do that because I've had plenty to times when I've had to bring my daughter to classes or on campus for any number of reasons. I've always found comfort in seeing and hearing about other parents doing the same, especially single moms.

Amy: I've brought my daughter to class many times, and I think I could bring her to a faculty meeting, and everyone would be cool about it, but it's not really possible for me because her school is like a 25-minute drive from here, so by the time I got there, picked her up, and brought her back, the faculty meeting would be over, which is part of why I have needed to pushback. I used to not go to our faculty meetings, which were always at 4:30, but I worked to get those changed. At my institution, we have a common hour, which is an empty hour on Tuesday and Thursday where there are no classes. Yes, a lot of things happen during that time; there are a lot of departmental and committee meetings, but faculty meetings are set at the end of the preceding year. I started emailing our previous Vice-Chair Pro Tem of faculty. She told me, 'Well, some people prefer 4:30 and some people prefer common hour, so this is just what we did.' I then emailed some other people on our professional affairs committee because I knew that you could email that committee and remain anonymous in your comments. When a new vice chair came on for whatever reason, I emailed him directly, and he was more sensitive to the issue. He sent out an email to the faculty discussion listserv saying, 'let's talk about this,' and I then sent out an email publicly, and I was like, 'Look we talk a big game here about equity and inclusion, this is a really easy thing we could change to be

more inclusive.' A lot of people just jumped on and were like, 'Yes! Inclusion,' and that was that. Some people said, 'There's always so much to do during common hour. I need that time to prep for class,' and I was like, 'Okay. That seems like a you problem that you can fix, managing your time better, but this is a structural issue for people who have children and need to go get those children because they don't have a wife to do it for them.' It actually required less work than I thought it would, and the vice chair was like, 'okay, we're just going to do this then.'

Danielle: [Moving her head back in surprise] So you got the faculty meeting times changed?

Amy: Yeah. I'm pretty outspoken and willing to say unpopular things and call people out. I have a great relationship with our president now. I think she likes that I push back on her, but on more than one occasion at faculty meetings, I have been like, 'She is doing this terrible thing. We should all be really upset about it,' and so I'm willing to go out on a limb and say those things, and usually when I do, I'll get a bunch of emails from people being like, 'I'm so glad that you said that. I support you,' and oftentimes these are emails coming from tenured faculty, so it's like, 'Why didn't you say something, then?' But it makes me concerned for people who are in my position, or who are marginalized in other ways within the institution, and who don't feel like they can say something, and like to what extent are they being run over and rundown and having to do all sorts of things that they don't have the bandwidth to do because they think they have to in order to keep their job.

Sonya: Right. That's been my experience. I barely have enough energy to eat healthy and take care of myself in addition to all of my work obligations. Never mind trying to pushback against meeting times.

Alex: Sonya, I think your perspective helps show how the pushing back you describe, Amy, is so valuable, especially to single moms. You're making changes through everyday language and actions to "alter the circumstances of everyday life" and "enact social change" (Cushman 12). It's like you're "deroutinizing" life in the academy to disrupt what has in some ways become accepted practice

(Cushman 13). The times of academic meetings seem like something that isn't generally given much consideration. There's a precedent of when they occur, and that's how things continue moving forward, but by calling out that academic meeting times don't work for everyone and exclude people depending on when and where they're scheduled, you're making a change that benefits more than just you. I also just want to go back for a minute to how you got that faculty meeting changed, Amy, and the way you used terms like 'diversity and inclusion.' It's interesting to me how powerful those words were in that context, but also not surprising since they're ubiquitous these days. You knew those words were "useful, would travel the furthest, and enable you to get your message through" (Ahmed 98). When the Vice-Chair Pro Tem didn't initially respond, it's like you knew you needed to change your rhetorical strategy. So you used an umbrella term—diversity and inclusion, that encompasses issues of "gender equity," to pushback and appeal to a broader audience than maybe if you had relied on your single mom identity alone (Mason, Wolfinger, Goulden 97). Again, I just feel like there's a lot of savviness and intelligence that goes into making these moves that isn't always recognized.

Amy: Well, I also am unafraid to speak out in my professional documents. For my fourth-year review, in my professional highlights document, I made a new category because the recommended categories are like research, teaching, committee service or something like that or professional development. I just added things in, like let me just list the things I've done that aren't committees but that helped students. I don't know if or how that will ever factor into the way I am evaluated for tenure but at least I know that it's there and people can see it if they want to.

Alex: Could you share what some of those added categories were?

Amy: I have it somewhere…I can find it… [Looking through files on her computer and across the screen] Tenure process. Here we go. Yeah. Okay, so I had publications, and then I also included research in progress because there are lots of things that I didn't get around to finishing. Under

conference presentations, I included, I had a number of students who gave presentations at conferences, and I had like set up time for them to practice with me, and I had looked over their submissions when they were applying to go to these conferences, so I included that there. I put down not just grants I received, but grants I had applied for. I put down times that I guest lectured in other people's classes because this will happen that people will want to sprinkle a little gay into their curriculum. It's very tokenizing, but I guess it's better than nothing, so someone will be like, 'Can you just come in and talk to my students about whatever?' I also wrote in my little narrative, that this was the most productive year of my academic career, and I did this all as a full-time single parent. I put that in there because I think it's important context for my life. It certainly does me no benefit to try to hide the fact that I have a kid because then the amount of work that I do in such limited time is invisible. I think what I accomplish becomes more impressive when you know that I'm not working after 4:30 pm or on weekends.

Alex: Well, and even more so compared to "the average faculty mother [who]," when you factor in all of the second shift work like cooking and cleaning and keeping your kid's life in order, "puts in a total of ninety-four hours a week" (Mason et al. 70). I guess what I'm trying to say is, you've really found a way to maximize use of the time you have. You're not working more hours, but you're still getting substantial work done. I also think it's interesting that rather than trying to conform to the categories they created for you in that faculty report, you decided to create new ones.

Amy: Exactly. As a single parent, I've developed a fierceness that I didn't have when I was married because it's just me and my daughter, and especially because my daughter is transgender, having to stand up for her has made it easier for me to stand up for myself. It's either do this or crumble, so I'm choosing to do this.

Amy's point reminds me of Katherine's experience withholding her emotions from her son because of how the Scout leader made her feel—rhetorical choices are shaped by our lives outside of the academy, our experiential knowledge. How we pushback in higher education and what we pushback on is deeply connected and tied to our material realities and exigencies of everyday life (Ronald and Ritchie 11-12). It's a type of feminist rhetorical practice in how we center the personal. Single moms are in a marginalized position, but it's that very position that allows us to pushback because we "see differently—and learn different things" (Reynolds 331). Our unique epistemology is a tool for developing "ethos and rhetorical authority," as we draw on our single mom experiences to work towards enacting social change, even in small ways, within higher education (ibid 331-332).

Alex: That's really powerful, Amy. I think for many of us, our kids and our lives outside of academia…[pausing to think] shape? Inform? I don't know what the word is I'm looking for, but they are connected to the action we take within it.

Kelly: Yeah. As single moms, we have a perspective that's really important and that's different. I had a single mom who reached out to me to ask what she should do because she was being treated poorly and feels like she doesn't belong, and I was like, 'We need moms to be researchers, especially you're doing qualitative research, and you're talking to people, you're talking to moms, and you're talking to families. You've got to be a person to be able to connect with other people, and if you're only a researcher and nothing else, I don't know that those people are always that great of qualitative researchers. I think that we need different kinds of people doing research, like different kinds of people in academia. Being a mom is part of who you are, and that's a good thing, that's an asset for you. I know that we go into these classes, and there's all these dudes who have done all of these randomized control trials, and everyone talks about how great they are because they have their own labs at blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, but their research is not the only research, and it's also not even the most important research. I know that sometimes in our program we feel that way because that's

how they're treated, and our research is treated as kind of, I don't know, like not like that, not prestigious[25], not great, but it's really important, and I think that being a mom is an asset,' and she said, 'That really changed by perspective on things because I was just basically feeling like I didn't belong here, and I shouldn't be here.' I think it's not just single moms that are feeling that way, but I think it's also moms who are married who are feeling that way because another mom who is married said a similar thing.

Tricia: I get that feeling of not belonging. My imposter system is on high, man. I always feel like I don't belong because I am so different, culturally, or at least in my experiences, than the traditional student. I am so nontraditional.

Erica: Yeah. I've been made to feel that way, too. When I go up for tenure, if the two tenured faculty members are still here, one of them has said, 'I will make sure you don't get tenure.' And so as a younger, female person with kids, I live kind of in a space being afraid that anything that I do wrong is going to be possible ammunition in that process, and so I never feel job security in any way. That's really scary as a single mom with kids, you know? I'm constantly questioning whether or not it's the right place for me, but I love my job. The politics of it become even more challenging when you layer on other identities. Like, I have the privilege of not being a person of color, who the system often takes even more advantage of. The power often lies with the people who need it the least. That as a single mom is pretty terrifying on a day-to-day basis.

Kelly: It is completely terrifying. I think about how I was almost pushed out of the program, but then, it was like I got to the point where faculty in my department were asking me to talk to other students because they [the faculty] never really believed I could succeed as a single mom, and now that I have, they want me to teach someone else how to. I would really, honestly prefer to teach

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[25]Qualitative research is seen as inferior to quantitative research in Kelly's program, so much so that she had to prove to her dissertation co-chair that she wanted to do qualitative research because she valued it not because it was "easy," as the co-chair claimed.

them how to better support single moms, rather than teaching [a single mom] how to navigate all their bullshit, but now that I'm in this position of being asked to take new students out to lunch, I feel like I have some leadership and ownership of the program. When people ask me what the program is like, I'm very honest with them. I tell them, 'If someone treats you like shit, then it's not because you're a bad person. This is not about you. You do belong here. This is about them. The way they're treating you is unacceptable, and it's not because there's something wrong with you. It's because there's something wrong with the culture of this department.' The culture of my department is like, 'It was hard for me, and it should be hard for you to.' My perspective is that when the department started treating me poorly, I thought I was the only one. I thought it was about me, and I thought I was unworthy, and I was a piece of crap, and I was very good at feeling that way having been at that time in the midst of a divorce with a narcisstic gas lighter. Then the more I started realizing this was happening to other people. I'm of the perspective that this was hard for me, and I don't want it to be hard for you, and so whatever I can do. I want to do what I can to help change the culture of the department because to me, I think that it is, and I know this is a word people don't want to use that much, I think that it's emotionally triggering and emotionally abusive for people who, who knows what the rest of their life has been like, and then they come here, and they're being treated this way. I don't want that to keep happening because to me the impact that it has on your self-esteem is not dissimilar from being in a toxic marriage, especially for people who academia is all they have. I mean, I just, mental health is really important. We can't keep treating people like shit. I don't know. It's not okay.

The was a silence from the single moms that indicated a sense of understanding in the space but also a palpable anger that people are continually "treated like shit." Kelly rested her chin on her fist, glanced up at the ceiling, and inhaled deeply. I thought about how her program had tried to

"divide, subordinate, and obscure" her identity as a single mom from that of a doctoral student, but she instead resisted this push for division and synthesized her identities to inform her "ways of knowing and being in the world" as she mentored her peers (Licona 11). Her position as a single mom mentoring incoming students put her in a third space location: "a space of opportunity for building coalitions" (ibid 16). Rather than parsing out her multiple subjectivities, Kelly uses all of them to inform the relationships she builds with her peers. As I looked at my screen, I could see the other single moms were starting to feel tired. Amy reached over to scratch the back of her dog, "a mutt" with black fur, curled up beside her on the couch. Katherine took a sip of her Starbucks latte—a treat for getting through her recent dental procedure that involved numbing the entire left side of her mouth. Danielle looked down at the paper in front of her with notes she had taken for the conversation, reminders of what she wanted to say. Julie glanced at her phone, sitting off camera, somewhere on her desk, books neatly stacked to her right, a whiteboard wiped clean behind her. Sonya took a sip of water, drawings her kids had done stuck with magnets to the fridge behind her. Kelly reached back and fidgeted with her hair, a clock hanging in the background, a red blanket draped over the back of her couch. I decided now would probably be a good time to wrap things up.

Alex: I can see that we're all feeling the drain that comes with video chatting for this long, so I want to wrap things up and thank you all so much for taking the time to talk through and share your experiences. It means a lot that you were willing to take this time, and I am so grateful. I'll take away so many things from this conversation, but as we ended, I think one thing I can't ignore is how our choices, our rhetorical practices if you will, are informed by our embodied knowledge that results from our "specific material conditions, lived experiences, positionalities, and/or standpoints" (Knoblauch 62). We have various experiences with colleagues, professors, ex-spouses, our jobs, our children, our other family members, and various other facets of our life that influence how we respond to different situations. What you've shared makes clear the role of embodied knowledge

and how in our choices, we "connect the personal to the larger social realm" (ibid 62). Thank you so much.

[Tricia and Erica say "good-bye" before hanging up, and the other single moms echo their response, while waving; the boxes disappear until I'm the last one to click the red circle and end the conversation].

Pushback and upfront rhetoric become necessary practices when academic institutions are not conducive to the lives of single moms. Such means of rhetorical work are not specific to single mom experiences—many academics find themselves in moments where they need to question or challenge what happens within their institutions, departments, and programs, but the context for single moms is what makes their rhetorical practice unique. They are being upfront about an identity that has traditionally been marginalized, and then pushing back from that position. This work is evident in how single moms bring their children to campus, make clear their boundaries and limits, make public their circumstances, and choose to disclose their single mom identity with decision makers. The exigency for this rhetoric comes from their institutional contexts and the experiences single moms have within them. Through these experiences, we see how single moms are "trying to transform institutions by challenging who they are for," and one-way institutions communicate who they are for is through the rhetoric of people within academia (Ahmed 110).

The rhetorical practices of single moms are tools to change institutions, even if those changes are slight. As described in chapter three, institutions are slow to change, but such change cannot happen without the continual and often invisible work of single mothers. When single moms engage in upfront and pushback rhetoric, they make choices about the visibility of their lives outside of academia; they take risks about who to trust and in what contexts; they make themselves vulnerable. In making these choices they may implement a rhetorical maneuver or find themselves in

a third space, where being *both* an academic *and* a single mother are stronger together than they are independent of one another (Licona 11).

In unifying these identities for rhetorical practices that can enact change, single moms' responses are often individual ones. Their critiques result in actions and changes that help them but do not necessarily reform the systems that single moms find themselves working against and within. However as shown in the following chapter, as well as the epilogue, we can see how parents, including single moms, especially during the pandemic, have come together to try and enact systemic and institutional change through collective action.

Chapter 6: Supporting Single Moms in Academia: Creating Institutional Structures and Systems

"If we really want to get to that place where academia is about expanding the intellect and the mind of our communities, understanding the world in a different way, and really educating students to think differently, we're gonna have to make some hard changes, and have a culture that accepts a lot of different people. We need those perspectives in academia, and right now, we don't have them. If we do, it's because someone has chosen to be in an antagonistic place, not because they belong there." -Kelly

"A lot of us single parents are one bad day away from disaster." -Julie

Headphones. Fully charged tablet. Crackers. Grapes. A full water bottle. Crayons. Blank paper. Coloring books. Three small containers of Playdoh. An extra change of clothes. A sandwich bag filled with Playdoh toys. One children's book. Pink blankie. I carefully placed all of these items into my daughter's small red and pink ladybug backpack, and shoved a worn looking cabbage patch doll with a recent haircut under my arm, as I prepared to pick her up from daycare and drive an hour to campus to listen to guest speaker, Jay Dolmage. The talk wasn't until 2:00, but I had decided to get Livy at 12:15 so that we would have plenty of time to find a space in the limited free parking areas, and make the slow walk uphill to campus. She was five, six months shy of starting kindergarten. Only a year before I had done the same routine to see Angela Davis at a nearby college only 20-minutes away in a banquet room that was standing room only by the time we arrived.

We wedged ourselves into a spot on the floor and sat "criss-cross applesauce" (good preparation for kindergarten); Livy lasted thirty minutes before she couldn't sit still anymore and had to go to the bathroom. She kept asking me, "When is she going to start singing?" Because when I explained to her that the talk was like a conference, she had thought I said, "concert." Once we left the packed banquet room, the idea of trying to weave our way back into the packed space felt overwhelming, so I decided to walk her around a newer building nearby filled with interesting art and fun lighting. As we slowly moved through the hallways, a woman came out of her office asking if we needed help finding something, asking why we were in the building in the first place. Feeling like I had got caught doing something I wasn't supposed to, I quickly stammered out that I was an

alumna of the school and had wanted to look at the new building to stretch our legs after catching a part of Davis's talk. I put up my private school ties as a shield to protect myself, as if to say, "See, we do belong here." The woman, seeming satisfied, went back into her glass office and closed the door.

When it was time to see Jay Dolmage speak, I remembered the experience I had seeing Angela Davis, remembered all of the work that had gone into organizing items to keep Livy happy, all of the energy that had gone into making sure she was comfortable, only to make it through a fraction of the talk and then feel a sense of shame afterwards. I had learned from that experience, and knew that for Dolmage, we would need to arrive early, find a comfortable seat, use the bathroom beforehand, and get acquainted with the space before it started to fill with people and faces unfamiliar to Livy. Jay Dolmage's talk was a much different experience from Angela Davis's. We found a seat near the end of a row and towards the back without a problem just in case we needed to make an early, discreet exit. We had plenty of time to get settled in, and many people smiled at Livy as they walked by. A fellow graduate student paused on her way to her seat to comment on how much she liked Livy's unicorn tumbler. As Livy sipped water out of the purple straw, the student pulled out her phone to reveal an elaborate unicorn case; Livy looked with admiration. During the talk, Livy was the only kid in the audience, and I felt grateful when Jay Dolmage reassured attendees that he wanted us to be comfortable, so if we needed to get up and move around, we should. I felt even more appreciative when he brought out a piece of construction paper with children's art on it, explaining that his kids had made this for him in support of the talk; they had even clipped some fur from the family dog and taped it to the corner. Livy smiled at this, and she listened to the talk for 15-minutes before asking me to help set-up her tablet so that she could play story creation games and complete math puzzles. I bring up these experiences for two reasons: 1. They reveal the work single parents put in to be active members of a campus community; the organizational and preparation skills they draw on to show up to activities that are important to

our professional and intellectual development. 2. They bring attention to how university policies and practices can shape the culture around parents in academic spaces.

The college where Angela Davis spoke is a small, private, liberal arts college, primarily an undergraduate institution with a small number of students. Family friendly policies and support are limited. For example, on-site childcare is non-existent, they offer a flexible spending account for dependent care but no dependent care stipends, and there are no designated lactation rooms on-campus. In contrast, Jay Dolmage's talk occurred at a large, private, R1 institution. Family friendly policies and support are developing and ongoing. There is, albeit limited, on-site childcare, they offer dependent care subsidies, and have designated lactation rooms across campus. This is a very small snapshot of the contrast in policies and practices at these two institutions, but they illustrate how the contrast can also shape the culture and attitudes towards families, particularly single parents with children. Neither event specified whether children were welcome, but my desire to attend the talks overrode my attention to who was or was not welcome in the space. Having attended various talks by guest speakers on campuses before, I decided the environment was one that could generally accommodate a child, so long as I made sure to be well-stocked with the necessary materials to keep her occupied and comfortable. I had contextual knowledge that informed my decisions, but the onus shouldn't be put entirely on single moms and caregivers in general to have this knowledge. What these experiences illustrate is how in the absence of family friendly policies and practices, there is an absence of inclusivity for single parents. To understand what policies and practices need to be developed and become the norm across higher education rather than the exception, we need to be having conversations with caregivers who have a range of identities. Single parents are just one starting point. In this chapter, I offer policy suggestions that surfaced as a result of my conversations with single moms, and end with how a single mom identity is an asset to higher education,

emphasizing the importance of developing policies and supportive systems and structures that give consideration to single moms and those with a range of marginalized identities.

Policies for Single Moms

Single moms need policies and practices within higher education that are designed with them in mind. As we saw in chapter three, single moms are resourceful in building systems of support when higher education fails to come through for them; however, such systems are temporary solutions to ongoing problems. Family friendly policies are important for the retention of faculty, staff, and students. Without such policies, caregivers, particularly women, find themselves vulnerable to feeling that they have no other choice but to leave academia (Mason et al. 96). This is especially the case for single moms, as survey participants shared—"I had to leave with ABD status due of lack of financial support," and "I lost a previous job in academia because I was a caregiver to a child with severe mental illness (my second son had then undiagnosed mental illness--we now know that it's bipolar disorder and he is doing well as a freshman in college)." Additionally, the single moms I interviewed shared similar feelings. Amy told me about how, "At least once a year I get to this moment of like I can't be an academic. I just can't cut it here. This is just not built for me," and both Erica and Kelly referred to their degrees in counseling as a back-up plan if academia didn't work out: "I'm fortunate that I have a practice-level license, and if worse comes to worse, I can go back to the practice of counseling," and "I'm in a unique position where if I for any reason had to quit my program, I'm in a field where I could very easily find employment. I'm not totally screwed if I have to quit my program. I don't want to. But I wouldn't be lost if I had to. I could get a job at any time." When I talked with Tricia, she described feeling like she was going to "fail or drop out of school almost every semester" only to "just try to shake it off and just push through and get through." As we saw in chapter four, Tricia also described experiencing high levels of imposter syndrome where she felt like "she didn't belong" because she is so nontraditional as a veteran and single mom. Now,

Tricia's head injury is impacting how she imagines her future career in academia. At a certain point, she will need to decide if she's "well enough to go back into academia" or if she will need to "just completely switch it up and start going off on [her] own and start entrepeunering." These women have left or think about leaving academia because the system is not designed for them. They don't aspire to leave academia but instead feel like they have no other option. The absence of policies and practices means that there isn't space for their single mom identities in their professional lives. But this attrition, this "leaky pipeline" is preventable. It can be repaired. While policies and practices are not a magical solution, they're a start to changing a culture that is historically situated with single, white, cishet, able-bodied men in mind (or married ones with wives at home to care for their children).

We also need to keep in mind that, as explained in chapter two, not all policies are created equal. Single mothers have unique needs and experiences that require policies that take into consideration those unique needs and experiences. This includes single mothers of color in academia (MOCA) (Cisneros et al.)—"Despite higher educational and so-called better economic status, the patriarchal/sexist, racialized, elitist, and anti-family traditions, cancel out academic advantages for single Black women with doctorate degrees, assuring multiple marginalities for them" (Terborg-Penn 145). In development of policies and practices to support single mothers, it's important to be attentive to Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (see introduction), recognizing that single mother is just one of many identities impacting a woman's experience and support needs. We also need to recognize that "*mother* does not automatically mean *white*" or cisgender, biological, heterosexual, able-bodied, or any other number of identity markers that are often prescribed as the default to a mothering identity (Austin 9). As policies and practices are developed, they need to be done in a way that includes a plethora of parenting perspectives, and takes into consideration individual and institutional contexts. In short, the best way to determine what policies and practices will be

beneficial to single moms at any institution is to talk to those single moms and make sure they are involved and heard in policy and practice development conversations.

More specifically, we can see this work being done at community colleges across the country. Education Design Lab began The Single Moms Success Design Challenge in 2019 with the goal of better supporting single moms and improving their degree attainment rate by 30%. In order to work towards this goal, the community colleges involved in the initiative prioritized including single moms in the conversations—"we root ourselves in users' experiences so we can approach the development of solutions through the lens of their needs, motivations, and behaviors" ("Updates from the Field: Building Understanding"). They held focus group conversations with single moms, distributed surveys, and had a gallery walk for stakeholders featuring quotes from single moms in academia. The outcomes of this are evident at Delgado Community College, where they have developed supports like scholarships and childcare vouchers specifically for single mother learners, a single moms' online community through the college app, flexible asynchronous online courses, specific career guidance and professional support, and transportation assistance, among others ("Through the Voices of Learners: A Spotlight on Delgado Community College's Single Moms Success Pilot"). This example shows how including single moms in policy conversations can lead to concrete action and initiatives that benefit them. Such a model can be extended beyond Delgado by creating university-wide committees at other institutions comprised of various stakeholders, including single moms. With the onset of the pandemic, some colleges and universities created Caregiving Task Forces, which were groups of faculty, staff, and other stakeholders focused on proposing initiatives to better support caregivers in higher education (see epilogue). At University of Washington, the caregiver task force developed two surveys: one that was circulated by Human Resources to all employees and graduate students, and a second directed towards all managers ("COVID-19 Caregiver Task Force Survey Results"). While caregiving task forces like this one were not specifically focused on single moms,

they provide a model for how university-wide initiatives can be developed to focus specifically on caregiving needs.

Policies that are tailored towards single moms have benefits that extend far beyond them. The suggestions in this chapter add to an already existing conversation[26] and reveal how, despite the progress that has been made, certain issues and challenges persist in academia and are especially felt by single mothers. The policies and practices below are organized into three categories of support: Financial, Professional, and Childcare. These categories reflect the needs single moms expressed in chapter three related to their primary challenges of financial support, time, second shift, and childcare. While financial, professional, and childcare are divided into three separate categories, they are not mutually exclusive. Oftentimes, a policy in one can benefit the others. We can see this in how childcare subsidies, which are a financial policy, can benefit single parents' childcare needs. The suggestions below are also not all-encompassing. They're a continuation of an ongoing conversation about how to shift towards making higher education family-friendly towards a range of familial structures.

Financial Support

In the second year of my graduate program, I learned that my school offered dependent care subsidies to graduate students with children under age six. My daughter was four at the time, and I was trying to survive off an income that put me at the federal poverty level[27]. To say I was relieved to be eligible for $1,000 to help offset the cost of her childcare expenses would be an

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[26] See Duquaine-Watson's appendix in *Mothering by Degrees: Single Mothers and the Pursuit of Postsecondary Education,* Hanson et. al.'s "(Re)Producing (E)Motions: Motherhood, Academic Spaces, and Neoliberal Times," and Hanson's "Career Killer Survival Kit: Centering Single Mom Perspectives in Composition and Rhetoric." See Nora et al.'s "Surviving Sexism to Inspire Change: Stories and reflections from Mothers on the Tenure Track" in *Surviving Sexism in Academia: Strategies for Feminist Leadership;* Mason et al.'s "Toward a Better Model" in *Do Babies Matter? Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower;* Ward and Wolf-Wendel's "Conclusions, Recommendations, and Parting Thoughts" in *Academic Motherhood: How Faculty Manage Work and Family*.

[27] This also speaks to the need to pay graduate students a living wage.

understatement. Because of that dependent care subsidy, for a brief period of time, the part of my mind constantly fixated on how much money I didn't have in my bank account could rest. I could pay for her childcare expenses and my rent for a month; it was something. Dependent care subsidies or childcare grants for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty and staff are one way that colleges and universities can offer financial support to families. Such means of support are often based on the following criteria: financial need—families who make up to a certain dollar amount are eligible and may be asked to provide a copy of their tax return, statement of earnings from employer, or other proof of income; ages of children—while some colleges and universities award subsidies and grants for children up to age 6, others award such support for dependents up to age 18 and/or also have older age limits for children with disabilities; affiliation with the university—students may need to prove enrollment. In some cases, colleges and universities also require that a spouse or partner be active outside of the home with exceptions granted due to visa status and ability. Dependent caregivers are then awarded a fixed amount, anywhere from $400 a quarter to $10,000 a year (University of Washington Tacoma and University of California, Berkeley). Many schools offer childcare subsidies, with the University of California system offering some excellent models. Additionally, schools like Arizona State University, Cornell, Northwestern, Oregon State University, Portland State University, Stanford, Syracuse, University of Arizona, UC Berkeley, the University of Chicago, University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, University of Washington, and Yale, among others offer examples of financial support for childcare to graduate students (See Table 1). Brown, Cornell, New York, Pepperdine, Princeton, Stanford, Swarthmore, and Syracuse University are all examples of schools that offer dependent care subsidies for faculty and staff (See Table 2). In providing these subsidies, it's important to keep in mind that childcare needs do not end once children reach school age, and that dependent care needs could extend beyond children and include students, faculty, and staff with carework responsibilities (see UC, San

Diego in Table 3 for an example of language inclusive of caregiving needs beyond those with

children).

Table 1: Childcare Funding Support for Graduate Students

School	Funding Source Title	Amount	Range of Dependent Coverage
Cornell University	Student-Parent Dependent Care Grant	A maximum of $12,500 per household per academic year (August 2020-June 2021)	From birth to high school graduation.
Northwestern University	The Graduate School (TGS) Graduate Student Childcare Grant	$2,500 for one child; $5,000 for two children per year ("TGS Graduate Student Childcare Grant").	From birth to age 13.
Oregon State University	Student Childcare Assistance	Up to 50% of child care expenses per term ("Student Financial Resources").	Not specified; dependents need to be enrolled in child care to be eligible.
Portland State University	Jim Sells Childcare Subsidy	"Between 10-50% of the cost of child care, depending on the student's financial need" ("Jim Sells Childcare Subsidy").	From birth to age 17.
Stanford University	Graduate Family Grant Program	From $1,000 to $15,000 per academic year depending on "family financial circumstances" ("2020-2021 Graduate Family Grant Program Guidelines" 1).	All legal dependents, with priority given to families with children under 10 years of age.
Syracuse University	Childcare Subsidy	$1,000 per child with a maximum of $2,000 per family per academic year.	From birth to age 6.
University of Arizona	UA Childcare Choice	$1,000 per semester.	From birth to age 12.
University of California-Berkeley	Graduate Division Student Parent Grant	$10,000 per year ($5,000 per academic term).	From birth to age 18.
The University of Chicago	PhD Child Care Stipend	$2,000 per year	From birth to age 10.
University of Michigan	Child Care Subsidy	Up to $3,028 for one child; up to $4,439 for two children; up to $5,852 for three or more children, all per term ("Child Care Subsidy").	From birth to age 12, or "dependent child(ren) who have special needs under the age of 19" ("Child Care Subsidy").
University of Pennsylvania	The Family Grant	$2,500 for one child per semester; $1,250 for additional children with a maximum of $5,000 per family per semester.	From birth to age 18.

University of Washington, Tacoma	The Childcare Assistance Program	$400-$600 per quarter	From birth to 12 years and 11 months.
Yale University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences	Ph.D. Student Family Support	An annual subsidy of $4,600 per academic year for children under the age of 18; $1,000 for each additional child under the age of 6.	From birth to age 18.

Table 2: Childcare Funding Support for Faculty and Staff

School	Funding Source Title	Amount	Range of Dependent Coverage
Brown University	Child Care Subsidy	A maximum of $1,000 to $4,000 per year.	From birth to age 6. This was adjusted from January 1-June 30, 2021 to include dependents up to 6th grade ("Child Care Subsidy for Faculty, Staff, and Postdoctoral Research Associates").
Cornell University	Child Care Grant	A maximum of $5,000 for one year (untaxed); however, if applicants "experience a decrease in household income or an increase in number of dependents after the Fall application," they can apply again in January for up to an additional $5,000 (taxed) ("Cornell Child Care Grant FAQ").	From birth to age 13, as well as "older children with disabilities who need care" ("Cornell Child Care Grant FAQ").
New York University (offers two separate means of support for faculty and staff)	• Child Care Fund for Faculty (CCFF) Subsidy Program • Child Care Subsidy Program for Office and Clerical and Laboratory and Technical Staff	• CCFF: Up to $3,500 per child with a maximum of $5,000. • "Award amounts are based on the number of eligible applicants received and vary from year to year" ("Work-Family Child Supports").	• CCFF: 3 years of age or younger. • Birth to age 12.
Pepperdine University	Child Care Subsidy Grant Program	Up to $5,000 per academic year.	From birth to age 12.
Princeton University	Employee Child Care Assistance Program (ECCAP)	Up to $8,000 per academic year, but this varies depending on	"Prekindergarten-aged children" ("Employee Child Care Assistance Program").

		number of children and household income.	
Stanford University	Childcare Subsidy Grant Program (CCSG)	Up to $10,000 a year (Primeau and Vasquez).	From birth to age 10.
Swarthmore University	Child Care Subsidy Grant Program	$3,000 per year.	From birth to age 6; "Families with a child (regardless of age) with a documented disability are also eligible to apply" ("Swarthmore Subsidy Grant Program 2021").
Syracuse University	Dependent Care Subsidy Program	$3,000 per year, but the eligible amount decreases for children ages 6-12 years of age	From birth to age 12, or "for an adult or disabled dependent" ("Dependent Care Subsidy Program").

In addition to offering childcare subsidies and grants to cover ongoing, regular childcare expenses, colleges and universities should offer childcare expense reimbursement and/or a dependent care professional travel grant program to offset expenses associated with "dependent care while traveling for work activities such as attending professional conferences and workshops or conducting research" (Cobb). As Sonja Thomas describes in chapter two, the challenges of single parenting are especially felt when travelling for conferences and invited lectures. While this is a challenge for any parent, the challenge is compounded by the nature of academia often requiring faculty to relocate for their jobs away from family, which Dr. Thomas referenced. Such relocation means living in an area without nearby family or friends to care for children overnight when travelling out of town for professional events. This challenge of relocating away from families surfaced in conversations I had with single moms (see Sonya in Chapter Five). One survey respondent wrote, "I'm new to the area. They have a great daycare setup, and babysitters for nights out, but no one I trust to stay overnight." Many single moms in the survey explained how they are unable to travel for conferences because of childcare challenges, and this was experienced across ranks, academic institutions, and disciplines, as Erica explained, "[Single moms] are much more financially stressed then our partnered counterparts, and so it might cost me extra to go to a conference, and that's not a reimbursable expense." Providing funding to offset childcare costs

associated with travel for research, presentations, and invited talks can help remove systemic and

structural limitations that prevent single moms from participating. Schools that offer this type of

funding include but are not limited to Stanford, Yale, Purdue's College of Engineering, University of

Chicago, University of California, San Diego, and Northwestern (See Table 3).

Table 3: Dependent Care Funding for Travel for Faculty

School	Funding Title	Amount	Eligibility
Stanford University	Junior Faculty Dependent Care Travel Grant Program	A maximum of $1,000 per year.	• Awarded to "untenured assistant and untenured associate professors in the tenure line and University Medical Line" and "Non-tenure line faculty who do not have continuing appointments." • "Awards may be used for child or adult dependent care" ("Junior Faculty Dependent Care Travel Grant Program").
Yale University	Anne Coffin Hanson Faculty Support Fund	A maximum of $1,000 per year.	Available to "postdoctoral associates and ladder faculty in the ranks of assistant and associate professor on term (and, in special circumstances to other faculty), in all schools of the University who travel to participate in a conference or conduct short-term research" ("Child Care Support for Professional Travel").
Purdue's College of Engineering	Childcare Expense Reimbursement for Travel (CERT)	A maximum of $1,000 per year.	• "Faculty members with primary appointments in the College of Engineering, including tenured, tenure track, professors of engineering practice, and research professors who are single caregivers or whose spouse/partner is not available to provide care during the period of Eligible travel." • Children must be "under 6 years of age at the time of travel" ("Childcare Expense Reimbursement for Travel (CERT)").
University of Chicago	Dependent Care Professional Travel Grant	A maximum of $1,000 per year.	Available to "assistant professors, associate professors, and professors" to cover dependent care related expenses incurred for work related activities like conferences, workshops, or conducting research ("Dependent Care Professional Travel Grant Program").
Northwestern University	Dependent Care Professional Travel Grant	A maximum of $1,000 per year.	Available to full-time faculty to cover child or adult dependent care expenses incurred for "extra dependent care at home while traveling; on-site dependent care while at a conference or meeting; transportation of dependent and/or caregiver to conference or meeting location…it is not intended to support costs incurred during travel for research or while on University business" ("Dependent Care Professional Development Grant").
University of California, San Diego	Dependent Care Travel Grant Program (DCTG)	A maximum of $2,500 per year.	Awarded to "Senate Faculty at all ranks" with "a healthy child (≤12 years) …or a child/adolescent (≤ 18 years) who is physically or mentally disabled, requires assistance with daily activities…or a disabled adult/elder (child, spouse, parent, parent-in-law or grandparent) who spends at least eight hours

			every day in the applicant's home and for whom the applicant has arriving responsibility" ("Dependent Care Travel Grant Guidelines").

Departments could also allow faculty and graduate students to use their research and/or travel funds to help cover the costs of childcare. The single moms throughout this project have shown how childcare is a research related expense—they coordinate childcare to attend meetings, complete book projects, write grant applications, present at conferences, and conduct interviews, among other research-related activities. Allocating funding to help offset these expenses would show how higher education recognizes the importance of childcare to complete academic work.

In addition to offering grants and subsidies for dependent care, colleges and universities should prioritize awarding funding opportunities based on need and merit. Single moms want to be competitive; they want to publish and present just like their partnered and/or childless by choice or circumstances colleagues. However, if they cannot receive support to participate in the activities that make them competitive, they are continually playing a game of catch-up, as one single mom wrote, "I feel like I am always putting out fires and dealing with crises. Never getting ahead" and another, "I have to keep up and compete with peers who have vastly more time." If financial support is based primarily on merit, single moms may find themselves regularly denied because they haven't had the time or financial resources to meet the markers necessary for eligibility like publications. However, if need is also a factor, single moms along with other faculty and students who have been ineligible for certain opportunities due to any number of life circumstances, can have an increased chance of receiving the support they need to be competitive.

Financial support has the potential to level the playing field for single moms who are struggling to keep up and remain competitive with peers who have access to different resources; it also helps other dependent caregivers who may not be single parents, but are caring for a family member with a disability or an elderly parent. In addition to these suggestions, colleges and universities also need

to have policies around financial compensation for obligations that require faculty to "serve beyond normal 'business hours'" (single mom survey participant). We saw in Erica's experience (chapter three) how single moms' may ask for this support, be denied, and then piece together their own solutions, but this work should not be on the individual. Single moms should not be expected to pay for childcare expenses beyond regular business hours to do additional work, as is often the norm in higher education for academics who work or travel on evenings and weekends. While childcare is typically offered Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., there is an understanding in academia that professional obligations, such as training sessions, orientations, professional networking events, and conferences happen beyond those days and times. In addition, there needs to be an understanding that childcare related costs continue even as children age out of daycare. If colleges and universities are truly committed to inclusive practices, then they will work to offer systemic and structural solutions whose benefits extend far beyond the immediate recipients.

Professional Development Support[28]

Graduate and Undergraduate Students

Professional development support refers to how departments, programs, and academic institutions as a whole can support single moms in their academic pursuits; oftentimes, the kind of work that is tied to tenure and promotion—service, publishing, and teaching. Such support begins at the graduate level. In my own experience, I have benefited from faculty developing and inviting me to present on conference panels and at departmental events, asking me to be a guest lecturer in their classes, and inviting me to be a collaborative author. What's even more important is that they not only invited me, they acknowledged my caregiving needs, encouraging me to bring my daughter, offering flexible deadlines to submit writing, and regularly checking in to see how they could help

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[28] Professional Development Support is divided into two sections to reflect the unique needs of graduate students versus tenure-track and tenured faculty; this also reflects the responses of survey and interview participants.

with my academic and personal needs. As mentioned in chapter one, graduate student mothers are at an extremely high rate of attrition, and single graduate mothers are even more so, which strengthens the case for supporting them. One way to be supportive is through having clear and specific mentoring guidelines. Oftentimes, mentoring is seen as an organic thing that happens, left to individual faculty members and students to cultivate; however, this runs the risk of disregarding certain students, particularly those who may be less visible and present on campus due to material circumstances and lived experiences. Graduate departments and programs[29] should be specific about what is expected of faculty mentors, particularly dissertation chairs or directors. Additionally, it is essential that this mentoring work be valued and rewarded in review and promotion. Oftentimes, this mentorship disproportionately falls on women and BIPOC faculty, without the recognition it deserves. This can be seen in how all of the faculty support I mention above came from women, all mothers, and two of whom are single moms. As the chart below demonstrates, mentoring, when done well, is substantial work. The ability of faculty to mentor graduate students should be taken into consideration not only in the tenure and review process, but also in hiring decisions. These expectations should be shared with faculty and students. For example, if we think of mentorship in terms of academia more broadly, we might conceive of faculty mentors providing support to graduate students in the areas of research, teaching, and scholarship as follows:

Table 4: Faculty Guide for Mentoring Graduate Students

Research, Teaching, and Scholarship	Prioritize meeting and checking in with mentees once a month
	Support community building efforts within the program; help mentees network with scholars that have relevant interests, and foster relationships with mentees' peers
Teaching	Invite mentees to be guest speakers in classes
	Review mentees' teaching materials and offer feedback
	Observe mentees' courses once per semester and meet with mentees afterwards to debrief and offer feedback

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[29] As a graduate student in Composition and Rhetoric, I am speaking to expectations from this perspective. While I am also drawing on the experiences of Kelly and Tricia, graduate students outside of the Humanities, I'm limited in what extent I can speak to support for graduate students in STEM and the Social Sciences.

Scholarship	Invite mentees to present on a panel at a minimum of one conference during their graduate program
	Offer ongoing support to mentees through the drafting, submission, and revision of a scholarly publication (this could also include inviting a mentee to co-author)
	Regularly reach out to mentees about possible opportunities that may benefit them professionally (fellowships, grants, CFPs, scholarships, jobs, post-docs, etc.).
	Send mentees links to information about recently published scholarship that may be of interest and/or relevant to their work
Service	Offer insight and support to mentees about serving on committees, as well as professional organizations in their field/discipline
	Share potential service opportunities with mentees that take into consideration their lived experiences and professional interests

It's important to emphasize that for BIPOC single mother graduate students, mentoring needs to be attentive to their lived experiences and realities. In other words, "While white graduate students and their minoritized peers are similar in terms of their capacity and capability, their journeys are unique due to 'intervening effects of racism,' (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2008, p. 5)" (Boyce 354). Ayesha S. Boyce's article "Strategies for Mentoring and Advising Evaluation Graduate Students of Color," is a helpful starting point for understanding how to mentor "historically minoritized ethnic groups" (351). She offers five specific strategies drawing on the tenants of CRT. While some of these strategies are similar to those described in Table 4, they also take into consideration the importance of an individualized approach. For example, mentors should be mindful about when and how they check-in with BIPOC graduate students, creating opportunities "for students to express their feelings, and if they choose, be vulnerable and open about the stressors of simply being a person of colour in a world with white supremacy woven into its very fabric" (Boyce 355). Boyce describes how important this type of work is in experiencing "vicarious trauma" at a time when images and videos of traumatic events are ubiquitous on social media (355). In supporting networking opportunities, mentors should be mindful of creating connections with "those with similar backgrounds," and they can also work to avoid scheduling important deadlines on "dates associated with holidays and events students observe" (Boyce 356). In addition to being

antiracist, Boyce suggest mentors provide "microvalidations," giving praise in public and "raising concerns in private" (357). Such an approach helps counteract the ongoing microaggressions BIPOC students face. If departments and programs cannot offer this type of support to graduate students, then they need to re-evaluate their student-faculty ratio and prioritize having enough faculty to support their graduate students with a range of identities throughout their time in the program.

Tricia's experience reveals how mentorship can drop-off when faculty don't know how or choose not to support a student who becomes disabled. Katherine's experience shows how a dissertation chair who may share a similar life experience may not be the best mentor and cause a graduate student to feel shamed because of their identity. Kelly's experience shows how faculty mentors can have an adverse impact on a student's publication and presentation record. Single moms are already dealing with challenges to professional development due to their material circumstances and lived realities, as well as their embodied experiences; good faculty mentorship can help minimize the additional obstacles single mom graduate students encounter by fostering their paths to successful publications and conference presentations and facilitating a timely path to degree completion. Such a positive impact is evident in Julie's experience, where her mentor was understanding of her life circumstances and met Julie where she was at any given time in her dissertation process; this included the opportunity to shift to part-time status if needed (which Julie never did but "it was good to know the option was there") without losing one's place in the program. However, Julie mentioned some inflexibility with deadlines in her program—if a student didn't meet the deadlines, the student could be kicked out. Graduate departments and programs should be flexible in their deadlines, working with graduate students on dates related to comprehensive exams, as well as prospectus and dissertation defenses that are feasible and limit the attrition of graduate students. If nothing else, faculty mentors should be mindful of building rapport

with their mentees so that they can have an honest and open relationship where graduate students are able to communicate their needs and professional goals[30].

Another means of professional development support that would benefit single mom students is a student success program. Danielle described this as a program that would offer specialized classes, as she explained: "I am dreading when I have to take my science courses (which I can only take one at a time otherwise it would be academic suicide), but if you offer Bio II the seminar portion as an online course and then you only have to be on campus for the lab portion with reasonable hours that could work." In other words, develop classes at times and in modes that work for single parents, and ensure that academic advisors are familiar with and attentive to the constraints and needs of single parenting students by making such knowledge a regular part of their training and orientation. Relatedly, include syllabus policies that take into consideration caregivers' constraints and needs. For example, University of Minnesota has a policy that students cannot be penalized for absence due to "illness, physical or mental, of the student or a student's dependent" (Grotjohn and Starry); Dr. Melissa Cheyney at Oregon State University has a syllabus policy "on children in class" (see Figure 1) where she emphasizes the importance of expecting children to be present and then offers guidance for including parents of children with a range of ages. Oftentimes, some version of student parent support like what Danielle describes can be found in student parent help centers, like those at UC Berkeley, University of Minnesota, and Michigan State University.

Sample Syllabus Policy for Caregivers
Policy on Children in Class: It is my belief that if we want women in academia, that we should also expect children to be present in some form. Currently, the university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here

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[30] While I have less experience with mentorship of junior faculty and this is something research participants did not speak to, I think that approaches similar to those taken by faculty of graduate students would be effective—having a mentorship program in place, specifying expectations of mentors and mentees, and building rapport to support mentees in meeting their goals. It is also essential that this work be valued and rewarded for tenure and promotion (see Chapter two).

is thus, a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff and faculty parents.

1) All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary to support the breastfeeding relationship. Because not all women can pump sufficient milk, and not all babies will take a bottle reliably, I never want students to feel like they have to choose between feeding their baby and continuing their education. You and your nursing baby are welcome in class anytime.

2) For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to choose between missing class to stay home with a child and leaving him or her with someone you or the child does not feel comfortable with. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.

3) I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.

4) In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met. Non-parents in the class, please reserve seats near the door for your parenting classmates.

5) Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have *finally* gone to sleep. The struggles of balancing school, childcare and often another job are exhausting! I hope that you will feel comfortable disclosing your student-parent status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all student in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance. Thank you for the diversity you bring to our classroom!

Figure 1: *Dr. Melissa Cheyney's policy for students with children from Oregon State University's "Family Friendly Syllabi Examples."*

Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

"I don't have time for your bs tenure games," Erica said as she described the inconsistencies between the tenure requirements listed on paper and those put into practice. She explained how the people on the committee have a substantial amount of power in the evaluation process: "There's these expectations that are kind of generally stated, and then what happens in the nitty-gritty of it is

left up to interpretation, and that has been a little bit unnerving and frustrating for me. I'm deciding what my next move is based on what is written on paper. I don't have time to fix something what isn't written anywhere." The inconsistencies Erica has experienced in her review process could be solved through an emphasis on transparency, clarity, and consistency in tenure and promotion expectations and evaluation procedures. The importance of this is evidenced in AAUP's "Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation" where one of the first sentences is, "Institutions should ensure that their stated criteria for tenure match the criteria that, in actual practice, the institutions apply" (3). This sentiment is echoed in *Academic Motherhood: How Faculty Manage Work and Family*—"The tenure process is known for its ambiguity" (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 217). In other words, there is an understanding of the challenges of the tenure process as Erica describes them, and it's evident that these challenges have occurred for years, which makes addressing them especially important. For single parents who lack time and feel the precarity of their positions, especially when they are the sole financial support for their family, it is essential to have policies in place that make tenure requirements and review processes clear, specific, and consistent. There need to be regular conversations and evaluations within departments about tenure and promotion criteria and the application of that criteria through the mentoring process. Faculty should be given the opportunity to provide honest input about their tenure and review experience without fear of retaliation[31].

Related to tenure review, single moms would benefit from an expanded definition of what is recognized and counted as valuable labor. As we saw with Amy, single moms can spend substantial time applying for grants and other opportunities, but those opportunities may not always pan out, and as with Amy's experience, the success of such applications is not always dependent on the

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[31] I acknowledge that I am writing about this from my positionality as a graduate student who has never held a tenure-track position. My research revealed that tenure and promotion review criteria need to be regularly evaluated and reviewed to ensure consistency with what is written on paper, as well as across candidates. Additionally, academia would benefit from future research focused on parents' experiences (especially single moms) with tenure and promotion.

applicant (chapter four). However, this lack of success does not equal a lack of productivity. Single moms also provide support that is unique to their identities and experiences but often does not have a designated space on performance reviews and/or evaluations, like Erica offering her office as a pumping space to a nursing mom, Kelly offering guidance to students who have come to her expressing mental health challenges including suicidal thoughts and panic attacks, Amy providing support to trans students, Katherine offering support to a single parent colleague, saying, "Call me when I'm on campus for coffee if you feel like you just had a bad day with the kids the day before and weren't the mom you wanted to be; we'll just have a coffee for half an hour and talk it out," and Julie volunteering advice and support for women in her PhD program going through divorce; as described in chapter four, these actions maintain academic institutions, but they aren't recognized, and they should be. Annual reviews and reports should designate space for what has been previously thought of as "invisible labor," and this space should be weighted equally in the evaluation process.

The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as Nathalie Ségeral's description of her work in Australia make evident the flexibility of review criteria. Ségeral described how in Australia, there is space in Tenure and Review materials to account for care responsibilities (see Chapter Two). With the COVID-19 pandemic, some schools and universities encouraged tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty to include COVID-19 impact statements in their promotion and review materials that "contextualize the faculty member's performance and contributions with the impact of COVID as a reference point. The statement briefly describes the effects the pandemic has had on faculty professional opportunities and, accordingly, its impact on productivity, performance, and trajectory" (University of Connecticut "COVID Impact Statements Guidance"). For many colleges and universities, such statements were seen as a way to support "faculty who are members of groups that have historically faced greater obstacles to advancement due to racism, sexism, and other discriminatory factors" (Virginia Tech "Adaptations to Promotion and/or Tenure Processes Due to

COVID-19"). These "greater obstacles to advancement" exist regardless of a pandemic; the pandemic simply exacerbates them. Therefore, faculty and staff who submit materials for review should be given the opportunity to account for not only the contextual factors in their lives that shape their work but also their invisible labor. Such labor impacts retention, as well as the mental, emotional, and physical health of campus community members. This should (and needs to) be a practice that is normalized beyond the pandemic.

Collaborative work should also be rewarded and incentivized, particularly as it relates to published scholarship. As described in chapter three, single moms benefit from working collaboratively, but such work is unevenly valued across disciplines. Supporting and encouraging collaborative work allows single moms to have more opportunities for publishing, while also building relationships across departments and institutions. Weighing collaborative scholarship equally to sole-authored publications in the tenure and review process also implies a recognition of the unique skills and labor required of such work.

There is an understanding in academia that it is a job with flexibility; oftentimes, this flexibility is seen as a blessing, but there are ways in which the boundlessness of it can feel like a curse. Academia needs to be better about supporting, recognizing, and normalizing boundaries. Amy explained to me that one change she would like to see is academia, "Really enforcing the idea that you shouldn't work more than 40-hours a week. There is this expectation that you're going to work 60-hours a week. Some of us can't do it, but none of us should be expected to do it. It's ridiculous!" Erica shares this perspective: "We need a system that says you can have a life outside of this and sometimes that gets in the way, and you still have to do your job. I don't necessarily know that we have a system that supports boundaries very well. This is a systemic issue." Julie and Amy both shared how they create their own boundaries around when they do work in chapters three and five, but this boundary creation is so innovative that Julie presents on it at conferences, and when Erica

tried to create boundaries related to email, explaining that she would not respond immediately but could be reached via phone for time sensitive matters, she was reprimanded for it by her Chair and told, "Your desire to do this is not my responsibility." Single moms in the survey recognized this challenge as well, "It's impossible to get anything done evenings or weekends because I have my kid full-time. But it's also impossible to meet all of the teaching, grading, service, and research requirements a TT job requires in 40 hours a week" and "My contract is for 45 hrs a week, which means I spend about 6 hrs at work M-F and scramble to fit in the other 15 hrs (despite knowing my colleagues don't really abide by this). I want to have a schedule where I can work regular hours, with many uninterrupted, and have free time where I don't think about work and can enjoy spending time with my kid," and "Small liberal arts colleges are demanding more time and effort from their faculty to survive the current academic market (time in the evenings and weekends), time and effort that generally require more on-campus activity (especially after 4:30 pm), not to mention even more contact with campus in the evenings via e-mail, or time spent with students over the summer (via e-mail, Facebook, etc. Yes, they ask this of us)." One small way departments and programs can have policies that support boundaries is by normalizing not sending or responding to emails after 6 pm or on weekends, except in cases of emergency. They can also ensure that when responsibilities are required outside of business hours, they are fairly distributed and there are a variety of ways faculty can participate. For example, if a faculty member can't be physically present, allowing them to attend virtually or develop print materials for the event. After hours events could also be made family-friendly, as I described in the opening to this chapter.
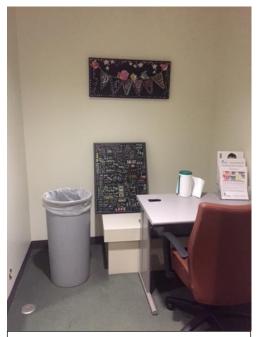
Flexibility in meeting participation would ease the after-hours burden on single parents as well and help reinforce boundaries. Participants should be given the option to virtually attend, and all meetings should be recorded so that if something comes up and someone is unable to attend, they can still see what was discussed in the meeting. While the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed

how possible this is, it needs to become the norm, not just a band aid solution applied during a pandemic. For single moms, scheduling is a substantial challenge— "I schedule my classes early in the day, which works best for me. However, committee meetings, etc. are often scheduled late in the day (so that they end at the 5:00 'end of workday' cutoff)," and "Although my current department is very supportive of academic moms and dads (and caregivers in general), our dept. meetings and committee meetings are at a very inconvenient time for people who need to pick up children from school or daycare." In addition to having the option of virtual attendance, departments, programs, and institutions might also have meetings during a common hour, like Amy's institution (see chapter five). Ultimately, what is important is keeping in-person work obligations during business hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and when possible, during school hours (often 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.). If this is not possible, allow remote participation, record meetings, and/or offer multiple meeting times. Such a rethinking of scheduling and participation should be extended to conferences and lectures—the shift to virtual conferences proved beneficial for many caregivers who could record their presentations ahead of time, as well as watch prerecorded presentations as their schedule allowed.

Dependent Care Support

When I spoke with Kelly, she shared a concern she had for parents of infants—a lack of lactation rooms within her college: "A colleague of mine, who's a physical therapist, she had a baby in the middle of the program. She's in a supportive marriage, so it's a little bit of a different situation, but we have a distance learning option for a lot of our core classes, and she was driving in from about an hour and a half away to come to classes. She told the Title IX office, 'I need a place to pump while I'm on campus,' and they said, 'Well, we don't really have any place. Why don't you just attend via distance?' She explained that she didn't want to attend via distance but instead wanted to come to campus, and they told her, 'It would probably be better for you to just attend via distance.'" While the Patient protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires employers to "provide a
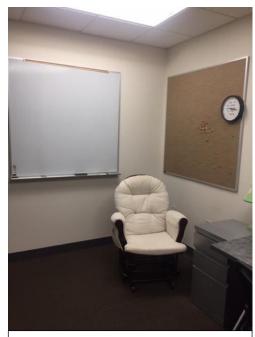
private, nonbathroom space to express human milk," this does not necessarily mean that there are designated lactation rooms or that the spaces are easily accessible for nursing parents, especially on large university campuses, like where Kelly is (Sturtevant et. al. 1). Additionally, "breastfeeding people who return to school [after giving birth] are not protected by law regarding their need to express milk" (Sturtevant et. al. 1). This means that universities and colleges need to put in a concerted effort to support nursing students, faculty, and staff. This includes not only having multiple lactation rooms across campus to provide options for those needing a conveniently located space, but also ensuring that the lactation rooms are regularly and properly cleaned and maintained. In a 2019 survey of the lactation rooms at my university, I found an inconsistency between what the website stated the rooms had (paper towels, disinfectant wipes, a white noise machine) and what was there, making it important to have someone who regularly checks and restocks the supplies of these

Figure 2: *Lactation Room in Social Sciences Building*

Figure 3: *Lactation Room in STEM Building*

Figure 4: *Another angle of the lactation Room in STEM Building*

rooms. As seen in the images above and below, the lactation rooms have a range of amenities depending on the location on campus. Figure 2 is from an academic building housing Social Science

Figure 5: *Lactation Room in Humanities Building*

Figure 56 *Another angle of the lactation Room in Humanities Building*

disciplines, as the image shows there was no hand sanitizer or paper towels when I visited; the lighting was also fairly dim; Figures 3 and 4 are from an academic building housing STEM disciplines, as the images show there were no paper towels, hand sanitizer, or wipes in this room when I visited; Figures 5 and 6 are from an academic building housing Humanities disciplines; while there were no sanitizing wipes, the space did have a working sink, as well as fully stocked hand soap and paper towels.

A reservation system is also helpful so that the rooms are vacant when parents need them. Additionally, faculty, staff, and students need to be educated about where the rooms are located and how to access them. Information should be easily findable on college and university websites; this could be on the human resources page, or a page dedicated to family-friendliness.

In addition to lactation rooms, colleges and universities need to have parental leave policies for graduate students who are often employed by colleges and universities as teaching assistants without the same benefits as faculty and staff employees. While FMLA and other state-wide family-leave policies exist, these policies are limited in what they can offer—they do not guarantee paid

leave, they require employees to work a certain number of hours before becoming eligible, and graduate students are often not covered (Hanson 42). Graduate schools can develop parental leave policies that provide guidelines around coursework, fellowships, and teaching and research assistantships to protect graduate students and give departments and programs a point of reference. Faculty and staff parental leave policies could act as models. Schools like the University of Pennsylvania, Oregon State University, and UC Berkeley are some examples that have clear parental leave policies for graduate students.

Beyond lactation rooms and parental leave policies, higher education can also provide care support through ensuring affordable, accessible, and onsite childcare, back-up childcare options for when schools unexpectedly close or a child is sick, as well as policies and practices for when someone needs to cancel a class (see Chapters Two and Five). Some schools, for example, have a "Don't Cancel that Class Program!" where different campus partners like the Title IX office, Career Services, or the Office of Student Success offer workshops (University of Minnesota Morris, University of Rochester, Washington State University, among others). While these programs often require advanced notice, they communicate a culture that acknowledges faculty and staff may need to cancel classes, and offer support at the structural level. Similarly, back-up childcare programs like those at Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, and University of Arizona can help single moms avoid cancelling classes when unexpected school closures or illnesses arise.

The policies and practices outlined above are just a starting point. Even if institutions implement all of these changes, there is still more to be done. The support colleges and universities choose to offer to single parents is a rhetorical move—it communicates their attitudes and positions towards families at their institutions. When this support is part of institutional policy and practice, it has the potential to slowly shift preexisting attitudes that have been detrimental to parents especially single parents and MSOC, to shift the culture so that a woman walking around campus alone with

her child isn't seen as suspect, so that attending a campus lecture doesn't require carrying pounds of supplies because things like markers and paper are already there, so that a single parent can access a range of spaces and feel seen, valued, and included.

A Case for Policies and Practices that Support Single Moms

Let me return to why supporting single moms in academia matters. I'm reminded of my conversation with Kelly where we sat on opposite sides of our screens getting glimpses into one another's living rooms, talking about what it's like to be a single mom, and as Kelly talked, I kept thinking about her tirelessness, about how she never stopped pushing the metaphorical rock up a hill, working to get through her program and support others along the way. As we talked, she continually returned to the importance of having "different kinds of people doing research." We saw this in chapter five, but it's worth reiterating here—"We benefit from people being real humans. You're a better qualitative researcher interviewing other moms. If you were only about your research and not about connecting with other people as humans, we would not be having this conversation right now." Kelly's tirelessness is because she is a single mom. She continues to work towards making academia a space that is inclusive and welcoming to people with a range of identities and lived experiences because she knows what it feels like to be excluded; she knows this work is important. Her ability to understand and connect with people is part of what allows her to be the kind of teacher whose evaluations include comments like, "This was one of the hardest semesters of my life, and I don't know if I would have stayed if it hadn't been for [Kelly]." This student's experience is not the exception; in Kelly's class, it is the norm. The experiences Kelly has had outside of academia make her an asset inside the classroom. We need to make space for single moms, to have inclusive practices their consider their needs, because there is a ripple effect. When it comes to single moms, Kelly is not unique in this regard.

Many of the single moms I spoke with mentioned being more empathetic and sympathetic towards their students because of their identity. As Julie sat in her office, resting her elbows on a clean desk in front of her, she explained how she has "really high standards" as an instructor. Her students are there to work, not mess around, and she makes that clear to them—she has high standards, but she also has a high level of empathy: "I understand personal circumstances. I think like with a lot of things, it's hard to understand the burdens of being a single parent until you're actually in the mix with it. It's made me a lot more forgiving of my own students, not just the ones who are single parents but the ones who have additional demands, and I think it's helped me to ID some of the students who are on that tipping point between staying here with us in school versus needing to find something else to do. I don't know, there's just a certain look we get in our eyes when we're about to drop out. I've seen it in my own face, so now I can see it in others." This ability to see in others what she has experienced herself is important; it's an empathetic approach to pedagogy, a feminist approach. As Susan McLeod wrote, "It is empathy that we recognize in some of the best teachers in our discipline, teachers who work not only to understand their students, but who actively try to appreciate their perspective, who try to feel and think along with their students" (375). Similarly, T. Passwater in assembling "feminist teaching tools" points to how "Checking in with your students is good work and time well-spent in sponsoring empathy." Just as being a single mom causes Julie to be highly organized and attentive to detail in her day-to-day course planning and scheduling, it has also caused her to be supportive and attentive to the needs of others. This support and attentiveness mean that single moms often take on the bulk of emotional labor for their departments. When single moms are open about their identity, they exchange one kind of labor— the work it takes to conceal who they are, for another—the work it takes to support students. As mentioned in chapter three, this work maintains institutions; it is an asset that requires support from

those same institutions, so that single moms can continue to provide the kind of support and empathy integral to students' experiences and student retention.

Katherine is able to connect with her students and make space for them as people with lives beyond her classroom because of her experiences as a geographically single mom— "I'm more empathetic and sympathetic of situations. In terms of my students, I see a lot of instructors who are just like, 'No. I'm sorry. That excuse doesn't fly,' but I think I'm more willing to be like, 'hey, come to my office hours. Talk to me, tell me about what's going on your life. I really do want to know.'" When Katherine had a student whose dad got sick, the student took on the responsibility of caring for him in addition to attending school and working two jobs. She didn't tell Katherine at first, but when the student finally did, Katherine offered reassurance, "You can't scare me away with any of your drama. I promise you that my drama is drama. My life is always chaotic and busy." While these single moms may be connecting with different students across campuses, at the heart of their interactions is their single mom identity as a resource.

Like Katherine, Julie, and Kelly, Amy often finds herself supporting students in similar ways, but she also finds herself supporting students in additional ones, "I'm one of a tiny handful of openly queer faculty on this Southern campus, and so all of the queer students and the trans students, my daughter is trans, and this is a well-known fact, they all come to me, and I love doing that work." At the same time, Amy acknowledges this work is not recognized in a service tracker; it's invisible to the university. None of the work these women describe is visible, but it's necessary to maintaining higher education. Connecting with students as whole people, especially first-year students, who many of these single moms teach, is connected to retention. Students who are able "to remain connected to their past communities are more likely to persist" (Tinto 4 2007). By connecting with students as whole people, supporting who they are in and out of their classrooms, these single moms are facilitating a connection between these students and the home communities

they identify with. Connections with faculty are also essential to student retention: "Simply put, the more students are academically and socially engaged with academic staff and peers…the more likely they are to succeed in the classroom" (Tinto 5 2012). The embodied experiences, material practices, and lived realities of single moms have given them a unique epistemology that shapes how they move through the world and connect with others across contexts. This fluidity between their lives in and out of academia can also be seen in their work as researchers and students.

When I asked Erica about how her identity as a single mom impacted her work as an academic she not only talked about her work as an instructor but also as a researcher—"I'm driven by my experiences with regard to what I'm interested in. That's where research ideas, or an idea for a program, or something that I want to change, will pop up—from my own experiences." Erica then described conducting two research projects: one to improve services for international students and another focused on groups for single moms who are college students. Similarly, Katherine's work on women in the military as well as research about international students is influenced by who she is as a mom—"I feel like I want to be in touch with the human side of people and wanting to know why they're doing things rhetorically or why they're not. I think my identity is really trying to be empathetic, trying to be in touch with why and how things operate, and why are people using certain discourse or not. All of that." I can see my own experiences reflected in the words of these women. Because of what I have been through as a divorced mom and graduate student, I have a great sense of empathy for students in my classes as they navigate their lives and education. This entire dissertation emerges from my own experiences and perspectives. Similarly, the support of a single mom faculty mentor helped me substantially during my graduate work. Not only did she listen patiently and offer support as I shared my experiences, but she also showed her support. When she invited me to guest lecture in her class, she encouraged me to bring my daughter, and then she helped keep my daughter happy and occupied so that I could focus on the students. My daughter

still remembers that experience positively two years late. When I passed milestones in my graduate work, this same single mom mailed me books she thought where relevant to my work, and on both occasions, included copies of children's books for my daughter. Her actions always made me feel supported as a student *and* a mom, and her support helped carry me through some difficult moments.

In addition to supporting others, single moms develop a flexibility and adaptiveness due to parenting on their own. Danielle captured this when she described how her single mom identity influences her work as a student, "My identity as a single mom has impacted my dedication and passion as an academic and working professional. When it comes to composition work, I believe that I can think on my toes a little bit more and am more understanding if something doesn't go as planned." We are flexible, adaptable, organized, attentive to detail, empathetic, sympathetic, conscientious, and patient. We offer unique perspectives in higher education that benefit our students, colleagues, and administrators, as well as our research, writing, and service.

This research works from the premise that single moms face challenges in academia, and in the face of those challenges, they adapt. They develop ways of navigating higher education that are reflected in their composition practices and rhetorical strategies. They create networks of support that consist of the people in their lives—their own mothers, colleagues, siblings, and friends. They pushback against practices and policies that exclude them, while being upfront about how their identity shapes what they can do. They maintain academic institutions through their invisible labor and support of others, and they single parent their children while doing all of this.

What would it look like to be inclusive of single moms in higher education, and more specifically, composition and rhetoric? What would it look like to make space for their range of composition practices and rhetorical strategies? As an interdisciplinary, growing field, there is the potential for composition and rhetoric to have a broad impact by giving attention to the practices of

single mothers. There is an opportunity to shift ideas about writing more broadly, about how, where, when, and why it happens. There can be an understanding that writing is not just contingent on a place or a time, but also on people, on physical, mental, and emotional health. Looking at the composition practices of single moms allows us to think about how composition is influenced by a whole person and their lives beyond the academy, how, particularly for parents, writing "has very little to do with writing, and much to do with life" (Suhl). Similarly, if we look at the rhetorical strategies of single moms, we can see how much of their work is centered on interpersonal relationships—on their identity as single moms and the perceived uptake of that by their audience. We can see how ethos is established through a stigmatized identity, how intersectionality factors into institutional change, and how the exigence for a rhetorical practice can start with a second grader and end with a longstanding faculty meeting change. Starting here has the potential to work towards change in policy and culture, so that ideas of who and what constitutes the ideal worker begin to shift to include space for our lives beyond academia that permeate our work within it.

If for no other reason, we need to think about the needs of single moms for retention; retention of students in our classes, retention of mentors, and retention of colleagues. When attrition happens in higher education, it's referred to as a "leaky pipeline," but this is not an equal opportunity leak, where "the system that funnels Ph.D.s into tenure-track professors just 'accidentally' springs a leak and a random person gets let go" (Van Duyne). Instead, "those random people are more often than not women, more often than not queer women, more often than not queer women of color, and more often than not raising kids on their own" (Van Duyne). A pipeline conjures images of linear structure, of lockstep movements, and neatly sequenced events. I don't see single moms in this pipeline. Rarely are their paths to, in, and through academia neat and linear. They're messy.

In thinking of this messiness, I'm reminded of my daughter painting on a large canvas a couple of years ago. As she started, her materials were neatly laid out—an empty egg carton filled with different paint colors, a cup of water for rinsing her brushes that were lined up nearby; she was careful. She dipped her brushes into individual colors before swiping them onto the canvas, making large squares of color, each gently overlapping the other. She rinsed her brushes off between each use, but eventually this got boring, tedious. She started taking her brushes, dripping wet with paint, and flinging the wet paint onto the canvas. She stopped rinsing her brushes off in between colors. Started mixing colors together. She splattered paint onto the grass, into her hair, and all over her arms and legs. "Oops," she said, "I'm getting paint everywhere."

"Don't worry about it." I reassured her. "There's this great invention now called a washing machine, and besides, you're wearing play clothes. They're supposed to get dirty."

"Yeah!" She said enthusiastically. "Kids are supposed to get messy!"

Her excitement was clear from the bright blue paint in her hair, the colorful swatches on her pants where she had wiped her brushes clean, her bare feet standing in the grass, no longer sitting on the concrete patio outside our apartment complex. It was at this point, after her messiness was validated, that she decided her brushes would no longer do for the canvas. She dipped one into some pale yellow, painted the bottom of her foot, and turned to me with a mischievous smile. She placed her hand on my shoulder for balance, picked up her foot, and pressed it onto the white space. When she finished, we were left with a corner of overlapping squares, and a yellow footprint hidden beneath colorful splatters. It's a secret only we know is there, invisible unless you know where to look.

Single moms' experiences in academia are like this—unpredictable and messy, but also possible because of the support they seek out from others, support that is often invisible. They frequently have plans, ideas of how they want to approach things, their steps neatly organized, but

they also adjust and adapt their plans as their lives unfold, as a kid becomes sick, a caretaker is unavailable, a tree falls in a backyard damaging a septic line, a funding resource falls through. They have a way of figuring things out. And within their experiences, there are yellow footprints, hidden parts of their path that are visible if you only know where to look.

Epilogue: Keeping it Together While Falling Apart: Single Parenting During a Global Pandemic

"Our children are being erased from the spaces that should be theirs as our homes become our workplaces. I want the dean out of kitchen." -Robin Silbergleid

I sit and try to type. I get three words down before a voice pops in, "I don't understand how to do this." I look to my right where my six-year-old daughter sits, fingers dragging letters along on her tablet, working to complete a writing and reading activity for the morning. How do you write when you're constantly disrupted?

"Don't make a sound," she says, as my fingers click along on the keyboard.

"I can't move this!"

"I found all the 'mother' words!"

It starts to feel like she's having a conversation with herself, as her short bursts are followed by even shorter silences. I feel like I'm in a wave pool, her voice pushing me up and the silence pulling me back down. Just as I start to refocus on my work, to relax, her voice pushes me back up and out again, away from my temporary calm.

"Okay, don't make a sound." She shushes me again as she gets ready to record herself reading the word mother over and over again. It's May 14th; Mother's Day was four days ago, yet here we are, completing Mother's Day activities well past their date.

"I don't want to do any of these activities," she whines. "Can I just do this one, mama?"

I'm already exhausted, frustrated, and wishing for just one hour of complete silence to write my own sentences, to do my own writing and reading activities. I'm working with feminist rhetorical theory. It requires a level of focus and attention that cannot be accomplished when you have someone asking questions like, "Where's the activity everyone else did where they sang their ABCs?"

"Oh, here it is!" And then a video plays.

"Can you put on your headphones?" I ask, as I begin to hear instructions for the activity she has chosen to complete.

"Why?" she asks. Every question receives a question.

"Because it's distracting," I tell her.

"Can you get them?" She asks.

I walk the five feet to our kitchen and pull them out of the junk drawer, untangling the cord, as I hand them over.

"It's not distracting me," she says, as she places the pink headphones over her ears.

The sound from the screen is gone, but now she's saying the letters aloud as she locates them on the screen and drags them to their correct spot. One noise is replaced by another. School has only been closed for two months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and even though I am divorced with 50/50 custody, and even though I have a live-in partner, I am still the primary parent, suddenly thrust into homeschooling full-time to a kindergartener who loathes homeschooling and would much rather do almost anything else, except play by herself.

This life of starts and stops, of irregularity, of working with, around, and through someone was not entirely unfamiliar to me or single moms in general before the pandemic, but it reached another level once COVID-19 hit and everything shut-down in March 2020. Like Robin Silbergleid describes in "A Problem of One's Own: Single-Mothering, Self-Reliance, and Care in the time of the Coronavirus," "my situation is extreme but not unique. Informal qualitative research says that parents are interrupted from work on average every 3.5 minutes while their children are also home (Edwards and Snyder)" (111). This meant that with the onset of the pandemic came the beginning of a "new normal" where those interruptions became a regular part of the workday. After having consistent childcare, first in daycare when my daughter was little and then through public education once she reached kindergarten, I had found regular stretches of time where I could focus on my work. But with the onset of the pandemic everything became upended, and we found ourselves in a world where how we used to do things in all facets of our lives was not the way we did them

anymore, at least for the foreseeable future. A world where, caregivers, particularly mothers, started to get a lot of attention across publications—*The New York Times, The New Yorker, Inside Higher Ed, The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Washington Post, Times Higher Education,* and *CNN,* among others—as they began to take on the bulk of childcare responsibilities due to daycare and school closures as an effect of the pandemic. However, even as mothers began receiving increased media attention, single mothers continued to "remain overall invisible in the media," and the "sparse studies and essays [that] have appeared in peripheral venues still speaks to the marginalization of single mothering" (Ségeral 141). In addition to the four articles Nathalie Ségeral describes in "Academic Single Mothering during a Pandemic," articles about the experiences of single mothers have also been published in *The New Yorker* ("Some Days I Feel Like I'm Melting: How Single Mothers in New York City Are Coping With Quarantine")*, CNN* ("Grad Student Mom: This is Something I Can't Fix"), *The Washington Post* ("Single Parents Struggle to Home-School and work as Their Support Systems Disappear"), and *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative* (articles by Ségeral and Silbergleid). While I won't summarize the content of these articles here, I note them to acknowledge that work is being published about single mothering experiences during the pandemic, but there is still more to be done.

To say that the COVID-19 pandemic upended the lives of many would be an understatement; we have all, regardless of our circumstances, faced challenges. As a result, we tried to find ways to manage, get by, continue to survive and exist; we were (and in some cases still are) responding to kairos. In her foreword to *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, Carolyn Miller provides two definitions of the title concept, one she credits to "Cicero, the Stoics, and later Ciceronians," where "*kairos*…becomes a principle of adaptation and accommodation to convention, expectation, predictability," and another "attributed primarily to Gorgias and to latter-day postmodern sophists," that "is understood to represent not the expected but its opposite: the

uniquely timely, the spontaneous, the radically particular" (xii-xiii). It is the second definition where

individuals find themselves facing an unexpected time when they are forced to act meaningfully that

I apply to this chapter. In the pandemic, all of us have been forced to find ways to navigate an

unprecedented time. In this chapter, I argue that single moms implement mêtis and show rhetorical

resilience (as described by Elizabeth A. Flynn, Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady in *Feminist Rhetorical*

Resilience—Possibilities and Impossibilities) as they respond to challenges parenting during a pandemic.

As these women face the "single motherhood double penalty," they are forced to continually adapt

to the unexpected circumstances that emerge (Ségeral 140). I begin this chapter by providing a brief

overview of what colleges and universities have done to support parents during the pandemic and

what those responses communicate rhetorically about the value of parents in higher education. I

then focus on what single moms have done to respond to the challenges they have faced. This focus

will draw on survey responses from 14 single mothers across disciplines, single mothering identities,

professional ranks, and geographic locations, as well as incorporate the narrative experiences shared

by Ségeral and Silbergleid in their articles. To conclude, I will argue that the mêtis single moms

implement and the rhetorical resilience they demonstrate strengthens the need for higher education

to acknowledge and value their contributions, as well as develop institutional support systems and

structures that show family-friendliness across parenting identities.

Higher Education Responses to Parenting During the Pandemic

Because there is no precedent for a pandemic, so much is being figured out as we go,

including policies related to parents at colleges and universities. At the end of June 2020, Florida

State University released a memo describing a policy where parents working remotely would be

expected to find childcare via a nanny or daycare center; if they cared for their children while

working from home, they could lose the "approval for remote work" (Burke). While FSU then

backtracked in a matter of days to clarify that the policy "only applies to staff members," and not

professors, the policy remained in place (Hassanein). Other schools opted to do entirely online learning, some under the influence of childcare needs, acknowledging that while challenges exist for all parents, these challenges are exacerbated for parents of children who may be sick, differently abled, as well as single parents (Reed). Guidance from the AAUP in "Principles for Higher Education Response to COVID-19" encourages institutions "to have plans in place for employees with children whose regular school or daycare situation is interrupted by closures due to COVID-19," but what those plans might entail and what they might mean for employees is left to the discretion of individual academic institutions (2). Additionally, support available for parents with high-risk children is not guaranteed or consistent, depending on the approval of accommodation requests that are reviewed using existing policies related to the FMLA and/or the ADA (Pettit). The U.S. Department of Labor developed a policy to support families unable to work due to COVID-19 childcare challenges ("Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employee Paid Leave Rights"), which could provide some relief, but like FMLA, it is dependent on meeting certain qualifications (being employed for a minimum of 30 days) and has a maximum 12-week allocation. Additionally, those who have already taken FMLA leave in the past 12-months are not currently eligible (UW System Women's and Gender Studies Consortium 3). In short, some of the policies colleges and universities turned to at the start of the Fall 2020 semester were limited.

Additionally, the solutions offered by colleges and universities often centered those in partnered relationships. For example, the Provost and VP for Human Resources sent a letter to the Stanford Community, "Supporting Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic," prior to the start of the Fall semester. In the letter, their "creative solutions" for the Fall included, "coordinating a family 'bubble' in which parents or primary caregivers support each other's work schedules," and they "encouraged families to creatively consider how to support one another's care needs" in the second opening paragraph (Drell and Zacharias). Similarly, on Syracuse University's "Tips for Adopting a

Successful Remote Work Strategy," they provide a link to an article from *CSNBC*, "5 Tips for

Effectively Working from Home During the Coronavirus Outbreak, When You Have Kids." The

final tip in the article is "Alternate Shifts with Your Partner..." While the article does note, "If

switching shifts with your spouse is not an option," what follows is an emphasis on

heteronormative, partnered relationships: "then Cameau, whose husband is not able to work

remotely, emphasizes that a strict schedule and extra planning will be key to maximizing your day"

(Connley). There is no acknowledgment of single parents' material circumstances. This is also

reflected in Ségeral's article when she describes "a university webinar meant to give practical advice

to mothers during the pandemic [that] mainly recommends dividing up childcare equally with one's

partner" (140). The assumption that a partner is available is the norm rather than the exception,

further marginalizing single parents and showing disregard for their needs.

Finding specific responses to support parents during the pandemic from colleges and

universities is difficult, despite multiple task forces across academic institutions providing caregiving

testimonials, as well as statements and letters offering specific suggestions about how to best

support parents during this time[32] (Kenworthy et. al. at University of Washington; The Gender

Studies Working Group on Gender and COVID-19 at Notre Dame; The Women's, Gender, and

Sexuality Studies Program at UNCG; McKinley and Stephen at University of Oregon; Syracuse

University letter signed by multiple caregivers and allies; "Open Letter on Research Productivity and

Childcare" from UCLA; Letter from Oregon AAUP members; "Recommendations to Minimize

Career Penalties for Parents in STEM Fields During the COVID-19 Pandemic"; "Statement on

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[32] I will not provide concrete suggestions about how to best support single parents during the pandemic, as that work is ongoing in these letters, statements, and testimonials. Instead, I encourage readers to seek out these resources, particularly caregiving testimonials, which provide a sense of needs across parenting identities. I also want to acknowledge that multiple colleges and universities offered automatic tenure-clock extensions in response to the pandemic and while this response is a step forward, it does not fully consider the needs of the range of individuals in the academy.

Carework and COVID-19" from Fordham University; "A Call to Higher Education Administrators to Support Caregivers During COVID-19"). These statements and letters are representative of individuals coming together as a collective to call for institutional, structural, and systemic change. They put the voices of single moms in conversation with caregivers of all identities and further reveal how support for one group benefits many, while also representing efforts by caregivers and allies to call on academic governance and leadership to enact change.

These statements and letters are also examples of "invitational rhetoric;" the authors are inviting administrators and faculty to "enter the [parents'] world and see it as they do" to achieve a sense of understanding not only about the challenges caregivers face but also about the caregivers themselves (Foss and Griffin 5-6). The hope is that this understanding might facilitate change. However, in some cases what has resulted is a failure to listen. Faculty and administrators at some institutions have failed to show a willingness to "recognize [their] privileges and nonprivileges and then act accordingly" (Ratcliffe 31-2). For example, at Syracuse University, aside from a Care.com subscription and extending the tenure-clock for tenure-track faculty, the administrator has failed to implement the suggestions they were given in a letter signed by multiple caregivers and allies. Places like Fordham and Notre Dame University seem to have similar responses in reviewing the letters and then working to review the university responses[33]. Academia's lack of a response illustrates a shortcoming of invitational rhetoric described by Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud—"…the oppressed are hard pressed to convince oppressors who benefit materially from oppression to be open to dialogue, let alone radical change" (Lozano-Reich and Cloud 222). The power dynamic between those writing the letters and statements and those receiving them resulted in a rhetoric of refusal, not only to engage in dialogue but also to listen and act—"Refusal to listen is, of

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[33] This chapter was written over the course of the pandemic and completed in Summer 2021. I acknowledge that there may be certain university initiatives developed in response to calls from faculty and staff that were implemented during this writing and/or after it was completed.

course, the premier option available to hegemonic struggles, especially for those in power"

(Swiencicki 157). The lack of listening is evidenced through the lack of action.

As we begin Fall 2021 with the Delta variant circulating and 50% of the U.S. population fully

vaccinated, faculty and staff are still expressing concerns about returning full-time, face-to-face on

campus. Parents of children younger than 12 years of age who are currently ineligible for the vaccine

are especially worried about the risks (CDC "COVID-19 Vaccinations in the United States"; PSU

"Testimony from Our Open Letter"). This continuation of fear and worry is indicative of a limited

response by higher education as a whole. However, while the response is limited, some institutions

have shown efforts to support caregivers during this time.

In the Fall of 2020, the University of Wisconsin Caregiving Task Force (an "independent

task force composed of UW system faculty, staff and instructors" developed to "advance research

on the gendered impacts of COVID-19 in higher education…"), issued a Progress Report outlining

the implementation of task force recommendations (Christus and Rytilahti). This report revealed

how the university system put into action calls from University of Wisconsin Madison, Women's

and Gender Studies Consortium Statement from Summer 2020 including issuing communication

dedicated specifically to caregiving, creating training modules and campus education surrounding

caregiving, and accommodating remote work and teaching options (ibid). Similarly, the University of

Washington created a Caregiver Task Force and in response to their calls to action as well as an

issued report, the President and Provost made a public statement recognizing the importance of

supporting caregivers and urging "managers, supervisors, and academic leaders to "provide

employee and student caregivers with the maximum flexibility allowable" (Cauce and Richards).

Both provided possible options for accommodations and urged deans and chancellors to "work with

their academic leadership teams to identify opportunities to be flexible and support faculty members

in these extraordinary times" (ibid). These positive responses are encouraging and reveal the beginning of what is possible due to collective action.

How colleges and universities respond to letters, statements, and urgings from their faculty, staff, and students, is rhetorical. Issuing a statement shows a willingness on the part of the administration to show solidarity with caregivers; action communicates this even more. A lack of response, communicates a lack of investment in the needs of caregivers in higher education. Offering the resources caregivers need begins with recognizing the value of parents in higher education, and hiring individuals to coordinate, organize, and develop these resources. Additionally, this support needs to be derived from the experiences, perspectives, and voices of parents in higher education. Committees and task forces need to prioritize having members that represent a range of parenting experiences, including single parents. An unwillingness to do this is a rhetoric of disregard and refusal, one where those in positions of power in higher education disregard the recommendations made to them and refuse to act. Such a rhetoric of disregard and refusal is especially felt by single parents, as described in their survey responses and articles about their experiences.

Single Mom in Academia Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In early Fall 2020, I circulated a survey asking for single parents to share their experiences during the pandemic. 14 single moms[34] across disciplines, academic ranks, single parent identities, and geographic locations responded. Their responses reflect much of what has been shown in the research—a need for greater support from academic institutions, a lack of understanding of single parent experiences by their colleagues, an overabundance of zoom meetings, and an intense exhaustion that is unique to the current context. However, their responses also show how solutions offered during the pandemic are not long-term ones and surviving during a pandemic requires

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[34] For more demographic information about participants in this study, please see Table 6.

unique strategies and tactics as an academic single parent. These women's responses illustrate their use of mêtis or of having a "mêtistic orientation" (Flynn et al. 9). This orientation is a sort of "bricolage"—"a kind of inventiveness, an ability to improvise a solution to a problem without proper or obvious tools or materials" (Coutu qtd in Flynn et al. 8). While mêtis is often associated with deception and trickery (Dolmage 2020), for single moms during the pandemic, I draw on the understanding of mêtis as the "intelligence needed to adapt and intervene in a world of change and chance" (Dolmage 150 2014). In this context, the emphasis is on "situational intelligence and innovative resourcefulness rather than rational planning" (Flynn et al. 9). Just as mêtis requires "reshaping itself to remain in motion," single moms' responses to challenges show continually returning to the drawing board to figure out what to do next (Flynn et al. 9). Even as single moms try to address the challenges they face, there are no easy or quick fixes; finding a solution is a matter of finding the path of least harm, as in—what can I do that will benefit me and my children, while minimizing our risk? They are responding to kairotic moments where "the challenge is to invent, within a set of unfolding and unprecedented circumstances, an action (rhetorical or otherwise) that will be understood as uniquely meaningful within those circumstances" (Miller xiii). They have been forced to be "creative in responding to the unforeseen, to the lack of order in human life" (Miller xiii). That single moms draw on mêtis to respond to kairotic moments is not surprising as—"*kairos* requires mêtis" and asks us to "pay as much attention to the momentary, the impromptu, the local, and the interpersonal as we do the monolithic structures of power" (Dolmage 165 2014).

All parents, and especially single moms, have been forced to think creatively in response to childcare center and school closures. Such closures required single moms to find ways to complete their academic work while also caring for and/or homeschooling their children. For some single moms, the response to this challenge involved relocating to be closer to family. Antica Culina, "a research scientist at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology in Wageningen" and sole carer for her

two-year-old daughter left the Netherlands to stay with her parents in Croatia during the pandemic

because she "depends on a nursery for childcare to get [her] scientific work done." With the closure

of the nursery and the lack of family nearby, Culina was forced to think creatively about how to

respond. Like Culina, two survey participants described relocating as a response to childcare

challenges. One returned to her home country with her eight-year-old child "to try to alleviate some

of the challenges by being closer to family," but she and her child ended up "being worse off," so

they're both back where they were living prior to March 2020. Another single mom along with her

one-year-old son "moved three hours away to be closer to [her] parents to give [her] a random break

to clean, etc." Many academics relocate away from family for employment, eliminating the possibility

to turn to close family for assistance with childcare; however, such a move is especially difficult for

single parents who also lack a partner for support.

With the initial survey respondent, we see how even as she implemented mêtis, her approach

was not effective, forcing her to return to her home country after being "worse off" by being closer

to family. So again, she finds herself having to be creative, to go back to where she started. With the

second respondent, we see how her response to the childcare solution was seen as a way to address

two challenges: childcare and second shift work. While women "disproportionately do more of the

work in the home than men—the global average is three times more…," this increases exponentially

for single moms who lack a partner to offload this type of labor (Donner). With childcare and

school closures, single moms have increased second shift responsibilities—their children are now

home all the time. This means more activity and use of spaces in the home, which also means more

to clean up. It's telling that the single mom who saw her "random break" as an opportunity for

cleaning is also the parent of a one year old and in a non-tenure track job—a precarious position to

be in at any time, but especially during a pandemic when student enrollments are down 2.5% in the

United States as of Fall 2020 ("Term Enrollment Estimates" 2) and universities and colleges in the

United States and Canada have experienced substantial financial hits, which some may remedy through furloughs and position cuts ("Financial Information of Universities…" and Smalley). The precarity of her position creates additional pressure to continue to perform at the level she did prior to the pandemic, even though she is taking on more with less.

One single mom opted not to relocate but instead to hire "childcare within the home" because she could "only work when [she] had someone to entertain [her] 3-year-old." However, the childcare provider tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the risk of the pandemic closer to this single mom and her children (she also has a 9-year-old). This single mom explained how, "There is no respite and no backup for me unless I pay someone to be here with me (and even in doing that I risked our health)." While the care provider, this single mom and her children are now all okay, this experience illuminates how, even as single moms try to address the challenges they face, there are no easy or quick fixes. Like the crab associated with mêtis, their movement through these challenges is not linear or forward but instead back and forth as they try to figure out how to respond to the unexpected.

While divorced single moms may have a co-parent to offset some of the parenting labor, they have also encountered unique challenges due to the pandemic. In her article Ségeral shares a Facebook post from a single mom, Kathryn whose son's father is a physician working in the ER. Kathryn explains how her son moved in with her full-time after the hospital where her son's dad works started seeing COVID patients. This was because she and her son's father had assumed the dad would be "working overtime, exhausted, sick or quarantined due to possible exposure" (147). They planned for the son and his dad to see one another "for outdoor, at-a-distance activities when possible," but this plan was made without specifics, as they "didn't know if that would be once a week or once in three months" (147). Kathryn is responding to a challenge with no idea of how it will go; without guidance about how to navigate relationships of children with parents who are

healthcare workers during the pandemic, Kathryn had to create her own solution, while also working with someone with whom she has "a really complicated relationship" (Ségeral 148). Additionally, this solution presents news challenges—while Kathryn may have had uninterrupted time to work before because of a shared custody schedule, she now finds herself with full, primary custody. The plan she may have had before no longer works in the current context, and she must find ways to work around new challenges.

Single moms are adept at responding to challenges because they are single moms—if they can't figure out how to get by, they are not the only ones who face repercussions—their children do as well. The stakes are high. For many single moms, the pandemic equated the loss of carefully built support systems. Single moms described facing more challenges "since the family network is harder to use because of the quarantine." One described how being a single mom in academia is always hard because you're "juggling work and kids," but the pandemic exacerbated these challenges because "with the kids not being able to attend school, it's so much harder. Then take away all my supports (friends and family who would help me occasionally, an ex who used to exercise some custody time) and I feel like I'm drowning." Another mom explained that "before I had built a support system that let me have time for myself." She had a "list of students from the college that would step in and watch the kids," and as a club advisor, she was able to bring her kids to club activities; she said the students and her children both loved it. As one single mom put it, the loss of support systems made not only work difficult: "Simple things, like running out for milk, are complicated when there's no one else because it involves taking your kid everywhere…it's the simple everyday routines that we have learned to make very organized because we're single working parents. COVID-19 disrupted all those routines and now we have to figure out how to reorganize the everyday under very surreal circumstances, and we have to do it mostly by ourselves." Her response illustrates how single moms have a unique epistemology they have developed because of

their embodied experience and material circumstances. This epistemology is shaped by and shapes their implementation of mêtis and response to kairotic moments.

As they respond to challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, single moms have shown feminist rhetorical resilience. Defined by Flynn et al., "Resilience is not a state of being but a process of rhetorically engaging with material circumstances and situational exigencies…[it] is always relational" (7). Such relationality is about the interaction with others to improve situations (Flynn et al. 2). Accomplishing such interaction during a pandemic when we have all been required to limit our face-to-face social relationships is, to put it lightly, difficult. However, by the nature of their parenting identities, single moms must interact with their children to make their situations livable. For some single moms, this has meant allowing their children to use electronic devices more than they would like—"[I worry] about being a bad parent—allowing kids on devices for hours so I can work." I can relate to this as I developed "alone time" with my own daughter—time where she can be on Kids YouTube in her room, while I work on my computer in the dining/living room. Like this single mom, I too have experienced feelings of guilt, especially because I relied heavily on the same strategy during my doctoral coursework, and there is a lot of shaming that circulates around parenting communities and the use of screen time. In her article, Silbergleid describes creating a schedule in collaboration with her son to get through the afternoon. However, despite this schedule, there is still a discrepancy between the "the posted schedule and reality," as Silbergleid realizes "I am not in charge of my time" (115). Similarly, because her children are 8 and 16, her teenager can sometimes watch the younger one "for short periods of time" (113). In these examples, we see how "resilience is not a state of being but a process of rhetorically engaging with material circumstances and situational exigencies" (Flynn et al. 7). Single moms need to consider their context, their audience (children, family members, colleagues, and other stakeholders), and their purpose.

Feminist rhetorical resilience is also evidenced in how single moms interact with others beyond their children to address the challenges they face. In some cases, this may mean "zoom hangouts with friends," "good support from an immediate boss," "reaching out to peer support groups," "meeting online to do yoga with a group of other single mamas in academia everyday," and/or "seeing a therapist." For others, it means outsourcing labor—"ordering groceries and takeout, hiring a neighbor to mow the lawn," "hiring childcare within the home," and/or reinventing previously familiar systems. For example, one single mom created a list of five meals made with staple foods that she rotates throughout the week, so she can "use the same shopping list and shop once a month." For many single moms, they've had to rethink their interactions with others. For one single mom this meant "keeping my camera and mic off" when she has zoom meetings for another it meant using a "dialectical behavior therapy app" after she had to stop therapy for a while, and for many it has meant reducing or letting go of the expectations they have of themselves, shaped by the people in their academic contexts—colleagues, administrators, students, etc.

These single moms demonstrate feminist rhetorical resilience in how they implement mêtis and relationality; they work to address challenges hoping to get through another day, such resilience "does not necessarily return an individual life to equilibrium but entails an ongoing responsiveness, never complete nor predetermined" (Flynn et al. 7). It's important to emphasize that this ongoing responsiveness is related to the lack of responses by higher education to support parents during the pandemic described earlier. Single moms must be resilient because they are on their own. Most single moms in the survey (11 of 14) wrote that their academic institutions and/or professional organization(s) have done nothing to support them as a single parent during the pandemic. Those who have experienced support describe fairly minor actions—"They allowed work from home accommodations without support for utilities or internet," "They gave me a one year period for my thesis corrections instead of the usual six months," "They did let me adjust my schedule for a bit,

but otherwise have been furloughing staff, laying folks off, which makes me nervous about my job security…," "we've produced a lot of policies regarding caregiving accommodations. I'm also in a significant leadership position, so I haven't really asked for any accommodations," and "It has mostly left me alone and not placed any overly burdensome productivity demands on me. All the same, I am on soft money right now (paying my own salary out of my own grant), so it would be ridiculous if they did." In each of these responses, the actions of higher education fall short, and many of the responses I provided here opened with statements like "Nothing much really" or "Not much actually." These responses show how single moms are aware of the support they have received and also how it could be improved, further strengthening the argument that their voices and ideas need to be included and implemented in administrative conversations.

What is at Stake?

As emphasized in Chapters One and Three, if academic institutions continue to fail to support single mothers, they risk losing them. In a personal correspondence with one single mom, she shared with me how she is seriously contemplating leaving academia. While she had considered this prior to the pandemic, what has happened since has only increased her interest in pursuing alternative career paths. She is not alone. Single moms in the survey described their situation during the pandemic as "career killing," echoing language used by Mary Ann Mason. They wrote that "outing yourself as a single parent appears a death sentence in academe," and "I'm not entirely sure I'd like to continue on this career track." Even for single moms who are not considering leaving, their mental health is suffering, for example, one single mom wrote that her primary challenge is "the mental health of my child and myself." Other single moms also described the mental strain they were under. I include their responses at length here because I think it's important to share what they are experiencing in their own voices. I have also listed their quotes for readability and emphasis:

- "We have to figure out how to reorganize the everyday under very surreal circumstances, and we have to do it mostly by ourselves. The underlying levels of anxiety are high for me; I may seem like I have it all together on the outside, but on the inside, I'm falling apart."

- "There is nobody to share the burden and to lift us up when we are down. We have to lift ourselves and everyone else and it's fucking exhausting."

- "All of the responsibility and all of the household maintenance falls to one person…it is mentally exhausting."

- "I don't think others understand what it feels like to never get a break. It's also really stressful to be the only parent making important decisions about your children's wellbeing in an uncertain time when none of the choices feel particularly great."

- "There is no respite and no backup for me…I cannot focus on research, and I have suffered major decision paralysis…"

- "I'm working 10 hours a day without extra time and on the edge of a nervous breakdown because the amount of responsibility assigned to me."

- "Productivity is difficult when mentally exhausted. If an institution allowed for decreased publication and service, that would demonstrate from a systemic level that mental health is important."

All these responses communicate how the expectations of academia coupled with the disregard for single parents' needs and experiences is mentally and emotionally damaging to single moms; women who are integral to maintaining academic institutions and who are also the primary source of support for children who, especially during the pandemic, are also struggling mentally and emotionally. If higher education recognized the needs of single parents through reaching out, offering concrete means of support, and implementing the suggestions in letters, statements, and testimonials from parents, they would communicate that the health and wellbeing of all stakeholders

in academia are important. While much has changed in higher education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of support for those of marginalized identities has persisted. While the pandemic has been beneficial in some ways—I have been able to attend more presentations than I ever could before because they're available virtually; I'm able to spend the kind of time with my daughter I was not afforded in the past; I have felt justified in being kinder and more compassionate towards myself about my productivity, as well as strategies for parenting and working simultaneously—it has also revealed how there is still substantial work to be done if higher education is truly committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Appendix A: Methods and Methodology

This research began during my own separation and divorce process, which meant that I found myself in a Facebook group at the time—Single Parents in Academia (SPA), comprised entirely of mothers, receiving invaluable support that helped carry me through that experience. Participants for this research come from SPA, as well as other Facebook groups I was a member of[35]: Academic Mamas, Writing while Mothering, Women in College Support Group, and Syracuse Grad Students with Children. As a graduate student and divorced mom raising a toddler and then young child, I found convenience sampling to be the best method to recruit participants because of how it allowed me to work from familiar spaces. In addition to the Facebook groups, I also relied on email listservs that I was either a part of (WP-Listserv, Rhet/Comp Mothers Listserv, NextGen Listserv, Writing Program Listserv, CCCC Feminist Caucus Listserv) or that are affiliated with my university (WiSE Listserv, Women's and Gender Studies Listserv, SUNY ESF Women's Caucus Listserv, University College Listserv) to recruit survey participants. I ended up with 103 survey participants from six different countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, the United States, and Spain) and twenty-eight states in the U.S.

While convenience sampling is, as its name would suggest, convenient for someone with various constraints, its limitation is in the inability to generalize findings since participants are usually being recruited from a place where they are easily accessible; in this case, since the majority of survey participants (46%) are from Rhetoric and Composition or related fields, there are limitations to what extent the results are representative of all single mothers in higher education (Miner-Rubino and Jayaratne 14). Additionally, the majority of respondents are divorced (52%), tenure-track (21%) or tenured faculty (30%) from R1 institutions (47%). While participants could disclose their racial and

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[35] I use the past tense here because I stopped using Facebook almost a year after I started this research for a variety of reasons I won't get into here (see Jenny Odell's *How to do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*).

ethnic identity, as well as their gender and sexuality in short responses if they chose, the survey did

not include questions specific to this demographic information, as my intention was to focus on

their experiences as single mothers in higher education.

Being a member of all of the Facebook Groups where I circulated the call for participants in

the survey, as well as the email listservs (with the exception of WiSE, SUNY ESF Women's Caucus,

and Women's and Gender Studies), meant that as I conducted this research I had to be constantly

attentive to my "own status as a researcher who identifies unapologetically" with her research

subjects (Royster 252). I took on a "bifocal standpoint" meaning that as I analyzed the survey data, I

was drawing on contextual knowledge that someone without group membership would not have

(Royster 276). I consider many of the survey respondents and interview participants friends, and

these connections inevitably shaped the way I read, analyzed, and made sense of the responses.

Throughout my data analysis for this project, I implemented reflexive ethnography as described by

Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, intertwining my own experiences, identifying my personal

connection, and using my "personal knowledge to help in the research process" (749).

I recruited interview participants based on those who expressed interest through the survey.

Because I had initially hoped to conduct interviews in-person, I first chose interview participants

based on their geographic location, prioritizing single moms within driving distance. However,

limited responses from those who were geographically close required me to change course. I decided

to reach out to women who represented a range of single mom identities, expressed explicit interest

in their survey responses in saying more about their experiences ("I would love to be interviewed for

this project"), and/or shared stories in their survey responses that I had more questions about. I

ended up conducting fourteen interviews with seven single moms—one participant I interviewed in

person, and the other six I interviewed either via phone or video chat. Each participant was paid $30

per interview for a total of $60. I chose to pay participants because time is an invaluable resource for

single moms, and it was something I could not give back, but I wanted to recognize their contribution to this work and was able to through financial compensation. I talked to these single moms in between classes, during their lunch breaks, as they drove home with their kids from family trips, and primarily between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm EST. These interviews asked single moms to: 1. Share their primary challenges in higher education and how they navigate those challenges to reveal their support systems and structures 2. Describe a day in their life to make visible the work they do both academic and non-academic 3. Discuss their composition practices and projects 4. Provide ideas and suggestions for how they could be better supported. The interviews lasted between just under an hour to two hours, and I interviewed each single mom twice over the course of a Fall semester or approximately four months—once at the onset, and again at the end. My own identity as a divorced mom with a young daughter helped me to identify with the participants, and oftentimes, I would share my prior experiences as a visiting instructor with a newborn and then as a graduate student, connecting with them over the challenges of kindergarten and the joys of a kid old enough to get her own snacks from the fridge. Many with older children regularly shared with me what I might expect in the future, and offered comfort, understanding, and reassurance when I had to reschedule conversations due to a sick kid or an unexpected school cancellation.

To analyze both the survey data and interview transcripts, I used grounded theory, which as described in Chapter Three, allowed me to center the participants and their experiences. I also implemented in vivo coding to represent their terms and language in the codes (Saldaña 91). Because part of the survey focused on the primary challenges single moms face, I coded the survey and interview data with attention to those challenges. As I read, I noticed seven themes emerge based on the women's responses: time, schedule, second shift, childcare, support, money, and mental health. I then coded the interview data a second time to see how single moms were dealing with those challenges (family, friends, institutional support, independently). These categories were informed by

how single moms responded to the survey, as well as my own experience with support and research about mothers' experiences in higher education that I had read. I also coded the interview data for the rhetorical strategies single moms used both in their academic and personal lives with colleagues as well as family members and friends (pushback and upfront rhetoric). Again, these codes emerged from themes I noticed in single moms' responses, as described in Chapter Three.

To help make sense of and synthesize the codes, I turned to feminist standpoint theory, intersectionality, and an ethics of hope and care, which I describe in more detail in the introductory chapter. Such theories allow for an understanding of how single moms' multifaceted identities inform their epistemologies, lived experiences, and material realities, while still prioritizing the single moms' voices. I felt that centering their perspectives would strengthen the case for developing support systems and structures that account for their experiences, while also recognizing how many ideas they have to contribute that could benefit higher education and others with marginalized identities.

Table 5 that follows this appendix provides an overall snapshot of the single moms who participated in the survey, as well as the interviews. It's intended to complement Chapter Three, which emphasizes survey data. Using Jillian Duquaine-Watson's "Profile of Participants" as a model, the table is intended to provide readers with demographic information about the single moms in this project, illustrate how prevalent single moms are, and strengthen the case for their much-needed support (39). Table 6 provides an overall snapshot of the single moms who participated in the survey referenced in the epilogue. My hope with both tables is to broaden our understandings of single moms so that when we hear the term, we're less apt to make assumptions.

	Undergraduate Students (2)	Graduate Students (PhD: 14, Master's: 3)	Non-Tenure Track (17)	Tenure-Track (22)	Tenured (31)	Other (14)
Table 5. Profile of Spring 2019 Survey Participants						
Institutional Type	**R1:** 1 **Comprehensive University/Regional State University:** 0 **Four Year College:** 1 **Small Private Liberal Arts College:** 0 **Two Year College: Other:** 0	**R1:** 13 **Comprehensive University/Regional State University:** 4 **Four Year College:** 0 **Small Private Liberal Arts College:** 0 **Two Year College:** 0 **Other:** 0	**R1:** 9 **Comprehensive University/Regional State University:** 5 **Four Year College: Small Private Liberal Arts College:** 0 **Two Year College:** 2 **Other:** 0	**R1:** 5 **Comprehensive University/Regional State University:** 10 **Four Year College:** 2 **Small Private Liberal Arts College:** 3 **Two Year College: Other:** 1	**R1:** 16 **Comprehensive University/Regional State University:** 7 **Four Year College:** 0 **Small Private Liberal Arts College:** 6 **Two Year College:** 1 **Other:** 0	**R1:** 3 **Comprehensive University/Regional State University:** 3 **Four Year College:** 1 **Small Private Liberal Arts College:** 2 **Two Year College:** 2 **Other:** 3
Discipline	**Humanities:** 2 **STEM:** 0 **Social Sciences:** 0 **Rhet/Comp and Related Fields[36]:** 0	**Humanities:** 2 **STEM:** 3 **Social Sciences:** 4 **Rhet/Comp and Related Fields:** 8	**Humanities:** 3 **STEM:** 1 **Social Sciences:** 4 **Rhet/Comp and Related Fields:** 8	**Humanities:** 3 **STEM:** 2 **Social Sciences:** 6 **Rhet/Comp and Related Fields:** 10	**Humanities:** 7 **STEM:** 6 **Social Sciences:** 6 **Rhet/Comp and Related Fields:** 11	**Humanities:** 2 **STEM:** 0 **Social Sciences:** 3 **Rhet/Comp and Related Fields:** 9
Single Mom Identity	**Divorced:** 0 **SMC:** 2 **Widowed:** 0 **Other:** 0	**Divorced:** 8 **SMC:** 2 **Widowed:** 0 **Other:** 7	**Divorced:** 7 **SMC:** 4 **Widowed:** 0 **Other:** 5	**Divorced:** 10 **SMC:** 1 **Widowed:** 2 **Other[37]:** 7	**Divorced:** 19 **SMC:** 5 **Widowed:** 1 **Other:** 5	**Divorced:** 7 **SMC:** 3 **Widowed:** 0 **Other:** 4
Length of Time as Single Mom	**>1 Year:** 0 **1-5 years:** 1 **6-10 years:** 0 **11-15 years:** 1 **16-20 years:** 0 **21+ years:** 0 **Unknown:** 0	**>1 Year:** 1 **1-5 years:** 8 **6-10 years:** 3 **11-15 years:** 4 **16-20 years:** 0 **21+ years:** 0 **Unknown:** 1	**>1 Year:** 1 **1-5 years:** 3 **6-10 years:** 4 **11-15 years:** 6 **16-20 years:** 1 **21+ years:** 0 **Unknown:** 1	**>1 Year:** 1 **1-5 years:** 12 **6-10 years:** 5 **11-15 years:** 1 **16-20 years:** 2 **21+ years:** 1 **Unknown:**	**>1 Year:** 4 **1-5 years:** 8 **6-10 years:** 11 **11-15 years:** 4 **16-20 years:** 2 **21+ years:** 1 **Unknown:** 1	**>1 Year:** 0 **1-5 years:** 2 **6-10 years:** 4 **11-15 years:** 4 **16-20 years:** 3 **21+ years:** 1 **Unknown:** 0
Number of Children	**One:** 2 **Two:** 0 **Three or More:** 0	**One:** 8 **Two:** 7 **Three or More:** 2	**One:** 10 **Two:** 2 **Three or More:** 4	**One:** 17 **Two:** 4 **Three or More:** 1	**One:** 16 **Two:** 10 **Three or More:** 4	**One:** 5 **Two:** 6 **Three or More:** 3

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[36] Related fields include those represented in professional organizations that Rhetoric and Composition falls under, including CCCC, NCTE, and MLA.

| Ages of Children | 0-4 years: 0
5-9 years: 1
10-14 years: 1
15-19 years: 0
20-29 years: 0 | 0-4 years: 8
5-9 years: 5
10-14 years: 6
15-19 years: 2
20-29 years: 1 | 0-4 years: 3
5-9 years: 5
10-14 years: 6
15-19 years: 3
20-29 years: 3 | 0-4 years: 4
5-9 years: 12
10-14 years: 6
15-19 years: 2
20-29 years: 1 | 0-4 years: 8
5-9 years: 9
10-14 years: 17
15-19 years: 4
20-29 years: 4 | 0-4 years: 1
5-9 years: 2
10-14 years: 7
15-19 years: 3
20-29 years: 2
30-39 years: 3 |

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[37] One tenure-track participant did not disclose their single mom identity.

Table 6. Profile of Fall 2020 Survey Participants[38]	
Academic Rank	**Undergraduate Student:** 0
	Master's Student: 0
	Doctoral Student: 2
	Non-Tenure Track Faculty: 5
	Tenure-Track Faculty: 1
	Tenured Faculty: 5
	Other: 1 (Postdoc)
Gender/Sexual Identity	**All 14 participants identify as cisgender females**
Racial or Ethnic Identity	**American Indian or Alaska Native:** 0
	Asian: 1
	Black or African American: 0
	Hispanic or Latinx: 1
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 0
	White: 11
	Other: 1
	I prefer not to answer: 0
Institutional Type	**Comprehensive University/Regional State University:** 11
	Four Year College: 0
	Small Private Liberal Arts College: 2
	Two Year College: 0
	Other: 1
Discipline	**Humanities:** 3
	STEM: 5
	Social Sciences: 5
	Rhet/Comp and Related Fields: 1
Marital Status	**Divorced:** 7
	Never Married: 3
	Separated: 1
	Single Mom by Choice: 1
Number of Children	**One:** 8
	Two: 6
	Three or More: 0
Ages of Children	**0-4 years:** 4
	5-9 years: 6
	10-14 years: 7
	15-19 years: 3

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[38] Due to a smaller number of participants and in order to maintain their anonymity, Table 6 is formatted differently from Table 5
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> Caregiving-Recommendations-June-23-2020.pdf.

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> delgado-community-colleges-single-moms-success-pilot/.

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Tuck, Eve and Yang, K. Wayne. "Introduction by the Journal Coeditors." *Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 1, Spring 2018, pp. 1-3.

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University of Wisconsin Madison, Women's and Gender Studies Consortium. "Statement Regarding Caregiving Recommendations." *University of Wisconsin-Madison.* 23 June 2020. https://consortium.gws.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/368/2020/06/WGSC-Caregiving-Recommendations-June-23-2020.pdf.

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    pregnant-academe-opinion.

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    tenure/Adaptations%20to%20the%20PT%20process%20due%20to%20COVID-19.pdf.

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    Officer." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* 26 Sept. 2008. *Business Insights: Essentials.* Web. 18

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Winn, Maisha T. "'Betwixt and between': literacy, liminality, and the celling of Black Girls." *Race

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ALEXANDRIA M. HANSON

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EDUCATION

PhD   Syracuse University, Composition and Cultural Rhetoric   December 2021

Dissertation Title: "Not Appropriate for Children: A Look at Composition Practices and Rhetorical Strategies of Single Moms in Academia" Dissertation Committee: Aja Martinez and Genevieve García de Müeller (Co-Chairs), Eileen Schell, Brice Nordquist, Kate Vieira

M.A.   California State University-Stanislaus (English)   2011
        TESOL Certificate
        Concentrations: Rhetoric and Teaching Writing and TESOL

B.A.   William Smith College, Writing and Rhetoric, *magna cum laude*   2008

ACADMEMIC APPOINTMENTS

At Syracuse University

Humanities Center Dissertation Fellowship   2020-21
Dissertation Fellow

Warrior-Scholar Project Writing Workshop   2020
Writing Tutor

Research Excellence Doctoral Funding Fellowship   2019-20
Composition and Cultural Rhetoric Dissertation Fellow

WRT 104: Introduction to College-Level Reading and Writing Practices   2019
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Designed and taught a six-week intensive summer course focused on reading scholarly texts, developing rhetorical awareness, understanding and practicing analysis and composing for a variety of audiences at the college-level.

Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition Program   2019
Summer Assessment Scorer

Fulbright Foreign Language TA Program   2017&19
Orientation Mentor

WRT 105: Practices of Academic Writing   2016-18
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Designed and taught five sections of a required introductory writing course that focused on developing rhetorical awareness, analysis, argument, and genre awareness and themed around identity, literacy, and language politics.

WRT 205: Critical Research and Writing   2017-18
Graduate Teaching Assistant

Designed and taught two sections of an intermediate required writing course that focused on research-based writing considering topics of research ethics, research and genre, and research methods, and that focused on an inquiry theme (taught Writing and Science, as well as Writing and the Arts).

At Hobart and William Smith Colleges

WRRH 105: English for Speakers of Other Languages   2011-16
Visiting Instructor
Designed and taught eight sections of an introductory writing-intensive TESOL course to multilingual students that focused on developing their American English language speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills themed around writing about experience in a new place.

WRRH 106: English for Speakers of Other Languages II   2012-16
Visiting Instructor
Designed and taught seven sections of an intermediate writing-intensive TESOL course to multilingual students that focused on developing their American English reading, writing, speaking, and listening with an emphasis on writing in the disciplines, presentations, and primary and library-based research skills.

WRRH 100:Writer's Seminar
Instructor
Designed and taught one section of an introductory writing course to develop students' academic writing proficiency and comfort, as well as awareness of rhetorical conventions, and an understanding of synthesis, evaluation of outside sources, integration of research, and critical reading and analysis.

WRRH 360: Writing Colleagues Placement   2011-15
Instructor
Designed and taught writing colleagues in seven sections that focused on supporting their ongoing work as curriculum-based peer tutors across disciplines.

WRRH 305: Writing Colleagues Seminar   2011-15
Writing Assistant
Supported writing colleagues in seven sections as an embedded peer tutor in their preparation to become curriculum-based peer tutors in courses across the curriculum.

Intercultural Affairs Writing Table   2011-13
Writing Tutor

HEOP College Writing   2012-13
Instructor
Designed and taught two sections of Introductory Writing to incoming first-year students in a 6-week intensive summer program themed around food, culture, and politics, and literacy, language, and educational history.

Summer Academy Writing   2013-15
Instructor
Designed and taught three class sessions on college writing to junior and senior high school students.

Center for Teaching and Learning   2007-08
Student Assistant

Center for Teaching and Learning 2007-08
Writing Colleague

Higher Education Opportunity Program 2007
Writing Colleague
At California State University, Stanislaus

ENGL 1000: Introduction to Composition 2010-11
Teaching Associate
Designed and taught two sections focused on reading and writing skills, particularly development and organization of ideas, as well as control of language at the sentence and paragraph level.

English Department, California State University, Stanislaus, Turlock, CA 2010
Teaching Assistant
Met with small groups of first-year writing students to assist with writing assignments.

Writing Center, California State University, Stanislaus, Turlock, CA 2009-10
Writing Tutor

Summer Bridge Program, California State University-Stanislaus, Turlock, CA 2010
Writing Tutor

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Syracuse University Press Intern, Syracuse University 2021
- Evaluated manuscript proposals
- Prepared editorial board proposals
- Researched, selected, and contacted manuscript reviewers
- Reviewed manuscript permissions

Assistant Director of TA Education, Syracuse University 2017-19
- Mentor Graduate Student TAs in introductory writing instruction
- Plan and organize TA pre-semester orientation for introductory writing courses
- Design and lead monthly workshops to support TA instruction
- Develop support materials for new TAs

20-Year Anniversary Community Day Planner, Syracuse University 2017
- Planned discussion sessions
- Managed recruitment and coordination of discussion facilitators
- Coordinated and organized discussion panels
- Introduced panel speakers and discussion activities

Writing Colleagues Program Coordinator, Hobart and William Smith Colleges 2011-15
- Mentor student Writing Colleagues in course placements
- Assist Director in course design and instruction of preparatory seminar
- Professional development of Writing Colleagues
- Design and instruct placement course
- Work with CTL staff to train Writing Fellows in work with international students
- Manage recruitment and collection of program applications

- Organize programmatic events each semester including invitation of speakers as well as welcome reception for newly accepted Writing Colleagues
- Develop promotional materials for program
- Review, synthesize, and archive end-of-semester Writing Colleague Evaluations
- Schedule all Writing Colleague placements

English Language Conversation Group Facilitator, Writing and Rhetoric, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY   2011-13
- Proposed and designed conversation group for international students
- Supervised First-Year students in facilitating conversation groups
- Organized publicity for group
- Scheduled all group meeting sessions

Freelance Editor, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY,   2008-09
- Edited and reviewed written work including dissertations, theses, cover letters, and research papers upon request

Front Desk Representative, Cornell University English Department, Ithaca, NY   2008-09
- Provided support to faculty and staff within the department by answering phone calls, handling questions, and arranging meetings
- Updated databases
- Proofread materials
- Assisted in organization of events, including development of publicity materials
- Managed program website

PUBLICATIONS

"Being Alone Together: The Affordances and Constraints of Social Media Groups for Single Moms." With Emily Donald. It Takes a Village: Academic Mothers Building Online Communities. Ed. Sarah Trocchio et al. [Accepted]

"Nobody to Share the Burden: The Importance of Empathy for Single Moms." Blog Carnival 18: The Role of Empathy in and after the Pandemic. *The Digital Rhetoric Collaborative.* March 2021.

"A 20-Step Guide to Combating the Invisibility of Graduate Student Parents." *What Graduate Students Do: Expertise, Ethics, and Exploitation.* Ed. Tessa Brown. University Press of Kansas Rethinking Careers, Rethinking Academia Series, [Forthcoming]

"Maintaining the Institution: Understanding the Invisible Labor of Single Moms." *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics.* 4.2 (Spring 2021).

"Making Space for What Lies in the Interstices: The Composing Practices of Single Moms." *Writers: Craft and Context.* 2.1 (Spring 2021).

"Combating White Supremacy in a Pandemic: Antiracist, Anticapitalist, and Socially Just Policy Recommendations in Response to COVID-19." With Genevieve García de Müeller, Ana Cortes, Laura Gonazales, Cody Jackson, Seth Kahn, B. E. Lopez, and Benesemon Simmons. *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics.* Deliberations (2020).

"Career Killer Survival Kit: Centering Single Mom Perspectives in Composition and Rhetoric." *Composition Studies.* 48.1 (Spring 2020).

"The Lives We Carry: The Challenges of Single Mother Graduate Students in Rhetoric and Composition." with Alejandra I. Ramirez, April Cobos, Heather Listhartke, and Skye Roberson. *Xchanges.* 15.1 (Spring 2020).

"Discussion of *Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America*, Conclusion." *HASTAC Collaborative Book Discussion.* (May 2020).

"A Review of Watson Session 'How and Why Digital Rhetoric Matters: Hashtag Feminism, Political Memes, and Pepe the Frog." *Digital Rhetoric Collaborative.* November 2018.

"Seeking Glimpses: Reflections on Doing Archival Work." With Stephanie Jones, T. Passwater, and Noah Wilson. *DisClosure.* 27 (2018).

Tarabochia, Sandra. Interview by Alex Hanson. *SWR Interview with Sandra Tarabochia.* March 2018.

"Flexing Nonverbal Muscles: The Role of Body Language in the Writing Center." *The Writing Lab Newsletter.* 36. 1-2. (August 2011). (as Alexandria Janney)

"Ending a Tutoring Session Happily Ever After." *The Dangling Modifier* 17.2. (Fall 2010). (as Alexandria Janney)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

"Making Responsive Spaces as Teachers and Colleagues." Conference on College Composition and Communication. Spokane, WA.   2021

"You're (Un)Welcome Here: The Rhetorics of Inclusion in Digital, Academic, and Community Spaces." Rhetoric Society of America. Portland, OR.   2020

"Resisting a Chilly Climate: Activism to Support Single Mothers in Higher Education." Feminisms and Rhetorics. Harrisonburg, VA.   2019

"Rhetorics of Motherhood Workshop." Rhetoric Society of America. College Park, MD.   2019

"Performing the Rhetorics of Family Friendly Policies: Rhetorics versus Realities in Writing Programs." Conference on College Composition and Communication. Pittsburgh, PA.   2019

"The Imagined Made Material: Methodologies and Knowledge-Making Practices that Liberate Absent, Invisible, and Ignored Communities." Thomas R. Watson Conference. University of Louisville, Louisville, KY.   2018

"What Counts as Success in Teaching College Composition? Rethinking Pedagogy." SUNY Council on Writing Conference, Syracuse. Onondaga Community College. Syracuse, NY   2017

"Teaching Techn(é/iques): Methods for Creating Wonder in the Composition Classroom." Computers and Writing Conference, Findlay. University of Findlay. Findlay, OH.   2017

"Opportunities Afforded in Supporting International Students." SUNY Council on Writing Conference, Albany. SUNY Albany. Albany, NY.   2016

"Curriculum and Classroom-Based Peer Tutoring, Program Development and Strategies."
International Writing Center's Association Conference, Pittsburgh. Wyndham Grand. Pittsburgh,
PA.   2015

"Using Embedded Tutors to Support Researched Writing across the Curriculum." Small Liberal Arts
Colleges Writing Program Administrators Conference. Illinois Wesleyan University.   2015

CCCC Research Network Forum: The Public Work of Composition. Conference on College
Composition and Communication, Las Vegas, NV.   2013

International Writing Center's Association Works in Progress Workshop, International Writing Center's
Association Conference, San Diego. Westin Hotel. San Diego, CA.   2012

"Using Writing Skills Assessment to Enhance the Success of At-Risk Students." Rhetoric Society of
America Conference, Philadelphia, The Loews Philadelphia Hotel. Philadelphia, PA   2012

"Returning 'Home': Making the Switch from Being a Writing Colleague Alumna to the Writing Colleague
Coordinator." East Central Writing Center Association Conference, Indiana University-Purdue
University. Indianapolis, IN.   2012

"The Literacy Risk Factor: Using Writing Skills Assessment to Enhance the Success of At-Risk Students."
Writing Program Administrators Conference, Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center. Baton Rouge,
LA.   2011

"The Taste of Language: Spicing up the Developmental Writing Classroom with a Pinch of Cultural
Rhetorics." Young Rhetoricians' Conference, The Monterey Beach Resort. Monterey, CA. 2011

"Critical Transitions: Using Literacy Assessment Data to Guide Retention Efforts for At-Risk Students."
Assessment Spotlight, California State University, Stanislaus. Turlock, CA.   2011

"Sustaining a Collaborative Footprint: How to Conserve the Connection Between High School and College
Writing Centers." Northern California Writing Centers Association 17th Annual Conference.
Mercy High School. Burlingame, CA.   2010

INVITED TALKS

"Resisting Standard English Ideologies." HWS Writing Colleague Training, Hobart and William Smith
Colleges. Geneva, NY.   2021

"Being Other: The Experiences of Single Academic Moms in Higher Education." CCR Community Day,
Syracuse University. Syracuse, NY.   2019

"Feminism and Motherhood." WRT 436. Syracuse University. Syracuse, NY.   2019

"Thinking through Academic Labor and the Labor of Care." CCR Colloquia. Syracuse University.
Syracuse, NY.   2018

"Working with Multilingual Writers in Curriculum-Based Peer Tutoring." WRRH 360. Hobart and
William Smith Colleges. Geneva, NY.   2015

"Supporting ESOL Students in the HWS Classroom." Center for Teaching and Learning Faculty
    Development. Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Geneva, NY.   2015

"Strategies for Supporting Multilingual Writers." Writing Colleague Professional Development Dinner.
    Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Geneva, NY.   2015

"Working with ELLs on Writing." Writing Fellow Training. Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Geneva,
    NY.   2011-15

"Working with International Students on Study Skills." Study Mentor Training. Hobart and William Smith
    Colleges. Geneva, NY.   2014

"Tutoring International Students." Teaching Fellow Training. Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Geneva,
    NY.   2013

"Working with Students on Grammar." Writing Colleague Professional Development Dinner. Hobart and
    William Smith Colleges. Geneva, NY.   2013

"Incorporating Writing Colleagues into Course Design." First-Year Seminar Workshop for Faculty. Hobart
    and William Smith Colleges. Geneva, NY.   2012

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE

Co-Managing Editor, *Xchanges*	2021-Present
Childcare Grants Coordinator, CCCC Feminist Caucus	2020-Present
Assistant Managing Editor, *Xchanges*	2020
Research Assistant, InterFaith Works of CNY/Office of New Americans, Syracuse, NY	2019
Graduate Committee Member, Writing Studies, Syracuse, NY	2018-19
Lower Division Committee Member, Writing Studies, Syracuse, NY	2017-18
Mentor, NY6 Undergraduate Research Conference, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY	2016
Member, Service Learning Advisory Council, HWS Colleges, Geneva, NY	2015-16
Co-facilitator, HWS Senior Symposium, HWS Colleges, Geneva, NY	2014-15
Juror, HWS First-Year Writing Prize, HWS Colleges, Geneva, NY	2014
ELL Tutor, Literacy Volunteers of Ontario Yates County, Canandaigua, NY.	2011-14
ESL Instructor, Community ESL at Cornell, Ithaca, NY	2009

AWARDS & HONORS

Graduate Dean's Award for Excellence in Research and Creative Work Honorable Mention	2021
Summer Dissertation Fellowship	2020

Nan Johnson Travel Award, Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference	2019
Certificate in University Teaching, Syracuse University	2019
HASTAC Scholar	2018-20
Childcare Grant, Conference on College Composition and Communication	2019
Graduate Student Organization Travel Grant, Syracuse University	2019
College of Arts and Sciences Summer Research Fellowship, Syracuse University	2018
Computers and Writing Travel Award	2017
Higher Education Opportunity Program Faculty Recognition Award	2015
Professional Development Award, Hobart and William Smith Colleges	2013
PEP Grant, Conference on College Composition and Communication	2013
Title V PPOHA Grant Project, CSU Stanislaus	2011