

Running Head: PROJECT PROPOSAL

“Time investment and associated stressors among females pursuing academic vocations”

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## **A. Abstract**

My project is an empirical, primarily quantitative study, whose purpose is to identify and describe the pressures felt by women working as professors at colleges and universities. The study will examine how Christian wives and mothers working as professors at a Christian university balance their time as professor, wife, and mother. The question addressed by this project has three parts:

Among women pursuing an academic vocation...

1. How much time is spent specifically in the roles of wife, mother, and professor?
2. What stressors are associated with each role?
3. How much satisfaction is derived from each role?

To obtain the data, I will construct a survey that asks questions pertaining to how female professors at four Christian colleges feel pressured to spend their time, where they do spend most of their time, what stressors they feel are associated with each role, and the sense of accomplishment felt from work in each role. The four colleges in this study will be Anderson University, Huntington University, Indiana Wesleyan University, and Taylor University, and the survey will be distributed to the female faculty members at each of these institutions. Although not all of these women will be mothers and wives, the data received from these women will allow for a control group and comparisons among the categories of women. The data collected will be primarily quantitative, although the instrument will include a few qualitative items whose use in the final study has yet to be determined. The data that I receive will then be compared and analyzed using a statistics program such as SPSS. I chose this methodology because the nature of the project will be best represented by using numbers, although there is also valuable

information that may be gained from qualitative data. Also, quantitative data is much easier to compare and work with qualitative information.

As described below in the review of primary literature, although a great amount of information exists concerning the different roles facing academic women, not much information is available about how women feel about these roles in which they find themselves. This project will focus on what happens to women internally when they accept these responsibilities, rather than just the external behaviors. This kind of motivational examination has yet to be studied. How women perceive and feel about these different realms will allow universities to better accommodate women who are also mothers. This information will also give some insight into the way women actually want to prioritize things in their lives, rather than just how the duties end up being prioritized.

Concerning my own career preparation, this project will benefit me in at least three main ways. First, the experience and skills I gain from working through a research project where I am the principal investigator will be extremely valuable to me. Since I plan on continuing my education, most likely to the doctoral level, I will undoubtedly be involved in many research studies. By already having the experience of completing a project, I will be much more able to succeed on other research projects that will come my way.

Also, I realize that I need to attend several years of graduate school in order to fulfill my vocation. Many of the programs to which I will apply are extremely competitive, and being able to show the admissions staff at graduate schools my manuscript for this project will ideally secure me acceptance at a desired school. Many

other students may not have the opportunity to do this sort of research, so my hope is that this project will make me stand out against some of the other applicants.

Finally, the information that I gather will be of great personal interest to me as I am a Christian woman who might one day work in the academic world. How these women perceive and balance their roles will give me a small amount of insight and advice as to how I might prioritize parts of my life in the future. I anticipate that many of the women will have much to say about their lives

### **B. Summary Review of Pertinent Background and Context**

Throughout the twentieth century, women fought for equality in the workplace and in family. In spite of this struggle, it still seems that the onus of the work for the family and the home is placed on the wife. Virtually all women, but especially those who are Christian, have an immense desire to be good wives and mothers. When this desire occurs in a woman who is also a professor, she finds herself having to make difficult decisions about what gets the majority of her time (Kimball et al., 2001; Sellers et al., 2006).

A widely-held, but often false stereotype of evangelical Christian women is that they all profess and subscribe to the traditional role of wife and mother. People both in and outside of the Church believe women should take the role of full-time mother, wife, cook, and maid (Sellers, Thomas, Batts, & Ostman, 2005). Studies have shown that these things in themselves undoubtedly constitute a full-time job in themselves (Yogev, 1982), but what about the Christian women who have a calling to work outside the home? These women perceive a tension between the views of their faith and the vocation to which they feel called.

Women often interpret the feelings of the Church to be that if a woman is a good Christian, not only will she stay home with her children, but this is what she truly wants (Thorstad, Anderson, Hall, Willingham, & Carruthers, 2006). One faculty member even expressed doubt that this feeling will diminish; calling it “entrenched” (Kimball, Watson, Canning, & Brady, 2001). This kind of thinking is pervasive, even though there are suggestions stating that when couples maintain traditional sex roles, there is a greater likelihood of distress in their marriage (Thorstad et al., 2006).

In addition to the Church, women often feel pressure from their role as wife and mother to spend a great deal of time with their husbands and children. Many women report not having as much time with their husbands as they would like, after spending so much time on their professional life and their children (Thorstad et al., 2006). A quote from one of the participants of a study done by Biernat and Wortman (1991) summarizes the plight of married professional women well: “Sometimes I feel like I should do more ‘wifely’ things.” This study also states that women judge themselves much more harshly than their husbands judge them, implying that at least some of the pressure women feel at home is self-inflicted (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). Sources also state that women feel they have taken on a great responsibility to raise children, and therefore put additional pressure on themselves to be good moms (Kimball et al., 2001; McClain, 2005).

Now the pressures women feel to have a family and be good wives and mothers are obvious, but the fact that this desired role affects women’s professional life is also important to consider. Women working outside the home, especially those employed at institutions of higher education, feel a great deal of pressure placed on them to succeed in their professional life. However, this success is much easier said than done. Many sources

cite the fact that women feel pulled from all sides, and therefore are not left with much time to devote to their careers (Belkin, 2005; Kimball et al., 2001; McClain, 2005; Wilson, 2004).

A great deal of a female professor's time and energy go directly to her children. Yogeve (1982) reports that married women with children spend eight hours less per week on their professional work than any other group of women. Thornton (2004) reiterates the point by making it clear that deciding when, and if, to have children is something that female graduate students should wrestle with before they even begin to look at the job market. Women often put off having children for a long period of time, or even at all, just because of the detrimental effect that having a child will have on a career. A fear that exists among female faculty is that they will not receive tenure on time if they take time to have a child (Wilson, 2003; Young & Wright, 2001). Even female faculty at institutions that allow women a year off the tenure clock immediately after the birth of a child often do not take advantage of this opportunity. Many feel it would label them as "mommy" and be harmful to their future career pursuits (Wilson, 2001a). To cope with the stresses of motherhood, some female faculty are turning to smaller, non-research based colleges, for their careers. They find less pressure to spend such a large amount of time on the job and are usually given more freedom to take time off work to care for their children (Schneider, 2000).

Duties common to housewives are also time-consuming and therefore damaging to academic careers. One woman who has recognized the great amount of time and energy spent on tasks at home has even gone so far as to set up a foundation that provides women working in the sciences with money that allows them to hire someone to help

cook, clean, and care for the children (Belkin, 2005). It appears that while husbands are important to their wives, husbands are often made a last priority, because other responsibilities seem so much more pressing (Thorstad et al, 2006).

With the exception of a few general references to how women order things in their life (Thorstad et al., 2006), no study has examined from which realm women feel the most pressure. The aim of this study is to determine from where female faculty at four Christian colleges and universities feel most pressured to devote their time and where they actually do spend the majority of their time.

### **C. Working Bibliography**

Aisenberg, N. & Harrington, M. (1988). *Women of academe: Outsiders in the sacred grove*. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press

This book, which appears to be foundational to the study of women in academia, catalogs a study that interviewed 37 women about their experiences that led to their “falling off the normal career track.” Several themes emerged from these interviews, including the problem of how power is used in the university and how higher education is often comparable to a game. The book is written from an academic and feminist school of thought and uses a qualitative methodology.

This work is relevant to the current research because it shows that women across the board feel they are being discriminated against in the university.

Belkin, L. (2005, June 5). What a working woman needs: A wife. *The New York Times*, p. C1

This article describes the Nobel Prize winner Dr. Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard’s new plan to encourage talented women working in the field of science to

continue doing so. She provides qualified women with money to spend on cleaning and childcare to give them more time for their academic work. This article is written from a feminist point of view and the data was collected normatively. The article is related to the project at hand by relaying how torn women feel between their life at work and their life at home.

Biernat, M. & Wortman, C. B. (1991). Sharing of home responsibilities between professionally employed women and their husbands. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(6), 844-860.

This research report describes a study done of professional couples' division of tasks in the home and each spouse's perception of the home life. It found that for the most part, traditional sex roles were filled and that women were much more critical of themselves than their husbands were. The article was written with a qualitative methodology and from an academic perspective. This article is relevant to the current research study because some of the women in the study were university professors and their answers help relay how many women in their field feel.

Caplan, P. J. (1994). *Lifting a ton of feathers: A woman's guide to surviving in the academic world*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

This book is a handbook for women who desire to have a career in the academic world. The piece has a great deal of information about the current state of the university, and suggestions for both individuals and institutions about how they can overcome the hurdles. The book is written from an academic and feminist point of view, using a normative methodology. This book is relevant to the

current research because it catalogs many of the problems women face in the university and also supplies suggestions to deal with these issues.

Curtis, J. W. (2004). Balancing work and family for faculty. *Academe*, 90(6), 21-23.

This article presents the need for colleges and universities to restructure their policies concerning family affairs, in order to make them more useful and beneficial to faculty members. Changing them will result in benefits for both the institution and the individual faculty member. The information for this piece was gathered normatively and is written from an academic school of thought. That this article presents the need for a change of structure in academia shows that a problem exists and that women are being faced with decisions that are very difficult to make.

Euben, D. (2004). Family matters. *Academe*, 90(6), 118-118.

This article is a short piece that gives a cursory look at four court cases pertaining to sex discrimination and tenure denial. The article is written using a normative methodology and from an academic school of thought. This work relevant to the study at hand because it shows that there is great controversy over the way women divide their time between work and home.

Gutner, T. (2002, September 23). Working moms: Don't feel so guilty. *Business Week*, p. 127.

This article calls into question the findings of a study that suggests children suffer when their mother works outside the home when the child is an infant. The article concludes that mothers who work will not damage their children, as long as they can afford good childcare and are attentive when they are with their

children. The author has a professional, maternal school of thought, and the methodology is qualitative. This article important to the research project because it relieves some of the guilt or shame mothers might have for working outside the home.

Kimball, C. N, Watson, T., Canning, S. S., & Brady, J. L. (2001). Missing voices: Professional challenges for academic women. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 20*, 132-144.

This article suggests certain barriers exist for female professors who are also mothers, not to mention expectations from home concerning their role as wife. The normative article draws on several quantitative and qualitative studies and is written from a Christian and academic perspective. This relates to the current research because it shows that women continue to encounter hurdles in the university and the home that make them feel inadequate in both settings.

Kingston, A. (2004). *The meaning of wife*. New York Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

This book is a social commentary on what a wife is in society today. Kingston examines the role of wife throughout history and from several viewpoints. The book is written from a feminist perspective and the information was collected normatively. These statements about how women view the role of wife are important to the project, as there is a great psychological aspect to the decisions women make about their families and careers.

Lott, B. (1994). *Women's lives: Themes and variations in gender learning*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

This book is a general use text that looks at the way women act and are treated in various areas of life. Different chapters include how women develop their identity through their childhood, what bearing biology has on a women, and the cultural expectations placed on women. This book is written from a feminist point of view using a normative methodology. The piece is significant to the study, because it contains information concerning women's role in the workplace, which for some women is the academic world.

McClain, L. T. (2005). Mom on sabbatical. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52(15), C1-C4.

This article depicts the sabbatical of a woman who is struggling with the question of how much time to spend with her daughter and how much to spend on her work. She also mentions the opinions of other women in her position and the reactions of other faculty members of her university. The article is autobiographical in methodology from an academic mother's perspective. This piece is relevant to the current research because it is another example of how women struggle to balance home and work, even when on sabbatical.

Moreton, A. & Newsom, R. W. (2004). Personal and academic backgrounds of female chief academic officers in evangelical Christian colleges and universities: Part 1. *Christian Higher Education*, 3, 79-95.

This research report details the familial, social, and academic backgrounds of sixteen women who hold high-level positions in evangelical Christian colleges across the United States. The article is written from a Christian and academic point of view using a qualitative methodology. This article is important to the

study because it looks at why Christian women in higher education made the decision they did early in their careers.

Ravizza B. R. & Peterson-Iyer, K. (2005). Motherhood and tenure: Can catholic universities support both? *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 8(3), 305-325.

This article presents the difficulties that exist for young professors who are also parents to be successful in both their career and family roles. They also point out that since Catholicism places such an emphasis on family, Catholic universities should be the first to make changes in structure to allow talented professors to be good parents as well. This piece is written from an academic and Catholic perspective using a normative methodology. The article pertains to this study in nearly all areas: it examines Christian female professors/mothers and their desire to be good at both their vocations.

Reinstra, D. (2003). *Great with child: On becoming a mother*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.

In this book, Reinstra journals and documents thoughts, feelings, and events surrounding the birth of her third child. The book is written from a Christian, maternal perspective and the information was collected autobiographically. The fact that she is a mother working at a Christian school makes it relevant and applicable to the project.

Saul, J. M. (2003). *Feminism: Issues and arguments*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This book looks at issues that have faced women throughout history and also contains a little about the history of feminism. Topics addressed include sexual harassment, the feminist bias, and how language affects feminism. The book is written from a feminist school of thought using a normative methodology. The piece is relevant to the current study because there is information concerning the balance of work role within the home for couples.

Schneider, A. (2000). Female Scientists turn their backs on jobs at research universities. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46(50), A12-A14.

This article states that more and more women are choosing to take positions at small liberal arts colleges, rather than large research universities. Some reasons for this are: more easily attainable tenure, more joy from teaching, and more time to start and devote to family. This article is written normatively from an academic and feminist perspective. This information is relevant to this research because it shows that women may be choosing not to take high profile and high-prestige positions, rather than being blocked from them.

Sellers, T. S., Thomas K., Batts, J., & Ostman, C. (2005). Women called: A qualitative study of Christian women dually called to motherhood and career. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 33(3), 198-209.

This research report describes a qualitative study done of eleven women involved in Christian academia and how they balance their roles as both professional and mother. The authors found information concerning motives of these women and also what the professional tell younger women facing the same issues. The qualitative study is written from a Christian and academic point of

view. This is important to the current research because it integrates the Christian aspect of women's lives with their sense of vocation and motherhood.

Thorstad, R. R., Anderson, T. L., Hall, M. E. L., Willingham, M., & Carruthers, L. (2006). Breaking the mold: A qualitative exploration of mothers in Christian academia and their experiences of spousal support. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(2), 229-251.

This research article is the write-up from a study that interviewed thirty female professors who are also mothers and evangelical Christians. The study examined how the support of these women's husbands affected them emotionally and pragmatically at home. The study is written from an academic school of thought using a qualitative method. This article is relevant to the research project because it combines many areas of the study; namely Christianity, motherhood, and working in an academic setting.

Thorton, S. (2004). Where—not when—should you have a baby? *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(7), B12-B12.

This article is about the aspects of a university female should examine if they wish to have a child during their career. She gives several aspects of a job female faculty should consider before accepting a job. The data was collected normatively and from personal experience, and the article was written from the perspective of an academic. This is relevant to the current study because it names several specific details a woman should examine that will affect both her career and her decision to have a child.

Wilson, R. (1997). At Harvard, Yale, and Stanford, women lose tenure bids despite backing from departments. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 43(39), A10-A11.

This article describes the situations of three female professors who were denied tenure at their respective institutions, in spite of the fact their departments supported them. Each of the women believes her sex is what prevented her reception of tenure. The article is written normatively and with qualitative interviews from an academic feminist perspective. This relates to the research at hand because one of the women states she did not receive tenure because she is a mother and this made the administration uncomfortable.

Wilson, R. (2001a). A push to help new parents prepare for tenure reviews. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 48(11), A10-A12.

This article examines a new statement made by the American Association of University Professors that suggests colleges and universities should allow faculty (both men and women) to take a year off the tenure track to take care of new children. This piece also states that even at schools where this option is available, most faculty members do not take advantage of it. The article is written from an academic feminist perspective using a qualitative methodology.

This information is relevant to the current project because it describes the perspective of faculty members concerning having and caring for children.

Wilson, R. (2001b). For women with tenure and families, moving up the ranks is challenging. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 48(11), A11-A13.

This article looks at how women, even those who have earned tenure, still struggle with juggling their careers and families. Female professors often have

trouble attaining the rank of full professor because so much of their time must go to teaching, administrative duties, and taking care of their family that no time is left to do research and write. This piece is written from academic, feminist perspective and by a normative methodology. This information is relevant to the study because it shows what an effect family life can have on the careers of faculty members.

Wilson, R. (2003). How babies alter careers for academics. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50(15), A1-A8.

This article cites several studies that come to the conclusion that for women working in the academic world, having a child can be equivalent to career suicide. Most of the focus is on the differences between men and women concerning how having children affects their careers. The article is written by an academic feminist using a normative methodology. This article relates to the current project because it directly examines the effects of motherhood on academic females' careers.

Wilson, R. (2004). Where the elite teach, it's still a man's world. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, (51)15, A8-A14.

This article describes a study that examines hiring percentages (based on gender) at 50 top research universities. It found that the rate of women earning doctoral degrees greatly exceeds the rate at which female faculty are being hired. The article is written normatively, describing a quantitative study. The author writes from an academic and feminist point of view. This data is important because it

shows that a disparity exists between men and women concerning hiring at some universities.

Wilson, R. (2005). Report calls for a more flexible tenure process. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52(25), A13.

This article states that leaders of colleges and universities are beginning to realize that the current tenure process in place at most institutions is not conducive to those faculty members, especially women, who desire to raise a family while working. The article is written from an academic, feminist point of view and a normative methodology is used. This piece is relevant to this research project because it shows that the current tenure process is not ideally set up for women to succeed.

Yogev, S. (1982). Are professional women overworked? Objective versus subjective perception or role loads. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 55, 165-169.

This research article reports a study done of 164 full-time faculty members evaluating the number of hours they work each week (both professionally and in the home) and whether or not they feel overworked. Women, on average, do not feel that they are overworked, even when working in excess of 100 hours per week. The information was collected quantitatively and written from an academic and maternal perspective. This article relates to the research because it shows that both professional and personal priorities are important to professional women, even when requiring an extraordinary amount of time.

Young, D. S. & Wright, E. M. (2001). Mothers making tenure. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 37(3), 555-568.

This research article describes a survey of 22 recently tenured, social work professors who are also mothers that examined aspects such as perception of tenure process, struggles to attaining tenure, personal strategies, and issues encountered within the university. The answers received were grouped into themes and cover a wide array of answers, showing that different women have drastically different experiences when working toward tenure. The article is written from an academic and feminist perspective using a qualitative methodology. This information pertains to the study because it shows how being a mother affects the tenure process for women.

#### **D. Preliminary Reflections on Faith and Scholarship**

I believe my faith will greatly influence my project in both how I work on it and how I shaped the questions I am addressing. As a Christian, I find the verse found in Colossians 3:23 to be very applicable to this situation, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though working for God and not for man.” This verse clearly states that in anything one does, he or she should work at it as though the work is for God Himself and not for anyone here on earth. Since this is a commandment directly from the Word of God, I feel I should commit to act with this kind of passion and devotion in everything I undertake, including this research. I understand that this project is going to be a great deal of work and that self-motivation will be key to my success. If I view this project as I should biblically, then I will not put partial effort into it, I will truly work at it as though I am directly reporting to God

My Christian faith has also informed the questions I am asking. I believe Christian women feel more of a call or even obligation to work in the home, and they

sometimes sacrifice their professional careers to accomplish these responsibilities`q. I have seen this first hand in my home church, which I attend because of my faith. I am interested in looking at these questions because I think that Christian women perceive their roles differently than women who are not Christians. I think the Christian women feel more expectations placed on them to work first and foremost as a wife and mother, while other women may feel more comfortable only working outside the home.

The outcomes I anticipate may, as I suspect they will, show that women feel a great deal of pressure from their church and family to be good wives and mothers, while also feeling the pressure from their respective university to succeed professionally. If these affirmations of my hypothesis are the outcomes, they will demonstrate the Christian worldview that many people have of women and their work within the home.

#### **E. Evaluation Process**

For evaluation of my work on this project, my advisor, Dr. Tim Steenbergh, will measure my achievement primarily by the work presented at weekly meetings. The purpose of these meetings is mainly for direction and accountability. At each meeting, the expectations of work for the next meeting will be established, so I am certain on what exactly much be accomplished. I will be graded out of 100 points divided as follows: 25 points for the meetings, 25 points for data collection, and 50 points for the final manuscript. This final report will consist of four sections: literature review, methods, results, and discussion.