

WORKING-WHILE-PARENTING AT TRENT – A PHOTOVOICE STUDY OF
TRENT WORKING-PARENT EXPERIENCES

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT

Working-While-Parenting at Trent – A Photovoice Study of Trent Working-Parent Experiences

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Many middle-class families, according to Whiteman (2023) find it challenging to manage unless both parents contribute financially through employment. I chose to become a professional because I'd wanted better employment options. My academic research interests soon had me wondering what working-while-parenting experiences were like for other professionals. The overarching topic of my master's thesis was working-while-parenting. The study broadly explored how working experiences affect the parenting goals and/or family well-being of securely employed Trent faculty and/or staff.

Trent working parents shared the experiences that *working interferes with parenting*; and that parents have *specific* work-life balance needs; they also shared the perspective that *parenting accessibility is a working parent right*. Trent working parents indicated that success in fulfilling their parenting goals, needs and responsibilities, requires *priority, presence* and at times, *childcare*. It was recommended that specific Trent Working Parent Representation be more broadly interpreted and purposefully approached.

Keywords: *Working-while-parenting; Work-life balance; Parenting goals; Family well-being; Presence and childcare needs; Parenting accessibility as a right; Working parent representation.*

LAND & KNOWLEDGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Trent University, situated in Peterborough and Durham, is on the treaty and ancestral lands of the Mississauga (Michi Saagiig) Anishnaabeg. This territory includes the communities of Curve Lake First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. In this area, Treaty 20 was established in 1818, and later, the Williams Treaties were signed in 1923 (Trent University, 2025, a).

We respectfully acknowledge that we are on the treaty and traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishnaabeg. We offer our gratitude to the First Nations for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations. May we honour those teachings

(Trent University, 2025, a).

I respectfully acknowledge that this work is representative of a Master's in Canadian Studies *and* Indigenous Studies. Although the focus of this research study formed more around that of a Canadian Studies perspective, it was nonetheless an honour and privilege to have been guided by both Indigenous Studies and Canadian Studies Scholars at Trent. May I always Honour the knowledge and narratives that have been shared with me throughout my extraordinary academic time here. Migwetch, Merci, and Thank You.

WITH GRATITUDE...

I am grateful to my children, for the honour of becoming their parent and to my husband, for supporting me in my parenting and vocational dreams.

I am grateful to Brenda Whiteman, for her nurturing friendship and for her revolutionary book, *Unmet Needs Never Go Away*, which offers insightful and timely solutions about working-while-parenting and has significantly inspired this study.

I am grateful for both my working- and studying-while-parenting research participants and hope that through their contributions to my studies at Trent, they too feel validated in pursuing more family-friendly work and study opportunities.

I am hopeful that Trent University and other Canadian institutions that benefit from the invaluable time and energy of all parenting individuals, will continue to 'care' more fully about our collective societal caring responsibilities.

This amazing research experience would not have been possible without the wonderful guidance and support of my Supervisor, Dr. Kristy Buccieri; and my Supervisory Committee, Drs. Sally Chivers and David Rapaport - as well as the generosity and accessibility of the Trent academic community.

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INTRODUCTION

There is so much more to human life than the pursuit of a comfortable lifestyle, and although it is necessary to the safe environment to raise children, it is only the foundation (Whiteman, 2023: 55).

Main Issue. Our modern Canadian society, according to Whiteman (2023), Licensed Clinical Social Worker¹, has reached a point where new parents are expected to unnaturally separate from their young children for extended hours daily; she not only discusses a collective lack of awareness regarding the gravity of such a decision but also offers insightful and timely solutions. Whiteman (2023) questions whether the relentless pursuit of socioeconomic success has incurred unnoticed costs to our well-being and societal values – especially in regard to raising our children.

Many parents are simply forced to work. Many middle-class families, according to Whiteman (2023), still find it challenging to manage unless both parents contribute financially through employment. Dependency is a natural stage in a child's development and cannot be rushed – as child-parent dependency serves as a critical foundation for

¹ Drawing on more than three decades of experience as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Whiteman has practiced in a range of settings, including: Mental Health Agencies, Children's Mental Health Services, Public Schools, Private Educational Institutions, Primary Health Care Environments, and Private Practice (Brenda Whiteman Psychotherapy, 2025). Whiteman delivers a diverse range of clinical services in specialized areas such as Individual Psychotherapy, Couples Counseling, Family Therapy, Parenting Support, Spiritual Guidance for Personal Growth, Trauma Therapy using EMDR, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), as well as Educational Workshops and Seminars on Mental Health Topics (Brenda Whiteman Psychotherapy, 2025).

eventual independence (Whiteman, 2023). Here lies the modern working-parent social conundrum...

Every woman has this innate ability to know and understand the voracious needs of her child, but it has largely been driven out of her by the society in which she has been raised. She must find it again. She must not be content to accept the hollow definition of “acceptable” maternal behaviour that modern society has superimposed on her (Whiteman, 2023: 58).

Positionality I. I'll never forget that heart-tearing feeling of dropping off my screaming infant son at daycare for the first time. Despite what modern society expected of me; my *innate* maternal instincts told me it was unnatural for my child and I to be separated from each other for many hours each day. My *voracious* parenting goals seemed unreachable over those eighteen months that I worked full-time to pay someone to care for my child.

My primary parenting goal upon returning to my profession after maternity leave was to work part-time to maintain work-life balance. My employer, however, soon made that goal impossible. Despite my multiple attempts to negotiate family-friendly hours and benefits, I was ultimately forced to choose between working full-time and sacrificing my parenting commitments or working part-time and losing my family health benefits. This unfair and discriminatory employment choice was the second I'd faced as a new parent and seasoned professional. While on maternity leave, my regulatory college refused to acknowledge my absence as warranted and had suspended my license.

These impossible work choices left me feeling angry and jaded as a parent. I'd chosen to become a *professional* because I'd wanted better employment options. Higher

pay, inclusive benefits, regular vacation, and multiple other perks – all these professional privileges I'd come to depend on. Never did I expect that they'd be withheld once I had dependents of my own. I wanted more for my family, so I chose to go back to school instead. My academic research interests soon had me wondering what working while parenting experiences were like for other professionals.

Reflections² on Feminist Conceptualizations of Care and Working-while-Parenting

How can care work be so essential and yet so undervalued? (Chivers, 2024).

Neoliberalism functions under the individualized, rather than collective good, premises of economic profit and market freedom. The undervaluing of care work is directly in line with these social conceptualizations in that they exploit the responsabilization of working-while-parenting. Profit is too often only measured in monetary ways over that of social welfare, which is largely in coordination with individual market freedom over collective social responsibility. In short, why invest in care work when working parents will either perform it themselves and/or facilitate it for free? Ultimately, the undervaluing of care work equates to the undervaluing of child and family welfare in the capitalist neoliberal state.

² Much of my inspiration for my research thesis has come from my related CSID 5701 reflection pieces on feminist care theory, which were student prompts to guide and initiate discussions in a graduate course that explored feminism, gender, and women in Canada and North America through the lens of care. I've included these portions because I felt that they were especially relevant to the topic of working while parenting.

Chunn (2014) assessed the Canadian legal transformation of *the Family* from a feminist reform perspective. Canadian social movements, since 1840, were described and included three key transformations from of a *white settler/industrial capitalist/laissez-faire* state; to a *corporate capitalist/welfare* state; to a *transnational capitalist/neo-liberal* state (Chunn, 2014). In association with these state transformations, the patriarchal conceptualization of “the Family” also changed forms, according to Chunn (2014) from an *authoritarian to welfare to an egalitarian* model, which was greatly influenced by *first-wave maternal* and *second-wave liberal feminist* movements. Despite these socio-legal reforms, the *nuclear family* form, which is based on *heterosexual* marriage, *sexual separations* between labour and *public/private sphere* divisions, has remained prominent (Chunn, 2014). These reforms of Canadian state, law and family were described as having contradictory effects in that they often reinforced the status quo of social organization, which have traditionally been based on the values of the dominant social group – white, bourgeois, heterosexual men, while perpetuating social inequalities amongst marginalized groups – and especially women and/or *feminized* labour (Chunn, 2014).

Positionality II. I’m not my mother’s generation’s kind of *Feminist*. In fact, that term scared me and seemed more offensive than the other *f-word* for the better part of my twenties and thirties. Growing up in the eighties and nineties, I had been mostly exposed to what I now understand to be *radical* feminism – that man-bashing, women-can-do-anything-men-can-do (and better) kind of feminism. When I decided to become a Mother and despite my *radical* upbringing, I knew that I would either find a complementary partner and co-parent or choose not to become a parent at all. It wasn’t

until I reluctantly but thankfully took some (Gender and) Women's Studies courses at Trent that I learned about the historical movements and contemporary categorizations of feminism. Most importantly, I learned that there are different types of Feminists and that I could decide what kind I'd like to be, for myself.

Chunn (2014) listed the positive reproductive labour-related effects of first-wave *maternal* feminism as the legal recognition of women's unpaid reproductive work in the private sphere as well as mother's pensions/allowances that recognized state responsibility in reproduction. Negative, differential effects, however, were identified as the assumption of women's unpaid, reproductive work and thus reinforcement of their economic dependency as well as the often-unsuccessful state enforcement of private familial responsibility in reproduction (Chunn, 2014).

Chunn (2014) listed the positive reproductive labour-related effects of second-wave *liberal* feminism as socio-legal reform based on gender neutrality in that legal equality abolished overt *sexual discrimination* and state enforcement of *female dependency* as well as the establishment of *parental leave* that permitted more gender equality in the private/public spheres. Negative, differential effects, however, were identified as the enduring double standard with regards to sexual divisions of labour in that *stay-at-home mothers remained favourable* to fathers as well as the focus on *familial/private responsibility* for the cost of reproduction that often placed many women and children in vulnerable positions (Chunn, 2014).

At heart, I believe myself to be a *maternal-social* feminist, however, functioning within the logistics of neoliberal feminism. What that means to me is that I fully support

the state's legal recognition and responsibility of reproductive labour, by either and optimally any parents - inclusive of all genders. As both a stepparent and birthparent, I too have experienced the limitations of the nuclear family model that persists in Canadian law and social policy. My stepdaughter, for example, often finds it difficult to define her family form within governmental parameters that don't always take blended households and/or shared parental units into consideration – not to mention their continued gender binary focus.

But from my neo-social-welfare viewpoint, state support doesn't go nearly far enough – especially when it comes to the responsabilization of employers. The continued differentiation between state or public responsibility and familial or private responsibility is where I feel many social problems persist in economically and equitably addressing reproductive labour. How can two closely correlated and interdependent social spheres ever be separated with regards to responsibility? To me, this is the consequence of allowing a neoliberal mandate, which is founded in individualistic capitalist values of free markets and profitability, to determine the social realities of everyday Canadian parents and families. Like the conflict of interests and blatant disregard that continue to come to light regarding corporate priorities and socio-environmental consequences, capitalist values are simply not congruent with a sustainable or equitable society.

Parental Leave in Canada is by far superior to some other nations – especially in comparison to our southern neighbours in the United States. American parents, for example, are expected to return to work only three months *or less* post-birth. The *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*, according to the U.S Department of Labor (2025), allows

eligible American employees to take up to twelve weeks of *unpaid*, job-secured leave annually, following the birth of a newborn child, and mandates that *any* group health insurance coverage continues throughout the leave period. New Canadian parents, comparatively, can now access up to eighteen months of state-funded time away from their employment responsibilities to focus on their family commitments. It's debateable, however, whether our current parental leave funding model of fifty-five percent of regular employment income is accessible and equitable to all Canadian families – especially since employer top-ups are not regulated nor are private savings a guarantee.

What often becomes especially difficult for many Canadian parents is not so much that first year and a half of sleeplessly navigating their new or growing family commitments, but rather their expected transition back to regular employment, when their partially state-funded parental leave comes to an end. Without governmental regulation and responsabilization of employers with regards to specific working-while-parenting rights, such as accessible, affordable childcare, parent-friendly working conditions and environments, and family-friendly employment relations and policies - parents and families are too often held privately and individually responsible for public and collective neoliberal problems. The mental, emotional and physical sustainability of a society that is economically dependent upon both the production and reproduction of its citizens is critical. And when human productivity suffers so do capitalist profits. It's a losing and care-less social problem that has many mutually beneficial and caring solutions. But perhaps that's too radical...

A *Feminist Ethics of Care*, according to McGregor (2022) emphasizes that we are not independent, autonomous individuals, but rather are shaped by our familial ties and networks of relationships. McGregor (2022) reflected on her continuous absorption of the lessons in radical care imparted by her mother. These lessons weren't about moral purity but about political intensity. She now understands that *ferocity* can be a form of care; it represents caring so deeply about the feminist relationality of the world that one relentlessly fights for it - "*We are who we care for, and who cares for us*" (McGregor, 2022: 29).

Klostermann (2022) utilized a *Feminist Political Economy* perspective in rethinking ideas and arrangements related to caregiving. Many, mostly women, caregivers in Ontario's care sectors, according to Klosterman (2022), have become completely exhausted by the prolonged lack of social investment and supports available to them; many of whom have made the difficult choice to limit or turn away from their paid and/or unpaid care responsibilities. Inspired by her own experiences of care work burnout, Klosterman (2022) examined the moral effects, on carers, of withdrawing from the care sector; centered by the impact of paid and unpaid caregiving responsibilities on women's lives - both within and outside of formal working hours.

What is the effect of privatization on care? (Chivers, 2024). Privatization effects the care work required to support working while parenting as any other sector by focussing on increasing profit whilst decreasing accountability. The commodification of childcare through capitalist neoliberal privatization has resulted in children themselves becoming merely another free-market commodity and has left working parents at the

mercy of the private business model of childcare provision - often working only to pay for the cost of childcare. This is commonly not in the best or in any interest of children. Childcare policy and standards aside, like all private sectors, when profits fall below margins that are considered to be acceptable, private childcare providers can simply shut down – and they do. This is not to mention the fact that childcare workers, who are primarily women and often mothers themselves, consequently, have little to no security or representation in private childcare employment situations.

Tronto (2013) considered the social intersections between care, equality, and democracy regarding the many cyclical disadvantages of the privatization of caring for children. She specifically examined the concept of care in the context of how we look after our children and particularly noted how infrequently conversations about motherhood transcend class divisions. The existing ‘winner-take-all structure’ of the political economy, according to Tronto (2013) forces caregivers to undermine equality to provide care - leading to a persistent cycle of unequal care.

How is care a shared responsibility and what are the consequences of trying to make it seem like an individual responsibility? (Chivers, 2024). The stark rise in living costs over the past seventy-five years can be associated with another close adversary for families – the change in Canadian government structure, from the social welfare to the capitalist neoliberal state. Social welfare was structured on state and collective responsibility, whereas capitalist neoliberalism on private and individual responsibility. The care crisis itself and all those who are affected by it is the direct consequence of care work being socially regarded as a private-individual responsibility. Our current care crisis

stems largely from a society more focused on self-interest than on valuing and supporting collective caregiving.

Tronto (2013) began by assessing the gender-based differences in childcare responsibilities and then analyzed the connection between private childcare and social equality. The reality that employment prevents women from providing care should exempt them from caregiving responsibilities, but persistent social expectations still demand that working mothers care for their children (Tronto, 2013; Moyser, 2017); the constant caregiving demands placed on working parents, and particularly mothers, foster a neoliberal individualistic ‘care-for-my-own mindset’, where individuals feel responsible only for providing direct care to themselves and their own families. When individuals in an unequal society focus solely on private care, according to Tronto (2013), they exacerbate significant inequalities and prevent some from attaining true citizenship. Tronto (2013) described a societal move toward a more caring democracy:

Unless caring responsibilities are rethought with the concerns of genuine equality in mind, then there can be little process toward a more [caring] democratic society (Tronto, 2013: 97).

Positionality III.

“Money Changes Everything,” according to the 80’s pop-punk artist, Cyndi Lauper – but does it really? As a child of the ‘material’ era, I was recently belting out the lyrics to this song, while doing something in my kitchen.

“No, it doesn’t Mom!” my nearly ten-year-old son yelled from the nearby living room.

“Mmhm what?” I said, not really paying much attention to the exchange at first.

“Money, Mom – money doesn’t change everything!” he yelled insistently and with just a hint of his usual slyness.

“Oh no?” I said, teasingly attuning to his tone and anticipating his next words.

“It’s love Mom, not money - Love changes everything!!!” he proudly and loudly proclaimed.

“Well, that’s for sure - and I’m so glad that you know that my Love!” I assuredly said as I went back to my chore, with a little smile in knowing that my son was not of the same material era – neither seriously nor in jest.

“Actually Mom,” he said with a wide grin and in full pride of his cleverness, “A Mommy changes everything...”

“Oh really!?” I both laughed and groaned in his general direction, “And don’t I know it – you little stinker!!!”

Now who can really argue with that, I thought, for becoming a Mother had certainly changed me - both in labour and in love.

It had taken me nearly four decades to (un)learn what my son had thankfully been taught in only one. Like many young modern professional women, I had once fallen victim to what Whiteman (2023) referred to as “The Seduction of the [working while parenting] Culture.” By my mid-thirties, I had acquired all of the neoliberal commodities that society expected of me and in the proper Western-European cultural order - the profession, the partner, the house and car; the investment portfolio - the quintessential nest, nester and nest egg. Becoming a parent should have been the next *sociological* step. In the traumatic aftermath, however, of being forced back to work fulltime, when

my son was but twelve-months-old and still breastfeeding, I vividly recall having to psyche myself up for work after tearfully dropping him at off daycare. Hadn't I heard somewhere (or from someone), I consoled myself, that I should be proud to be a strong Feminist woman who could do (and have) it all? But at what cost...

STUDY OVERVIEW

Purpose and Rationale. The overarching topic of my thesis was *working while parenting*. The study broadly explored how working experiences affect the parenting goals of securely employed Trent faculty and/or staff. Some more specific inquiries included parenting goals; employment supports and/or barriers to parenting goals; and employee suggestions to better support parenting goals and so on. One of the main goals of the research was to gather firsthand insights from working parents, via personal experiences and photographic expressions, to better guide and/or support the development of related policies and services that are more accessible to parents.

Significance. This research extended working while parenting knowledge from a unique Canadian perspective and will fill the research gap by focusing on *secure*, rather than precarious, employment experiences of working parents at Trent University. The overarching research goal was to inform, empower and interconnect working parents at Trent, whilst advocating for structural-institutional reform regarding supports and/or barriers to achieving parenting goals and family wellbeing. With research that is current and specific to Trent University, policy and/or service reforms, which could better support the parenting success of Trent faculty and/or staff may be formally considered.

Operationalization of Key Terms. Throughout this study, I will use the concept of *Working Parent* to refer to any *secure* part or fulltime employee who is working at Trent while raising *dependent* children.

Lewchuk (2017) categorized four levels of *employment security*: secure, stable, vulnerable, and precarious. The *Employment Precarity Index*, EPI was employed to examine the security attributes associated with various types of employment arrangements; some traits commonly associated with temporary employment included uncertainty regarding future job prospects, fluctuating income, and variable work schedules (Lewchuk, 2017). Both the secure and stable employment categories align closely with the *Standard Employment Relationship*, SER category; official labour market statistics offer two potential metrics for assessing SER: the proportion of full-time employment and the proportion of permanent employment (Lewchuk, 2017).

I will use the concept of *Parenting Success* to refer to Trent working-parents' self-determined ability to achieve their parenting goals; and *Family Wellbeing* to refer to Trent working -parents' self-determined ability to maintain life balance by ensuring the health and wellness of themselves and their families.

Family-Friendly will be used interchangeably along with *Parenting-Accessibility*, throughout the study – although neither term is intended to be exclusive nor assuming toward any group that may either choose to include or exclude these descriptive notions. *Family-Friendly* within the context of this research, is intended to describe social-employment initiatives that are planned with specific family needs in mind and is inclusive of all possible arrangements that can constitute a parental union and/or

household; parenting-*accessibility* is intended to describe social-employment accommodations that are considered with specific parenting limitations in mind and is exclusive of but similar to accommodations required as per the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, AODA* (2008-2025) for those with disabilities.

Research Question. The intended study broadly asked:

- *How have your overall working experiences at Trent affected your parenting goals and/or your family's well-being?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Statistical and theoretical perspectives on the social inequalities of employment with specific regards to gender (Lyonette, 2015; Moyser, 2017) as well as feminist conceptualizations of care (Tronto, 2013; Doucet, 2022 and 2023; and Klostermann, 2022) have been particularly helpful in the formation of my research direction. Whiteman's (2023) child developmental critiques of working while parenting have additionally informed and inspired my thesis topic. Although these social perspectives might seem to be at odds with one another, in that they argue for gendered labour equality and then conversely argue against the working demands of parents – the tensions of each are in fact critically intertwined. Most modern Canadian parents must work (Whiteman, 2023) and therefore, both the individual and collective effects of working-while-parenting demand social equality and equity examination - in that they have explicit child welfare implications.

Gender and Labour Inequalities

Canadian Trends. Moyser (2017) analyzed trends from 1976 to 2015 regarding gender and paid work in Canada, according to the *Labour Force Survey, LFS*. The LFS is a monthly Statistics Canada production that samples 56,000 Canadian working households. In 2015, the LFS found that 82% of women, aged 25 to 54 (representing core working ages), participated in the Canadian labour market; compared to 21.6% in 1950 and 65.2% in 1983 (Moyser, 2017). Labour participation differences between genders, (or disparity) have decreased significantly over time – from 75.5% in 1950 to 28.3% in 1983 to 8.9% in

2015 (Moyser, 2017). Despite more Canadian women working than ever before, according to Moyser (2017), their paid labour experiences differed considerably from men in that women still tended to be more responsible for family caregiving and domestic labour or unpaid work.

Gender, Labour and Pay. With particular regard to gender, labour and pay, according to Moyser (2017), the current gender wage ratio reflects significant progress compared to previous decades. In 1981, women were paid an average of \$0.77 for each dollar paid to men; by 2015, women had closed the gap by \$0.10, moving closer to earning as much as their male counterparts (Moyser, 2017). The rise in women's educational attainment, according to Moyser (2017), has played a significant role in improving the gender wage ratio over time.

Workplace Sexism. Stamarski and Son Hing (2015) discussed how sexism within workplace institutions extends from individuals to policies and influences human resource related gender inequalities - especially regarding working mothers. Hostile sexism encompasses antagonism and negative stereotypes towards assertive women, whereas benevolent sexism consists of positive yet paternalistic perceptions of women as very communal (Stamarski and Son Hing, 2015). For women, some of the most detrimental gender inequalities occur within human resources, HR practices such as policies, decision-making, and their implementation, which significantly impact the hiring, training, compensation, and promotion of female workers (Stamarski and Son Hing, 2015). Human resource policies that display inherent bias against a specific group of people, according to Stamarski and Son Hing (2015), regardless of their job-related

knowledge, skills, abilities, and performance, can be referred to as institutional discrimination.

Systemic Sex Discrimination. Faraday (2020) observed that despite laws prohibiting sex discrimination in pay for decades, a significant and measurable systemic gender pay gap continues to disadvantage women compared to men across the country and throughout the labor market. Since 1987, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) has acknowledged that systemic discrimination permeates the systems, institutions, and power structures organizing mainstream Canadian society, according to Faraday (2020); however, genuinely systemic discrimination cases seldom reach the *Court*, and when they do, the Court often struggles to implement a properly systemic analysis. Canada has endorsed various international human rights agreements over time, such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* and the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* - these agreements have provided increasingly specific directives urging governments to implement affirmative measures, including legislative measures, to attain equal pay for equal work (Faraday, 2020); ratification, however, does not always lead to action.

Systemic sex discrimination affects women's pay in numerous ways, according to Faraday (2020: 7), including *biased treatment* in hiring, training, and promotions; sex-based *occupational segregation*; the *undervaluation of women's skills* and labour in traditionally female occupations; *overrepresentation of women in part-time, casual, seasonal, and temporary agency work*; *overrepresentation of women in minimum wage jobs*; *gender-based violence* that forces women out of jobs or occupations; *barriers to*

unionization due to labour legislation designed around male full-time work patterns; and the disproportionate *burden on women to perform unpaid care work*. Data from Canada's 2016 Census indicates that, on average, women earn thirty-two percent less than men annually across the country; years of receiving lower wages result in a thirty-four percent gender disparity in women's pensions; additionally, women experience a lower return on their educational investment compared to men, as they are paid less than men across all levels of educational achievement (Faraday, 2020). These continued gender inequalities, according to Faraday (2020), mean that Canada is out of bounds with its international labour commitments:

In 1998, the International Labour Organization, ILO declared women's right to equal pay for work of equal value one of its eight 'Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work' - as a member of the ILO, Canada is bound by this Constitution (Faraday, 2020: 9).

Gender and Care Inequalities

Domestic Divisions. Lyonette (2015) examined how the distribution of domestic labour between partners is influenced by their relative earnings. The division of domestic labour remains a significant gender equality issue as women continue to perform more domestic work (housework) than men, despite their participation in the labour market (Lyonette, 2015). Although men whose partners make more money than they do tend to do more domestic labour than other men, their female partners still do more than they do overall (Lyonette, 2015). Fathers spend more time than ever caring for their children as being an *involved dad* is viewed as masculine - childcare, according to Lyonette (2015), is therefore not as gendered as domestic work. Women earning the same or more than

their partners, however, are often conforming to and rebelling against gender performativity of domestic labour simultaneously; although women tend not to believe in the idea that men are inferior at performing domestic work, they still tend to excuse them in terms of normative social expectations (Lyonette, 2015). Higher earning women are more likely than those with lower incomes to negotiate housework 'sharing' and/or hire someone to help with domestic work; despite having paid domestic help, according to Lyonette (2015), women continue to be responsible for organizing and any remaining indoor cleaning, while men tend to focus on cooking and outdoor maintenance.

Gender, Labour, and Parenting. With specific regard to gender, labour, and parenting, according to Moyser (2017), the work hours of women were significantly influenced by the presence and age of the youngest child in the household, whereas men's work hours were minimally affected by this factor. Over time, there has been a trend where the work hours of women generally increased as their children aged, although this association has become less pronounced; in contrast, fathers' average weekly work hours showed less variation based on the age of the youngest child in the household (Moyser, 2017).

Childcare Inequity. Tronto (2013) began by evaluating the gender-based disparities in childcare responsibilities and then analyzed the relationship between private childcare and social equality. For women to be fully recognized as citizens, they must join the paid labour market, which creates chaos in care work; although employment hinders women from providing care and should ideally relieve them from caregiving duties, enduring social expectations still require working mothers to care for

their children (Tronto, 2013). The relentless caregiving demands on working parents, and especially mothers, promote a *neoliberal individualistic* mindset, where people feel solely and independently responsible for providing direct care to themselves and their families. The 'winner-take-all structure' of the current political economy, according to Tronto (2013) compels caregivers to compromise equality [and quality] in order to provide care, resulting in a continuous cycle of unequal care.

Part-time versus Full-time Employment

Regarding Gender. Pupo (2019) discussed the social perception of part-time work for women, often viewed as a desirable option providing flexibility for domestic responsibilities and personal satisfaction from paid work; part-time work is expected to relieve women of their *isolation* in the home and provide *extra* income for family purchases - while not interfering with household demands. Part-time work is often presented as a desirable and necessary option for women; women who work part-time are socially encouraged to feel that they have *the best of both worlds* (Pupo, 2019). The voluntaristic or *free-market view*, according to Pupo (2019), assumes women choose part-time work willingly in aligning with maternal and domestic roles; however, this perspective overlooks structural constraints, limited job options, and inadequate childcare policies.

Regarding Nation. de Jong et al. (2006) examined the trend of an increase in part-time work amongst medical specialists in the Netherlands, who have tended to work full-time – especially in comparison to other countries. Part-time work has become relatively common in The Netherlands, and there are hardly any differences in conditions of

employment between part-time and full-time jobs, according to de Jong et al. (2006); this makes The Netherlands different from the USA, UK, France and Germany, where part-time work is often second-rate employment. The Netherlands occupies a unique position with the highest percentage of men (19%) and women (71%) working part-time, according to de Jong et al. (2006), compared to other countries in the European Union; besides the majority of women who prefer a part-time job, a growing minority of men also prefer part-time work.

Frequency analysis results indicated that the main preferences for working part-time versus full-time were family and leisure commitments; it was indicated that medical specialists who have part-time preferences are commonly young mothers with preschool aged children (de Jong et al., 2006). It was found that medical specialists working part-time are female, older, and have children below the age of five; however, both men and women work part-time more often with children below the age of five (de Jong et al., 2006). It was recommended that organizational policy should be more supportive of part-time working preferences, and/or a change in the working hours of medical specialists to reflect these preferences (de Jong et al., 2006).

Regarding Quality. McDonald et al. (2009) examined Australian full-time workers' perceptions of part-time work across various job quality dimensions, where part-time work is typically considered of good quality. Despite strong labour agreements and legal obligations, however, McDonald et al. (2009) highlighted concerns regarding reduced responsibilities, limited access to high-status roles and promotions, increased work intensity, and inadequate workplace support for part-time workers. The gendered nature

of part-time work exacerbates these disparities, according to McDonald et al. (2009), disproportionately affecting women; thus, the need for increased monitoring and improvement of job quality irrespective of work hours to promote equity in the workforce was determined. Permanent part-time employment has been proposed as a way to reconcile the conflict between full-time work commitments and caregiving responsibilities, while still retaining some of the advantages of standard employment (McDonald et al., 2009); the crucial element enabling a shift from maternity leave to part-time work at the same organizational level is the entitlement to return to the same position, protected by enterprise bargaining agreements and sex discrimination laws.

Regarding Satisfaction. Booth and van Ours (2008) investigated the relationship between part-time employment and satisfaction levels regarding working hours, job contentment, and overall life contentment in Britain. Among men, those who worked full-time without overtime hours showed the highest satisfaction with their working hours, while the number of hours worked didn't significantly affect their job satisfaction or life satisfaction, according to Booth and van Ours (2008); however, women presented an intriguing scenario in that both their satisfaction with working hours and job contentment indicated a preference for part-time employment, regardless of whether it was for a small or large number of hours, and interestingly, their overall life satisfaction remained largely unaffected by the number of hours they worked.

For a woman, having young children is associated with a significantly lower employment options and a greater part-time employment probability, according to Booth and van Ours (2008); this holds until the children reach the age of twelve. When a

society makes it challenging for women to balance work and family responsibilities due to inadequate or unsuitable childcare options or by enforcing lower pay for females, according to Booth and van Ours (2008), it's understandable that women may prefer to work fewer hours in the job market to enhance their overall satisfaction with both work and family life. There are several apparent policy solutions to enhance the well-being of women and promote effective resource distribution; the first involves efforts to enhance the quality of part-time employment; the second entails reducing the opportunity cost associated with participating in the job market by lowering the actual expense of childcare (Booth and van Ours, 2008).

Regarding Family. Iseke (2014) contributed a German angle to the part-time employment puzzle by introducing the significance of family roles as a moderating element. The significance individuals place on family roles, according to Iseke (2014), could impact how they perceive job attributes, potentially moderating the impact of part-time employment on job satisfaction. If part-time employees highly value family responsibilities, according to Iseke (2014), they might be willing to adjust their expectations and tolerate subpar working conditions in order to optimize their overall well-being by harmonizing work and family commitments. Part-time employees who prioritize family responsibilities tend to view their job positively, valuing the flexibility it offers to manage both work and family commitments; additionally, valuing family roles highly may lead part-time workers to perceive fewer discrepancies related to social acceptance and status, or perceive them as less impactful (Iseke, 2014).

While the significance of family responsibilities doesn't impact how underemployment and over-education affect job satisfaction, Iseke (2014) found that individuals who are overemployed and place high value on family roles express even lower satisfaction levels compared to overemployed individuals who don't prioritize family responsibilities. Part-time employment proves advantageous as it mitigates conflicts between work and family obligations, consequently reducing role-related stress, according to Iseke (2014); incorporating family importance as a moderating factor contributes to a deeper understanding of how part-time employment influences job satisfaction.

Regarding Security. Lewchuck (2017) examined the contemporary prevalence and effects of precarious employment across Southern Ontario. By the close of the 20th century, there was widespread acknowledgment that labour markets were undergoing transformation, resulting in decreased job security, according to Lewchuck (2017); despite this perception, official labour market statistics have not indicated a significant rise in temporary or casual employment. Lewchuck (2017) presented a fresh examination of evolving employment characteristics and introduces a novel approach to gauge job security - the *Employment Precarity Index*; the EPI index was used to evaluate the impact of insecure employment linked with the "gig" economy on various aspects of well-being and social interactions, including health outcomes, household welfare, and community engagement.

The diminishing occurrence of direct employment arrangements, a rise in less secure forms of employment, and a weakening of labour's capacity to negotiate better

working conditions, according to Lewchuck (2017), have given rise to a new category of workers known as the *Precariat*—individuals employed in unstable jobs with limited employment benefits or social safeguards. A notable proportion of jobs described as permanent, actually exhibited traits commonly associated with temporary employment, such as uncertainty regarding future job prospects, fluctuating income, and variable work schedules (Lewchuck, 2017). Many traditional permanent full-time positions have evolved and now lack the typical attributes of stable employment relationships, according to Lewchuck (2017), while these roles might resemble *Standard Employment Relationships (SER)*, the actual experience of working in them often mirrors that of temporary or contractual positions, or that of *Precarious Employment Relationships (PER)*. Lewchuck (2017) described capitalism itself as being directly responsible for the rising occurrence of insecure employment:

...work under capitalism has never been all that secure for many workers...
(Lewchuck, 2017: 405).

Regarding productivity. Boules and Cette (2005) examined the levels of structural productivity across leading industrial nations. Longer work hours, more common in North American countries, are not correlated with higher rates of labour productivity, according to Boules and Cette (2005); socioeconomic sustainability may decrease productivity but increases the quality of life for society as a whole. many workers. English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon countries, according to Boules and Cette (2005), tend to work thirty to forty percent more hours than workers in Scandinavian and Central European countries. Annual reports from the *International Labour Organization*, however, regularly observe

that labour productivity per hour is routinely higher in short-hours countries like Germany and France, than in countries where workers log more hours per year (Boules and Cette 2005).

The Sociology of Work

A Social Relation. Budd (2011) conceptualized work as a social relation. Work is not solely influenced by economic markets or human resource management strategies but also by social structures, according to Budd (2011); these structures encompass various social institutions, including norms, conventions, rules, and procedures, as well as socially constructed power dynamics; together, these elements define what is deemed acceptable and feasible within the realm of work. Work serves not only as a source of income or personal fulfillment but also as a means of garnering social recognition and status according to Budd (2011); it's more than just a measure of productive output; rather, it involves human interaction within networks comprising supervisors, colleagues, customers, and other individuals. In contrast to economic transactions, *social exchanges* are defined by enduring, evolving connections founded on trust and mutual give-and-take; according to Budd (2011); these connections involve obligations that are not precisely defined and encompass a range of objectives beyond financial gain, including considerations such as status, esteem, and other socioemotional factors.

The existence of unequal power dynamics based on gender, race, and socioeconomic class is also perceived as contributing to disparities in employment opportunities and the formation of gendered and racialized divisions within the workforce (Budd, 2011). According to Marx, the fundamental mechanism behind

capitalist exploitation lies in the fact that the surplus value generated by labour, which exceeds the wage paid for labour power, is appropriated by the capitalist rather than the worker (Budd, 2011). Substituting (or adding to) capitalism with patriarchy, wherein male-dominated institutions are perceived as shaping work dynamics to benefit men more than women, presents another illustration of work being defined by a socially constructed, unequal power dynamic (Budd, 2011). The extent to which individuals can shape their employment roles is not uniform and differs depending on factors such as personal circumstances and occupational roles, according to Budd (2022); similarly, attempts to establish labour unions are limited by prevailing attitudes and regulations governing labour.

A Social Effort. LaJeunesse (2009) proposed going beyond the twentieth century shorter work week model of employment toward twenty-first century *work time regulation policy*; based upon an alternative macroeconomic paradigm of employment that features increased socioeconomic participation, while addressing challenges regarding work-family balance, environmental sustainability, financial stability, and socioeconomic wellness. By reconceptualizing employment as a *collective social effort*, rather than being individual and/or familial, according to LaJeunesse (2009), government policy can work toward more egalitarian and sustainable macroeconomic goals - that is, employment relations could be conceptualized as a *social effort bargain* to be regulated in the public interest. Work time regulation would allow post-industrial citizens, who live in modern times of abundance and enlightenment, according to LaJeunesse (2009), the

time and energy to realize their potential beyond employment in terms of development, relationships, community, and leisure.

Long work hours and low productivity growth rates create negative consequences for society as a whole, as overworked parents, citizens, and volunteers are also less effective in their non-paid, but fundamentally important, social tasks (LaJeunesse, 2009). Through the redistributing of work time and increasing of socioeconomic participation, government policy could finally begin to better support these post-modern ideals in human development. Since the social effort bargain has a vital impact on living standards and wellbeing, the State has a justifiable interest in promoting an outcome that reflects a collective settlement between employers, employees, families, communities, and future generations (LaJeunesse, 2009).

Winston Churchill, a mid-twentieth century UK Prime Minister, pre-emptively discussed negative social well-being effects of capitalist-neoliberalism:

When we measure the things that are most important — such as the integrity of the environment, free time to build relationships, democratic participation, volunteerism, lower crime and inequality, job and health security, and overall well-being — maximizing the output of material goods is revealed as a rather pedestrian pursuit

(Churchill, 1908: 158)

Working (and Studying)-While-Parenting

Child development. Whiteman (2023) observed that a prevailing aspect of modern Canadian cultural mindset involves unquestionably endorsing the necessity for both parents to work and utilize daycare for their young children. This trend is attributed to a strong work ethic prioritizing economic comfort [or perceived necessity], potentially

overshadowing other essential human values, according to Whiteman (2023); she questioned whether the relentless pursuit of economic success has incurred unnoticed costs to our well-being and societal values – especially in regard to raising our children. Our society, according to Whiteman (2023), has reached a point where new parents can separate from their newborns or young babies for extended hours daily, potentially continuing this pattern throughout the child's developmental years; she highlighted a lack of awareness regarding the gravity of such a decision in our superficial collective consciousness.

Many families are placed in a difficult situation where both parents are forced to work for financial stability, according to Whiteman (2023), leaving little room to consider whether this decision is in the best interest of their children. Children are naturally inclined to form strong attachments to their parents, even at a cellular level; their entire reality revolves around their parents, and they actively seek that connection every moment - particularly during the crucial early months and years of development (Whiteman, 2023). Human life encompasses far more than merely striving for a comfortable existence, according to Whiteman (2023), while creating a secure environment for raising children is essential, it serves as just the starting point.

Part-time studies. McLean and Rollwagen (2010) examined the inclusion of part-time adult learners at McGill University to evaluate the two competing theoretical frameworks explaining the global expansion of higher education in recent decades: *human capital theory and social exclusion theory*. Human capital theorists assert that the expansion of educational opportunities is driven by the growing complexity of economic

and workplace demands, according to McLean and Rollwagen (2010); in contrast, social exclusion theorists contend that the heightened competition in the labor market has led to the inflation of educational qualifications. Although McGill experienced both educational expansion and credential inflation, neither human capital theory nor social exclusion theory can completely explain the fluctuations in part-time study opportunities for adults (McLean and Rollwagen, 2010).

Part-time students have significantly contributed to the increasing enrollment in higher education across many countries; interconnections were found between the rising levels of involvement in higher education, the uptick in part-time study, and the increasing engagement of women in wage labour markets (McLean and Rollwagen, 2010). During the period between 1951 and 1991, the percentage of women participating in the labour force in Canada rose from 24% to 60%, according to McLean and Rollwagen (2010), it was during this same timeframe that university enrollments, along with part-time student enrollments, experienced the most significant surge. Among Canada's prestigious, research-intensive universities, McGill has had one of the longest and most extensive histories of offering part-time study opportunities for adults (McLean and Rollwagen, 2010).

Student-parent success. Slater-Meadows (2023) explored the common structural-institutional enablers and barriers of academic success faced by student parents at Trent University. In order to unpack the number one structural-institutional academic barrier commonly expressed by Trent student-parents, which was *the unaffordability, inaccessibility and incompatibility of childcare options*, an institutional analysis was

conducted; firstly, Trent's human rights policy was examined, with particular regards to student rights, discrimination and harassment, and employment equity; secondly, Trent's two current but limited sources of campus childcare in Peterborough were looked at to determine why they may be falling short; finally, Trent's child and youth-based programs were considered with regards to student placement opportunities that could potentially expand childcare options (Slater-Meadows, 2023).

In examining Trent's Human Rights Policy, which appeared to be based on the *Canadian Charter of Right and Freedoms*, significant outdates and ambiguities were noted, according to Slater-Meadows (2023), with regards to the categorization of pregnant and parenting students, such as sex versus gender and breastfeeding versus parenting that may be infringing upon the rights of student parents. In order to begin to meet the needs of Trent student-parents, it will be necessary for Trent Child Care (TCC) to expand its on-campus location, according to Slater-Meadows (2023), in terms of space and staff as well as collaboration with its neighbouring childcare provider, Trent Excalibur Camp (TEC); additionally, both TCC and TEC could be potentially acceptable placement options for students of either Trent's Child and Youth Studies or Bachelor of Education programs. Other structural-institutional suggestions to improve childcare options for Trent student-parents included before and after school-age programs with transportation services as well as waiting spaces for older children; and more information provided about Trent childcare options (Slater-Meadows, 2023).

Feminist Work-Care Theory

Work-Care Inequalities. Tronto (2013) considered the social intersections between care, equality and democracy in regard to the many cyclical disadvantages of the privatization of caring for children; the concept of care in the context of how we look after our children was examined and it was noted how infrequently conversations about motherhood transcend class divisions. Tronto (2013) characterized *Social Psychology of Unequal Care* as being justified by competition, disregard, and privilege. *Competitive caring* entails ensuring one's own children are well cared for to give them a competitive advantage over other children; *unsympathetic disregard* occurs when individuals assess whether fellow citizens merit their support, potentially leading them to refuse public responsibilities for their care; *privileged irresponsibility* refers to how the division of labor and prevailing social values enable some individuals to exempt themselves from basic caregiving duties because they have other, seemingly more important, work to do (Tronto, 2013).

The constant caregiving demands placed on working parents - particularly mothers, according to Tronto (2013), foster a neoliberal individualistic *care-for-my-own* mindset, where individuals feel responsible only for providing direct care to themselves and their own families. Neoliberals argue that promoting the private pursuit of wealth and minimizing public intervention is the best path to collective happiness (Tronto, 2013). Asserting that our responsibilities are confined to ourselves and our families, when individuals in an unequal society focus solely on private care, according to Tronto (2013), however, reproduce significant inequalities and prevent some from attaining true

citizenship. As long as neoliberals maintain that the division between public and private life accurately defines the limits of government power, they perpetuate an ideological justification for increasing inequality in care (Tronto, 2013). If unequal opportunity threatens democratic society, according to Tronto (2013), then proponents of democracy must seriously consider care responsibilities that extend beyond their own households.

Work-Care Relationships. Doucet (2023) examined the research of gendered divisions of domestic labour from a care-focussed perspective. The study of this field, according to Doucet (2023), had traditionally faced two central problems: despite focussing on unpaid care work, care concepts are often overlooked; the field mostly examines divisions of labor rather than emphasizing ‘relationships and relationalities.’ Doucet (2023) challenged researchers in the contemporary field of ‘who does what?’ to recognize the complex interconnections between unpaid work and care within households and beyond; to move past simplistic and outdated divisions and binaries in order to influence social policy that centres on care, relationships, and justice. *Feminist Care Ethics*, according to Doucet (2023), have radically influenced moral theory and feminism by highlighting the subjective associations between ethics, relationships, and responsibilities in care. *Feminist Care Economies* are guided by the notion that women must also be recognized in unpaid work to reach equality in paid work and aims to progress social research and policy by ‘recognizing, reducing and redistributing’ the unpaid work of women (Doucet, 2023).

Work-Care Politics. Klostermann (2022) employed a *Feminist Political Economy* perspective to reevaluate concepts and structures related to caregiving. Many caregivers

in Ontario's care sectors, primarily women, have become utterly exhausted due to the sustained lack of social investment and support; consequently, many of these caregivers have made the tough decision to reduce or relinquish their paid and/or unpaid care duties (Klostermann, 2022). Inspired by her own experiences of care work burnout, Klosterman (2022) examined the moral effects on carers, of withdrawing from the care sector centered by the impact of paid and unpaid caregiving responsibilities on women's lives - both within and outside of formal working hours.

Work-Care Divisions. Doucet and Klosterman (2024) explored the blurred lines between care and work and the challenges in measuring them accurately; to address this, they adapted Doucet's *Household Portrait* method into a *Care/Work Portrait*. This qualitative, participatory, visual method engages couples in mapping and discussing their household responsibilities, including both care tasks and work duties; the adaptation aims to provide innovative conceptual and methodological approaches to researching the intersection of work and care (Doucet and Klosterman, 2024). Influenced by evolving care theories, "the Care/Work Portrait offers theoretical and methodological advantages for studying gendered divisions and relations of household work and care" (243), according to Doucet and Klosterman (2024); "it attends to unpaid care work/paid work/paid care work intra-connections, moves outside the household to include community-based work, deepens distinctions between tasks and responsibilities, and considers wider forms and contexts of care" (243). The Care/Work Portrait is based on feminist-ethical-economical care theories; attending to subjective, intersectional, conceptual and practical

relationships between justice, and paid/unpaid care and work (Doucet and Klosterman, 2024).

Radical Feminist Caring. McGregor (2022) continues to absorb the lessons in radical care imparted by her mother:

“I am still learning the lessons in radical care that my mother taught me. Those lessons were not about moral purity, but political ferocity... Ferocity, I now believe, can be a form of care; ferocity is a way of caring so much about the world that you refuse to stop fighting for it (33).

McGregor described her Mother as being committed to her friendships with other women, which were founded on mutual support networks, sharing food, clothes, and childcare; she believed in the worth of women, the strength of women, and the transformative power women possess in creating communities - “...*she was loud and unabashedly feminist...*” (McGregor, 2022: 31).

A Feminist Ethics of Care, according to McGregor (2022), emphasizes that we are not independent, autonomous individuals, but rather are shaped by our familial ties and networks of relationships. The notion that self-care is intrinsically valuable due to its focus on the often stigmatized and feminized traits of emotionality and gentleness is grounded in *sentimentality*, according to McGregor (2022); it also reflects the neo-liberal shift in the twenty-first century that reinterprets sentimentality, presenting care as a highly individualized activity typically managed by institutions or corporations. McGregor described the counterintuitivity of femininity regarding care ethics:

“*Softness, care, and rest can be, counterintuitively, sites of rage, refusal, and ferocity*” (McGregor, 2022: 40).

METHODOLOGY

Feminist methodological approaches such as Armstrong's (2022) utilization of the *Feminist Political Economy*; and Doucett's (2022) application of the *Feminist Ecological Approach* have been particularly helpful in the formation of my research topic. Wang's (2005) and Wang & Redwood-Jones' (2001) use of the *photovoice* and/or *photo novella* research method, which is a form of *Community-Based Participatory Research* (Castleton and Garvin, 2008); and tool for knowledge mobilization and transformative learning (Morgenshtern, 2024), has significantly informed and inspired my thesis direction.

Feminist Political Economy. Armstrong (2022) utilized a *Feminist Political Economy* perspective in analyzing the social structures governing caregiving labor. Care, according to Armstrong (2022), "is a relationship, albeit often an inequitable one, and that care is a shared responsibility, leading us to investigate the privatization of care in all its forms" (7). *Feminist Political Economy*, according to Armstrong (2022), "refers to the complex of institutions and relations that constitute not only what are conventionally referred to as the political and economic systems but also the social, physical, ideological and cultural systems" (7).; Paid and unpaid care work are seen as being particularly determined and facilitated through the political economy through this feminist lens (Armstrong, 2022).

Feminist Ecological Approach. Doucett (2022) examined notions of *time* assessment in relation to *care* commitments through a *Feminist Ecological Approach*.

“Care is more than tasks or units of time. It is a deeply relational, affective, responsive, sentient, moral, cross-temporal, and spatial set of practices, processes, identities, and responsibilities. Care cannot be captured on a tally sheet. (Doucet, 2022: 23).

Calls were made for care work research to re-examine the methods and principles involved in classifying *care tasks* in time-use studies; recognize care responsibilities as *process time*, meaning that they can be described but not quantified in fixed units of clock time; and embrace the multiplicity of time, including relational and non-linear time kinds of time (Doucet, 2022). A Feminist Ecological Approach, which considers the interconnected aspects of knowledge production, was advocated by Doucet (2022), to be infused into future care work research through qualitative research practices such as interviewing, journaling, stories, and narratives.

Community-Based Participatory Research. Castleden and Garvin (2008) discussed how scientific research, particularly involving Indigenous communities in Canada, has been historically linked to colonialism, leading to understandable skepticism among Indigenous peoples. *Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)* aims to develop culturally relevant research approaches addressing injustice and exploitation. Castleden and Garvin (2008) evaluated the use of *Photovoice*, a CBPR method employing participant-employed photography and dialogue, in a partnership with a First Nation in Western Canada. Through content analysis of interviews, Castleden and Garvin (2008) found that Photovoice effectively *balanced power dynamics, fostered trust, built capacity,* and responded to cultural preferences.

Photovoice

Refining Photovoice. Wang (2005) introduced the method of *Photovoice*, previously called *auto-driving*, *reflexive photography*, and/or *photo novella*. Photovoice, according to Wang (2005), employs images taken by participants as a tool to initiate group discussions between those who typically hold less power and policymakers, in aiming to drive social change. Wang (2005) outlined the following objectives of Photovoice: aiding individuals in documenting and contemplating specific community concerns; fostering group discussions regarding these issues; and impacting policymakers. Photovoice theoretical bases include *documentary photography* as empowering change; *critical consciousness* as questioning reality; and *feminist theory* as valuing lived experience (Wang, 2005). The reflective qualities of photovoice, according to Wang and Burris (1994) were described from a Freirian perspective:

In Freirian terms, photographs serve as one kind of code that reflect the community back upon itself, mirroring the everyday social and political realities that influence people's lives (Wang and Burris, 1994: 172).

For Empowerment and Expression. Wang and Burris (1994) explored photo novella as a way of facilitating participant empowerment in expressive research. Inspired by *Paulo Freire's* concept of *education for critical consciousness*, photo novella empowers individuals to document and discuss their own life experiences, fostering a sense of agency, according to Wang and Burris (1994); this process, rooted in empowerment education and *feminist theory*, utilizes *documentary photography* to enable those with limited resources and social standing to convey their perspectives directly to policymakers.

The practice of instructing *unconventional* photographers to document their own experiences is also commonly associated with *Wendy Ewald*, a documentary photographer and renowned educator (Wang and Burris, 1994). In contrast to traditional documentary photography, which often reflects power imbalances between the photographer and subjects, according to Wang and Burris (1994), photo novella shifts this dynamic by enabling participants to become both documenters and potential agents of change within their own communities. Feminist research recognizes women as experts in their own experiences, allowing them to shape their own understanding of womanhood based on their own standards and perspectives, empowering them through knowledge creation (Wang and Burris, 1994). The unique observational quality of a participatory photovoice photographer, according to Wang and Burris (1994), was highlighted:

...when a photographer is completely integrated within the community she photographs, she is often imaginative and observant in ways that exceed more experienced photographers and photojournalists (Wang and Burris, 1994: 177).

For Assessment and Education. In using photovoice for public health promotion, Wang and Burris (1997) outlined the methodology and evaluate its effectiveness for participatory needs assessment. Photovoice broadens the scope of *participatory needs assessment*, according to Wang and Burris (1997); by incorporating the visions and words of the people, it allows for a genuine evaluation of local needs; this approach aims to align the differing perspectives of health professionals and community members to achieve a more substantial impact on community well-being. Grounded within a framework of Freirian *problem-posing* education, according to Wang and Burris (1997),

the photovoice images generated and topics deliberated by individuals have the potential to catalyze community problem-solving, mobilization, and activism.

For Social Justice. Photovoice, according to Jarldorn (2019) is a helpful tool in uncovering systemic injustices; photovoice research is as a human rights-based approach that combines the critical educational pedagogy of Freire with lived-experience Feminist research methods. Without the integration of both theory and action, according to Jarldorn (2019), photovoice would lose its essence and become more akin to ‘photojournalism.’ Jarldorn (2019) highlighted the contradictory nature of modern evidence-based practice, which tends to prioritize ‘professional expertise’ over the knowledge of individuals with ‘lived experience’; relying on a theoretical framework grounded solely in personal values, according to Jarldorn (2019), risks being based on incomplete information, shaped by ‘privilege,’ and therefore prone to bias—even when guided by ‘good intentions.’

Jarldorn (2019) described Freire’s distinctive educational approach as founded on the idea that ‘people already possess knowledge’ and on his belief in the potential for transformation through dialogue and learning. Freire argued that oppression occurs when the powerful control the conversation, silencing those without power, according to Jarldorn (2019); he believed that true liberation for the oppressed could only come through collectively developing critical awareness, achieved through education and the practical application of theory—what he called ‘meaningful praxis,’ according to Jarldorn (2019); in doing so, Freire believed the oppressed could not only free themselves, but also help educate and liberate their oppressors from the confines of their own

dominance. Jarldorn (2019) identified a key goal of Photovoice as helping participants to achieve Freire's third stage of 'collective consciousness'; through shared commitment, participants collaboratively explore an issue by engaging in both personal and group reflection, intentionally working toward individual or collective action, according to Jarldorn (2019) - this heightened awareness can continue to resonate within a group or community well beyond the end of the Photovoice project (Jarldorn, 2019).

Steps and Stages. Wang and Burris (1997) explored the evolution of the photovoice concept, its pros and cons, essential components, participatory analysis, required materials and resources, and practical implications. The initial photovoice training session, according to Wang and Burris (1997), should cover topics such as cameras, ethics, and power dynamics; perspectives on viewing photographs; and a philosophy of returning photographs to community members to show appreciation, respect, or foster camaraderie. Facilitators should limit technical guidance during the early training sessions to prevent hindering creativity; photovoice participants might be interested in exploring renowned historical images that demonstrate the role of photography in promoting social change (Wang and Burris, 1997). The stages of Photovoice, according to Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001: 562), include: the establishment of study *intentions*; the determination of research *funding*; the *training* of researchers; the facilitation of a community 'guidance' *committee*; the determination of *target* policy makers, community leaders; the *recruitment* of participants and *introduction* of methodology; the obtainment of informed-*consent*; the facilitation of a photography

theme; the distribution of cameras and review *ethical* use; the facilitation of a guided photo shoot and *debriefing*.

Ethics and Privacy. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) explored the ethical concerns associated with using photovoice, such as the potential invasion of privacy and ways to prevent it; issues related to recruitment, representation, participation, and advocacy; and specific methodological strategies to minimize risks and maximize benefits for participants. Photovoice training, according to Wang & Redwood-Jones (2001), begins with a group discussion focused on the use of cameras, power, and ethics, as well as the responsibility and authority granted to participants with cameras, rather than starting with camera instruction. While ethical training is highly valuable, it cannot guarantee immunity against lapses in judgment by project facilitators and/or participants' behavior and their interactions with the world (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001). Voluntary compliance with and respect for privacy laws must be pursued, guarding against four specific types of invasion; these laws protect against intrusion into private spaces, the disclosure of embarrassing personal facts, misrepresentation through images, and exploitation of a person's likeness or appropriation (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001). There is widespread acknowledgment that scholarly writings are significantly shaped by the author's perspective, according to Wang & Redwood-Jones (2001); similarly, a photographer's perspective greatly influences the images they capture. Like the subject, the photographer is firmly rooted in political, cultural, social, and economic contexts.

Consent and Protection. In photovoice, the concept of intrusion is broadened to include not just individuals but also groups, neighborhoods, and communities, according

to Wang & Redwood-Jones (2001); protection against being misrepresented applies not only to the images created but also to the stories participants tell about their photographs. The film negatives are considered the property of the photographer, whether a participant or a professional, and honoraria are paid to those whose images are used for publication (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001). The issue of intrusion into one's private space is partially mitigated through the use of consent forms, according to Wang & Redwood-Jones (2001), which come in three types: the first, obtained from participants by the project staff, outlines participants' rights and responsibilities; the second, obtained by the photographer, is a signature from the subjects granting permission to have their picture taken; the third type, used only after the photographs have been developed and discussed, grants permission from the photographer for the pictures to be published or used to promote the project's goals. If the participant or subject in a photograph is a minor, all three forms require the signature of a parent or legal guardian (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Photovoice at Trent. Morgenshtern (2024) of Trent University recently and locally utilized a photovoice research project on immigrant experiences to obtain professional employment. Facilitating a dialogical process of action and reflection, photovoice, according to Morgenshtern (2024), helps in developing critical thinking on issues such as race, difference, resilience, resistance, inclusion, and equity – it is an essential tool for knowledge mobilization and transformative learning. Morgenshtern (2024) listed four key methods for disseminating knowledge critically including *reflection; relationality; collectivity; and dialogue*. Enhancing personal reflection can raise awareness and result in

a critical consciousness; building relationality enables mutual exchanges of affirmation, legitimation, and validation; fostering collectivity reveals structural forces affecting lived realities by identifying shared narratives; and enlisting those in power in critical dialogue can open up possibilities for knowledge activation (Morgenshtern, 2024).

METHODS

Sampling and Recruitment. Recruitment attempts were made for between ten to twelve Trent working-parent participants. The selected sample size was based on graduate research thesis precedents with special consideration for time and availability constraints. To be eligible to participate, subjects must have self-identified as raising *dependent*¹ children while being securely² employed either part or fulltime at Trent. In order to encourage a diversity of participants, there were no other major exclusions regarding subjects, besides that it was conducted in the English language at Trent University. Participants were recruited through Trent's diverse communication networks via newsletters as well as by email invitation and sharing through select departmental Academic Administrative Assistants (See Appendix A: *Sample Recruitment Communication*).

Informed-Consent. The informed-consent process was virtual. A copy of the consent letter was provided to participants as part of the participant-training PowerPoint presentation (See Appendix B: *Orientation-Training Guide*). In order to ethically address the issues of privacy and intrusion in this Photovoice study, a two-part Consent Form was utilized: *Part A: Participant Informed-Consent*, outlined participants' rights and responsibilities as well as granted permission for their photographs to be published as

part of the study; *Part B: Subject-Permission* granted verbal permission for subjects' pictures, to be taken and published as part of the study. If the subject was a minor, and thus unable to provide consent, their image was either carefully edited to remove any identifying features and/or deemed private and not shared publicly as part of the study (See Appendix C: *Informed Consent Form*).

Accessibility and Appreciation. The accessibility of Trent working parents was of great concern. Childcare compensation as needed, of up to thirty dollars per participant, was therefore made available throughout the study and especially during the *reception-exhibition*³. In appreciation and remuneration, participants could choose to have one of their photographs printed (and framed pending funding availability) for their personal display at the conclusion of the study. Research funding for participant remuneration, and childcare as well as a photovoice reception was generously made available through a successful application to Trent's *T.E.W. Nind*, Presidential Endowment Fund.

Ethical Considerations.

Wang et al. (1996) highlighted the collective, participatory intentions of photovoice in contrast to objective research methods:

In recognizing our role in the research process, we reject the construct of the dispassionate, objective researcher. We identify ourselves as participatory researchers in a collective process that attempts to exert a positive impact on...lives and communities (Wang et al., 1996: 1396).

³ A *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* photovoice reception-exhibition will be planned with participants and facilitated with key Trent University and Peterborough community leaders, and policy makers in early Summer 2025.

Risks and Benefits. The anticipated level of risk experienced by participants was minimal and may have included psychological risks including feeling demeaned, embarrassed, worried, or upset; social and/or professional risks including loss of status, privacy and/or reputation. To mitigate psychological risks, the researcher was honest about her own professional working-parent status and transparent about her reasons for doing this study (e.g., information sharing, empowerment, and institutional change). She also provided all participants with a list of university services, should they have experienced distress and invited people to take a break as they needed.

To mitigate social and/or professional risks and provide accessibility, the research was conducted virtually. As to minimize any potential burden or risk felt by Trent working-parent participants, regardless of their level of employment security or degree of social marginalization, union and human rights supports were highlighted in the orientation-training as well as provided as part of the informed-consent process. Particular attention was drawn to the rights that all employees have to reasonably express their working concerns without fear of employer reprisal.

It was anticipated that although significant working while parenting barriers would be found, participants in the study would feel beneficially informed, empowered, and connected by their contribution. Participation was completely voluntary, and could stop at any time, without consequence. Should a participant have withdrawn, their data would have been immediately destroyed - unless the participant provided written permission to include their contribution up until the time of withdrawal (See Appendix D - *Participant Withdrawal, Support*).

Anonymity and Confidentiality. Participants were identified with a self-selected pseudonym. Names and email addresses were used for virtual communication purposes only. Photovoice images were necessary for the study method and were not used for identification purposes. Privacy and confidentiality were protected as much as possible through non-identifying data collection; however, it could not be guaranteed - as there may have still been possible aspects of identification such as personal effects or experiences. All professional identifiers—such as participants’ roles, departments, length of employment, and similar details—were deliberately omitted from the data sets to protect anonymity and confidentiality, given Trent’s small size and the potential for easy identification if such information were included.

Data was stored exclusively on the Principal Investigator’s Trent protected computer, using encrypted software (*MyTrent - SharePoint, OneDrive*), to which only she and her supervisor had access. Audio-recorded interview and digital survey responses, as well as any email communications were immediately deleted and/or de-identified, following transcription. Digital photographs were also deleted immediately, but some select pieces may have been included in dissemination presentation – with permission from participants.

Conflicts of Interest. Participants may have been acquainted with the Principal Investigator through her representation with *Trent Graduate Students’ Association, Arthur Newspaper* and/or as student peers or Trent colleagues.

Burdening Social Change. One ethical concern arising from photo novella involves the unequal distribution of the responsibility for social change, particularly in placing the

onus of advocating for change on marginalized groups, rather than on privileged groups who bear a responsibility to redress inequality through a concept of compensatory justice (Wang et al., 1996). As to minimize any potential burden or risk felt by Trent working-parent participants, regardless of their level of employment security or degree of social marginalization, union and human rights supports were highlighted in the orientation-training as well as provided as part of the informed-consent process. Particular attention was drawn to the rights that all employees have to reasonably express their working concerns without fear of employer reprisal.

Overcoming Gender Barriers. The involvement of male stakeholders in photo novella research provides a special chance to offer support and directly listen to the perspectives of women; men are often exposed to aspects of women's daily routines and tasks that they may have previously overlooked (Wang et al., 1996). There was not any participation exclusion regarding gender in the study, as both men, women and non-binary individuals were expected to be working while parenting at Trent. It was anticipated, however, that the data generated would be gendered along traditional male-female divisions in that the majority of working while parenting participants would be cis women and conversely most of the structural-institutional stakeholders at Trent would either be men and/or non-parenting women. The intention of this research was therefore to facilitate the overcoming of parenting-related gender barriers at Trent University by encouraging knowledge sharing amongst all stakeholders and participants – across all gender identities.

Empowerment and Influence. While photo novella can empower participants to communicate their concerns to policymakers, it does not transfer the authority to make policy decisions to them (Wang et al., 1996). Creating a false perception of empowerment without genuine opportunities for meaningful engagement would be unsustainable, however, there is a belief in the substantial positive influence that photovoice research can wield through political action (Wang et al., 1996). Participants in the photovoice study may have found empowerment through the personal expression of their working while parenting at Trent experiences and reasonably encouraged that supportive policy and service reforms may become possible. The positive influences that this research could potentially have on the parenting success and family well-being of all parenting staff, faculty and/or students at Trent University is both significant and sustainable – especially because it will be representative of current and relatable community data. Dissemination outputs and especially the potential use of reception presentation and media diffusion will extend the knowledge generated within this study beyond the institution and create opportunities for broader political attention and action – perhaps across other academic institutions and workplaces.

Design and Data

Intervention Overview. The photovoice research of Trent working-parents began by actively recruiting participants; Informed-consent was obtained virtually; and Orientation-training presentation was administered asynchronously and included an online intake and exit survey; Independent photovoice study then took place; and One-on-one interviews were administered virtually; and finally, a Photovoice reception-

exhibition and possible *Pressbooks* publication was planned (See Appendices, A: *Sample Recruitment Communication*, B: *Orientation-Training Guide*, C: *Informed Consent Form*). Over a six-week period, participants completed two five-minute surveys; a thirty-minute asynchronous orientation-training presentation; an independent photovoice study; and thirty-minute audio-recorded one-on-one interview. An optional three-hour photovoice reception-exhibition was also planned, after event funding was secured.

Research Preparation. Preparatory stages of photovoice research include the establishment of study intentions; the determination of research funding; the training of researchers; the facilitation of a community 'guidance' committee; and the determination of target policy makers and community leaders (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The photovoice research of Trent working parents, as beforementioned, was intended to explore how working experiences affect the parenting goals of securely employed Trent faculty and/or staff. Research funding for participant remuneration, and childcare as well as a photovoice reception-exhibition was successfully secured. The primary and sole researcher was familiar with professional art-photography expression-exhibition and also obtained significant photovoice training in her literature and methodological review.

A community 'guidance' committee was not facilitated; however, a master's thesis advisor and advisory committee were established to guide the researcher through the academic research process. As the primary researcher was also concurrently involved in graduate student Senate representation with an individual goal of improving work-life balance realities for both student parents and working parents at Trent, she intended to

use this study to inform and initiate parenting-accessible policies and services. Target policy makers and community leaders included those who most impact working parents at Trent such as Human Resource and Union representatives. It was anticipated that specific institutional organizations and individuals would be highlighted within participant data regarding their experiences of working while parenting.

Research Facilitation. Facilitation stages of photovoice research include the recruitment of participants and the obtainment of informed-consent; the introduction of photovoice methodology and ethical considerations; the distribution of cameras; and the establishment of a photography theme via a guided photo shoot and debriefing (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The photovoice research of Trent working-parents, as beforementioned, actively recruited between ten to twelve participants; informed-consent was obtained virtually and included particular details regarding anonymity, confidentiality, and employment rights.

Photovoice facilitation begins with a group discussion focused on the use of cameras, power, and ethics, as well as the responsibility and authority granted to participants with cameras, rather than starting with camera instruction (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The research facilitation PowerPoint presentation took between sixty to ninety minutes and was administered asynchronously. Participants were asked to identify themselves via a self-selected pseudonym only – regardless of whether they were acquainted with the Principal Investigator. Comprehensive training in the methods and ethics of photovoice was outlined as well as some minor technical photography skills. As anticipated, participants used their own digital cameras of no particular type and were

therefore generally familiar with their use. In the event that a participant did not have access to a personal camera, an alternative was made available. The photography theme of *Working While Parenting at Trent* was established and unpacked from a parenting success and family well-being perspective. Examples of how other photovoice study themes were expressed were presented and discussed as needed.

For approximately six weeks, from early November 2024 to early January 2025, the Principal Investigator was in regular communication via email with participants, both as a group and individually, in order to facilitate the independent and asynchronous research study schedule. At the beginning of each week, an overview of the recommended tasks was sent, along with a reminder email towards the end of each week; participants were also sent email invitations to early presentations of the research findings at internal and external knowledge-sharing events (See Appendix E: *Weekly Group Email Communication*).

Although recruitment for the Working-while-Parenting at Trent research study generated much interest, with initial inquiries from sixteen participants, only nine formally signed up by the deadline. Of the nine participants, however, only five were able to complete the *full* study that included the independent photovoice component. Ironically, barriers to full study participation were most-often self-reported by participants as being related to working-parent time and energy constraints; all barriers presented as well as other participant details will be included in the following Analysis chapter. In order to maintain participation of all nine participants and with parenting-accessibility in mind, an alternative study design was offered that excluded the

photovoice component and required a one-on-one interview only – to verbally express their working-while-parenting at Trent experiences.

Research Analysis and Dissemination. Analysis and dissemination stages of photovoice research include the collection and discussion of photographs; the planning of public-sharing events with participants; and the facilitation of those events with the community, leaders, and policy makers (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Participants had up to six weeks to produce between two to three main photographs that expressed their and/or their family's experiences of working-while-parenting at Trent – with particular attention paid to parenting success and family well-being. One-on-one interviews were administered after independent photovoice studies had been completed and took between thirty to sixty minutes. Participants were asked to discuss their photographs regarding the broad research question of:

- *How have your overall working experiences at Trent affected your parenting goals and/or your family's well-being?*

Some more specific prompting inquires included:

- *What have been some of your most important parenting goals while working at Trent?*
- *What specific Trent employment supports and/or barriers have you experienced regarding your parenting goals and/or family's well-being?*
- *What specific Trent employment suggestions would you make to better support parenting goals; and/or family's well-being?*

- *How well do you feel your working-parent-accessibility is currently represented in your union-collective agreement; and/or in employment legislation?*

Data Analysis. Data was generated via intersectional methods for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. Specifically, through pre/post participant demographic and preference surveys; as well as independent photovoice study; and one-on-one interviews about working-while-parenting at Trent experiences (See Appendices, F: *Intake Survey Instrument 1*, G: *Interview Guide*, H: *Exit Survey Instrument 2*). Trent working parent data was analyzed descriptively via intersectional quantitative statistics in regard to participant demographics and preferences; and explored thematically in terms of their work-while-parenting at Trent experiences.

Dissemination. A *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* photovoice reception-exhibition will be planned with participants and facilitated with key Trent University and Peterborough community leaders, and policy makers in early Summer 2025. The venue will likely be at either Trent's Traill College or Sadleir House and will include an opening reception as well as a temporary exhibition of participant photographs. Expected costs associated with the reception-exhibition will include the venue rental, refreshment provision, technology requirements, and photography and marketing material printing (See Appendix I: *TEW Nind Fund Application-Budget*). The reception will be a parenting-accessible event and will be planned in coordination with participant working-while-parenting availability in mind. Participants can decide whether they'd prefer to bring their children to the event, where child supervision and activities will be provided, or use their childcare voucher to make alternative arrangements.

The exhibition of participant photography will be on display at the chosen venue from one to three weeks and printed photographs will be privately presented to participants for their personal display after the conclusion of the event. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, they can decide whether they wish to identify their photographic work to the public in whatever way they see fit such as signature or other association.

In addition to the reception-exhibition, a *Working while Parenting at Trent* Pressbooks publication may also be planned with participants and shared with Trent University and the Peterborough community, leaders, and policy makers. The primary researcher has recently obtained training in *Pressbook* creation and will facilitate production with the copyright permission of participants who wish to become involved.

Research Outputs. Photo novella humanizes the data, offering audiences a chance to directly see the challenges faced both subjectively and collectively by participants (Wang et al., 1996). The results of this project will be disseminated via thesis submission, as well as possible academic journal and *Pressbook* publications, and convention presentation. A *Working-while-Parenting* photovoice reception-exhibition will also be facilitated, where participant photography will be on display. With research that is current and specific to Trent university, policy, and/or service reforms, which could better support the parenting success of Trent working parents, may be formally considered.

Media Diffusion. The appeal of photo novella facilitates its spread, promoting diffusion, wherein an innovation is communicated across various channels over time

throughout society (Wang et al., 1996). Recognizing the significant influence of the media in shaping discussions among policymakers and the public (Wang et al., 1996), local media sources such as *Arthur Newspaper*, *Peterborough Currents*, and *Trent Communications* will be invited, via press-release, to the launch of the *Working-while-Parenting at Trent - Photovoice Reception-Exhibition*.

Policy Connection. Photo novella functioned not only as a means of gathering information but also as a platform for fostering community and empowering participants to articulate their perspectives, both literally and metaphorically, to policymakers (Wang et al., 1996). Connections between the *Working-while-Parenting at Trent – Photovoice Study* and policy influences at Trent University will be initiated through reception, convention, publication, and media presentation. As many of the policymakers and/or service providers at Trent may also be working-while-parenting, it is anticipated that hearing from their professional peers will not only inform and inspire positive structural-institutional change but also encourage all working parents at Trent to individually and collectively demand better parenting supports. The underlying assumption in employing photo novella to inform policymakers is that individuals will operate 'within the existing system', regardless of how unjust or imbalanced the distribution of power may be (Wang et al., 1996).

ANALYSES

Data was generated via intersectional methods for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. Specifically, through pre/post participant demographic and preference surveys; as well as independent photovoice study; and one-on-one interviews about working-while-parenting at Trent experiences (See Appendices, F: Intake Survey Instrument 1, G: Interview Guide, H: Exit Survey Instrument 2). Trent working parent data was analyzed descriptively via intersectional quantitative statistics in regard to participant demographics and preferences; and explored thematically in terms of their work-while-parenting at Trent experiences.

Barriers to Participation. Although recruitment for the Working-while-Parenting at Trent research study generated much interest, with initial inquiries from sixteen participants, only nine formally signed up by the deadline. Of the nine participants, however, only five were able to complete the *full* study that included the independent photovoice component. Ironically, barriers to full study participation were most-often self-reported by participants as being related to working-parent time and energy constraints – which was commonly combined with personal and/or family illness. Specifically, WWP Participants (and Near but Still Dear Participants) Stated...

“I’m unbelievably swamped at work and at home...so I have just been trying to breathe.”

“My daughter was sick, then I was sick, and I have been super busy at work.”

“It’s been a hectic couple of weeks...working...while also managing household responsibilities.”

"I just can't find the time...I likely don't have time to fully participate..."

"I'm super busy at work and home...and struggling to find the energy and time to complete the assignment - how ironic!"

In order to maintain participation of all nine participants and with parenting-accessibility in mind, an alternative study design was offered that excluded the photovoice component and required a one-on-one interview only – to verbally express their working-while-parenting at Trent experiences. The original study timeline of three weeks was also doubled to six, in some circumstances, so that participants could tend to their unanticipated working, parenting and other life demands as needed.

The irony of working-while-parenting as being a significant barrier to participation in a study about Trent working-parent experiences is perhaps the most authentic and valid demonstration of the issue in itself. The above quotations were minimized and de-identified in order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, however, the emotional toll significance remained clear. Words that stood out among these statements included:

*Unbelievably, super; hectic; busy; swamped, sick;
Struggling; to find energy, time - just trying to breathe...*

When these working-parent participant statements of barriers to participation were analysed from this reductive perspective, simple irony is soon replaced by the undeniable and often impossible reality that is working-while-parenting. It is an unbelievable struggle that can perhaps be difficult to comprehend - until one becomes a parent or caregiver. So, to all of those Trent working-parents who enthusiastically wanted

to participate in this study but simply couldn't *fully* or even *at all* – your barriers themselves still provided invaluable data – Thank You!

Quantitative Data

Participant Demographics I: Gender, Age, Race/Ethnicity, Indigenous, Disability.

With regard to age, slightly more Trent working parent participants were between the ages of forty-one to fifty (five of nine), while slightly less were between thirty-one to forty (four of nine). The majority of participants self-identified as female (eight of nine), and only one as male. Regarding race and ethnicity, the majority of Trent working parents self-identified as White (eight of nine), and only one as South-Asian. None of the participants identified themselves as being Indigenous and only one self-identified as having a disability (See *Table 1*, below).

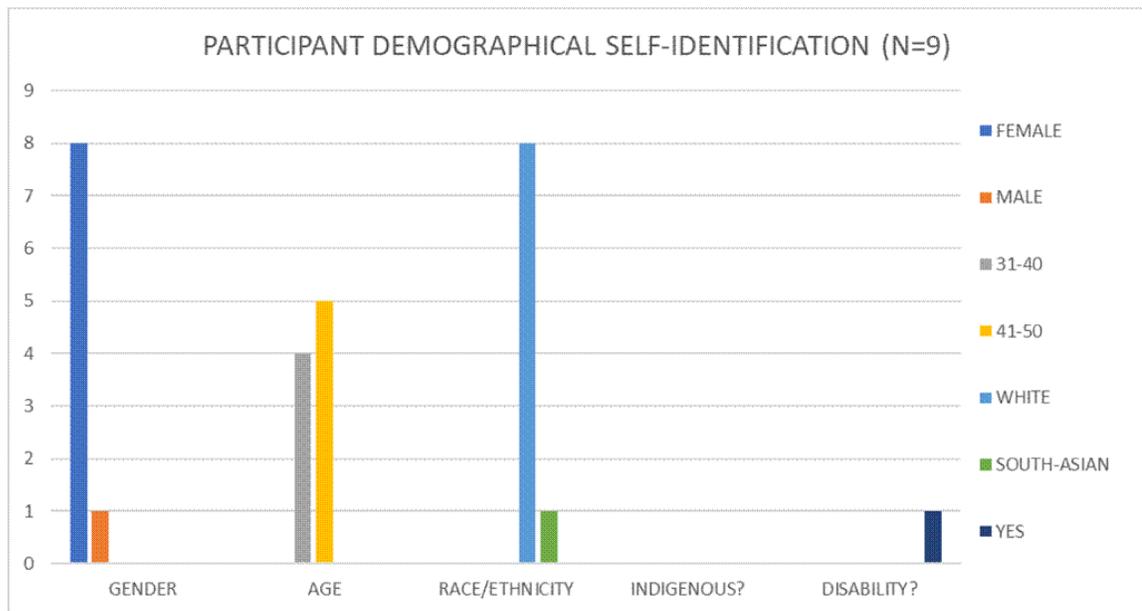


Table 1: Participant Demographics I

Participant Demographics II: Employment, Education, Income, Parenting. With

regard to employment, all but one Trent working parent participants were employed full-

time (eight of nine), while the other was working parttime. Education levels amongst participants varied, with slightly more having master’s degrees (four of nine), than doctoral degrees (three of nine), and bachelor's degrees (two of nine) respectively. Regarding household income, the majority of Trent working parent participants reported \$125,000 or above (five of nine), while two reported a household income between \$75,000 to \$125,000, one reported \$75,000 or below, and one participant preferred not to disclose their income details. The majority of Trent working parent participants self-identified as being a part of a fulltime dual parent household (seven of nine), while two participants identified themselves as being a fulltime single/sole parent household (See *Table 2*, below).

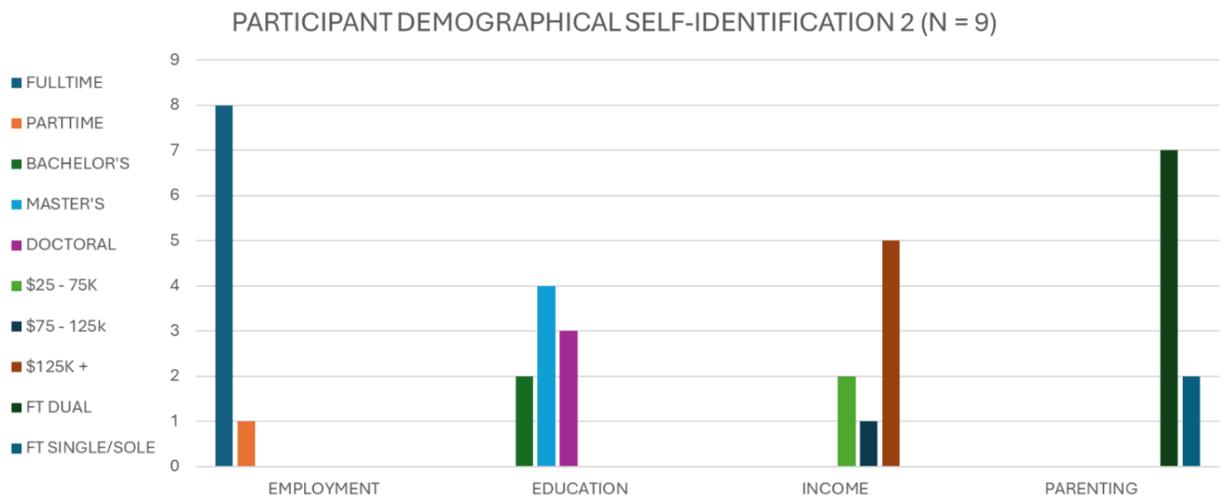


Table 2: Participant Demographics II

Possible Observations and Intersections. The majority of Trent working parent participants self-identified as White females, between the ages of forty-one to fifty, and none of whom identified themselves as being Indigenous individuals. Based on Hill Collins’ development of *Standpoint Epistemology*, special attention was paid to the

distinctive categories and social relations of identity that shape working-while-parenting experiences (Appelrouth and Eldes 2016). Privilege over oppression would seem to best describe the demographical standpoints of this research group as a whole – especially when considering that all participants held at least a bachelor’s degree, more than half reported a household income of \$125,000 and above, and most were a part of a fulltime dual parent household.

Of the two Trent working parents who were fulltime single/sole parent households, both were White females with one dependent child, who were employed fulltime; one with a doctoral degree who preferred not to report their income, and the other with a bachelor’s degree, a household income of between \$25,000 to \$75, 000 and who self-identified as having a disability. The assessment of female oppression and privilege from an intersectional perspective, recognizes diverse social positions related to class, race, gender, and so on (Crenshaw, 2016). These working and mothers differed demographically with regard to education and likely household income as well as self-identifications of ability, which may or may not have advantaged one over the other, however, they reported perhaps unexpected differences in working-while-parenting experiences at Trent. The participant who reported less income and a disability, for example, perceived their employment at Trent to be slightly more positive overall - especially in terms of parenting goals and family well-being. This is perhaps an intricate demonstration of just how individual perceptions and circumstances about working-while parenting can be (See Appendix J: *Trent WWP Entrance Survey 1, Frequency Summary*).

Participant Working-While-Parenting Preferences. Trent working parent research participants were surveyed, using a Likert scale, about their individual working-while-parenting preferences regarding four specific categorical aspects including *Childcare Options, Employment Accommodations; Health-Wellness Considerations, and Parenting-Accessibility initiatives* (See Appendix K: *Trent WWP Exit Survey 2, Frequency Summary*).

- I. Childcare Options. When asked about their specific interests regarding childcare options, participants prioritized *campus* childcare centre *expansion* and/or collaborations with off-campus childcare centres; *flexible* campus childcare options such as extended hours/weekends, year-round access; drop-ins or day-camps; and *secondary-alternative* childcare when primary childcare options are disrupted (seven of nine each).
- II. Employment Accommodations. The most-common working-while parenting preferences given were *flexible attendance/scheduling* options such as start/finish times, working from home, "parenting" absences, and virtual or child-friendly meetings/events that support fluctuating parenting demands; union advocacy for a full year of paid parental leave – with *employment insurance top-ups*; vacation time and/or reduced workload in *correspondence* with public school breaks/PA days; and *part-time* working options that maintain employment security and other privileges to achieve better parenting work-life balance.

An unexpected preference indicated by two female participants was a strong disinterest in having more breastfeeding or nursing spaces on campus. Although this working parent accommodation was not discussed in depth, the impression given was

that nursing parents should feel free and comfortable to do so anywhere at Trent and not be confined to any particular space.

- III. Health-Wellness Considerations. When asked about their specific interests regarding health-wellness considerations, participants prioritized family-oriented *health-benefits* and/or special funding for eyecare, orthodontics and/or family counselling as well as *recognition* and support of the challenges that *sole-parents* face in working fulltime hours.
- IV. Parenting-Accessibility Initiatives. The most-common working-while parenting preferences given were *information* for supervisors and human resource personnel about parenting-accessibility; *sharing of the Trent WWP study* findings across institution and beyond; and working-parent specific *representation* within unions.

Qualitative Data

Individual Working-While-Parenting Perceptions and Experiences. Trent working parent research participants were individually interviewed, about their working-while-parenting perceptions and experiences regarding eight specific discussion items including *Introduction and Interest; Parenting Goals and Work-Life Balance; Parenting Supports and Barriers; Family Well-Being Supports and Barriers; and Working-Parent Representation and Suggestions*.

- I. Participant Introduction and Study Interest. Trent working parents shared the common sentiments that *parenting is priority* and that *parents want to be present*. Common reasons given for participation interest included feelings that it

was a worthwhile study on an important topic in need of more attention; and that working parent support is critical at Trent as well as an integral part of life and society.

- II. Participant Parenting Goals. Trent working parents were asked to describe their top parenting goals. While the most-common goal description was to be a *present and involved* parent, more specific parenting goal descriptions included *being there for their children*, both physically and emotionally, from moment to moment.
- III. Perceptions of Work-Life Balance. Trent working-parents were asked to describe their individual meaning of work-life balance. While the most-common description given was that work-life balance means having the ability to fully dedicate attention to *parenting, work, self-care, and/or relationships*; other responses focused more specifically on having favourable work-life *boundaries, and expectations*, as well as having both working *flexibility and support*. Trent working-parents shared the common experience that *parents have specific work-life balance needs*.
- IV. Experiences of Working Parent Support. Working *flexibility*, and *support* were common parenting work-life balance needs and included specific issues of having *time* for morning baking; of being able to *transition* easily between work and home demands; and of *multitasking* either at home and/or at work to meet the need of both commitments.

V. Experiences of Working Parent Barriers. Trent working parents shared the common experience that *working interferes with parenting*. Work *scheduling* was a common parenting interference and included issues of struggling to coordinate full-time work expectations with parenting responsibilities; foregoing basic *selfcare* while at work so that parenting can be fully prioritized at home; as well as *navigating* the difficulty of morning work commitments that interfere with child wellness needs.

Working commitment *expectations* and *scheduling* continued to be a common parenting interference and included issues of negotiating work *deadlines* and *communications* during a parenting emergency; navigating the inconvenience of *evening work* commitments that interfere with family bedtime routines; as well as feeling emotionally *conflicted* about needing to utilize childcare to support work events that don't consider parenting accessibility.

Feelings of both *resentment and regret* about having to *sacrifice parenting priorities* was a common experience and included issues of being expected to participate in parenting *inaccessible* work-related activities, of feeling *pressured* to place employment security ahead of maternity commitments, and of having *conflicted* perceptions about utilizing childcare provisions to promote employment success.

VI. Experiences of Family Well-Being Supports and Barriers. Awareness about the irreplaceable importance of the *parent-child connection* was a common issue and included experiences of being committed to providing *quality time and personal care* in parenting by refusing to let work expectations and/or upbringing

limitations interfere; as well as appreciating the immense *parent-child value* of attending school day activities and/or *connecting* through family-friendly work events.

- VII. Perceptions of Working Parent Representation. Trent working-parents shared the common perspective that *parenting accessibility is a working-parent right*. More family and/or personal *time and freedom* were common parenting accessibility needs and included specific experiences of *balancing* work, leisure; family and care commitments through the freedom of *remote labour*; as well as conversely *sacrificing parenting goals* and/or personal care to meet restrictive working demands.

General *ambiguity* about *parenting sick days* was common amongst Trent working parents regarding when missing work was *required to care* for an ill child. No specific parenting-accessibility representation was understood to be a part Trent's union collective agreements, and it was often perceived that parenting-accommodations came from the discretion of *individual supervisors* rather than from union representation.

- VIII. Working-While-Parenting Suggestions. While the most-common working-while parenting preference given was *part-time working options*, other responses focused more specifically on *flexible attendance* [or remote work], parental leave with *EI top-ups*, and *correspondence* between work and public-school scheduling.

Potential Bias and Limitations. Although attempts were made to recruit a generalizable sample with even demographic distribution, there may have been data skews – especially regarding gender and race/ethnicity as well as education, income,

Indigeneity and ability. Without knowing the current and specific demographic statistics in relation to working-while-parenting at Trent, however, it's difficult to assess whether the research participant sample was truly representative of the broader institutional population, nor was the sample large enough to offer statistically significant insight. Recruitment calls were sent out widely across Trent's academic departments as well as to all potential union representatives of Trent's working parents. Those departments at Trent who were most acquainted with the Principal Investigator, including the social sciences and humanities, however, may have shared recruitment invitation more generously. The Principal Investigator may have been both informed and inspired, and biased and influenced by her own experiences as a Trent working parent and student as well as her previous related research on Trent student parent experiences (Slater-Meadows, 2023).

Conclusion-Connection. The purpose of this analyses chapter was to demonstrate how data was generated and analysed for this research study. Key quantitative and qualitative details were highlighted and interrelated for an overview of either common or unique data characteristics amongst Trent working parents. In the following findings chapters, two prominent themes will be presented in terms of their work-while-parenting at Trent experiences.

FINDINGS I: WWP EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS & ACCOMODATIONS

Introduction-Overview. One of two prominent themes that arose from data provided by working-parents at Trent was that of *Working-while-Parenting Employment Rights and Accommodations*. Working parents have specific needs and thus require particular accommodations to be able to maintain work-life and especially parenting balance. As is any working individual's right, employment accommodations are based on individual circumstances and cannot be reasonably denied. To do so would be considered workplace discrimination and would be in violation of *Equality Rights, Section 15 (1)*, under Canada's 1983 Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

(Government of Canada, 2025, a).

And especially the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, *Articles 23 through 25*:

Everyone has the right to just and favourable work; to rest and leisure; and to a standard of living – mothers and children have special rights to care and support (United Nations, 2025).

Many working-parents in Canada are perhaps familiar with their government rights to *Parental leave* (Government of Ontario, 2025, b) and *Parental employment insurance, EI benefits* - currently up to seventy-six weeks at fifty-five percent of wages to a maximum of \$695.00 weekly (Government of Canada, 2025, b). Canadian working-parents are fortunate to have one of the longest and most generously funded parental

leave and benefits packages in the world. Canadian working parents of today may not be aware of the gratitude they owe to their postal worker counterparts in fighting for these maternity leave rights over four decades ago; the forty-two-day strike led by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers was a turning point, securing seventeen weeks of paid maternity leave and establishing a new benchmark for parental benefits that would later become available to all workers (Canadian Labour Congress, 2025). Whether or not \$695 a week is enough to cover the rising expenses of average Canadian households may seem beside the point, when compared to countries like the United States, that offer only minimal or no government-funded parental leave and benefits at all.

Working parents in Canada, however, may be less familiar with their government rights to *El caregiving benefits* (Government of Canada, 2025, c) that provide supports like parental leave and benefits in circumstances of a seriously ill or injured child. They may be even less familiar with *Family responsibility leave* (Government of Ontario, 2025, a) that legally entitles any employee up to three days of unpaid leave per year to tend to a serious family matter. Perhaps these basic employment rights are in place more for the protection of unsecure or precarious working parents. If so, it would be interesting to know the level of awareness amongst this group in comparison to their secure and permanent counterparts. Another related inquiry may be whether employment instability itself, plays a role in the under-realization of these rights.

Most of the Trent working-parents in this study identified as being securely employed and thus protected by union-negotiated collective agreements - on top of their basic governmental employment rights; they often noted progressive working conditions

that are even more notable in a wider working context. Many of them, however, still found that their Working-while-Parenting Rights and Accommodations fell short; often the specific needs and particular accommodations required to be able to maintain work-life and especially parenting balance were unmet. If parenting-accessible employment supports were experienced, they were largely perceived as being at the discretion of individual supervisors as opposed to a governmental and/or union-negotiated working right. Parenting-specific accommodations were not commonly understood nor was there much awareness about their existence at all within collective agreements. Top finding themes included that *Working Interferes with Parenting; Parents Have Specific Work-Life Balance Needs; and Parenting Accessibility is a Working-Parent Right...*

Working Interferes with Parenting

Until one becomes a parent, it can be hard to imagine what it truly means to be one; once one becomes a parent, it is nearly impossible to ever put parenting aside. Becoming responsible for the safety and security; the health and happiness of another human being is a tremendous commitment. Parents do not parent from nine to five; from Monday to Sunday – being a parent is a twenty-four-hour; seven-days-a-week responsibility. Even with the provision of childcare from professionals or family members – modern Canadian parents are the ultimate caregivers of their children. One would think that this parenting reality goes without saying, yet parents are often expected to put their employment duties ahead of their children’s needs. From a purely capitalistic perspective, labour is expected from employees; capitalist employment, however, is often incongruent with working-while-parenting realities.

Trent working parents shared the common experience that working interferes with parenting. **Work scheduling** was a common parenting interference and included issues of struggling to coordinate full-time work expectations with parenting responsibilities; foregoing basic selfcare while at work so that parenting can be fully prioritized at home; as well as navigating the difficulty of morning work commitments that interfere with child wellness needs.

Specifically, WWP Participants Stated...

“So, when I first got the job, and I was trying to figure out a [full-time] schedule...I remember sitting down...and thinking - oh my goodness...how am I...should I have accepted this job?!” (Meera).

“I don't take breaks, and I don't take lunch; I just work like really, really focused in the day so that when I go home, I turn my email off - I don't ever do work in the evenings” (Nadiya).

“What I find quite challenging is the mornings because my daughter does struggle with transition - so anytime there's somewhere I have to be early [before 9:00] has been difficult (Logan).

Working commitment expectations and scheduling continued to be a common parenting interference and included issues of negotiating work deadlines and communications during a parenting emergency; navigating the inconvenience of evening work commitments that interfere with family bedtime routines; as well as feeling emotionally conflicted about needing to utilize childcare to support work events that don't consider parenting accessibility.



ERx3 - "My child had a very serious allergic reaction that landed us in the ER 3 times in 48 hours. I felt so stressed not only because of their condition but because of deadlines at work - contact emails, messages, follow ups. I remember wanting to quit, feeling completely spent and also full of rage because all I wanted to do was care for them..." (Celina).

Figure 1: Photovoice - "ERx3" - Celina

Bike Evening - "Sometimes staying late for work-related events; this photo captures the end of the workday and the beginning of the commute home, heading into the dark to rejoin family in the middle of the bedtime routine" (Saber).



Figure 2: Photovoice - "Bike Evening" - Saber

Literature Connections. Brenda Whiteman, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, would be the first to agree that working interferes with parenting. Whiteman (2023) observed that many families are placed in a difficult situation where both parents are forced to work for financial stability, leaving little room to consider whether this decision is in the best interest of their children. Children are naturally inclined to form strong attachments to their parents, even at a cellular level, according to Whiteman (2023); their entire reality

revolves around their parents, and they actively seek that connection every moment - particularly during the crucial early months and years of development. Human life encompasses far more than merely striving for a comfortable existence; while creating a secure environment for raising children is essential, it serves as just the starting point (Whiteman, 2023).

Many parents, like *Nadiya* (see above quote), forego basic selfcare such as breaks while at work, so that parenting can be fully prioritized at home. Even if a working parent attempts to separate their work and life commitments by restricting communications like email, however, their limited selfcare throughout the day will likely affect their parenting intentions after hours. A parent must firstly be able to take care of themselves in order to take care of their children. A depleted Mother, whether in energy or health, cannot fully nurture her dependent child. This critical caring-connection sacrifice is nonetheless made by parents at the expense of both themselves - and especially their children, every day.

Regarding a more gendered perspective on how working interferes with parenting, Stamarski and Son Hing (2015) discussed how sexism within workplace institutions extends from individuals to policies and influences human resource related gender inequalities - especially regarding working-mothers. Gender discrimination can be institutionalized through Human Resource, HR policy, according to Stamarski and Son Hing (2015), if the criteria employed by organizational decision-makers to assess job performance systematically favor men over women. *Facetime*, which rewards employees who spend more time in the office, may disproportionately benefit men; considering that

women predominantly serve as primary caregivers, they utilize flexible work arrangements more frequently (Stamarski and Son Hing, 2015).

Trent working parents, *Meera and Logan* (see above quotes) experienced how working interferes with parenting from a human resource related gender inequalities standpoint. Meera took on the responsibility of struggling to coordinate full-time work expectations with parenting responsibilities herself, rather than having the opportunity to negotiate this important transition with her employer. Logan was left responsible for navigating the difficulty of meeting morning work commitments that interfered with her child's wellness needs, without any consideration of parenting accessible working commitment expectations and scheduling from her employer. These gender and parenting related employment commitment-scheduling challenges could reasonably be resolved from an optimum human resource standpoint, if more consideration was simply given to the external realities of all working parents.

Faraday (2020) demonstrated that gender discrimination and workplace equity intersect further with how working interferes with parenting. Systemic sex discrimination affects women's employment in numerous ways, according to Faraday (2020) - those that especially have the potential to interfere with parenting included biased treatment in employment practices; overrepresentation of women in part-time, and/or contractual work; unionization limitations that centre around male full-time work trends; and the disproportionate expectation placed on women to provide unpaid care work (Faraday, 2020: 7).

The bottom line is that parenting, which is still primarily the unpaid labour of women, remains undervalued – especially in the workplace. A labour of *love* one might say... A beautiful concept but one that invites both interference and inequity, however, when it comes to working-while-parenting. As Whiteman (2023) indicated, most working parents seek employment, despite knowing that being separated from their children may not be what's in everyone's best interest. This vulnerable family need for financial security puts new parents in a weak negotiating position before they even consider returning to the workplace. As Son Hing (2015) discussed, parents and especially working mothers, often find themselves at the losing end of HR policy and employment assessment. Perhaps if parents had less work interference, their employment facetime would then be perceived by the quality of a job-well-done over quantity of in-office hours. As Faraday (2020) demonstrated, equality and equity in the workplace are *not* the same – in terms of gender and especially regarding working-while-parenting. As many Trent working-parents have indicated, for example, how can pay or any other work benefit truly be equal when employment expectations continue to interfere with and undervalue parenting commitments. Perhaps not much has changed over the past thirty-five years regarding how and why working continues to interfere with parenting as the following tribunal quotation indicated:

...women's work – in fact, virtually anything done by women – is characterized as less valuable (The Ontario Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal, 1990).

Parents Have Specific Work-Life Balance Needs

Work-life balance means different things to different working people. It is as dependent on one's work-life values as much as it is on one's work-life circumstances. While one person may value working *hard* and retiring at an early age, another person may rather work *less* throughout their entire life. An argument for the work hard mentality may be that labour productivity is optimal up until midlife; while the work less reasoning may centre around the notion that productivity throughout life is not only possible but important in leading a fulfilling vocational role. Particularly problematic regarding the work hard logic, however, is that childbearing is contradictorily optimal up until midlife – especially for working women. If parents are expected to work during childbearing years, it is not only reasonable that they will need to work less to maintain work-life balance - but also a reality that working-while-parenting needs are both individual and specific.

Trent working-parents were asked to describe their individual meaning of work-life balance. While the most-common description given was that work-life balance means having the ability to fully dedicate attention to parenting, work, self-care, and/or relationships; other responses focused more specifically on having favourable work-life boundaries, and expectations, as well as having both working flexibility and support.

The Most-Common Work-Life Balance Description of WWP Participants Was...

- Being able to **fully focus on parenting**, working; selfcare and/or relationships -
 - By having **well-defined boundaries**,
 - Both **flexibility, and support**,

- And **realistic expectations**.

Specific WWP Participants Stated...

“Work-life balance means having the flexibility and resources to be present for my family, while also being able to meet my professional responsibilities” (Oshi).

“I need those [work-life] boundaries for myself to be a better parent and better professional; I don't believe in the narrative that as a woman and a mother, you have to sacrifice everything” (Olive).

“Having a gym that's available to staff on campus...really supports my work family balance because...I don't have to then leave again later in the day when I would like to be at home” (Saber).

Trent working-parents shared the common experience that parents have *specific* work-life balance needs. **Working flexibility, and support** were common parenting work-life balance needs and included specific issues of having time for morning baking; of being able to transition easily between work and home demands; and of multitasking either at home and/or at work to meet the need of both commitments.



Figure 3: Photovoice - "Morning Muffins" - Lico

Morning Muffins - "Working at Trent has afforded me far more flexibility...time in the mornings to make muffins from scratch... I know how happy they are when they come down and it's something that I've baked for them..." (Lico)

Bike Day - "Having to receive a call about a sick child isn't easy, but it's made much easier by knowing that I'm supported by my team at Trent - [like] being able to get back on my bike, go home and...continue to do my work..." (Saber)



Figure 4: Photovoice - "Bike Day" - Saber

Multitasking – “What you see there is my briefcase and my lunch and some other things – but also my son’s viola because it can’t stay in the car because if it gets too cold or too hot, then that could be problematic for the instrument” (Lico).



Figure 5: Photovoice - "Multitasking" - Lico



Calm – “I could get dinner started...there are just little things I can do to make me feel calmer, which is my goal with my kids – to be calm, to be present...if I can like knock some chores off the list while I’m also working, that’s amazing!” (Nadiya)

Figure 6: Photovoice - "Calm" - Nadiya

Literature Connections. Pupo (2019) examined the social [mis]perception of part-time work for women – often viewed as the desirable, *best-of-both-worlds*, option in providing flexibility for domestic responsibilities and personal satisfaction from paid work. Part-time work is expected to relieve women of their isolation in the home,

according to Pupo (2019), and provide “extra” income for family purchases, while not interfering with household demands. This *voluntaristic* view assumes women choose part-time work willingly, aligning with maternal and domestic roles; however, critics argue this *free-market* perspective overlooks structural constraints such as limited job options, and inadequate childcare policies (Pupo, 2019). It would seem that the social misperception of part-time work for women is based more upon the capitalist-neoliberal notions of familial individualization and *responsibilization* than the specific needs of working-parents.

Though many working parents may share in the dream of part-time work flexibility as a solution to their work-life imbalances, it would be impossible for most within the current Canadian neoliberal-socioeconomic reality. Part-time-working-while-parenting could potentially be the solution to common parenting work-life balance challenges, including social and financial stresses, were the employment security and benefits actually comparable to that of full-time. Regardless of part- or full-time employment status, however, flexibility and support are often a privilege of individual working circumstances. Trent working parents *Lico and Saber*, were fortunate to have been afforded working flexibility and support in their employment positions, which was invaluable in addressing their work-life balance needs. Lico expressed her appreciation in having time for morning baking because of flexibility in her Trent work schedule; while Saber valued being able to transition easily between work and home demands due to the support he received from his Trent superiors and colleagues.

Booth and van Ours (2008) investigated the relationship between part-time employment and satisfaction levels regarding working hours and work-life contentment from a gendered perspective. Women favoured part-time employment over full-time positions, according to Booth and van Ours (2008); part-time jobs offer the opportunity for working mothers to derive self-esteem from work as well as through family care and household responsibilities. Interestingly, male partners' life satisfaction remains unaffected by their partners' employment hours, according to Booth and van Ours (2008), but is higher when they themselves are engaged in full-time work.

Work-care inequality, according to Booth and van Ours (2008), poses a real working-while-parenting conundrum for women – especially within the first twelve or *school-aged* years of their children. When a society makes it challenging for women to balance work and family responsibilities due to inadequate or unsuitable childcare options or by enforcing lower pay for females, it's understandable that women may prefer to work fewer hours to balance their overall satisfaction between work and family life (Booth and van Ours, 2008). The working-while-parenting reality is that when society doesn't care about the specific needs of working-parents – those who have the privilege of doing so will choose to scale down their work and make financial sacrifices in favour of caring for their children.

Multitasking is another, often gendered, solution to meet parenting work-life balance needs and perhaps an assumed coping mechanism of women and all parents, when working-while-parenting flexibility, and support are not considerations of employers, unions, and legislation. As women especially, we are socialized to pride

ourselves as being skilled multitaskers – a gendered characteristic that apparently distinguishes us from our male counterparts. One might wonder, however, if we should really consider this to be a personal accomplishment or more of a neoliberal social manipulation? Trent working parents, *Lico and Nadiya*, described using multitasking either at home and/or at work to meet the need of both commitments. Lico expressed humour at the inconvenience of having to bring her son's delicate musical instrument to work; while Nadiya expressed satisfaction at the calming effect of accomplishing both work and life demands simultaneously through multitasking.

De Jong. et al. (2006) discussed international professional preferences for part-time work and associated family commitments. Part-time work has become relatively common in the Netherlands (19% of men and 71% of women) and there are hardly any differences in conditions of employment between part-time and full-time jobs, according to de Jong., et al. (2006); this makes the Netherlands different from the USA, UK, France and Germany, where part-time work is often second-rate employment. The main preferences for working part-time versus full-time were family and leisure commitments; it was found that medical specialists working part-time are female, older, and have children below the age of five, however, both men and women work part-time more often with children below the age of five (de Jong. Et al., 2006). When truly caring societies such as the Netherlands equalize the benefits between part- and full-time work, the specific work-life balance needs of parents can be realized through flexibility and support.

Boules and Cette (2005) examined the levels of structural productivity across leading industrial nations. Longer work hours, more common in North American countries, are not correlated with higher rates of labour productivity, according to Boules and Cette (2005); socioeconomic sustainability may decrease productivity but increases the quality of life for society as a whole. Many workers in English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon countries, according to Boules and Cette (2005), tend to work thirty to forty percent more hours than workers in Scandinavian and Central European countries. Annual reports from the *International Labour Organization*, however, have observed that labour productivity per hour is routinely higher in short-hours countries like Germany and France, than in countries where workers log more hours per year (Boules and Cette 2005).

Work-life balance means different things to different working people, cultures, employment situations and organizations. The social value placed upon work-life ethic is both collective and individual. Employment accessibility and accommodations, although seemingly a human right, are dependent on many intersecting factors – from socioeconomic status, and education to gender identification, and ethnical background. The political and cultural values of interrelated governing groups and organizations of employment play significant roles in affecting social policy and working rights. Campaigns and reforms to better represent and support the specific needs of working-parents must therefore be informed by those who are actively working-while-parenting. Only then can politicians and employers become better attuned to the many work-life *imbalance* realities of parents and offer effective and equitable solutions.

Parenting-Accessibility is a Working-Parent Right

The rights of working-parents are equally if not even more so critically related to the rights of children. When a children's rights framework is applied to the need for parenting-accessibility within employment agreements, it might be easier to comprehend the significant impact of the working-while-parenting relationship. The Government of Canada presents an overview of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNCRC*, and summarizes the basic principles of the Convention as the rights of all children to:

Respect and non-discrimination; to have their best interests in mind, to optimal life and development and to participation in children's matters

(Government of Canada, 2025, d).

Additionally, the Canadian government outlines that nearly every country, including Canada, has signed the UNCRC and that all governments are responsible in ensuring the rights of children up to the age of eighteen (Government of Canada, 2025, d). But parents are *ultimately* responsible for ensuring the rights of their children. How can these universally declared rights of children be truly protected, however, if the formal parenting-accessibility rights of working-parents are not?

Trent working-parents were asked to prioritize their parenting-accessibility preferences. While the most-common working-while parenting preference given was part-time working options, other responses focused more specifically on flexible attendance, parental leave with EI top-ups, and correspondence between work and public-school scheduling.

8 of 9 WWP Participants Want:

- **Part-time working options** that maintain employment security and other privileges to achieve better parenting work-life balance.

9 of 9 WWP Participants Want:

- **Flexible** attendance/scheduling options
- **A full year** of paid parental leave – with employment insurance **top-ups**.
- Vacation time and/or reduced workload **in correspondence with** public school breaks/PA days.

Specific WWP Participants Stated...

“If I could afford to work part-time and still have the benefits, I absolutely would do that” (Logan).

“I had discussions with my supervisors about wanting to work less...and they didn’t want me to be doing a full-time job four days a week” (Meera).

“It can’t be my kids are sick, and I have to stay home with them today – you have to say you’re sick, like, it’s your sick day” (Logan).

“A full year of [parental leave] top-up...dropping down to less than \$2,000 a month is really tight in this day and age, which is all that you get [with EI]” (Olive).

“I just found the whole process [of EI parental leave] unnecessarily hard; they made it so hard for me to go back to work, and I was like, what? Who is this helping? Who is this serving? Already my life is impossible – having to go back to work with a four-month-old baby, and you are making it worse” (Nadiya).

Trent working-parents shared the common perspective that parenting accessibility is a working-parent right. **More family and/or personal time and freedom** were common parenting accessibility needs and included specific experiences of

balancing work, leisure; family and care commitments through the freedom of remote labour; as well as conversely sacrificing parenting goals and/or personal care to meet restrictive working demands.



Figure 7: Photovoice - "Remotely" - Celina

Remotely – *“This is a picture of being able to work remotely from a family vacation rental, I worked on a Friday afternoon while my parents watched my child... my child got the extra family time and I was able to meet work commitments AND be at our vacation destination early... it was a treat to end work and be at our destination...”* (Celina).

Volume – *“Even though things are a lot better for me now, there’s still a lot of volume there...I’m basically exhausted every weekend...sometimes I’m in back-to-back meetings where I can’t even go to the bathroom”* (Nadiya).

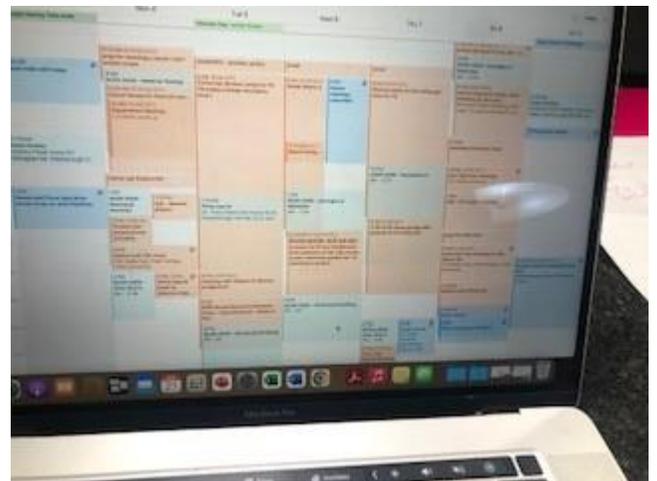


Figure 8: Photovoice - "Volume" - Nadiya

Literature Connections. Although part-time employment might seem like the ideal for working parents, it is often not so

in reality. McDonald, et al. (2009) discussed the social disparity between part-time ideals and realities regarding working-while-parenting in Australia. Permanent part-time employment has been proposed, according to McDonald et al (2009), as a way to

reconcile the conflict between full-time work commitments and caregiving responsibilities – while still retaining some of the advantages of standard employment. Despite strong labour agreements and legal obligations, however, McDonald, et al. (2009), highlighted labour quality concerns regarding reduced responsibilities, limited access to high-status roles and promotions, higher work intensity, and inadequate workplace support for part-time workers. The gendered nature of part-time work exacerbates these disparities, disproportionately affecting women; the need for increased monitoring and improvement of job quality irrespective of work hours to promote equity in the workforce was determined (McDonald, et al., 2009).

Working parents often perceive employment differently than their non-parenting counterparts. Iseke (2014) investigated how the significance of family roles influences satisfaction with part-time jobs in Germany. People notice job disparities when elements of their current work situation differ from their preferred work situation (Iseke, 2014). If part-time employees highly value family responsibilities, according to Iseke (2014), they might be willing to adjust their expectations and tolerate subpar working conditions to optimize their overall well-being by harmonizing work and family commitments. While the significance of family responsibilities doesn't impact how underemployment and over-education affect job satisfaction; individuals who are overemployed and place high value on family roles express even lower satisfaction levels compared to overemployed individuals who don't prioritize family responsibilities (Iseke, 2014).

Long work hours and low productivity growth rates create negative consequences for society as a whole, as overworked parents, citizens, and volunteers are also less

effective in their non-paid, but fundamentally important, social tasks (LaJeunesse, 2009). Through the redistributing of work time and increasing of socioeconomic participation, government policy could finally begin to better support these post-modern ideals in human development. Since the social effort bargain has a vital impact on living standards and wellbeing, the State has a justifiable interest in promoting an outcome that reflects a collective settlement between employers, employees, families, communities, and future generations (LaJeunesse, 2009).

Trent working-parents *Logan, Meera, Olive, and Nadiya* (See above quotes) collectively expressed frustration, ambiguity, and dismay regarding the misalignment between their employment realities and their parenting-accessibility needs. Although Logan expressed significant interest in part-time working options, she contended that the financial and benefit losses would be too costly; additionally, Logan felt that having to personally call in sick in order to care for an ill child was nonsensical. Although Meera attempted to negotiate working four days a week with her supervisors, she was told that it would simply not be possible for a full-time position. Both Olive and Nadiya expressed disappointment with their parental leave experiences, in that Olive found the significant decrease in her income to be unaffordable, while Nadiya felt that the complexity of the process added unnecessary stress to her new parent experience.

It is reasonable to expect any new parent's employment perceptions to shift when they transition from parental leave to working-while-parenting; it's unreasonable, however, for employers not to anticipate and especially accommodate the needs and rights of working-parents. The crucial element enabling a shift from maternity leave to

part-time work at the same organizational level, according to McDonald, et al. (2009) is the entitlement to return to the same position, protected by enterprise bargaining agreements and sex discrimination laws. De Jong. Et al. (2006) recommended that organizational policy should be more supportive of part-time working preferences, and/or change the working hours of [parenting] medical specialists to reflect these preferences. Expecting that a working-parent should either return to work full-time by sacrificing work-life balance or else part-time by withholding security and other privileges is just *not* working-while parenting accessible – and quite frankly discriminatory toward all working-parents.

Additionally, labour unions and/or parenting advocacy groups must better determine and represent working-parent employment rights and accommodations. Arguably the most effective approach for members of an organization, regardless of gender, according to Stamarski and Son Hing (2015), to combat group-based inequality and enhance the overall status of women is to participate in collective action and/or social movements. Equally discriminatory toward working-parent inaccessibility by way of part-time employment options is the lack of adequate social funding for the affordability and availability of childcare provision. There are several apparent policy solutions to enhance the well-being of women and promote effective resource distribution, according to Booth and van Ours (2008), the first involves efforts to enhance the quality of part-time employment; the second entails reducing the opportunity cost associated with participating in the job market by lowering the actual expense of childcare. Why one

might ask, are these seemingly basic and logical working-parent employment rights and accommodations even a social issue at all?

Theme Conclusion. Firsthand perspectives from working parents—shared through personal stories and photographic representations—have been demonstrated to help shape and/or improve the creation of parent-accessible policies and services. The focus of this finding chapter was one of two prominent themes that arose from data provided by working parents at Trent: *Working-while-Parenting Employment Rights and Accommodations*. Trent working parents shared the experience that working interferes with parenting – especially regarding *working commitment expectations and scheduling*. The most-common *work-life* description given by Trent working-parents was having the flexibility to fully dedicate attention to parenting, work, self-care, and/or relationships; Trent working parents shared the experience that parents have *specific* work-life balance needs – especially regarding *working flexibility, and support*. The most-common working-while parenting preference given was part-time working options; Trent working parents shared the perspective that parenting accessibility is a working-parent right; *family and/or personal time and freedom* were common parenting accessibility needs.

Trent working parents have indicated specific needs and thus require particular accommodations in order to be able to maintain work-life and especially parenting balance. The rights of working-parents are equally if not even more so critically related to the rights of children. When a children’s rights framework is applied to the need for parenting-accessibility within employment agreements – it might be easier to comprehend the significant impact of the working-while-parenting relationship. As is any

working individual's right, employment accommodations are based on individual circumstances and cannot be reasonably denied. To do so would be considered workplace discrimination and would be in violation of *Equality Rights* under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 2025, a); the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2025); and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Government of Canada, 2025, d). Even with these nationally and universally signed human socioeconomical rights and freedoms in place, however, working-parents at Trent and beyond may not have their working-while-parenting rights adequately addressed.

The complex social issue of working-parent inequality and inequity could perhaps be examined more deeply from a socioeconomical relationship perspective. Budd (2011) discussed the social relations and inequalities of work regarding capitalism, Marxism and working-while-parenting. *Social inequality and work*: the existence of unequal power dynamics based on gender, race, and socioeconomic class, according to Budd (2011), is also perceived as contributing to disparities in employment opportunities and the formation of gendered and racialized divisions within the workforce. *Capitalist inequality of work*: the fundamental mechanism behind capitalist exploitation, from a Marxist perspective, lies in the fact that the surplus value generated by labour is appropriated by the capitalist rather than the worker (Budd, 2011). *Inequity of working-while-parenting*: the combination of capitalism with patriarchy, wherein male-dominated institutions are perceived as shaping work dynamics to benefit men more than women, according to

Budd (2011), presents another illustration of work being defined by a socially constructed, unequal power dynamic.

The notion that capitalism and social welfare, in contradictory combination, would lead to negative social issues was forewarned well over a century ago. In *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, 1908, Winston Churchill, who would become the infamous British prime minister, discussed the negative social well-being effects of capitalist-neoliberalism. Of considerably higher social importance than labour productivity, according to Churchill, are environmentalism, leisure, relationships, democracy, charity, equality, security, stability, and wellness:

When we measure the things that are most important — such as the integrity of the environment, free time to build relationships, democratic participation, volunteerism, lower crime and inequality, job and health security, and overall well-being — maximizing the output of material goods is revealed as a rather pedestrian pursuit (Churchill, 1908: 158).

As Churchill, predicted, when a labour productivity focus is placed above the well-being needs of society, social degradation will be the automatic and pervasive consequence. Those who are the most vulnerable to the exploitive and individualistic nature of capitalist neoliberalism are working individuals – and especially their children. Capitalism doesn't stand to make a profit when labour productivity is compromised by the reproductive needs of working-parents; neoliberalism values the individual right to economic market freedom, over the collective responsibility of social welfare. Proponents of these self-serving social structures have proven time and time again that they simply don't care about the many intersecting components of social wellness.

FINDINGS II: WWP CARING NEEDS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Introduction-Overview. The second of two prominent themes that arose from data provided by working-parents at Trent was that of *Working-while-Parenting Caring Needs & Responsibilities* – a topic that has also been widely covered by recent media and polling sources. Work-life balance is not a reality for many working mothers, as women are more likely take responsibility for the majority of domestic work and childcare; however, modern fathers are prioritizing their parenting role and choosing to be more present for their family commitments (Stechyson, 2024; Vanier Institute of the Family, 2024; McGinn, 2024, a). Childcare providers in Ontario who choose not to participate in the federally subsidized childcare program will no longer receive general provincial funding; and although Canadian childcare may be becoming more affordable, daycare deserts continue to limit accessibility for many parents (Jones, 2024; McGinn, 2024, b).

Stechyson (2024) reported for *CBC News* that according to a current U.S. poll work-life balance is not a reality for many working mothers. In comparison to working fathers, women are more frequently juggling family and work-related responsibilities; the constant struggle between work-life demands leads to higher stress, anxiety and burnout amongst female working parents (Stechyson, 2024). When it comes to unexpected childcare problems, mothers over fathers are expected to be the default parent, and working mothers are twice as likely to work less or leave work altogether because of childcare issues than working fathers (Stechyson, 2024).

The *Vanier Institute of the Family* (2024) found that women are more likely to take responsibility for the majority of domestic work and childcare, and that working-

mothers are more often employed part time or self-employed in order to manage work-life demands. The 'double burden' of balancing paid, and unpaid work can impact women's wellbeing, according to the Vanier Institute of the Family (2024), as it often results in a heavier total workload and reduced time for rest.

McGinn (2024, a) explored modern fatherhood differences, for *the Globe and Mail*, from previous generations and found some key changes including that 33.6 is now the average age of first-time fathers, and many men only fathering one child, as well as more and more post-pandemic fathers are now working from home. The common theme between these changes, according to McGinn (2024, a) is that modern fathers are prioritizing their parenting role and choosing to be more present for their family commitments by negotiating better work-life balance. Economic instability and inflation are attributed with older first-time fathers – especially in terms of the rising costs associated with raising a family such as childcare, education and extracurricular expenses (McGinn, 2024, a).

Jones (2024) reported for *the Globe and Mail* that childcare providers in Ontario who choose not to participate in the \$10-a-day federally subsidized childcare program will no longer receive general provincial funding. Although the intended purpose of withholding government funding from non-participating childcare providers is to limit their operation and access to Ontario families – the reality will be fewer licensed childcare options for those families that either do not financially qualify for or are simply not interested in meeting the requirements to access a subsidized childcare program (Jones, 2024). While 51,000 new childcare spaces have recently been created in Ontario,

according to Jones (2024), only about half of them are a part of the new subsidized childcare program.

McGinn (2024, b) additionally reported for *the Globe and Mail* that although Canadian childcare may be becoming more affordable, daycare deserts continue to limit accessibility for many parents. The lack of accessible childcare in communities throughout Canada has become a serious issue, putting parents'—especially mothers'—careers at risk, undermining families' financial security, and depriving children of quality early learning and care (McGinn, 2024, b). Searching for childcare amid extremely long waitlists is a common struggle for many parents in Canada, but it's particularly exasperating for those living in areas known as child-care deserts. Placing a child in an unlicensed home daycare is not only more expensive than a spot in a federally subsidized licensed program, but it also tends to be less stable and secure (McGinn, 2024, b).

Parenting is Priority

It never ceases to amaze me how often I need to remind people that I'm a parent. Even when I do, however, it often seems like the priority of such a tremendous role doesn't quite sink in. I'm forever responding to parenting-inaccessible invitations and expectations with, "I'd love to attend but it depends on whether I can make childcare arrangements..." You'd think that my non-parenting colleagues and peers would eventually catch on to my parenting priorities, should they seek my presence beyond school and childcare hours but in my experience, this is a rare scheduling consideration. It's so discriminatory really – especially towards the infinite parenting needs of our children. And so capitalist as well in that my employment priorities are almost always

assumed; scheduling of social and/or work-related events mustn't interfere with my neoliberal responsibility to be productive in the public sphere, but my reproductive commitments are somehow overlooked. The priority of parenting it seems is conveniently private and therefore not of collective concern. The personal costs and hassles of finding childcare during evenings or weekends are a whole other challenge entirely.

Trent working parents shared the common sentiment that parenting is priority. Feelings of both **resentment and regret** about having to sacrifice parenting priorities was a common experience and included issues of being expected to participate in parenting inaccessible work-related activities, of feeling pressured to place employment security ahead of maternity commitments, and of having conflicted perceptions about utilising childcare provisions to promote employment success.

Specific WWP Participants Stated...

“My parenting role...has to [obviously] come first...for me and for every parent”
(Meera).

“How dare you expect that we would be doing these [work-related] things in the evening and on the weekends when there's no way we could ensure that our children are being cared for; this is just an expectation often from senior levels of administration...and it's really shameful” (Nadiya).

“Work-life...it's not necessarily about balance, but about priorities – and my priority has always been my children” (Lico).



Figure 9: Photovoice - "Promoting Work"
- Rebecca

Promoting Work – “I worked straight through my maternity leave so that I could keep my career afloat...it was a really tough time and I’m really sad that I felt that I had to do that, but I did” (Rebecca).

Accomplishments & Babysitting
– “You can see that I look very accomplished...and all that, but inside of me, I’m like, why the hell is the first time my child is with a babysitter?! – because I have to work and it’s at night...” (Rebecca).



Figure 10: Photovoice - "Accomplishments & Babysitting" - Rebecca

Literature Connections. Whiteman (2023) would likely suggest that the feelings of resentment and regret that Trent working parents shared about having to sacrifice their parenting priorities is not only understandable but necessary. Our society, according to

Whiteman (2023), has reached a point where new parents can [or must] separate from their newborns or young babies for extended hours daily, potentially continuing this pattern throughout the child's developmental years; she highlights a lack of awareness regarding the gravity of such a decision in our superficial collective consciousness. This working-while-parenting socialization is neither natural nor valuable, according to Whiteman (2023), but rather a modern norm of employment oppression that must be challenged by parents:

[A Mother] must not be content to accept the hollow definition of “acceptable” maternal behaviour that modern society has superimposed on her (Whiteman, 2023: 58).

Trent working parents *Nadiya* and *Rebecca* (see above statements, photographs) shared particular feelings of both resentment and regret about having to sacrifice parenting priorities. Nadiya described being expected to participate in parenting inaccessible work-related activities as a *shameful* and careless expectation that was often imposed upon working-parents from senior administrators. That it is a normal expectation of any employee to be available outside of regular working hours, but especially for working-parents to also pay out-of-pocket for afterhours childcare arrangements – is a modern employment socialization that goes beyond mere inconvenience. Perhaps if more working parents, like Nadiya, had the determination to challenge parenting inaccessible norms like work-related activities, administrators at all levels across institutions would no longer impose them.

Rebecca described feeling forced to promote working at Trent while on maternity leave to maintain her employment status and expressed both sadness and regret about

what should have been more of a parenting-focussed time. Upon returning to work, Rebecca described feeling conflicting emotions of accomplishment and anger because she was expected to place her young child with a babysitter to attend an evening work-related event, which prioritized her career over her parenting commitments. Despite being raised by a capitalistic society that attempts to minimize the *priority of parenting*, both Nadiya and Rebecca seem to have retained the wisdom of their maternal importance. With these working-while-parenting reflections maintaining their emotional intensity years after they occurred, one might better understand the *gravity* of a child's experience as Whiteman (2023) suggests.

Care, according to Armstrong (2022), is understood as both a social relationship and responsibility – and is often inequitable. *Feminist Political Economy* refers to the structure and relations of institutions that make up not only political and economic systems but also consider social, physical, ideological, and cultural components; paid and unpaid care work are seen as being particularly determined and facilitated through the political economy through this feminist lens (Armstrong, 2022). Trent working parents *Meera and Lico* (see above statements) shared the common sentiment that parenting is priority as well as a Feminist Political Economy working-while-parenting perspective. While Lico states that as a parent, children clearly come *first*; Meera echoes this parenting priority value as being neither in-balance with or as equal to her employment responsibilities. Care work, whether paid or unpaid, is clearly not an equity consideration from the perspective of many employers – but opposingly a *Patriarchal Capitalist Economy*.

Klostermann (2022) utilized a Feminist Political Economy perspective in rethinking ideas and arrangements related to caregiving, centered by the impact of paid and unpaid caregiving responsibilities on women's lives – both within and outside of formal working hours. Many, mostly women, caregivers in Ontario's [public and private] care sectors, according to Klosterman (2022), have become completely exhausted by the prolonged lack of social investment and supports available to them. As indicated by the collective expressions of Trent working-parents, the lack of parenting-accessibility or even - acknowledgement by a society that continues to place labour productivity and profits over reproductive labour and care work – parental exhaustion has clearly turned toward resentment and regret. Perhaps, despite the inequitable socioeconomic- psychophysical exhaustion that *is* often working-while-parenting – Trent and many other working parents have grown weary of independently advocating for what's best for their children. And as Whiteman (2023) might suggest *it's about time...*

Parents Want to be Present

What does it really mean to be present as a parent? While on parental leave, a parent's presence with their child remains constant both day and night, week after week, and month after month – until employment finally interferes. At around twelve to eighteen months, most Canadian parents return to work and thus remove themselves from the uninterrupted presence of their children. For some working parents, this transition may be a welcome one, where they can rediscover their personal independence and freedom through the many social relations of employment; for others, however, working-while-parenting presents a traumatic shift that challenges goals and

values that were perhaps unknown prior to becoming a parent. Some parents cherish being involved in their children's morning and bedtime routines on workdays, while others find these moments far too fleeting. For some parents, these routine moments of presence are all too brief – what's reasonable by way of working logic doesn't resonate with their parenting reality. Perceptions of parental presence are individual and so what's reasonable for one working parent may be intolerable to another. What truly matters perhaps is that parents can self-determine how present they want to be and in whatever way they independently define parental presence to be.

Trent working parents were asked to describe their top parenting goals. While the most-common goal description was to be a present and involved parent, more specific parenting goal descriptions included being there for their children, both physically and emotionally, from moment to moment.

The Top Parenting Goal of WWP Participants Was...

- To provide **present and involved** parenting –
 - By **being-there**,
 - Both **physically and emotionally**,
 - **Moment-to-moment**.

Trent working parents shared the common sentiment that parents want to be present. Awareness about the irreplicable importance of the parent-child connection was a common issue and included experiences of being committed to providing quality time and personal care in parenting by refusing to let work expectations and/or upbringing limitations interfere; as well as appreciating the immense parent-child value of attending school day activities and/or connecting through family-friendly work events.

Specific WWP Participants Stated...

"...in a way that I wasn't necessarily raised...I'm really trying to do gentle parenting, like connection/attachment parenting..." (Logan).

"I did all the work I needed to do in the morning, and then that afternoon, he and I, went for a walk and watched a movie – that felt amazing to be able to do that with him – because historically, if my kids were sick, that just wasn't an option" (Nadiya).

"I think I can be missed at work...but I was completely replaceable [while on maternity leave]. That was a really great lesson because where I'm not...replaceable is to those two people in my home" (Olive).



***Field Trip** – "I was able to attend my child's field trip with their class. This was an amazing day. The joy that it brought my child because I was in attendance was apparent – she kept hugging me and saying, "this is my mom!" Trent provided me with a last-minute day off to attend, and I was/am so grateful. I grew up with parents who couldn't attend class trips because of their work schedules, so this was a huge win for me, and I felt oddly emotional all day" (Celina).*

Figure 11: Photovoice - "Field Trip" - Celina

Together – “I think that opportunities for families to be together, for kids to be on campus are important; for working-parents to have their kids be invited to be where [they] are; and to have activities that are for parents and kids to explore, be curious – are amazing!” (Nadiya).

Literature Connections. McGregor (2022)

continues to absorb the lessons in *radical care* imparted by her mother; these lessons weren’t about moral purity but about *political intensity* – she now understands that ferocity can be a form of care; it represents caring so deeply about the world that one relentlessly fights for it. By *radical*, McGregor (2022) means viewing the world as a

collection of systems that require transformation, not mere acceptance. *A Feminist Ethics of Care* emphasizes that we are not independent, autonomous individuals, but rather are shaped by our familial ties and networks of relationships.

That Trent working parents want to be more present for their children may seem like a gentle and morally pure sentiment; however, it may actually be a politically intense and radical working-while-parenting social movement. Although *Nadiya*, (see above statements, photographs), describes the lovely effects of togetherness she experiences when her children are invited to her workplace, she frankly and unapologetically states that she is no longer willing to sacrifice her parenting presence at home when her child is ill. That any parent would need to fight politically for the moral right to care for their own



Figure 12: Photovoice - "Together" - Nadiya

child is an understandable site of ferocious parenting refusal – is it not? Perhaps these individual working-parent realizations of workplace versus homelife irreplaceability that *Olive* experienced while on parental leave, or the emotional elation that *Celina* shared with her child while volunteering on a class trip – will collectively continue to reinforce the wisdom of radical care and inspire a feminist ethical transformation of capitalist neoliberal working-while-parenting oppression.

Feminist Care Ethics, according to Doucet (2023), have radically influenced moral theory and feminism by highlighting the subjective associations between ethics, relationships, and responsibilities in care. *Feminist Care Economies* are guided by the notion that women must also be recognized in unpaid work to reach equality in paid work and aims to progress social research and policy by ‘recognizing, reducing and redistributing’ the unpaid work of women (Doucet, 2023). The term *work ethic* is perhaps far more understood than *care ethic*, which stems from Weber’s [1905 (1958)] notion of the *Protestant [work] Ethic* that attributed the development of Western capitalism to the Calvinistic religious-economic values of hard work and money saving. Care simply does not carry the weight of work in this neoliberal view because it does not produce measurable outcomes by way of market profits. The care ethic, however, measures social wellbeing as the profit of social reproduction. From this standpoint, one could argue that it is not only unethical but rather patriarchal to continue to favour labour that is produced in the public sphere – especially when it could be said that any working economy is equally if not primarily fuelled by the private reproductive labour of parents.

Trent working-parents *Logan* and *Celina* (see above statements, photographs), shared the sentiment that it is unreasonable for parent's not to be present for their children. Despite being brought up by the presumably capitalist neoliberal work ethic of her parents' generation, Logan has chosen to be more alternatively connected and attached in her parenting style. Although it was not possible for Celina's parents to volunteer for her class trips when she was a child, perhaps due to their socialized work ethic – she seemingly chooses to prioritize her parenting presence for her daughter by recognizing the value and ethics of care.

Despite more Canadian women working than ever before, according to Moyser (2017), their paid labour experiences differed considerably from men in that women still tended to be more responsible for family caregiving and domestic labour or unpaid work. With special regard to gender, labour, and parenting, according to Moyser (2017), the work hours of women were significantly influenced by the presence and age of the youngest child in the household, whereas men's work hours were minimally affected by this factor. Although this gendered labour difference seems to be changing for the better, in that more and more fathers or partners are taking parental leave and/or taking on more of a parental role than breadwinning role – capitalist neoliberalism continues to exploit and individualize the caregiving commitments of parents – and especially mothers, nonetheless. How can working parents possibly be in two places and/or mental spaces at once – at work and at home? Even parents who work from home may require care for their children so that they can effectively complete employment tasks, yet childcare options in Canada continue to be both inaccessible

and/or unaffordable. Not only does the public sphere of paid work clearly interfere with the private sphere of unpaid care but employers and governments, alike, unethically refuse to acknowledge the collective responsibility of caring for future generations of employees and citizens – a.k.a. our children.

Parents Need Childcare

In 2015, the value of unpaid childcare provided by parents was assessed at \$284 billion, according to Statistics Canada (2022), and accounted for about 15% of Canada's gross domestic product. To address the individual unaffordability of childcare for Canadian working parents, a collective support program has been a long-promised but never-fully-delivered policy solution. Canada's quality and affordable *Early Learning and Childcare* program, according to the Government of Canada (2025, e), will provide economic growth; an increase in female employment; and an optimal early years' experience for all Canadian children. After decades of political debate and voter enticement, Canada is finally working toward a federal childcare subsidy program that claims will cost all Canadian parents only ten dollars per day per child (Government of Canada, 2025, d). *Toward* is a key word regarding this universal childcare provision, which is designed after the Quebec provincial plan that has been in place for now nearly thirty years (Statistics Canada, 2022) – in that childcare *affordability* is only part of the solution.

Despite this long-awaited federal programming that would seem to support working parents and their employers alike, there simply is not enough *access* to childcare spaces to satisfy the demand. The waitlists for public childcare centres can be years-long and seemingly endless. Some parents, despite registering before conception, never

secure a childcare spot within a publicly funded and regulated centre; many are forced instead to pay full fees within *private* and *unregulated* childcare situations, which aren't eligible for government subsidy under the current federal plan requirements.

The Canadian universal childcare *affordability versus accessibility* conundrum is something that the government claims to be working *toward* resolving by 2026 by increasing the number of regulated spaces by 27% (Government of Canada, 2025, d), however, access to affordable public childcare centres are but one of multiple working-while-parenting barriers yet to be addressed. What if, for example, working parents want to access affordable public childcare but only *parttime*? Many regulated centres impose a fulltime childcare requirement to optimize their business profit and efficiency but at what cost to the parent-child connection and wellbeing...

Trent working parents shared the common experience that parents need childcare. When asked about their specific interests regarding childcare options, however, participants prioritized on-campus childcare access, flexible scheduling arrangements and alternative childcare availability

7 of 9 WWP Participants Want...

- **Campus childcare** centre expansion and/or collaborations with off-campus childcare centres.
- **Flexible** campus childcare options such as extended hours/weekends, year-round access; drop-ins or day-camps.
- **Secondary**-alternative childcare when primary childcare options are disrupted.

Although Trent working parents agreed that parents need childcare, perceptions regarding the type and timing of **childcare needs were individual** and dependent upon many working-while parenting factors. Individual issues that affected childcare perceptions included valuing the closeness and convenience of on-campus childcare access and/or appreciating the flexibility of alternative childcare arrangements; as well as resenting the inaccessibility of on-campus childcare or the unrealistic burden of childcare placed upon working parents.

Specific WWP Participants Stated...

“Having her on campus was incredible to know that if she was sick or she needed me, I could literally instantly be there; she’s now in junior kindergarten and she’s struggling with that [distance]...the literal proximity to the parent, essentially all being on campus together, actually means a lot to that little person” (Rebecca).

“I didn’t even get a phone call from Trent [Childcare Centre]. I called every single week – and I was faculty and staff...” (Olive).

“It’s like our society still has this idea that there is always one parent at home... even though probably the majority of households have two parents working – there’s sort of just supposed to be like a magic caretaker for children” (Meera).



Figure 13: Photovoice - "Convocation & Care" - Rebecca

Convocation & Care – “She gets to see a little piece of what mommy does and the people I work with and my students...it was such a profound moment of I’m so lucky to have a daycare space on campus” (Rebecca).

Conferences & Care – “I [have approval to] use not university funds but grant funds that I’ve earned myself to pay for the travel of my child and caregiver to go with me” (Rebecca).



Figure 14: Photovoice - "Conferences & Care" - Rebecca

Literature Connections. Doucet and Klostermann (2024) assessed ambiguous and conflicting perceptions of domestic labour in developing the *Care/Work Portrait*, a qualitative, participatory, visual, and

creative method to engage couples in examining their household and care responsibilities, which was an extension of Doucet’s (1996) *Household Portrait*. The *Care/Work Portrait* aimed to further provide innovative conceptual and methodological approaches to researching the intersection of work and care, by acknowledging the

interconnectedness of paid/unpaid care/work that extends beyond the household. Both methods took issues of working-while-parenting into consideration and offered a methodological demonstration that showed the indivisible reality of private/individual and public/collective care-work responsibilities.

As Trent working parents have demonstrated with particular regard to childcare needs – there is no cookie-cutter way to determine individual perceptions. Although *Rebecca* shared the experience that working parents need childcare, for example, it was her parenting preference to utilize flexible and alternative options like accessing an on-campus childcare centre as well as bringing her daughter *and* caregiver along with her to work-related conventions. Before implementing a federal childcare subsidy program such as the *Early Learning and Childcare* program (Government of Canada, 2025, d) that claims to resolve the childcare affordability-accessibility crisis in Canada, it might first be helpful to develop a *Working-While-Parenting Portrait* that examines both individually and collectively what Canadian working parents actually *need and want*.

Lyonette (2015) evaluated the relationship between a partner's income share and how household responsibilities [including childcare] are divided. The division of domestic labour remains a significant gender equality issue as women continue to perform more domestic work than men, according to Lyonette (2015), despite their participation in the labour market. Fathers, however, spend more time than ever caring for their children as being an *involved dad* is viewed as masculine and is therefore not as gendered as domestic work (Lyonette, 2015). Higher earning women are more likely than those with lower incomes to negotiate housework 'sharing' and/or hire someone to help with

domestic work; but despite having paid domestic help, women continue to be responsible for organizing and any remaining indoor cleaning, while men tend to focus on cooking and outdoor maintenance (Lyonette, 2015).

There certainly is no *magical caretaker* for children or households. As Trent working parent, *Meera*, commented the societal assumption that there is one parent at home, while the other works is as outdated as it is absurd. The reality of many two-parent households is that both parents contribute, however equally or unequally, to the division of work and care responsibilities; some may prefer exterior domestic labour or yard work, while others are more content with performing labour inside of the home – any gendered ideal of either is a social construct. Despite all best efforts, however, there is bound to be some work/care overlap as well as gaps. Working parents will therefore inevitably need childcare. The division of the private/public sphere as being either an individual or collective responsibility consideration is perhaps another outdated and absurd social construct that must be rigorously challenged.

Theme Conclusion.

Direct insights from working parents—conveyed through personal narratives and photographic expression—have proven valuable in informing and enhancing the development of policies and services that are more accessible to parents. The focus of this findings chapter was the second of two prominent themes that arose from data provided by working-parents at Trent was that of *Working-While-Parenting Caring Needs & Responsibilities*. Trent working parents shared the experience that parenting is priority and expressed feelings of both resentment and regret about having to sacrifice parenting

priorities. While the most-common parenting goal description was to be a present and involved parent, more specific descriptions included being there for their children, both physically and emotionally, from moment to moment. Trent working parents shared the common experience that parents need childcare; participants specifically prioritized on-campus childcare access, flexible scheduling arrangements and alternative childcare availability.

Trent working parents have indicated that success in fulfilling their parenting goals, needs and responsibilities, requires *priority*, *presence* and at times, *childcare*. Children who receive inadequate early care may never fully recover from this deficit, according to Tronto (2013); what is typically seen as exemplary care or direct care is the care provided by parents to their children within the traditional private sphere of the home, family, or household. Baker et al. (2019) examined the long-term effects of the universal childcare initiative in Quebec. The sharp rise in workforce participation among mothers with young children has fueled significant policy interest in increasing access to non-parental childcare, especially through “universal” childcare initiatives, according to Baker et al. (2019); programs such as Quebec’s have greatly reduced the cost of childcare for all residents and resulted in a substantial increase in its use across the population. Kottelenberg and Lehrer (2017) indicated that Quebec's universal childcare program yielded some benefits for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds, but these were balanced out on average by negative effects experienced by children from more advantaged families. Vermeer and Groeneveld (2017) found that children had higher cortisol levels in childcare settings compared to at home; a link between elevated cortisol

levels and the quality of childcare was observed, with increases being more pronounced in toddlers and preschoolers than in infants. Baker et al. (2019) indicated that individuals who had greater access to childcare showed poorer health, reduced life satisfaction, and increased involvement in crime later in life; a rise in aggression, hyperactivity, and crime rates was primarily observed among boys; earlier research highlighting the critical importance of early childhood environments for long-term well-being and success was recommended (Baker et al., 2019)

The constant caregiving demands placed on working parents, however, foster a neoliberal individualistic *care-for-my-own* mindset, according to Tronto (2013), where individuals feel responsible only for providing direct care to themselves and their own families. As long as neoliberals maintain that the division between public and private life accurately defines the limits of government power, they perpetuate an ideological justification for increasing inequality in care. Tronto (2013) highlighted the democratic responsibility to reconsider care from an equality standpoint:

Unless caring responsibilities are rethought with the concerns of genuine equality in mind, then there can be little progress toward a more [caring] democratic society (Tronto, 2013: 96-7).

DISCUSSION

Looking Back and Inward

Trent Working Parent Representation. If parenting-accessible employment supports were experienced, by Trent working parent participants, they were largely perceived as being at the discretion of individual supervisors as opposed to a governmental and/or union-negotiated working right. Parenting-specific accommodations were not commonly understood nor was there much awareness about their existence at all within collective agreements. The Trent University Faculty Association, TUFA, represents Trent's Academic Staff and Professional Librarians – except for those who are in or above a supervisory position; CUPE Unit 1 (Local 3908) represents part-time Trent employees and students, CUPE Unit 2 (Local 3908) represents full-time Trent students, and OPSEU (Local 365) represents Trent's non-academic employees (Trent University, 2025, b). As the majority of Trent working parent participants held either secure fulltime Trent Faculty or Non-Academic positions, the most-recent TUFA and OPSEU-365 Collective Agreements (Trent University Faculty Association, 2025; Ontario Public Service Employees Union – Local 365, 2025) were examined and compared through a working-while-parenting lens.

Within Section 1.2.4.1: *Discrimination and Harassment*, both the TUFA and OPSEU-365 Collective Agreements establish consensus between parties in prohibiting *discrimination, interference, restriction, or coercion*, and includes *pregnancy, family status, number of dependents, and disability* as well as many other intersectional considerations of member status (TUFA, 2025: 14). Both parties pledge to ensure equal

opportunity in employment without discrimination, as mandated by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, according to TUFA (2025: 14); the University commits to fully meeting its obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, aiming to create and maintain a barrier-free workplace. Within Appendix C, which references Trent’s *Discrimination and Harassment Policy*, Item 7.3: *Systemic Discrimination* is described as when organizational structures—through patterns of behavior, policies, or practices—unintentionally cause or sustain disadvantages for groups identified by a prohibited ground of discrimination (TUFA, 2025; Trent University, 2017-).

Despite the seemingly intersectional framework of Trent’s Discrimination and Harassment Policy there appears to be ambiguity and oversight regarding the considerations of both *marital and family status* and *number of dependents* in that they all potentially affect the realities of working parents yet neither specifically consider systemic discrimination in terms of *working-while-parenting*. The *Human Rights Code of Canada* defines *marital* status as including the categorizations of being *married, single, widowed, divorced, separated or common-law*, while family status is referred to as being in a parent-child relationship and includes all situations where an adult is acting as a parent to a child (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2024). The grounds of marital and family status overlap to encompass various family structures, according to the OHRC (2024); therefore, the ground of family status must be interpreted using a broad and purposeful approach. Together, TUFA’s (2025), OPSEU’s – 365 (2025) Collective Agreements, and Trent’s (2017-) Discrimination and Harassment Policy claim to prohibit *discrimination, interference, restriction, or coercion based on considerations of marital,*

family status and number of dependents; and specifically, Systemic Discrimination, which unintentionally causes or sustains disadvantages for groups identified by a prohibited ground of discrimination -Trent working parents, nonetheless, shared the experiences that working interferes with parenting and the perspective that parenting accessibility is a working-parent right, which is perhaps not currently being broadly or purposefully interpreted nor approached.

Within Section V.6: *Eligibility for Pregnancy, Maternity and Parental Leave Sub-Plan(s)*, the TUFA Collective Agreement outlines Trent’s Employment Insurance, EI supplements or top-ups (TUFA, 2025). The *Maternity Benefit Sub-Plan* provides a ninety-five percent supplement for up to seventeen weeks, followed by either the *Standard Parental Benefit Sub-Plan* and a ninety-five percent supplement for up to an additional twelve weeks, or the *Extended Parental Benefit Sub-Plan* and a seventy-three percent supplement for up to an additional twelve weeks (TUFA, 2025). Mothers in a Faculty position at Trent are entitled to up to twenty-nine weeks or just over seven months of standard maternity-parental leave with a ninety-five percent salary/wage supplement; and Trent Faculty working Fathers and/or co-parents are eligible for up to twelve weeks or three months of extended parental leave with a seventy-three percent salary/wage supplement. There appeared to be no significant differences between the TUFA and OPSEU Collective Agreements regarding eligibility for the pregnancy, maternity, parental leave sub-plans. (TUFA, 2025; OPSEU-365, 2025).

There is a vast financial difference between an annual gross salary of \$38,000, the median employment income in 2020 within Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2023) and \$

\$91,194 the starting salary of a Trent Faculty, *Lecturer*, (TUFA, 2025). This financial privilege, however, may not be in the best interest of higher earning parents or their children. When it comes to EI Maternity-Parental Leave Benefits and employer provided EI top-ups, one could argue that it is actually better to make less than more in terms of being able to afford time away from work in the early and critical stages of parenting. When we do the math, we can see that a \$38,000 gross annual salary works out to be approximately \$731.00 per a 52-week work year, whereas a gross annual salary of \$91,194 works out to be approximately \$1754 per week. Although a Trent Lecturer may earn about a thousand dollars more per week than the average Ontario employee, it often means that they are financially unable to take the full seventy-six-week maternity-parental leave in comparison. On average, an Ontario employee would receive \$695.00 weekly while on maternity-parental leave, which is all but thirty-six dollars less than their average weekly wage; Trent Lecturers, on the other hand, would find themselves bringing in less than half of their weekly earnings or at a weekly deficit of \$1059.00. Even with employer provided EI top-ups, of up to twenty-nine weeks or just over seven months, Trent Lecturers may find themselves returning to work much earlier than average Ontario parents – or perhaps even financing their own maternity-parental leaves. This vast financial discrepancy between lower and higher income earners regarding maternity-parental leave affordability may explain why Trent working parents shared the common working-while-parenting employment accommodation preference of union advocacy for a full year of paid parental leave – with *employment insurance top-ups*. This parental leave income deficit scenario can also be applied to Trent’s Non-Academic staff.

Within Section IV.11: *Absence and Vacation – Faculty*, the TUFA Collective Agreement indicates that when an absence from work is unexpected, due to *illness or disability*, and beyond three days of scheduled instruction time, Trent Faculty employees must provide duration details to the Dean (TUFA, 2025). Faculty members of less than five years are entitled to [no less than] two weeks of annual vacation and those of more than five years are entitled to three – all annual vacation time for Trent Faculty must be preapproved by Departmental Chairs and fall within the summer term, from mid-June [or post convocation] to end of August (TUFA, 2025). There did not appear to be any vacation time period restrictions for Trent’s Non-Academic staff (OPSEU – 365, 2025).

Perhaps the language in Trent’s Human Resource Policy and Procedures regarding *Absences*, which seemed to be unavailable publicly, is more specific than the TUFA Collective Agreement. Within TUFA (2025), however, there is no clear indication as to whether an *unexpected* absence must be due to *personal illness or disability*, or if it could also be extended to family members – particularly the children of Faculty members. OPSEU-365 (2025) does not specify types of unexpected work absences and simply expects that the acting supervisor be notified prior to the shift start time. Trent working parents shared the common experience that *working interferes with parenting*; work scheduling was a common parenting interference regarding child wellness needs. The most-common working-while parenting preferences given were *flexible attendance/scheduling* options such as start/finish times, working from home, "parenting" absences, and virtual or child-friendly meetings/events that support fluctuating parenting demands. The TUFA (2025) Collective Agreement stipulation that

restricts Faculty *vacation* time to the *summer term* is perhaps another example of how the institutional scheduling of the University may interfere with the parenting responsibilities of Trent working parents as vacation time and/or reduced workload in correspondence with public school breaks/PA days were also prioritized.

Within Section XVI.6: *Benefits*, the TUFA Collective Agreement outlines the provisions of various governmental and institutional insurance benefit plans and funds, from those mandated such as EI, CPP, and WSIB; to those extended such as Health Care, Life Insurance, Long-Term Disability, and Gender Affirmation (TUFA, 2025). With one hundred percent of premiums often being covered by Trent's Board of Governors, for secure full *and halftime* (17.5 or more weekly hours) Faculty and their dependents, these benefit and fund provisions seem to be both generous and inclusive – even extending privileges toward tuition and retirement (TUFA, 2025). The OPSEU-365 Collective Agreement regarding benefit provisions was similar (albeit lesser in some instances) to TUFA's except that there did not seem to be tuition privileges and particularly that *Contracted* staff were not eligible for benefit plan membership (OPSEU-365, 2025).

The experiences of working parents and parenting students (Slater-Meadows, 2023) overlap in some significant ways. Despite the progressive generosity and inclusiveness of TUFA's Benefit provisions, a critical need of both working and studying parents seems to be continuously overlooked. Trent working parents shared the experiences that *parents need childcare* - specifically on-campus childcare access, flexible scheduling arrangements and alternative childcare availability; more opportunities for part-time working options that maintain employment security and other privileges to

achieve better parenting work-life balance were also prioritized. The primary structural and institutional barrier identified by Trent student-parents was *the unaffordability, inaccessibility, and incompatibility of childcare options* (Slater-Meadows, 2023). Why not respond to this working-while-parenting (and studying) affordability need by including a Childcare Fund within TUFA's Benefit funding? To respond to the issue of childcare inaccessibility for both parenting employees and students at Trent, Slater-Meadows (2023) also recommended a shared expansion between Trent Excalibur Camp and Trent Child Care; to increase staffing capacity, both TEC and TCC could potentially draw upon Trent's two child and youth degree programs for placement opportunities.

Trent Student-Parent Experiences. To examine the primary structural and institutional barrier identified by Trent student-parents— *the unaffordability, inaccessibility, and incompatibility of childcare options* —a textual analysis⁴ was conducted on Trent University's policies and procedures related to childcare provision (Slater-Meadows, 2023).

In section one of Trent's Discrimination and Harassment Policy, *The Ontario Human Rights Code* is affirmed as "Every person has the right to freedom from discrimination and harassment based on specified protected grounds" (Trent University, 2017-2025: 1). In section two, *Trent's Commitment*, the university states their commitment to "eliminate discriminatory barriers" through "*the central role of equality, access and respect for its faculty, students and staff*" (Trent University, 2017-2025: 1). In

⁴ Please note that this analysis was a preliminary review for information and not an exhaustive textual analysis

section three, sex (including sexual harassment, pregnancy, and breastfeeding), disability, and family status are included as *Protected Grounds* (Trent, 2017-2025: 2).

Slater-Meadows (2023) suggested that the protected ground of sex—which currently includes pregnancy and breastfeeding—be broadened to explicitly encompass the statuses of pregnancy, breastfeeding, *and parenting*. Furthermore, it was suggested that family status *and/or parenting*, in the context of ensuring equality, access, and respect, constitutes a specific anti-discrimination and harassment right for student-parents—one that Trent University may not presently be fulfilling (Slater-Meadows, 2023).

In Trent’s Employment Equity Policy, which does not seem to have been updated since 1997, *equal opportunity* is described as the objective assessment of a candidate, without the application of personal human rights protected characteristics such as “*race, sex, religion and disability*” (Trent University, 1997: 1). *Employment equity* is described as programming that pursues minority group members such as “Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, visible minorities and women” (Trent University, 1997) for positions of employment. Trent states that in order to provide equal opportunities of employment, “the university will seek to identify and remove discriminatory barriers in employment areas including recruitment, hiring, training and promotion practices” (Trent University, 1997: 1). Trent describes their *Employment Equity Program* as *ongoing* and to be reviewed and updated *annually*; with regards to *Working Environment*, it is specified that “reasonable *physical* accommodation will be provided to enable qualified *handicapped*

people to become part of Trent University and to achieve satisfactory job performance” (Trent University, 1997: 4).

If sex and disability were genuinely accounted for in Trent’s Employment Equity Policy and Program, according to Slater-Meadows (2023), the lack of childcare options would not have emerged as the primary structural-institutional barrier to the academic success of Trent student-parents—particularly in relation to *teaching or placement roles*, where access to childcare is a fundamental *employment necessity for any parent*. Similar to discrimination and harassment policies, pregnancy, breastfeeding, *and parenting*, should be recognized as [temporary] extensions of the protected human rights ground of *disability*; as such, they should be key considerations within Trent’s Employment Equity Policy and Program - particularly in relation to workplace accommodations (Slater-Meadows, 2023)

Slater-Meadows (2023) highlighted the rights of pregnant and parenting students, also known as *Title IX Rights* (National Women’s Law Centre, 2012). Both post-secondary institutions and the professors that they employ must comply with Title IX Rights as per United States federal civil rights law. Pregnant and postpartum students are considered to have a temporary disability and are eligible for reasonable assistance or accommodation as requested (National Women’s Law Centre, 2012). Post-secondary institutions must provide pregnant or parenting students with equal access to participation in career-building or fieldwork elements - whether on or off campus. A doctor’s note is not required, unless it is requested of all students with any medical condition (National Women’s Law Centre, 2012). Post-secondary institutions cannot

withhold or deny academic scholarships because of pregnancy or parenting status. If reduced course-load or a leave-of-absence is medically required, pregnant *or parenting students*, who are considered to have a *temporary disability*, are eligible for the same scholarship provisions of other disabled students (National Women’s Law Centre, 2012).

Slater-Meadows (2023) highlighted the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) Accreditation Standards for Master’s degree program stated that academic institutional programs *must demonstrate* a public service focus that strives toward multilevel effectiveness, accountability, and inclusivity (NASPAA, 2019a). With particular regard to standards in serving students, accredited institutions must provide supports to enable academic success as well as encourage student body *diversity and inclusiveness* through recruitment, admissions, and retention practices (NASPAA, 2019a).

The Rights of Parenting Students [and] Working Parents. Trent’s Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Employment Equity policy and procedures both clearly apply to *faculty, students, and staff*. It is often the case, especially at graduate student levels, that parents can be simultaneously studying and working while at Trent – whether assisting in teaching or research as well as faculty or staff positions. Within any post-academic institution model, which includes contractually funded employment as part of a degree program, parenting rights cannot be separated between or specific to students or employees – at any level or status. One could perhaps argue that a student-parent’s rights must be regarded differently than a working parent’s rights outside of a university or college setting, and although working-while-parenting will also be discussed externally

in terms of government policy and legislation – it cannot be internally distinguished within the context of this research study.

Slater-Meadows (2023) provided current example of student-parent initiatives at US institutions includes Portland State University, *PSU* (n.d.), where regular family-orientated activities are offered such as *Family Friday* with complimentary bowling and pizza. PSU also provides student-parents with reserved and walk-in campus childcare as well as day camps when elementary students do not have school. Complete services for Student-parents at PSU include a *Family Resource Room* with a computer and refreshment station as well as study, lounge and play areas; between five to ten *Family Events* per semester that foster networking and socialization amongst student families; multiple *Lactation Spaces* across campus, accessible to students, *staff and visitors with children*, and equipped with breast pumping kits, diapers, wipes and breast pads; many *Family Friendly Spaces* throughout campus for lounge and/or study; and individual *Pregnancy Support* for student-parents-to-be and new student-parents (Portland State University, n.d.).

Initiatives for Student Parents [and] Working Parents. Much like the rights of student-working parents within a post-academic institution, family-oriented initiatives like those available at Portland University, are clearly accessible to *students, staff and visitors with children*. If these parenting-accessibility initiatives were not made available to student parents, then they could be considered a discriminative academic barriers that would be out of line with Title IX Rights NASPAA in the United States; to limit these initiatives to parenting students only and to therefore exclude them from working

parents at Portland University would not only be nonsensical but likely impossible. Whether student-parents or working parents - parents are parents, period. The rights of all parents within any post-secondary institution to academic and/or employment accommodations and parenting-accessible or family-oriented initiatives cannot be therefore separated between or specific to students or employees – whether in Portland or in Peterborough. If parenting students at Portland University are granted special status and opportunities in order to uphold their specific human rights and encourage their academic success, then it can be argued that studying and/or working parents at Trent University and beyond should be granted the same rights and privileges – whether to encourage academic and/or employment success.

Gazing Outward and Onward

Families Come First in Finland. The City of Helsinki (2025) welcomes parents to the blissful nation of Finland that prioritizes supporting families – and especially children - through family-first public policy and legislative supports. Finland’s parental leave system promotes shared parenting responsibilities by allocating designated portions of leave to each parent. Each Finnish parent is entitled to approximately 160 days of paid parental leave, which can be used flexibly within the first two years of their child’s life; parents have the option to take their leave on a part-time basis - allowing them to better balance work and family responsibilities (City of Helsinki, 2025).

In Helsinki what some cultures refer to as preschool or kindergarten is part of a broader system known as early childhood education (City of Helsinki, 2025). Daycare attendance is common among Finnish children where they can participate on a full- or

part-time basis, as it is widely viewed as valuable for both their social and early learning development. Primary school in Finland begins at the age of seven in a low-stress setting, where verbal feedback instead of numerical grades is provided - promoting development without added pressure (City of Helsinki, 2025). Helsinki provides ample public and private community-based daycare choices, with the common goal of keeping children close to their homes. Municipal daycare fees are income-based and have a maximum limit, helping to ensure that childcare remains affordable for families (City of Helsinki, 2025).

Finland has long been renowned as one of the happiest countries in the world. It would seem beneficial for any nation that wishes to be more family forward to look toward international leaders like Finland and their other Nordic counterparts who seem to be having significant successes in public policy for working parents and their children. The Finnish government is not shy about inviting families from other nations to join them and conversely, those from supposedly *less blissful* places may even find themselves tempted in proclaiming, *Let's All Move to Finland!* – all joking aside. Canadian national pride is, however, at an all-time high – what with Trump's heated tariffs and Carney's cooling calm. Moving to Finland, it would seem, would not be a popular solution for many Canadian working parents – now or ever. Learning from and perhaps modelling after Nordic governments and organizations like those in Finland, who seem to have created just the right formula and balance between work and life – for everyone – does seem to be an ideal place to start to strive for a happier Canada.

Recreating a Care-Centred United Kingdom. Working Families (2025) is a national UK charitable organization that aims to eliminate workplace obstacles for individuals with caregiving responsibilities by promoting positive change through empowering working parents and carers, helping employers foster flexible, family-friendly environments, and advocating for supportive government policies. The *Working Families Index (Working Families, 2025)* represents the most in-depth examination of work and family life experiences in the UK; drawing on responses from over 3,000 parents, the Index highlights the daily challenges they face in accessing flexible work, parental leave, and affordable, high-quality childcare, while also showcasing the positive impact and potential of flexible, family-friendly work arrangements; key findings include that parental leave is inaccessible; parents are struggling financially; childcare is limited; flexible working unsupported; and thus parents are over-working. Working Families' (2025) *Family Friendly Workplaces certification* offers employers a set of best practice guidelines and a work and family action plan to help establish a family-friendly workplace culture. Working Families' (2025) *Best Practice Awards*, now in their sixteenth year, recognize employers whose exceptional workplace cultures and practices set the standard for flexible and employee-friendly environments; some award categories include *Best for Mothers, Fathers, Carers and Eldercare, Best Family Network and All-Round Flexibility, Best for Mental Health and Wellbeing and for Supporting Different Pathways to Parenthood, and Family-Friendly Champion of the Year*; some currently shortlisted organizations include *Pan Macmillan, Royal Air Force. E. ON UK, and Nationwide Building Society*.

The *All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)* has been re-established in the UK House of Commons, with sponsorship from leading organizations Zurich, TLT, and Wates, and Nottingham University Business School as its academic partner, according to *Working Families (2025)*; APPG aims to support working families and advocate for flexible, family-friendly work practices through policy, legislation, and employer initiatives. A new *Employment Rights Bill* that directly relates to working parents and carers in the UK is expected to become law in Autumn of 2026, according to *Working Families (2025)*; key legislative changes that affect parenting include flexible working arrangements, parental leave expansion, and statutory sick pay entitlements – thus requiring a more accommodating and flexible workplace for parents and enabling them to better balance their responsibilities.

Much like Canada, working parents in the United Kingdom have been experiencing both supports and barriers to their parenting success and family wellbeing. Similar to that in Canada, UK public policy and legislation, which was designed with caring at its core, has been undergoing collaborative reform that aims to strike a balance between employer and employee standpoints. There seems to be consensus among all UK stakeholders that policy or legislation alone, when it comes to protecting the rights of either working families or employing organizations, is mutually conflicting and therefore unable to function separately. In the unanimous aim to benefit from a more caring society, however, social wellness advocates, governmental legislators and employment organizations have joined together in caring about the interrelated interests of everyone. Perhaps then, Canadians, who pride themselves on being peaceful, polite and above all

else a progressive society, have no excuse but to learn from Finland and other Nordic countries as well as those within the United Kingdom, and to lead others in becoming a more care-centred world.

CONCLUSION

Theme I Summary: Working-while-Parenting Employment Rights and Accommodations. Trent working parents shared the experiences that *working interferes with parenting* – especially regarding *working commitment expectations and scheduling*; and that parents have *specific* work-life balance needs – especially regarding *working flexibility, and support*. Trent working parents shared the perspective that *parenting accessibility is a working-parent right - family and/or personal time and freedom* were common parenting accessibility needs.

Parenting Accommodations Equal Children's Rights. When a children's rights framework is applied to the need for parenting-accessibility/accommodations within employment agreements – it might be easier to comprehend the significant impact of the working-while-parenting relationship. Even with the many nationally and universally supported human socioeconomical rights and freedoms declarations in place, however, working-parents at Trent and beyond may not having their working-while-parenting rights adequately addressed.

Neoliberalism and the Inequity of Working-while-Parenting. The combination of capitalism with patriarchy, wherein male-dominated institutions are perceived as shaping work dynamics to benefit men more than women, according to Budd (2011), presents a stark illustration of work being defined by a socially constructed, unequal power dynamic. As Churchill (1908), predicted, when a labour productivity focus is placed above the well-being needs of society - social degradation will be the automatic and pervasive consequence. Those who are the most vulnerable to the exploitive and individualistic

nature of patriarchal capitalism, often politically framed as neoliberalism, are often working individuals – and especially their children.

Theme II Summary: Working-while-Parenting Caring Needs & Responsibilities.

Trent working parents shared the experiences that *parenting is priority* and expressed feelings of both resentment and regret about having to sacrifice parenting priorities; and also, that *parents need childcare* - specifically on-campus childcare access, flexible scheduling arrangements and alternative childcare availability. While the most-common parenting goal description was to be *a present and involved parent* - more specific descriptions included *being there* for their children, both physically and emotionally, *from moment to moment*. Trent working parents have indicated that success in fulfilling their parenting goals, needs and responsibilities, requires *priority, presence* and at times, *childcare*.

Working-While-Parenting is Both a Private and Public Concern. As indicated by the collective expressions of Trent working-parents, the lack of parenting-accessibility or even -acknowledgement by a society that continues to place labour productivity and profits over reproductive labour and care work – parental exhaustion has clearly turned toward resentment and regret. Not only does the public sphere of paid work clearly interfere with the private sector of unpaid care but employers and governments, alike, unethically refuse to acknowledge the collective responsibility of caring for future generations of employees and citizens – a.k.a. our children. The division of the private/public sphere as being either an individual or collective responsibility

consideration is perhaps another outdated and absurd social construct that must be rigorously challenged.

Neoliberalism Doesn't Care About Working-Parents. The constant caregiving demands placed on working parents foster a neoliberal individualistic *care-for-my-own* mindset, according to Tronto (2013), where individuals feel responsible only for providing direct care to themselves and their own families. As long as neoliberals maintain that the division between public and private life accurately defines the limits of government power, they perpetuate an ideological justification for increasing inequality in care (Tronto, 2013).

Recommendations Within Trent

Specific Trent Working Parent Representation to be more broadly interpreted and purposefully approached within all applicable Trent Union Collective Negotiations and Agreements, including but not limited to advocacy for:

- A full year of paid parental leave – with *Employment Insurance top-ups*.
- *Flexible attendance/scheduling* options such as start/finish times, working from home, "parenting" absences, and virtual or child-friendly meetings/events that support fluctuating parenting demands.
- Vacation time and/or reduced workload *in correspondence* with public school breaks/PA days.
- A *Childcare Fund* as part of Trent Union Benefit funding; as well as for a *shared expansion* between Trent Excalibur Camp, Trent Child Care, and Trent's two child and youth degree programs for potential placement opportunities.

- The protected ground of *Sex*, within *Trent's Discrimination and Harassment Policy* (Trent University, 2017-) be broadened to explicitly encompass the statuses of *Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Parenting*.
- *Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Parenting* to be recognized as [temporary] extensions of the protected ground of *Disability*; as such, they should be key considerations within *Trent's Employment Equity Policy and Program* (Trent University, 1997-).

Recommendations Beyond Trent

Canadians can learn from Finland as well as those within the United Kingdom, who seem to have prioritized the right policy-legislative formula and balance between work and life, and lead others in becoming a more care-centred world. Some family-forward and care-centred policy and legislative models that have been demonstrated in Finland and the UK and that Canada could also explore include:

- *A redesigned Canadian Parental Leave System that promotes shared parenting responsibilities* by allocating designated portions of leave to each parent (City of Helsinki, 2025).
- Parental Leave that can be used *flexibly* within the first two years of a child's life so that parents have the option to take their leave on a part-time basis (City of Helsinki, 2025).
- Establishing a Canadian-led organization like *Working Families* that aims to eliminate workplace obstacles for individuals with caregiving responsibilities by promoting positive change through empowering working parents and

carers; helping employers foster flexible, family-friendly environments; and advocating for supportive government policies (Working Families, 2025).

Final Reflection

As I finish writing and prepare to defend this master's research thesis, which I've been working toward as part of my undergraduate and graduate academic studies at Trent over the past many years - much has changed in my own life as a working and studying parent. My daughter, who was just a teenager when I first came to Trent University, is now pursuing her own post-secondary educational path; my son, but a toddler then, is now nearly a tween himself. My husband and I are celebrating our tenth wedding anniversary by renewing our vows this Summer and we've finally begun going out on regular dates again (lol). After more than two decades of active service, I have officially resigned from the health-regulated profession that originally inspired my working-while-parenting challenges; I've decided to continue in doctoral studies instead.

It was terrifying to leave my first profession for Trent, because it was all I knew at the time and how I identified myself - but I had no choice but to do so. I had no choice but to step away from an employment situation that didn't recognize or respect my specific needs and rights as a working parent. Unfortunately, I had no union representation, nor did I have a supportive and flexible superior. The psychological, physical, spiritual and financial tolls upon myself - and especially my children - were far too great. My infant son had expressed his nonverbal distress at the working-while-parenting imbalances imposed upon our family, the day I tearfully dropped him off at daycare on my way back to fulltime work; my daughter, who was nearly ten at the time,

also thought it unfair that I was working more (and for less) than any of our family wanted me to – *my Children were right*. They needed me and in coming to Trent, I've been able to be there for them, as their Mama, in a way that works best for all of us.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Recruitment Communication -

Frost Centre for CANADIAN STUDIES AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES

Suite 103, Kerr House

Telephone 705-748-1750

Email: frostcentre@trentu.ca

Trail College, 299 Dublin Street

Trent University, 1600 West Bank Drive

Peterborough, ON K9L 0G2

Date:

ATTENTION TRENT WORKING-PARENTS:

You are being asked to assist *Angela Slater-Meadows*, master's graduate student in the CSID Department at Trent University, by participating in a *Photovoice* research study about *Working-While-Parenting at Trent*. Photovoice, according to Wang (2005), employs images taken by participants as a tool to initiate group discussions between those who typically hold less power and policymakers, in aiming to drive social change. As a participant, you will be providing valuable data regarding how working experiences affect the parenting goals and/or family well-being of securely employed Trent faculty and/or staff. Some more specific inquiries will include defining parenting goals; employment supports and/or barriers to parenting goals and/or family well-being; and employee suggestions to better support parenting goals and/or family well-being. With research that is current and specific to Trent university, policy, and/or service reforms, which could better support the parenting success of Trent faculty and/or staff may be formally considered.

To be eligible to participate, you must currently self-identify as Working-While-Parenting (dependent children) in a Secure and Paid Position at Trent University. Participation in this study will only require brief and intermittent blocks of your time, over a three-week period, and will include an orientation-training presentation; an independent photovoice study; and a one-on-one interview. In consideration of student-parent accessibility, childcare compensation as

needed, of up to \$30 per participant, will be provided. A *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* photovoice reception-exhibition *may* be planned, pending funding availability.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board for research with human participants at Trent University. To participate in this study, please contact me directly through the email or phone number provided below. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Angela Slater-Meadows, Principal Investigator
Email: angelaslater@trentu.ca

Appendix B: Orientation-Training Guide Presentation –

Slide 1-2

**Working-While-Parenting
at Trent – A Research Study**
Participant Orientation-Training Guide

Contents

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    graph TD
      A[Introduction - To Research and Study...] --> B[The Photovoice Method - An Overview...]
      B --> C[Informed Consent - What You Need to Know...]
      C --> D[Initial Survey 1: Who You Are...]
      D --> E[Independent Photovoice Study - Step by Step...]
      E --> F[One-on-One Interview - in Preparation...]
      F --> G[Exit Survey 2: What You Want/Need...]
      G --> H[Withdrawal and/or Support - At All Times...]
      H --> I[References and THANK YOU!!]
  
```

Slide 3-4

INTRODUCTION

- Primary Researcher,
- **Angela Slater-Meadows (She/ Her)**
- Master's candidate in Canadian Studies & Indigenous Studies
- As both a parenting-student and student with invisible disabilities, I am deeply passionate about accessibility at Trent and dedicated to promoting equitable and inclusive initiatives – especially for parents.
- More about me on [LinkedIn](#)...

INTRODUCTION

Positionality:

My primary parenting goal upon returning to my profession after maternity leave was to work *part-time* to maintain work-life balance. My employer, however, soon made that goal impossible. Despite my multiple attempts to negotiate family-friendly hours and benefits, I was ultimately forced to choose between working fulltime and sacrificing my parenting commitments or working part-time and losing my family health benefits. This unfair and discriminatory employment choice was the second of faced as a new parent and seasoned professional. While on maternity leave, my regulatory college refused to acknowledge my absence as warranted and had suspended my license.

These impossible work choices left me feeling angry and jaded as a parent. I'd chosen to become a professional because I wanted better employment options, higher pay, inclusive benefits, regular vacation, and multiple other perks – all these secure working privileges it's come to depend on. Never did I suspect that they'd be withheld once I had dependents of my own. I wanted more for my family, so I chose to go back to school instead. My academic research interests soon had me wondering what working-while-parenting experiences were like for other professionals.

Thanks for reading about my working-parent experiences – I'm excited to learn about yours! – Angela

Slides 5-6

INTRODUCTION

Mature Students VERSUS Student-Parents.

Childcare is a CRITICAL Student-Parent Need.

Trent Student-Parents AND a Family-Friendly University.

Previous Research.

- *Trent Student-Parents* –
- In order to explore the relationship between the academic success and family wellbeing of student-parents and structural-institutional enablers and barriers, an examination of the key challenges and possible solutions for student-parents was needed.
- The study was informed by the combination of feminist standpoint epistemological and institutional ethnographic approaches.
- One-on-one interviews and semi-structured focus groups were conducted to effectively gather data as well as provide participants with a motivational experience.

INTRODUCTION

Current Study.

- *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* –
- The intended study will broadly explore how working experiences affect the parenting goals and/or family well-being of securely employed Trent faculty and/or staff.
- Some more specific inquiries will include defining parenting goals, employment supports and/or barriers for parenting goals and/or family well-being, and employer suggestions to better support parenting goals and/or family well-being.
- The research questions will be explored descriptively and thematically through participant orientation-training, independent photovoice audio, and one-on-one interviews.

• Photos: <https://www.istockphoto.com>

Slide 7-8

PHOTOVOICE

“Photovoice is used to reveal systemic injustices”
(Jardorn, 2019).

PHOTOVOICE

What's Photovoice?

“Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique.” – Caroline Wang

Wang (2005) introduced the method of Photovoice, previously called auto-driving, reflexive photography, and/or photo novella.

Photovoice, according to Wang (2005), employs images taken by participants as a tool to initiate group discussions between those who typically hold less power and policymakers, in aiming to drive social change.

Slide 9-10



PHOTOVOICE

Photovoice has been utilized as a social justice tool for various marginalized groups, including:

- Individuals with **mental illness** in Connecticut;
- Families in California;
- Planned Parenthood educators in South Africa;
- And both young **homeless** women and older marginally housed women in Detroit (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Images: <https://photovoice.org/>

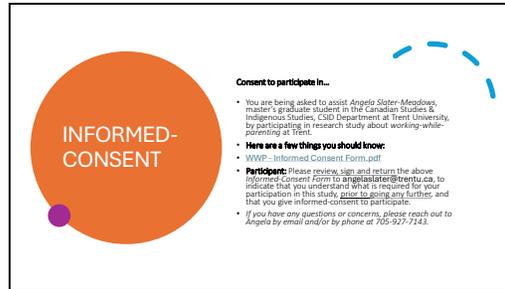


PHOTOVOICE

Photovoice theoretical bases include *documentary photography* as empowering change; *critical consciousness* as questioning reality; and *feminist theory* as valuing lived experience (Wang, 2005).

Photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/16061762@N00/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/16061762@N00/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/16061762@N00/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/16061762@N00/>

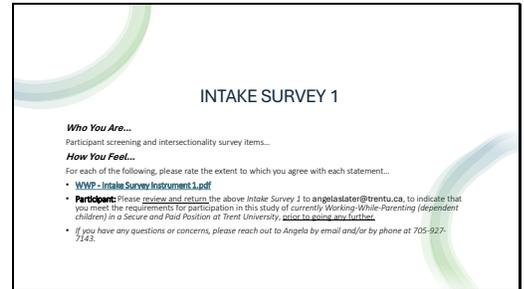
Slide 11-12



INFORMED-CONSENT

Consent to participate in...

- You are being asked to assist Angela Slater-Meadow, master's graduate student in the Canadian Studies & Indigenous Studies, CSD Department at Trent University, by participating in research study about working-while-parenting at Trent.
- **Here are a few things you should know:**
- **WWP - Informed Consent Form.pdf**
- **Participant:** Please review, sign and return the above informed consent form to angelslater@trentu.ca to indicate that you understand what is required for your participation in this study **prior to going any further**, and that you give **informed consent** to participate.
- **If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Angela by email and/or by phone at 705-927-7143.**



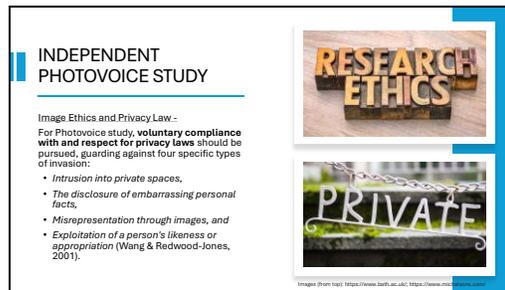
INTAKE SURVEY 1

Who You Are...
Participant screening and intersectionality survey items.

How You Feel...
For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement...

- **WWP - Intake Survey Instrument 1.pdf**
- **Participant:** Please review, and return the above Intake Survey 1 to angelslater@trentu.ca, to indicate that you meet the requirements for participation in this study of currently *Working While Parenting (dependent children) in a Secure and Paid Position at Trent University, prior to going any further.*
- **If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Angela by email and/or by phone at 705-927-7143.**

Slide 13-14

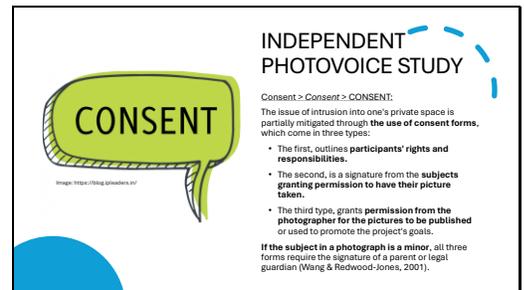


INDEPENDENT PHOTOVOICE STUDY

Image Ethics and Privacy Law -
For Photovoice study, **voluntary compliance with and respect for privacy laws** should be pursued, guarding against four specific types of invasion:

- *Intrusion into private spaces,*
- *The disclosure of embarrassing personal facts,*
- *Misrepresentation through images, and*
- *Exploitation of a person's likeness or appropriation* (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Images: <http://img.ghostfiles.io/>



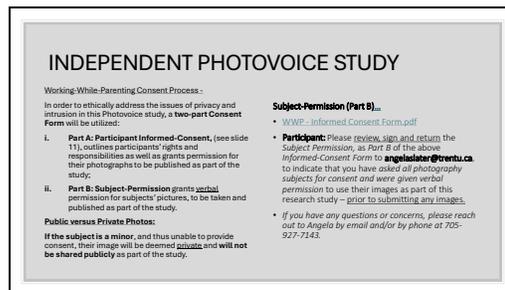
INDEPENDENT PHOTOVOICE STUDY

Consent > Consent > CONSENT:
The issue of intrusion into one's private space is partially mitigated through the use of consent forms, which come in three types:

- The first, outlines participants' rights and responsibilities.
- The second, is a signature from the subjects granting permission to have their picture taken.
- The third type, grants permission from the photographer for the pictures to be published or used to promote the project's goals.

If the subject in a photograph is a minor, all three forms require the signature of a parent or legal guardian (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Slide 15-16



INDEPENDENT PHOTOVOICE STUDY

Working-While-Parenting Consent Process -
In order to ethically address the issues of privacy and intrusion in this Photovoice study, a **two-part Consent Form** will be utilized:

- Part A: Participant Informed-Consent**, (see slide 11), outlines participants' rights and responsibilities as well as grants permission for their photographs to be published as part of the study;
- Part B: Subject-Permission** grants **verbal** permission for subjects' pictures, to be taken and published as part of the study.

Public versus Private Photos:
If the subject is a minor, and thus unable to provide consent, their image will be deemed **private** and will not be shared publicly as part of the study.

Subject-Permission (Part B)...

- **WWP - Informed Consent Form.pdf**
- **Participant:** Please review, sign and return the **Subject-Permission**, as part B of the above **Informed-Consent Form** to angelslater@trentu.ca, to indicate that you have asked all photography subjects for consent and were given verbal permission to use their images as part of this research study - **prior to submitting any images.**
- **If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Angela by email and/or by phone at 705-927-7143.**



INDEPENDENT PHOTOVOICE STUDY

Tips, Tricks & What Camera to Use:

Participant: Any personal digital camera that you are generally familiar with using is recommended.

<<< You can even use your phone! >>>

- If you do not have access to a personal camera, please reach out to Angela at angelslater@trentu.ca or **705-927-7143**, and a loaner will be provided.

Photos: https://photos.blr_2YGd1t0L8

Slide 17-18

INDEPENDENT PHOTOVOICE STUDY

Participant: Over the next couple of weeks, please consider the following thematic scenarios to create a few photographs that express your and/or your family's experiences of working-while-parenting at Trent:

- A photograph and related experience where you felt your **parenting success** as a working-parent was really **supported or enabled** by the university.
- A photograph and related experience when you felt your **parenting success** was **neglected, constrained, or simply unsupported** by the university.
- A photograph and related experience when you felt the university really **supported your family's wellbeing** at a time when the university really felt **left out** of supporting your family's wellbeing.

<<< Please remember to ask all photography subjects for consent >>>

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Angela by email and/or by phone at 705-927-7143.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW PREP

Participant: Please prepare yourself for the following interview questions:

- To get us started, why don't you introduce yourself and share a little bit about who you are (age, gender, race/ethnicity, your field, why you've chosen to participate in this study).
- First, I'd like to invite you to describe a few of your most important parenting goals as well as what work-life balance means to you.
- Next, I'd like to invite you to share a photograph and related experience where you felt your parenting success as a working parent was really supported or enabled by the university.
- Now, I'd like to invite you to share a photograph and related experience where your parenting success was neglected, constrained, or simply unsupported by the university.

• Next, I'd like to invite you to share a photograph and related experience when you felt the university really supported your family's wellbeing at a time when the university really felt left out of supporting your family's wellbeing.

• How well do you feel your working parent accessibility is currently represented in your union-collective agreement, and/or in employment legislation?

• Finally, I'd like to close by inviting you to make a few specific suggestions regarding your Trent employment that you feel would better support your parenting success, and/or your family's well-being.

Once you feel prepared, please reach out to Angela at angelaslater@trentu.ca or 705-927-7143 to make arrangements for your one-on-one interview.

Slide 19-20

EXIT SURVEY 2

What You Want...
Participant-informed initiatives survey items...

What You Need...
For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement...

- WWP - Exit Survey Instrument 2.pdf

Participant: Please review and return the above Exit Survey 2 to angelaslater@trentu.ca, to indicate your support of and thoughts about potential Family-Friendly initiatives at Trent, prior to going any further.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Angela by email and/or by phone at 705-927-7143.

WITHDRAWAL/SUPPORT

A participant can withdraw directly:

- Through principal investigator, **Angela Slater-Hedows**, in-person; by phone at 705-927-7143; or by email at angelaslater@trentu.ca
- By contacting research supervisor, **Dr. Kristy Buccieri**, by phone at 705-748-1011 x6382; or by email at kristybuccieri@trentu.ca

Should a participant withdraw, all data including their questionnaire responses, audio-recorded interview notes, and photographs will be immediately destroyed - unless the participant provides written permission to include their data contribution up until the time of withdrawal.

- "The Department of Human Resources of Trent University is dedicated to the delivery of the highest quality and most efficient services possible for the Trent University Community"; <https://www.trentu.ca/humanresources>
- "Know your rights and obligations under the Employment Standards Act (ESA)"; <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-esa>
- "The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) was established as an arm's length agency of government in 1981 to prevent discrimination and to promote and advance human rights in Ontario"; <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en>
- "Canadian Mental Health Association - Hamilton, Kawartha Pine Ridge, CNRA (KAPR) is a proud partner in 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline"; <https://www.mentalhealth.ca/9-8-8/>

Slide 21-22

THANK YOU! MERCI! MIGWETCH!

"Every woman has this innate ability to know and understand the voracious needs of her child, but it has largely been driven out of her by the society in which she has been raised. She must find it again. She must not be content to accept the hollow definition of "acceptable" maternal behaviour that modern society has superimposed on her" (Whiteman, 2023: 58).

I am grateful to Brenda Whiteman, for her nurturing friendship and for her revolutionary book, *Needs Never Go Away*, which offers insightful and timely relations about working-while-parenting and has significantly inspired this study.

I am grateful to my children, for the honour of becoming their parent and to my husband, for supporting me in my parenting and vocational dreams.

I am grateful for both my working- and studying-while-parenting research participants and hope that through their contributions to my studies at Trent, they too feel validated in pursuing more family-friendly work and study opportunities.

I am hopeful that Trent University and other Canadian institutions that benefit from the invaluable time and energy of all parenting individuals, will continue to "care more fully about our collective societal caring responsibilities."

"Unless caring responsibilities are rethought with the concerns of genuine equality in mind, then time can be little process toward a more (caring) democratic society" (Toronto, 2015: 17).

May We Teach Our Children Well...

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Slide 23

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- <https://photovoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/3301916a4c04c13740ab9e8d09.pdf>
- <https://gcn.ca/photovoice-hv-entibion-submission/>
- <https://photovoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/71a138f2226b03220648d41a1d91a2d>
- <https://actbennington.org/what-we-do/youth-employment/photovoice/>
- https://fundraising.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/112_p-hooghaer-09d845_1206_600x300.jpg
- <https://www.burgenmagazin.co/m/photovoice-adressing-global-issues-through-photography/>
- <https://photovoice.com/peerman-2022/>
- <https://appliedworldwide.com/photovoice-as-a-research-method/>
- <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/ethics-review-process/>
- <https://www.mcgill.ca/comm/eng/privacy-policy/22209>
- <https://blog.pearlcare.com/links-or-contacts-include-contact-us/>
- Video: <https://youtu.be/ZYGx15L8>

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form –

WORKING-WHILE-PARENTING - Informed-Consent Form

Frost Centre for CANADIAN STUDIES AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES

Suite 103, Kerr House

Telephone: 705-748-1750

Email: frostcentre@trentu.ca

Trail College, 299 Dublin Street

Trent University, 1600 West Bank Drive

Peterborough, ON K9L 0G2

Consent to participate in...

You are being asked to assist *Angela Slater-Meadows*, master's graduate student in the Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies, CSID Department at Trent University, by participating in an orientation-training presentation; an independent *Photovoice* study; and a one-on-one interview about *Working-While-Parenting* at Trent University. If you agree to participate, you will be providing valuable data regarding how working experiences affect the parenting goals and/or family well-being of securely employed Trent faculty and/or staff. With research that is current and specific to Trent university, policy, and/or service reforms, which could better support the parenting success of Trent faculty and/or staff may be formally considered. Participation in this study will only require brief and intermittent blocks of your time, over a three-week period, as described below.

Here are a few things you should know:

- Over a three-week period, you will be asked to participate in two five-minute surveys; a thirty-minute asynchronous orientation-training presentation; an independent photovoice study; and thirty-minute audio-recorded one-on-one interview about your working-while-parenting at Trent experiences.
- The results of this project will be disseminated via thesis submission, as well as possible academic journal and Pressbook publications, and convention presentation. A *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* photovoice reception-exhibition will be facilitated, where

participant photography will be on display - pending funding availability but will be cancelled should funds not be granted. You can choose to participate in all or some of these activities.

- Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop participating at any time, without consequence. Should you decide to stop participating, all of your data will be immediately destroyed - *unless you provide written permission to include your data contribution up until the time of withdrawal*; even after completion the study, removal of your data may be requested anytime up until May 31, 2025.
- Sometimes it can be challenging to speak about one's experiences seeking to balance parenting and working life. The anticipated level of risk experienced by participants is *minimal* but may include *psychological risks* including feeling demeaned, embarrassed, worried, or upset; *social risks* including loss of status, privacy and/or reputation; and/or *professional risks* including loss of status, privacy and/or reputation. Each participant will be provided with a list of support resources before participating and invited to take breaks as needed. It is anticipated, however, that although significant working-while-parenting barriers will be found, participants in the study may feel beneficially informed, empowered, and connected by their contribution.
- The responses you provide will be added to responses collected from other participants in the study, it will be summarized, and the researcher will prepare a report on what they learned about the topic of *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* from the questionnaire and interview responses.
- No information about you (such as your name or your relationship to the researcher), will be included in the final report. While your privacy and confidentiality will be protected as much as possible, through non-identifying data collection, *it cannot be guaranteed* - as

there may still be possible aspects of identification such as personal effects or experiences.

- Data will be stored exclusively on the Principal Investigator's Trent protected computer, using encrypted software, to which only she and her supervisor will have access.
- Audio-recorded interview and digital survey responses, as well as any email communications, provided by you and other participants, will be immediately deleted after the study. Digital photographs will also be deleted; however, some select pieces may be included in dissemination presentation – with participant permission.
- In consideration of student-parent accessibility, childcare compensation as needed, of up to \$30 per participant, will be provided.
- In appreciation and remuneration, you may choose to have one of your photographs printed (and framed pending funding availability) for your personal display at the conclusion of the study.
- This consent agreement is not a waiver of any legal rights.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board for research with human participants at Trent University. If you have any questions, please contact:

- ❖ *Principal Investigator*, Angela Slater-Meadows by email (angelaslater@trentu.ca) or by phone (705-927-7143);
- ❖ *Research Supervisor*, Dr. Kristy Buccieri by email (kristybuccieri@trentu.ca) or by phone (705-748-1011 x6382); and/or
- ❖ *Coordinator, Research Conduct and Reporting*, Anna Kisiala by email (annakisiala@trentu.ca) or by phone (705-748-1011 x7866).

Participant-Consent (Part A): Please indicate below that you have reviewed this informed-consent form, that you understand what is required for your participation in this study, and that you give informed-consent to participate.

Participant Signature

DD/MM/YYYY

Subject-Permission (Part B): Please indicate below that you will ask all photography subjects for consent and obtain verbal permission to use their images as part of this research study.

Participant Signature

DD/MM/YYY

Appendix D: Participant Withdrawal, Support –

WITHDRAWAL

A participant can withdraw directly:

- Through principal investigator, **Angela Slater-Meadows**, in-person; or by email at **angelaslater@trentu.ca**
- By contacting research supervisor, **Dr. Kristy Buccieri**, by phone at **705-748-1011 x6382**; or by email at **kristybuccieri@trentu.ca**

Should a participant withdraw, all data including their questionnaire responses, audio-recorded interview notes, and photographs will be immediately destroyed - *unless the participant provides written permission to include their data contribution up until the time of withdrawal.*

SUPPORT

- “The **Department of Human Resources of Trent University** is dedicated to the delivery of the highest quality and most efficient service possible for the Trent University Community”: <https://www.trentu.ca/humanresources/>
- “Know your rights and obligations under the **Employment Standards Act (ESA)**”: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0>
- “The **Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)** was established as an arm’s length agency of government in 1961 to prevent discrimination and to promote and advance human rights in Ontario”: <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en>
- “**Canadian Mental Health Association – Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge, CMHA HKPR** is a proud partner in 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline”: <https://cmhahkpr.ca/9-8-8/>

Appendix E: Weekly Group Email Communication

SCHEDULE -				
WEEK#/OF:	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1. October 28, 2024	Email Overview	---	Email Reminder	---
2. November 4	Email Overview		Email Reminder	
3. November 11	Email Overview		Email Reminder	
4. November 18	Email Overview		Email Reminder	
5. November 25	Interviews	Interviews	Interviews	Interviews
6. January 6, 2025	Interviews	Interviews	Interviews	Interviews

RE: Working-While-Parenting Week 1: Thanks for Participating!

Good (Monday) afternoon!

Trusting that you had a bit of a working-parent breather over the reading break last week – the unexpected PA Day threw my family a bit of a curve ball, but we managed.;D

I want to start by thanking you for signing up for my Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies master’s thesis on the topic of Working-While-Parenting, WWP at Trent. I’m truly excited and honoured to learn about how your working experiences affect your parenting goals and/or family well-being!

Attached is the *WWP Participant Orientation-Training Guide* – please don’t let it’s twenty-three PowerPoint pages intimidate you! This independent study is meant to be done *intermittently*, and at your own pace and availability, over a three-week period. Rest assured that it has been carefully designed with your *parenting-accessibly*, top-of-mind.

I’ll be sending out a gentle weekly email reminder, just to keep us all on a similar track, but you’re welcome to progress in whatever way works best for you and your working-parent commitments. I’m hoping that we can wrap up data collection with our virtual one-on-one interview, the last two weeks in November - and prior to the busy winter break...

Perhaps this week, you can begin your participation by skimming over the guide, deciding upon your *self-selected pseudonym*, and by providing me with your *Informed-Consent and Intake Survey 1* forms. All forms are linked within the guide in PDF format. Should this be inaccessible for you, however, *they are also attached to this email in Word*.

Again, I am truly grateful for your participation and hope that through your contribution to my Working-While-Parenting research at Trent, you too will feel validated in pursuing more family-friendly work and study opportunities!

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free reach out to me anytime by email at angelaslater@trentu.ca.

Warmest regards, ~ Angela

RE: Working-While-Parenting Week 2: Becoming Familiar with Photovoice.

Welcome to WWP Week 2!

Trusting that most of your family's Hallowe'en candy has been devoured and/or has mysteriously disappeared by now – for pure sanity's sake.;D

Thanks to those of you who confirmed your participation last week by deciding upon your *self-selected pseudonym* and providing me with your *Informed-Consent and Intake Survey 1* forms.

< For those who have yet to do so, it's not too late if you're still interested!?!? >

Perhaps this week, you can continue your participation by becoming more familiar with *Photovoice*...

- **Slides 7 to 14** of your *Participant Guide*, provide an overview of this social justice research method, while
- **Slides 13 to 15** discuss Photovoice *ethics* – particularly regarding *privacy* and *consent*; and
- **Slide 16** includes a short video with some *phone photography tips and tricks*.

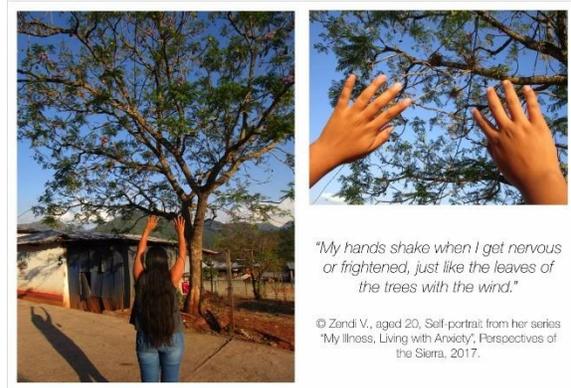
Finally, you may want to skim over **Slide 17**, which includes your *Independent Photovoice Study* prompts. With these ideas in mind, perhaps you can begin to think about how your and/or your family's experiences of working-while-parenting at Trent might be expressed photographically.

<< Below are some Photovoice examples from other studies - the first is showing physical accessibility, while the second a mental health challenge. Hoping this helps! >>

<<< I've also attached the *WWP Participant Orientation-Training Guide* again - just in case it vanished into the Outlook ether as sometimes seems to occur... >>>

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free reach out to me anytime by email at angelaslater@trentu.ca.

Warmest regards, ~ Angela



RE: WWP 2.0 (Light) – Your Participation <Without> Photovoice...

Good *Monday* Morning (Just-joking!)

Trusting you're well - regardless of it being Monday..:D

Thanks to another marvelous Trent working parent, who reached out last week about having *participation time restraints*, I've decided to offer a *lighter* version of the study. If you're finding yourself in a similar situation, but would still like to offer your *valued* perspective, I'd be more than happy to still include you in the *interview study portion*.

If this option works better for you, then perhaps you could simply **let me know your availability** (this week and/or next) and I'll book you for a **half-hour virtual one-on-one interview**.

In the meantime, I will just need your *Informed-Consent* form only (keeping in mind that some aspects will no longer apply); and it might be helpful for you to review **Slide 18: Interview Prep** (of the *Participant Guide*)...

Please let me know if you need either of these materials to be provided again, and/or you have any questions or concerns?

Warmest regards, ~ Angela

RE: Working-While-Parenting Week 3: It's Time to Get Creative!

Happy *Monday* (Just-joking!)

Trusting you're well - regardless of it being Monday..:D

Hoping, however, that you've had time to skim over **Slide 17**, which includes your *Independent Photovoice Study* prompts, *and* with these ideas in mind,

- **that you've begun to think about how your and/or your family's experiences of working-while-parenting at Trent might be expressed photographically.**

If you're looking for some Photovoice inspiration, take a look at the photo-video clip that I recently posted to Facebook, after hiking with my dog, Clairabelle, at one of our favourite local trails:

<https://www.facebook.com/100019432986195/videos/842729748041619/>



In the meantime, it might be helpful for you to review **Slide 18: Interview Prep** (of the *Participant Guide*) as I'll be reaching out about *scheduling* in Weeks 4 and 5...

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free reach out to me anytime by email at angelalater@trentu.ca.

Have a Great Week!

~ Angela

RE: Working-While-Parenting Weeks 4-5: Excited to Finally Meet You!

TGIF and Interviews *already!?!??*

I'm feeling so excited to finally meet all of you over the next couple of weeks! To ensure that we all have ample time to plan ahead, I thought it best to send out the *WWP Interview Sign-up* sheet sooner, rather than later...

Once you feel that you've completed your *Photovoice Study* and have prepared for our half-hour *Zoom Interview* together, it might also be helpful to:

- Indicate **your preferred interview time** here -
- Take note of the **interview Zoom link** -
- Email me **your Photovoice image selections** for preview at –
- **Review your Consent Form** and complete/provide your Surveys – *if you have yet to do so...*

Should you have any questions or concerns, *especially regarding alternative interview needs*, please feel free reach out to me anytime by email at angelalater@trentu.ca.

I'm really looking forward to learning about your working-parent experiences!

Cheers ~ Angela

RE: Thanks Again for Participating in WWP at Trent! – Exit Survey; Exhibition and Renumeration...

Happy Super-Belated New Year!

Trusting that you've settled back into your post-Holiday work-life groove and that you've recovered from <or hopefully missed out on> that COVID-like Winter Break illness...

The following points are with regards to WWP follow-up and/or next steps:

- First and foremost, I want to thank you for participating in my Canadian and Indigenous Studies master's thesis on the topic of Working-While-Parenting at Trent! I'm now happy to share that there are officially nine WWP Participants :D
- Secondly, with your working-parent experiences in mind, I've now updated the *WWP Exit Survey* (see attached). Please kindly complete it at your earliest convenience and return it by email at angelaslater@trentu.ca. *Psst - there may be one of you who still has yet to send me your Consent Form and Survey 1...*
- And last but not least, I received exciting news with regards to some Presential Endowment funding late December and am happy to announce that I will be able to go ahead with a *Working-While-Parenting Exhibition-Reception* in late Spring/early Summer 2025 as planned! As mentioned during our WWP interviews, I'll be preparing an exhibition proposal for each of you, including either your de-identified working-parent photography and/or thoughts.
 - For those photographs that were deemed to be currently non-shareable due to identifying aspects, please feel free to re-submit them with edits as discussed. I'm also happy to make editing suggestions for you if preferred...
 - This *optional and anonymous* knowledge-sharing event will be a catered, three-hour affair, to be held at Sadlier House. In remuneration, appreciation and to support parenting-accessibility for your participation in this study, a childcare voucher of \$30 will be provided as well as a framed display of your contributions – regardless of your choice to attend. More details will be provided soon!

It's truly been an honour to learn about how your working experiences have affected your parenting goals and/or family well-being. I hope that through your contribution, you too will feel validated and empowered in pursuing and advocating for more parenting-accessible work and study opportunities.

As always, should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free reach out to me anytime by email at angelaslater@trentu.ca.

Warmest regards,
~ Angela

RE: WWP Exit Survey 2 Reminder & Presentation Invitation...

Happy "Thesis Tuesday" of what I'm calling Day 1/Ground Zero of my WWP Data-Analysis February 😊

Thank you to those of you who have sent me your WWP Exit Survey 2!

Also, a reminder that I won't be able to include your Trent working-parent perspective in the study 😞 - unless I've received your **complete data set** of:

1. Consent Form;
2. Entrance Survey 1; and
3. **Exit Survey 2** <revised/updated - attached>

And finally, I'd like to personally invite each of you to attend the upcoming *Symons Seminar Series*, **where I'll be presenting** an overview and early findings of my Working-While-Parenting at Trent MA thesis...

As always, should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free reach out to me anytime by email at angelaslater@trentu.ca.

Warmest regards,
~ Angela

RE: PERSONAL INVITE: Working-while-Parenting at Trent to be <VIRTUALLY> Presented at York U!

Good Afternoon, Trent Colleagues, Family & Friends,

An **early finding** out of my *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* master's thesis is that:

The Majority (or 8 of 9) of the Trent working-parent Participants are **Interested in**,

PARENTING-ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES such as,

The Sharing of the Trent WWP study findings across the institution and beyond...

Please join me <virtually> at York University this Friday morning from 10 am to 12 pm, as I share some more preliminary WWP at Trent results at the *Global Labour Research Centre's Graduate Student Symposium!* (Zoom link and Program below)

Global Labour Research Centre
9TH ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM
February 20 & 21, 2025

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 21ST
10AM - 12PM EST Virtual Presentations - Session 4

4.1 The New Normal: Precarity, Rising Costs, and Transformations in Work
Panel Chair: TBD

Maryam Eshafei, York University
The Surveillance, Deskilling, and Automation of Language Teachers' Work

Alanna Veitch, Queens University
Out of COVID's Shadow: Returning to the Body as a Site of Social Stress and Disablement to Re-Politicize How Precarity Affects Black Women's Health in Toronto Ontario

Genevieve Wilson, Trent University
Biden His Time: A New Age of Neoliberalism

Kyrin Stuart, Brock University
Employment Climate and Experiences of LGBTQ+ Faculty and Teaching Staff within Canadian Universities: A Literature Review and Thematic Analysis

4.2 Intersectional Labour Strategies: Care, Well-Being, and Rights in Higher Education and Digital Care Work
Panel Chair: Professor Pat Armstrong

Safeera Jaffer, University of British Columbia
The Labour of Pedagogy: Critical Encounters, Well-being, and Care in Higher Education

Lovepreet Kaur, York University
Intersectional Perspectives on LGBTQ+ Labour Rights in Canada: Navigating Law, Social Justice, and Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace

Zainab Mahmood, University of New Brunswick
Silent Struggles: Healthcare Access by Precarious Migrants Working in Alberta Under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

Angela Slater-Meadows, Trent University
Working While Parenting at Trent - A Photovoice Study of Trent Working-Parent Experiences

Scan to access the Zoom link for Session 4.1

Scan to access the Zoom link for Session 4.2

12PM - 1 PM EST Lunch Break

@glrc_york
@glrcyork8680

GLRC
Global Labour Research Centre

As always, should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free reach out to me anytime by email at angelaslater@trentu.ca.

Warmest regards,
~ Angela

Appendix F: Intake Survey Instrument 1 –

WORKING-WHILE-PARENTING - Intake Survey Instrument 1

PARTICIPANT SCREENING AND INTERSECTIONALITY SURVEY ITEMS:

Self-Selected Participant Pseudonym: _____

Are you currently Working-While-Parenting (dependent children) in a Secure and Paid Position at Trent University? **Yes;**

No

How many Dependent Children do you currently have living at home? **1-2; 3-4; More than 4; Prefer not to say**

Are you currently employed in a Full or Parttime Position? **Fulltime; Parttime**

What is your current Level of Education? **High-school diploma or GED; College diploma; Technical certification; Bachelor's degree; Master's degree; Doctoral degree; Professional degree (JD, MD); Prefer not to say**

What Gender do you self-identify as? **Male; Female; Non-Binary; Prefer not to say**

What is your current Age? **Less than 30 years old; 31-40 years old; 41-50 years old; 51 to 60 years old; More than 60; Prefer not to say**

How do you identify your racial and/or ethnic background? **Arab; Black; Chinese; Philipino; Japanese; Korean; Latin-American; South Asian; South-East Asian; West Asian; White; Other; Prefer not to say**

Do you identify as Indigenous? **Yes; No; Prefer not to say**

Do you identify as having a disability? **Yes; No; Prefer not to say**

What is your current Household Parental Status? **Fulltime Dual-parent; Fulltime Single-parent; Parttime Dual-parent; Parttime Single-parent; Other; Prefer not to say**

What is your current Annual Household Income? **Less than \$25,000; Between \$25,000-\$75,000; Between \$75,000-\$125,000; More than \$125,000; Prefer not to say**

For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement, using the scale from **1** (Disagree strongly), **2** (Disagree a little), **3** (Neither agree nor disagree), **4** (Agree a little), and **5** (Agree strongly):

As a current Working-Parent at Trent University,

1. I feel that my overall working experiences at Trent have positively affected my parenting goals.

2. I feel that my overall working experiences at Trent have negatively affected my parenting goals.

3. I feel that my overall working experiences at Trent have not affected my parenting goals.

4. I feel that my overall working experiences at Trent have positively affected my family's well-being.

5. I feel that my overall working experiences at Trent have negatively affected my family's well-being.

6. I feel that my overall working experiences at Trent have not affected my family's well-being.

Appendix G: Interview Guide –

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. To get us started, why don't you **introduce yourself** and share a little bit about who you are (*self-selected pseudonym, your kids ages, personal like/dislike*) and why you've chosen to participate in this study.
2. First, I'd like to invite you to **describe** a few of your most important **parenting goals** as well as what **work-life balance** means to you.
3. Next, I'd like to invite you to **share a photograph and related experience** where you felt your **parenting success** as a working-parent was really **supported or enabled** by the university.
4. Now, I'd like to invite you to **share a photograph and related experience** when you felt your **parenting success was neglected, constrained, or simply unsupported** by the university.
5. Next, I'd like to invite you to **share a photograph and related experience** when you felt the university really **supported your family's wellbeing** or a time when the university really **fell short** of supporting your family's wellbeing.
6. How well do you feel your *working-parent-accessibility* is **currently represented** in your union-**collective agreement**; and/or in **employment legislation**?
7. Finally, I'd like to close by inviting you to make a few **specific suggestions** regarding your Trent employment that you feel would **better support** your parenting success; and/or family's well-being.

Prompts will include -

- a. *With regards to childcare options?*
- b. *With regards to employment accommodations?*
- c. *With regards to health-wellness considerations?*
- d. *With regards to family-orientated initiatives?*

Appendix H: Exit Survey Instrument 2 –

WORKING-WHILE-PARENTING - Exit Survey Instrument 2

INITIATIVES EXIT SURVEY ITEMS:

Self-Selected Participant Pseudonym: _____

For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement, using the scale from **1** (Strongly interested), **2** (Interested a little), **3** (Neither interested nor disinterested), **4** (Disinterested a little), and **5** (Strongly disinterested): (Use PDF tool, *Highlight selected text and/or Fill in form fields*)

As a current working-parent at Trent University,

a. **With regards to CHILDCARE OPTIONS –**

- b. Campus childcare centre *expansion* and/or collaborations with off-campus childcare centres.
- c. Flexible campus childcare options such as extended hours/weekends, year-round access; drop-ins or day-camps.
- d. Accessibility considerations such as reserved childcare spots.
- e. Affordability considerations such as special rates and/or funding.
- f. Secondary-alternative childcare when primary childcare options are disrupted.
- g. Other (please specify) _____

With regards to EMPLOYMENT ACCOMODATIONS -

- a. Flexible attendance/scheduling options such as start/finish times; working from home; "parenting" absences; and virtual or child-friendly meetings/events that support fluctuating parenting demands.
- b. Part-time working options that maintain employment security and other privileges to achieve better parenting work-life balance.
- c. Union advocacy for a full year of paid parental leave – with employment insurance top-ups.
- d. Vacation time and/or reduced workload in correspondence with public school breaks/PA days.

- e. Family-oriented work areas, play spaces, washrooms, parking, and/or resource centres.
- f. *More* breastfeeding and/or milk expression spaces.
- g. Other (please specify) _____

With regards to HEALTH-WELLNESS CONSIDERATIONS -

- a. Family-oriented health-benefits and/or special funding for eyecare, orthodontics and/or family counselling.
- b. Family-oriented fitness classes, sports teams, play groups, swimming programs.
- c. Coordination with parents who have tenure or promotion deadline considerations.
- d. Recognition and support of the challenges that sole-parents face in working fulltime hours.
- e. Other (please specify) _____

With regards to PARENTING-ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES -

- a. Specific working-parent orientation, and regular outreach.
- b. Working-parent specific representation within unions.
- c. Information for supervisors and human resource personnel about parenting-accessibility.
- d. A Parenting-Accessibility awareness campaign.
- e. Sharing of the *Trent WWP* study findings across institution and beyond.
- f. Other (please specify) _____

Appendix I: TEW Nind Fund Application-Budget

Cathy Bruce, Ph.D.,

President, Trent University • (705) 748-1090 • cathybruce@trentu.ca

Angela Slater-Meadows,

angelaslater@trentu.ca • Peterborough, Ontario • [LinkedIn](#)

DATE: October 29, 2024

RE: T.E.W. Nind Fund Consideration

Dear President Bruce,

Please accept this letter for consideration of the T.E.W. Nind Fund in support of my Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies master's thesis dissemination on the topic of working-while-parenting experiences at Trent University. Funding will be used to facilitate a Summer 2025 art installation in the form of a Photovoice reception-exhibition, featuring how working experiences affect the parenting goals and/or family well-being of securely employed Trent faculty and/or staff.

Public Art Installation of Master's Research. An anonymous *Working-While-Parenting at Trent* photovoice reception-exhibition will be planned with participants and facilitated with key Trent University and Peterborough community leaders, and policy makers. The venue will likely be Sadlier House and include an opening reception as well as a temporary exhibition of participant photographs. Expected costs associated with the reception-exhibition will include the venue rental, refreshment provision, technology requirements, photography display and marketing materials. The three-hour reception will be a parenting-accessible event and will be planned in coordination with working-while-parenting availability in mind. Participants can decide whether they'd prefer to bring their children to the event or use their childcare voucher to make alternative arrangements. The exhibition of participant photography will be on display at the chosen venue from 1 to 3 weeks and framed photographs will be privately presented to participants for their personal display after the conclusion of the event.

Policy Connection through Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Connections between the *Working-While-Parenting at Trent – Photovoice Study* and policy influences at Trent University may be initiated through reception, convention, publication, and media presentation. As many of the policymakers and/or service providers at Trent may also be working while parenting, it is anticipated that hearing from their professional peers will not only inform and inspire positive

structural-institutional change but also encourage all working parents at Trent to individually and collectively initiate better parenting supports.

Empowerment and Influence at Trent and Beyond. Participants in the intended photovoice study may find empowerment through the personal expression of their working-while-parenting at Trent experiences, a sense of community among parents, and reasonable encouragement that supportive policy and service reforms may become possible. The positive influences that this research could potentially have on the parenting success and family well-being of all parenting staff, faculty and/or students at Trent University is both significant and sustainable – especially because it will be representative of current and relatable community data. Dissemination outputs and especially the potential use of reception presentation and media diffusion will extend the knowledge generated within this study beyond the institution and create opportunities for broader political attention and action – perhaps across other academic institutions and workplaces.

Fostering Community and Success via Accessibility. As both a parenting-student and student with invisible disabilities, I am deeply passionate about student accessibility at Trent and dedicated to promoting equitable and inclusive practices and initiatives -- especially for studying and/or working parents. In bringing the experiences of Trent’s working-parents to light, the long-term success and enhancement of the Trent community may be fostered through the development of parent-accessible initiatives that will allow the university to move in new and progressive directions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. My *Budget, Abstract and CV* are attached.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Slater-Meadows (She/Her)

Master’s Candidate in Canadian and Indigenous Studies, Trent University;

BAH. Sociology-Crime/Legal; Psychology.

VP Senate, Trent Graduate Students' Association.

Budget.

Item	Amount/Details	Cost/Specifics	Total
Participant Childcare Voucher: 2 hours of childcare	12 (participants) For Research or Reception	X \$30.00 (each)	\$360

Photovoice Reception-Exhibition:	For 50 -60 (guests)	Below >	Below >
<u>VENUE</u>	<i>The John, Sadlier House</i> michael@sadleirhouse.ca	Bar service of (2+2) 4 h x\$25 =	\$100
<u>REFRESHMENTS</u>	<i>The Cheesy Fromage</i> tanya@thecheesyfromage.com	Catering (from \$7 to \$11 pp) 9 x 60	\$620.37 Incl. GST
<u>TECH-EQUIP</u>			
Audio-Visual, Podium, Seating.	Included with Venue.	N/A	N/A
Display Easels.	<i>The Art School of Ptbo</i> info@artschoolptbo.org	To either borrow or rent.	TBD...
<u>MATERIALS</u>			
Photo prints.	<i>Peterborough Photo</i> pbophotoservice@bellnet.ca	8x10's = 5.99 x 10 11x14 = 24.99 x 10	\$67.69 Incl. GST \$282.39 Incl. GST
Photo Framing.	As above.	8 x10 or 11x14 = \$26.99 x12	\$365.98 Incl. GST
Posters, Programs	<i>Staples</i> www.staples.ca/	25 Posters; 50 Programs	\$42.97 Incl. GST
<i>Estimated...</i>	GRAND	TOTAL	\$1839.40

Appendix J: Trent WWP Entrance Survey 1, Frequency Summary -

ITEM:	RESPONSES:				
Working-while-Parenting	Yes = 9(100%)				
How Many Children?	1 – 2 = 8	3 - 4 = 1			
Employ Type	Fulltime = 8	Parttime = 1			
Education Level	Bachelor’s = 2	Master’s = 4	Doctoral = 3		
Gender	Male = 1	Female = 8			
Age	31 – 40 = 4	41 – 50 = 5			
Race/Ethnicity	South-Asian = 1	White = 8			
Indigenous	No = 9	Yes = 0			
Disability	Yes = 1	No = 8			
Household Parental Status	Full-time Dual-parent = 7	Full-time Single/Sole-Parent = 2			
Annual Household Income	Prefer not to say = 1	Between \$25 – 75 k = 2	Between \$75 – 125 k = 1	More than \$125 k = 5	
	1 (Disagree strongly)	2 (Disagree a little)	3 (Neither agree nor disagree)	4 (Agree a little)	5 (Agree strongly)
Positive – Parenting Goals	---	---	2	4	3
Negative – Parenting Goals	1	4	1	2	1
No effect – Parenting Goals	2	4	3	---	---
Positive – Well-Being	---	1	2	3	3

Negative – Well-Being	2	4	2	1	---
No effect – Well-Being	3	3	2	1	---

Appendix K: Trent WWP Exit Survey 2, Frequency Summary -

CATAGORY/ Aspects of...	1 (Strongly Interested)	2 (Interested a little)	3 (Neither interested nor disinterested)	4 (Disinterested a little)	5 (Strongly disinterested)
I CHILDCARE OPTIONS:					
Childcare - Centres	4	3 = 7/9, 78%	1; 1 NR		
Childcare - Flexible	4	3 = 7/9, 78%	2		
Childcare – Accessible	4	2 = 6/9, 68%	3		
Childcare – Affordable	4	2 = 6/9, 68%	3		
Childcare – Secondary	4	3 = 7/9, 78%	2		
Childcare – Other					
<i>QUOTES -</i>					
II EMPLOYMENT ACCOMMODATIONS:					
Employ – Flexible	7	2 = 9/9, 100%			
Employ – Parttime	6	2 = 8/9, 89%			1
Employ – Paid Leave	8	1 = 9/9, 100%			
Employ – Vacation	6	3 = 9/9, 100%			
Employ –	1	4	2	2	

Fam. Spaces					
Employ – Nursing	2	2	3	Spread out evenly...	2 = Strong Disinterest??
Employ – Other					
<i>QUOTES -</i>					
III HEALTH-WELLNESS CONSIDERATIONS:					
Health-Well – Family Benefits	6	1 = 7/9, 78%	2		
Health-Well – Family Fitness	3	2	3	1	
Health-Well – Positional Coordination	2	2	4; 1 N/A		
Health-Well – Parental Recognition	6	1 = 7/9, 78%	1 N/A; 1 N/R		
Health-Well – Other					
<i>QUOTES -</i>					
IV PARENTING-ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES:					
Parenting-Initiatives – Outreach	2	2	5		
Parenting-Initiatives – Represent	4	3 = 7/9, 78%	2		
Parenting-Initiatives –	5	3 = 8/9, 89%	1 N/R		

Information					
Parenting- Initiatives – Campaign	2	4 = 6/9, 68%	3		
Parenting- Initiatives – Research	4	4 = 8/9, 89%	1		
Parenting- Initiatives – Other					
<i>QUOTES -</i>					