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Female tenure-track professors and their perceived satisfaction levels in romantic relationships

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Brianna N. Meehan
Female Tenure-Track Professors and
Their Perceived Satisfaction Levels
in Romantic Relationships

Abstract

This empirical study surveyed seventy-six female professors who hold tenure-track positions at eleven eastern Pennsylvania colleges and universities. The participants ranged in age from 20's to 60's and varied in race. While there is literature regarding women's relationship satisfaction and job satisfaction, there is a lack of literature about the personal lives of this specific population in relation to their career demands. The study was designed to investigate this population's perceived satisfaction levels in romantic relationships and to determine the relationship statuses of the group that was surveyed. Grounded theory methodology was used in order to generate an understanding of the overarching themes and struggles of the population. This study was conducted in order to be a springboard for future research on a topic that lacks literature. A career in academia is demanding in many ways (particularly time-demanding), and this study revealed that over 70% these women devote forty-six hours or more per week on average to their careers as tenure-track professors. While the methodology of this study was mostly quantitative, two open-ended qualitative questions were included in the survey in order to get deeper understanding of the relationship between personal romantic relationships and family life and tenure-track professorship for women. These open-ended questions produced a lot of texture in the qualitative findings including several strong themes about professors' feelings about the impacts of their careers on having children and on their romantic lives.

**FEMALE TENURE-TRACK PROFESSORS AND THEIR
PERCEIVED SATISFACTION LEVELS IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

An project based upon an independent investigation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

A trend today shows young women pursuing careers first and postponing marriage and children until later in life, or putting them off entirely (Evans & Grant, 2009; Guendouzi, 2006; Slaughter, 2012). Tenure-track professorship is a demanding career by its very nature. As a young woman pursuing a master's degree in social work at a predominantly female school, I am surrounded by high-achieving career women. If high-achieving women are focused on their careers, how are their personal lives being affected? The 21st century media is filled with images of high-powered, driven, professional women – not only politicians - like Hillary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice, but doctors, lawyers, business CEO's, teachers, and financial advisors. One of high-powered professionals at the center of the current “women-and-work debate” Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's COO. My curiosity about the personal lives of these high-achieving career women inspired this study, which focuses on professors. The issue being investigated specifically is their perceived success rate in romantic relationships.

My interest in this topic arose out of many relational encounters both clinically, in my scholarly work, and personally. My grandmother was the only woman in her entire class of architecture students in her university in the year 1947. Today at the same university, there are many more female students in the architecture program where at least twenty percent of the program's faculty members are female. The majority of my female peers who are in their twenties are single and highly focused on academia and career rather than marriage and

motherhood. This topic was also inspired by my own anecdotal observations and experiences, as well as a couple of recent and very remarkable articles: “Women, Money, and Power” by Liza Mundy, published in *Time* magazine, “Why Women Still Can’t Have it All” Ann-Marie Slaughter, published in the *Atlantic* magazine, and “The Confidence Woman, Facebook’s Sheryl Sandberg is on a mission to change the balance of power. Why she might just pull it off” by Belinda Lucombe, published in *Time* magazine.

I have become aware of a common narrative among my high-achieving female friends who are students and professionals. There is a shared sense that it is difficult to devote enough time to academia and personal relationships and experience a high level of success in both. Another issue is that men do not seem to be making as much money as they did previously because women moving into a lot of job positions that men used to dominate, so families are now more dependent on women to provide a stable income (Evans & Grant, 2009; Guendouzi, 2006; Mundy, 2012). In fact, it was stated in an article in *TIME* magazine’s May 27, 2013 issue that women are out-earning their husbands in 38% of married couples (they noted that his information was drawn from various sources, including Pew Research Center, IRS, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Family Law Quarterly) (Luscombe, 2013b).

This study is being conducted with the intent of discovering how the demands of being a tenure-track female professor impacts personal and social lives, specifically – their romantic relationships. My personal exchanges with tenure-track professors, as well as my research in current literature indicate that this career path is extremely demanding, time-consuming, and stressful. This is one of many reasons that this population is of great interest in the arena of high-achieving women. A sub-question of this study is: do the requirements of female tenure-track professors’ jobs affect their ability to invest in romantic relationships? While my interests are

about this unique population, I am also curious about whether or not the findings of my study may be applicable to female professionals in general. This study aims to identify whether the majority of the tenure-track female population is married or in committed relationships, how long the relationships have lasted, and how successful their intimate life has been while focusing on their careers. Though there are several hypotheses about the shift toward professional positions for women, such as a change in women's personal priorities or society's trends toward professionalization allowing women to explore things that they have always been curious about, this study investigates the outcome of a life in academia rather than the reasons behind the desire for this career.

This topic is socially relevant in that the results are significant for a population of women who are the subjects of the study as well as to people who are pursuing relationships with these women. This type of study would also be of interest to pop-culture groups or media sources that target this group, whether they target the group for its ages, interests, or professions. It will help us understand the dominant perspective in this group of people and will help us understand the reasons behind both high levels of satisfaction and low levels of satisfaction in relationships.

Romantic relationship satisfaction in tenure-track professors is clinically relevant to the field of social work in that it will provide an interpretation of the psychic functioning of this type of professional woman. In this study, satisfaction level is measured by a long-established measure that was designed over years by other researchers. This study will help clinicians better understand how to work with this population if they indeed are, or later become consumers of mental health services. Social workers often deal with clients' relationship problems, and a more thorough understanding of what the relationship challenges are that women face is always needed. Social workers will also better be able to treat their clients from this research.

My observations have taught me that finding and maintaining a balance between personal life and career is a challenge for many people in many different professions. Perceived satisfaction in romantic relationships while working in a professional position might indicate a good balance between work and personal life. In a study of marriage and family therapy faculty members, Matheson & Rosen (2012) note that in previous literature, this balance is defined as “an occupational stressor regarding issues of time, energy, goal accomplishment, and strain” (p. 394).

Several articles related to the correlation of women in professional careers and marriage or intimate relationships have been examined in preparation for this study. “Young women are attending graduate and professional schools in record numbers in preparation for careers of all types” (Hoffnung, 2004, p. 712). As recently stated on the second presidential debate of 2012 by President Obama, “women are increasingly the bread-winners in the family.” The reality that many married women now out-earn their husbands undoubtedly changes how marriages and intimate relationships function. This indicates a need to pay attention to and understand the change in numbers of professional women, or women seeking higher degrees, and also to identify how this changes life paths of marriage and/or romantic relationships and family planning.

It is also a growing trend that many women are putting off having children until late 30’s and even 40’s (Slaughter, 2012; Rubin & Wooten, 2007; Hall-Schwarz, 2005). As having children is most often related to being in romantic relationships, this gives us more reason to study the relationships trends of professional women. Much of the research has been on young women’s aspirations of career and marriage (Cooper, Arkkelin, & Tiebert, 1994; Hoffnung, 2004; Mark & Murray, 2012). There is also a substantial amount of research on the relationship

between career and motherhood/parenting role (Guendouzi, 2006; Peus & Trait-Mattausch, 2008; Raskin, 2006; Rubin & Wooten, 2007; Swanson, 2006; Title, 1982). In fact, there is a lot of evidence that having children seriously hurts a woman's chances of achieving tenure in academia (Evans & Grant, 2009; Hall-Schwarz, 2005). In juxtaposition to the current research, the goal of this paper is to identify the success rates in romantic relationship of women who are currently in professional careers as tenure-track professors.

In discussing the population of working women, we must acknowledge the women's rights movement of the early and mid 20th century and its impact on educational opportunities, jobs opportunities, personal and work relationships, and sexuality today. If it weren't for this social movement, women would not have the choice of seeking education and career or choosing whether or not to get married and have children. Women have so much more power and control over their lives and their futures today because of what their ancestors did over the last century. The fact that women now have access to birth control and the ability to decide when and if they want to reproduce undoubtedly contributes greatly to the shift from homemakers to career women. This access provided options and control for women. Some might argue that it helped to increase relationship satisfaction.

While there are likely many factors that contribute to one's perceived satisfaction level in romantic relationships, such as parental and social influences, personality type, health...etc, this study will focus on success in the sense of relationship satisfaction, using the measure designed by Hendrick (1998). Some women, perhaps many, are now expected by their families, their culture or greater society to focus on education and career, rather than marriage and motherhood and this expectation may have something to do with success or lack thereof in marital relationships.

The complicated topic of dating, partnership, and relationship satisfaction has been studied for decades and continues to make headlines, with much focus on what/who's not working in relationships. "Over the years, research and casual observation have tended to suggest that men do not react well when women outperform them" (Mundy, 2012, p. 11). The media are quick to suggest that this is sometimes the reason for relationship failures. Many scales have been developed to assess people's levels of satisfaction in relationships. Researchers continue to attempt to identify the most important aspects of intimate relationships and making relationships work. Though there is much literature about professors and motherhood, no evidence has been found of published literature or research on the romantic relationships of tenure-track professors.

In a collection of personal stories of women in academia from the book *Mama, PhD*, one woman writes, "Academia is a place where what's private and what's public, the personal and the professional, the family and the classroom, and the emotional and the intellectual exist separately" (Evans & Grant, 2009, p. 126). If this is true, how do professors reconcile the separation of their personal and their professional lives? If having a career in academia means shutting out emotions, family, and private life, how do they manage to have a successful personal life?

This study surveys seventy-six female tenure-track professors in the city of Philadelphia and surrounding areas. The participation of this special population will not only benefit this specific population, but it will benefit university administration, the institution of higher education, and families or individuals who are involved with female tenure-track professors.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

A substantial body of literature exists to date that addresses women's dual aspirations of career and family and/or marriage (Cooper, Arkkelin, & Tiebert, 1994; Hoffnung, 2004; Raskin, 2006; Rubin & Wooten, 2007; Slaughter, 2012). In 1982 it was theorized that the shift from homemakers to career women in the 1970's has to do with the social change of increasing acceptance and opportunity for women to choose non-traditional professions, such as medicine and law (Title, 1982). It has also been suggested that not only do most women aspired to marry and have a family, but also women no longer view having a career as an option, but a necessity for income to raise a family (Evans & Grant, 2009; Guendouzi, 2006; Mundy, 2012; Swanson, 2006; Title, 1982).

Literature from the past decade suggests that women's aspirations for career and marriage have not changed that much in that they still want to be a wife, a mother, and career woman, and many believe that these three things are possible simultaneously (Armenti, 2004; Evans & Grant, 2009; Hoffnung, 2004; Peus & Trait-Mattausch, 2008). Recent research has also focused on college students' preference in regards to future career and marriage and the correlation of these two to their personal values and gender-role orientation (Cooper, Arkkelin, & Tiebert, 1994). Another study examined the factors that have gone into the decision by high-achieving professional women to become stay-at-home mothers. Findings from the mentioned study suggested that the participants noted the importance of their mothers influence on their

childhoods; as they grew up with stay-at-home mothers (Rubin & Wooten, 2007). Another one of the findings from the study about professional women who chose to be stay-at-home mothers is that they felt a “loss of identity after leaving their professions” (Rubin & Wooten, 2007, p. 340), which is consistent with research by Guendouzi (2006). This research is crucial in understanding the factors of women’s decisions about careers and families.

Many women aspire to have professional careers as well as marriages and children. In a study of 200 female college seniors, Hoffnung (2004) found that, seven years after the study’s initial interviews, 29% of the 178 women who participated in the second interview had already earned masters degrees and 11% had earned doctorate degrees (pg. 718). Also, within seven years of being a college senior, 43% of these women had married, 11% were engaged, and 19% were in committed relationships (Hoffnung, 2004, pg. 718). Some of the recent research has been focused on young women (college and 20’s) (Deutsch, Kokot, & Binder, 2007; Hoffnung, 2004; Mark & Murray, 2012).

Another researcher, Title (1982), examined young people’s values in the adult roles of career, marriage, and family. She noted that young women’s decisions about how they wanted to time their education, work, marriage, and parenthood were somewhat unexamined in career theory, and that up until that point, career theory examined the types of careers women wanted to pursue. This was a limitation of studies on career theory. Title (1982) notes the importance of young women’s determining and weighing the differences in their values for their potential adult roles of career, marriage, and parenthood. This suggests that there may be major differences in how each is valued, whereas Hoffnung (2004) discovered that the majority of college-educated women value each role equally. The subjects in the second study were about four years younger

than those in the Hoffnung study. Even so, it was discovered that most high school students seemed to have a fairly solid idea of their aspirations for career and family.

More women than men currently attend college and graduate school, and are therefore occupying more professional jobs than before (Guenzoudi, 2006; Mundy, 2012). Mundy (2012) describes, with detailed statistics, the shift to female breadwinners:

“Almost 40% of U.S. working wives now out-earn their husbands, a percentage that has risen steeply in this country and many others, as more women have entered the workforce and remained committed to it. Women occupy 51% of managerial and professional jobs in the United States, and they dominate nine of the ten U.S. job categories expected to grow the most in the next decade” and “By the year 2050, demographers forecast, there will be 140 college-educated women in the United States for every 100 college-educated men” (Mundy, 2012, p. 6).

In addition to professional roles, such as doctors, professors, and lawyers, management positions have become another profession that women are increasingly filling (Peus & Traut-Mattaush, 2008). In regards to women’s abilities in academia and careers, Mundy (2012) states “Women have always had the potential to be high-achieving students. What we are seeing now is the long-delayed unleashing of women’s academic abilities, after nearly a century in which their college going was artificially suppressed even as men’s was boosted” (Mundy, 2012, p. 41).

Despite the fact that many professionals, writers, and researchers contend that women can perform multiple roles, some stories and research indicates that it is not possible to do so successfully. Interviews of women in middle management positions indicated that a balance between work and family is really important but that it is a barrier to career advancement and therefore, women are forced to choose between the two (Peus & Traut-Mattaush, 2008). The women in managerial roles in the above mentioned study also experienced prejudice against women with children, another modern issue encouraging women to choose between marriage and career.

Research reveals that many young accomplished women are dissatisfied with their love lives (Whitehead, 2003). Relationships are not as successful as they were just a few decades ago. Marriage rates have been decreasing over the past few decades (Swanson, 2006) while the divorce rate in this country has increased dramatically throughout the entire twentieth century. We are also constantly reminded by social media's portrayal of celebrities that divorce is very common. The number of married adults in the year 2010 has dropped from 72% to 51% in the year 2010, a record low; and divorce rates have jumped from 5% in 1960 to 14% in 2010 (Luscombe, 2013b). Whitehead (2003) found from her interviews of thirty young well-educated females that women are highly confident in their ability to be successful in their careers but very insecure about their abilities to achieve their romantic goals. The current expected life pattern of women in their twenties is that they will focus on education, personal growth, and career development – not on courtship and marriage (Evans & Grant, 2009; Whitehead, 2003).

Another study compared men and women professors and looked at whether the amount of time spent on household labor affected their productivity level at work (Suitor, Mecom, & Feld, 2001). The researchers discovered that when children were in the house, tenure-track women faculty spent almost twenty hours more than men did on household labor and academic work, another indication that tenure-track women professors are a hard-working and long-working population. They did not find any direct effects of household labor on research productivity, but they did find that professors who were married lacked leisure time, (Suitor, Mecom, & Feld, 2001).

The participants for this proposed study are tenure-track female professors. The number of female faculty in postsecondary education more than doubled from the mid 1970's to 1995 (NEA, 1998). As indicated by the literature, a career in academia is very demanding and

stressful, partially due to the many roles a professor has to perform (Armenti, 2004; Hooper, Wright, & Burnham, 2012; Ismail & Rasdi, 2008; Kelly & Fetridge, 2012). Research has indicated that part of the stress of being a tenure-track professor is that there is little to no indication of what progress one is making while on tenure-track (Kelly & Fetridge, 2012).

In addition to the already demanding nature of a career in academia, a report from the National Science Foundation indicates that being married and having children hurts a woman's chance of success in the academic field (Mundy, 2012). Armenti (2004) explored the problems that female tenure-track professors have when they choose to be mothers as well, and found that older tenured women often warned younger tenure-track women that having children before achieving tenure could reduce the likelihood of achieving that goal. This article indicates that women have to make big sacrifices in their personal lives in order to succeed in their careers as professors seeking tenure (Armenti, 2004).

Research indicates that female faculty often delay or completely opt out of motherhood due to the demands of their academic careers (Armenti, 2004; Evans & Grant, 2009; Hall-Schwarz, 2005; Solomon, 2011). Research by Clark & Hill (2010) also indicates that women in science disciplines are more likely to achieve tenure if they delay or opt out of motherhood. A qualitative study that explores the experiences of women with advanced degrees who delayed motherhood identifies several themes in their experiences: a strong need to lay the foundation for their careers first and finding barriers to continuing to excel in their careers once having a family (Hall-Schwarz, 2005). Another problem that arose for these women when trying to balance home and work was "the financial necessity and expectations of others for them to continue working while parenting" (Hall-Schwarz, 2005, p. 199) which is consistent with the common narrative

mentioned early in this paper that there is a stronger need for women to provide income for families today than previously.

“The U.S. Department of Education concludes that the proportion of university instructors who have tenure or are on the tenure track fell below 30% in 2009 – a big drop from 1971, when 57% were on the tenure track or had tenure already” (Findlay, 2011, p. 46). The National Center for Education Statistics found that the percentage of faculty and staff on tenure track decreased between 1992 and 1998, (Parsad & Glover, 2002). The explanation for the drop is that Universities found that they could spend much less money if they allowed fewer professors to achieve tenure, which makes the career even more competitive (Findlay, 2011). Statistics from various reports and research also show that there has been at least a 20% difference in the number of male post-secondary faculty who are tenured compared to a lower number of female post-secondary faculty who were tenured, (NEA, 1998; Parsad & Glover, 2002; Solomon, 2001) and since then, men are still more likely to become tenured and to achieve the rank of full professor, (Clark & Hill, 2010; Kelly & Fetridge, 2012). An explanation for why there are many more female post-secondary faculty who are not tenured is not given, though Clark & Hill (2010) pose that marital status and children are primary factors.

Many stories of women in academia reveal great difficulty in achieving tenure and/or maintaining a career in academia while raising children at the same time due to the inflexible nature of academic institutions (Clark & Hill, 2010; Evans & Grant, 2009; Solomon, 2011). The demands of being a tenure-track professor include: teaching, research (contributing to the field), and service (contributing to the University community by chairing/sitting on committees...etc.). These demands extend the professor long beyond actual teaching and office hours (Evans & Grant, 2009; Kelly & Fetridge, 2012).

The book *Mama, PhD.*, is a collection of true stories of women in academia, many who have families as well as careers. In one of the stories, a graduate student talks about the “floating head syndrome,” which means that university administration expects students/faculty to “function as disembodied brains, not connected to any sort of life outside of academic pursuits” and other women allude to feeling as though they are not treated as whole persons in the academic field (Evans & Grant, 2009). Another common narrative is that women fear that having a family before achieving tenure signifies a lack of commitment to their careers, (Evans & Grant, 2009; Solomon, 2011). In fact, in a study of the experiences of non-tenure-track professors, many in this role specifically steered away from the tenure-track because their observations had made them feel that they could have a more balanced lifestyle in a non-tenure-track role, as well as a greater ability to pursue their own interests (Kezar & Sam, 2010).

One story of a graduate student/junior engineer illustrated the lack of acceptance by administrators of women with families in academia: having told her engineer boss that she was pregnant, he responded, “Did you do this on purpose?” indicating disapproval of her decision to have a family and a high-powered career (Evans & Grant, 2009). The story of this engineer also described the challenging compromises she and her partner had to make in order to have both family and careers in academia. Due to the career demands of her husband and herself, they followed a Excel spreadsheet that divided up the hours of childcare responsibility down to the minute of every day of the week, and they made sure every semester to arrange their classes (whatever it took) so that they didn’t overlap (Evans & Grant, 2009). Many women in academia are certain that they are less likely to get tenure-track jobs or earn tenure if they have children (Evans & Grant, 2009).

Literature on professors' management of work and personal life has focused almost exclusively on mothers, (Solomon, 2011). Solomon (2011) sought to identify all of the demands of life in academia and its effects on all faculty - not just faculty with children. Due to scholarly output demands, "...some professors said they had to put work above everything else in their lives" and that they were unable to fit in time for non-work activities (p. 338). Regardless of gender or whether they had children, many professors felt that their work negatively affected their personal lives (Solomon, 2011). The study also revealed that male professors whose wives did not work full-time felt more comfortable having children before achieving tenure, whereas female professors (regardless of their spouses' professions) felt that having children would interfere with achieving tenure (Solomon, 2011). This female narrative is consistent with the many of the stories in *Mama, Ph.D.*, as well as in the study of women who delayed marriage and motherhood until the age of 35 or older (Hall-Schwarz, 2005).

Matheson and Rosen's (2012) study on both male and female marriage and family therapists who are also professors found that women, but not men, felt that their balance between personal life and work was poor, which is another indication that the experiences of female professors should be honed in on. Another telling finding from this study was that older participants and participants who were not partnered were more likely to report that they were satisfied with their work/personal life balance (Matheson & Rosen, 2012). Participants named "work flexibility" as the main factor of the ability to have a balance and participants who reported a poor balance attributed this to having too much domestic responsibilities while having a "boundaryless" career at the same time (Matheson & Rosen, 2012). Some female participants who did not yet have tenure or children felt that their job demands were so challenging and

finding a balance was so difficult that they could not imagine having children (Matheson & Rosen, 2012).

“In most cases, the newly appointed faculty member will be overscheduled, overworked, and under acknowledged,” (Hooper, Wright, & Burnham, 2012). The effects of the academy on professors’ personal lives have not been extensively studied, in part due to the possible political ramifications of the sensitive topic, (Solomon, 2011). The literature on female tenure-track professors, to date, mainly focuses on the balance of career and motherhood, rather than the balance of career and personal romantic relationships. The long-term effects of the demanding career of tenure-track professorship on their personal romantic relationships have yet to be exposed in the arena of scholarly literature.

Given the stress of the tenure-track position and the struggle for women to balance competing roles, I have become interested in studying relationship satisfaction for this population, which has lead me to the literature which currently exists on this topic.

Relationship Satisfaction Literature Review

Highly educated women are staying single longer than before. In fact, the number of women ages twenty to twenty-four who had never been married doubled between 1970 and 2000 and tripled for women ages thirty to thirty-four (Whitehead, 2003). Whitehead (2003) states that eighty-six percent of people between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine feel that being “economically set” before they get married is essential. The love lives and marriage/divorce rate of the specific population of professors is not typically researched and relationship success rates have not yet been studied.

Much research has been done on interpersonal relationships. One particular study (Leslie & Morgan, 2011) looked at romantic relationship satisfaction by identifying men’s and women’s

goals for relationship and the dominant discourses that enabled them to achieve their relationship goals. They posed that historically, the three most common discourses of relationships are security, romantic love, and intimacy (Leslie & Morgan, 2011). Another study, (Zimmer-Gembeck & Ducat, 2010) looked at the relationship quality of couples and how their reports on romantic behaviors differed or agreed. The researchers used a self-created 30-item survey that questioned positive and negative romantic behaviors of the self in the relationship and that person's perception of his/her partner (Zimmer-Gembeck & Ducat, 2010). The researchers discovered that age and relationship length are important factors in couples agreement in that older age and longer relationships tended to have more agreement (Zimmer-Gembeck & Ducat, 2010). Hendrick, Hendrick, and Adler (1988) found that couples with a high level of commitment and more time invested in a relationship were more likely to rate a high level of relationship satisfaction.

McCabe (2006) evaluated the research from the past fifty years on the factors of relationship satisfaction in committed heterosexual couples. The research indicated mixed results on whether individual factors, such as personality traits, are highly predictive of relationship satisfaction, but most indicated that couples with similar personality traits (especially affective traits and cognitive traits) were more likely to experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction (McCabe, 2006). The research also indicated that communication, specifically self-disclosure, is an important predictor of relationship satisfaction (McCabe, 2006), which is consistent with the research of the Hendricks (1988, 1997, 1998, 1990).

Other findings from the research that McCabe (2006) reviewed are that sexual functioning and sexual satisfaction were highly predictive of relationship satisfaction, while becoming a parent is associated with low relationship satisfaction levels. Mark and Murray's

(2012) research also supports the notion that sexual satisfaction is highly predictive of overall romantic relationship satisfaction. It has been suggested that several aspects of modern life, such as work pressures, negatively affect love and relationship satisfaction and it is essential to “keep passion alive” if these stressors are experienced in order for a relationship to succeed (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1997).

Germain (2010) wrote a doctoral dissertation on predicting relationship satisfaction of men and women in homosexual and heterosexual relationships and found that perceiving one’s partner as warm and trustworthy is the best predictor of overall relationship satisfaction and humor is the second highest predictive factor. This study also indicated that predicting relationship satisfaction mirrored concepts of partner selection based on evolutionary “mate selection” theory (Germain, 2010) meaning that the ways humans choose their partners has not changed much over hundreds of years. Some research indicates that self-disclosure is one of the most important predictors of relationship satisfaction, (Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998; McCabe, 2006).

Most relevant to the thesis presented in this paper is the literature on the utility of the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) developed by Hendrick in 1988 (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Renshaw, McKnight, Caska, & Blais, 2010). The 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale was originally created to measure the quality of marriages and was later adapted for non-marital romantic relationships. This study examined whether the scale could be adapted to measure other types of interpersonal relationships and still maintain reliability and validity (Renshaw et al., 2010). Results indicated that the scale proved reliable and valid in the adapted form for other types of interpersonal relationships and that the most common explanation for lower satisfaction is depressive symptoms in the participant

(Renshaw et al., 2010). Hendrick's RAS is closely related to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale by Spanier (1976), which has been used in much of Hendrick and Hendrick's Research (1997).

The five "love styles" (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988) are positively related to relationship satisfaction (Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998). The Eros love style is one of passion and intensity; the Ludus love style is one of a playful and casual nature; the Storage love style is a friendship-oriented love that is stable and steady; the Pragma love style is practical and rational; the Mania love style one that is possessive, dependent, and emotional; and the Agape love style humble and altruistic (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1997; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992; Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). The Eros love style has shown to be a strong positive predictor of relationship satisfaction while the Ludas style is a strong negative predictor (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1997). For a more thorough understanding of these various love styles, see *Romantic Relationship: Love, Satisfaction, and Staying together* (1998), *Romantic Love* (1992), or *A Generic Measure of Relationship Satisfaction* (1988). McCabe (2006) also supports the notion that interaction/love styles are important in understanding satisfaction and that interaction styles are highly predictive of later divorce. Also relevant to love styles is attachment theory, which is based on the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. These highly influential psychology theorists showed us that infant attachment styles form the basis for adult love relationships (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Walls, 1978; Bowlby, 1980).

"Relationship satisfaction is an important phenomenon because it has implications for relationship success and stability" (Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998, p. 771). Therefore, relationship success is best measured by satisfaction, though this is still a difficult thing to measure. Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, (1998, 1997, 1988) contend that relationship satisfaction is largely based on love attitudes and love styles and relationship satisfaction is best

predicted by love, communication patterns, and perceptions of one's partner. The 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendrick, 1988) is a long-established valid and reliable scale. It is a short and simple assessment of a deep and complicated phenomenon.

Being a tenure-track professor is a high-demand career; one that requires a high skill level, the ability to multi-task, and a lot of time. As shown earlier in this chapter, literature supports that one has to be very hard-working and high-achieving to succeed in this career. Research has shown how the tenure-track job interferes with women's plans and hopes of having children. As more and more women began going to college, graduate school and having careers, there was increased public interest in family structures and the observed decreasing common role of home-maker for women. As you've just read, being a tenure-track professor does affect women's decisions to have children. From reading this literature, my interest in the effects of the tenure-track position on romantic relationships arose.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Study Design

This study is a mixed methods study, which was designed to collect mostly quantitative data on female professors who hold tenure-track positions at eastern Pennsylvania colleges or universities. For purposes of confidentiality, the eleven colleges/universities from which the participants were recruited will not be named. This population was chosen because it has been identified as an understudied population. The geographic location was chosen because of the population's density and diversity in the Philadelphia area, which is where the study was conducted. The subjects in the study are largely based in an urban area and the limitations of this reality will be explored in the findings section. The purpose of the study is to identify the participants' satisfaction levels in romantic relationships. The study was also designed to identify if there is a relationship between the demands of the tenure-track position and professors' personal romantic relationships. Furthermore, the purpose is to develop a line of inquiry into possible themes, such as work/personal life balance, that might inform future research directions.

Grounded theory research method was used in this study. This enabled the researcher to survey the sample and identify the main concerns and the overarching themes and struggles of the population of tenure-track female professors. This theory is almost the opposite of traditional social science research theories in that the researcher does not begin with a hypothesis, but rather develops a hypothesis after the data has been collected and analyzed (Elliott & Higgins, 2012;

Moore, J., 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The goal of grounded theory research is to identify correlation instead of causation, as well as to generate new understandings, rather than proving or disproving an existing theory (Elliott & Higgins, 2012; Moore, J. 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This theory allows the researcher to conceptualize the social pattern of the population and then inform others of what research directions to explore next (Elliott & Higgins, 2012). The qualitative aspects of this study support the use of grounded theory. While this researcher had an idea going into the research, had read literature, and had personal connections with the population, using this research method served to produce a solid theory based on the data collected. The research was conducted through an internet survey that was created on the website surveymonkey.com. Satisfaction level was measured by using the long-established Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) created by a researcher named of Susan S. Hendrick (1988).

The research method was selected because the current research on the subject is in its infancy; this will allow the research to deepen and advance. The methodology of several previous studies, which were reviewed before this research was conducted, used qualitative methods with in-depth, semi-structured in-person interviews or by telephone (Haddock & Rattenborg; Hoffnung, 2003; Mundy, 2012). Though this method and style could be useful for the research investigated in this study, other methods were examined. It was found that a quantitative method using surveys with multiple choice questions would enable the researcher to broaden the number of subjects and develop clear possibilities for the population of female tenure-track professors.

A design using online surveys allowed for capturing the largest response possible. Another benefit of using surveys, or questionnaires, is that it allows for a controlled number of responses. Additionally, as the subject of personal romantic relationships is a sensitive one, it

was beneficial to have anonymous participation, which this method and design allow for. Almost all the questions had multiple-choice answers. However, in order to get a deeper understanding of the psychosocial stressors this population is facing, two open-ended questions were included in the survey.

Method and Sampling

The inclusion criteria for participating in the study were: 1) participant must identify as female 2) Must currently hold a tenure-track position 3) Must currently work at one or more of the eleven eastern Pennsylvania colleges or universities. The researcher identified possible participants by examining each college and university website and searching for the email addresses of female Assistant Professors (as they are likely to hold tenure-track positions) from each department. Medical schools were excluded because their tenure-tracks tend to be different in length and requirements. Email addresses were copied and pasted in to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and this document was saved in a secure electronic file.

Recruitment letters with a link to the online survey were emailed by the researcher through her university e-mail account to all of the identified professors. The recruitment letter can be seen in Appendix A. Those interested in participating in the study were asked to click the link to the website and then read and electronically sign the Informed Consent Form, which can be seen in Appendix B. A total of 748 people were invited to participate. Professors who already have tenure were not solicited to participate in the study because this was not the specific population that was being studied. However, the researcher received a number of email responses from recruits saying that they were either already tenured or not on the tenure-track. It was apparent that some information on college/university websites was not up-to-date and/or that the researcher had mistakenly assumed that they were on the tenure track because their title

stated “Assistant Professor.” There were also a number of emails that were rejected (kicked-back automatically to the researcher) because of invalid addresses.

The survey was created in an online program called Survey Monkey (website: surveymonkey.com), a private company that allows users to create web-based surveys through their own personal accounts. The website prompts users, step-by-step, to create their surveys, and once their surveys are ready to send out, it generates an original link that recruits can click and be brought directly to the survey. This link was included in the body of the recruitment email.

The survey, which can be seen in Appendix C, included the following demographic questions: age, race, and relationship status. These demographic questions were asked simply so that the researcher could identify whether or not there were any noticeable differences in responses to survey questions between different age groups, and different races. Their relationship status was asked because the study concerns relationship satisfaction. For those who did not want to disclose their race, there was an option to “choose not to answer.” The survey also included questions about the professor’s current stage in the tenure process, questions about how much time was devoted to her career, and whether the professor had children. Finally, for those who identified as currently being in a relationship, they were to answer the relationship satisfaction questions from the RAS scale. In total, the researcher of this project created thirteen questions in the survey. The additional seven questions were the RAS scale and were only completed by those participants who were currently in a relationship.

All but two research questions were in multiple choice or Likert scale format. Two open-ended questions about participants’ opinions on whether their career-choices have affected their romantic relationships and whether these choices affected their decisions to have children were

included in order to identify themes in the experiences of tenure-track professors and in hopes of creating a path for future research.

Participants who are currently in relationships were directed to complete the RAS (Relationship Assessment Scale), developed by Susan S. Hendrick in 1988. The RAS is based on a 5-item scale also created by Susan S. Hendrick, seven years prior, called the Marital Assessment Questionnaire (Hendrick, 1988). Changes were made in order to be more inclusive of all types of romantic relationships, not just marriages (Hendrick, 1988). One of the studies on the RAS used quantitative measures to assess the scale by conducting four separate studies and comparing the results of the participants' basic levels of relationship satisfaction (Renshaw, et al., 2010). The aim of this study was similar to the aim of the study reported in this thesis. Thus, a quantitative approach is fitting for studying relationship satisfaction. Reliability and validity of the RAS was supported by the study mentioned above, as well as other studies by the researcher who created the RAS.

The RAS assesses general satisfaction, how well the subject perceives that their relational needs are met, how well the subject perceives the relationship as compared to others, the subject's love for his/her partner, the subject's regrets about the relationship, the number of problems the subject perceives to be in the relationship, and how well the subject's expectations have been met (Hendrick, 1988). The RAS is brief and easy to administer, and "...what is perhaps most important about the RAS is its appropriateness for the broad array of partnered relationships now of interest to researchers" (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). The scale can be administered to people of all sexual orientations and people who are in committed relationships, such as marriage and partnerships, as well in as casual relationships.

Sub-questions of this research include: What percentage of participants have above-average satisfaction in their romantic relationships? What percentage of participants have below-average satisfaction in their romantic relationships? What are the marriage and divorce statistics of the tenure-track professors who participated? Is there a correlation between the amount of time devoted to career and level of satisfaction in romantic relationships? The data revealed some answers to these questions. It was hypothesized that tenure-track professors experience low satisfaction levels in personal romantic relationships due to the level of commitment that their careers require and the demanding nature of tenure-track professorship. It was also hypothesized that tenure-track professors lacked time to devote to romantic relationships due to the amount of time that their jobs require of them.

Care was taken in working the survey questions so that they are not biased against any particular group of race, culture, class, or sexual orientation. No particular group of professors, in terms of race, culture, or subject taught, was sought out to participate in the study. It was hoped that by sampling from an array of eastern Pennsylvania universities, the participants would be diverse, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

This research used probability sampling techniques. The sample was required to meet certain criteria in order to participate, but they were selected randomly and invited to participate in the study. This unbiased sampling procedure was selected because it creates the possibility to be able to generalize the results to a large population who are similar to the small population used in the study. The diversity of the sample is not as diverse as the population from which it is pulled. According to the United States Census Bureau, white people make up 45.9%, while black people make up 44.3% of the Philadelphia's population.

Data Collection

All data was collected through SurveyMonkey. Recruited professors who were interested in participating clicked the link in the recruitment email and were brought to the website where the first question they were prompted to answer was, “Do you identify as a female who currently holds a tenure-track position in a college and or university in the eastern Pennsylvania Area?” Those who met the inclusion criteria and clicked “Yes,” were then brought to the Informed Consent page. Those who clicked “No” were brought to a disqualification page where they were given the following message: You do not meet the criteria to participate in this study but we appreciate that you took interest in the study. Please click on “Exit Survey.” Those who had met the inclusion criteria and had been advanced to the Informed Consent page were to read about purpose and security of the study and then click on “I agree” in order to advance to the survey questions. It was set up so that participants could not have access to the survey questions unless they clicked “I agree.”

The survey instrument was available for a total of ten days and a second recruitment email was sent to the same 748 email addresses seven days after the initial recruitment email was sent as a reminder that the survey would be available for three more days and that the researcher was requesting the participation of those who were interested and willing but had not yet participated. Participants answered the questions by clicking the preferred response, question by question. Most questions required an answer in order for participants to advance to the next question or complete the survey. The following two questions did not require an answer: 1) If you are married or in a committed relationship, how long have you been in this relationship? 2) If you are not in a committed relationship (partnership or marriage), do you hope to be some day? The first question did not require an answer because some participants had indicated on a previous question that they were not married or in a committed relationship. The second question

did not require an answer because some participants were already in a committed relationship. The Relationship Assessment Scale questions only required an answer for those who had answered “Yes” to the question, “Are you currently in a relationship of any sort?”

Participation in this study was anonymous in that it was designed so that the surveys could not be linked to any participant’s name or email. Therefore, the participants’ identities were protected. Participants were informed on the Informed Consent Form that all data would be kept safe and secure and would be destroyed after the thesis is completed.

A percentage of the emails were kicked-back to the researcher because they had invalid addresses. All participants were women who hold masters or doctoral level degrees. At the time of participation, all participants held tenure-track positions at eastern Pennsylvania Universities.

Data Analysis and Sample Characteristics

A total of seventy-six people completed surveys. Sixty people (78.95% of the sample) identified as white, seven people (9.21%) identified as Black/African American, six people (7.89%) identified as Asian, one person identified as Hispanic, one person identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and one person chose not to identify their race. Thirty-two of the participants (42.11%) were between the ages of 30 to 39, twenty-eight of the participants (36.84%) were between the ages of 40 to 49, ten participants (13.16%) were between the ages of 50-59, three participants were between the ages of 20 to 29, and three were between the ages of 60 to 69.

Figure 1

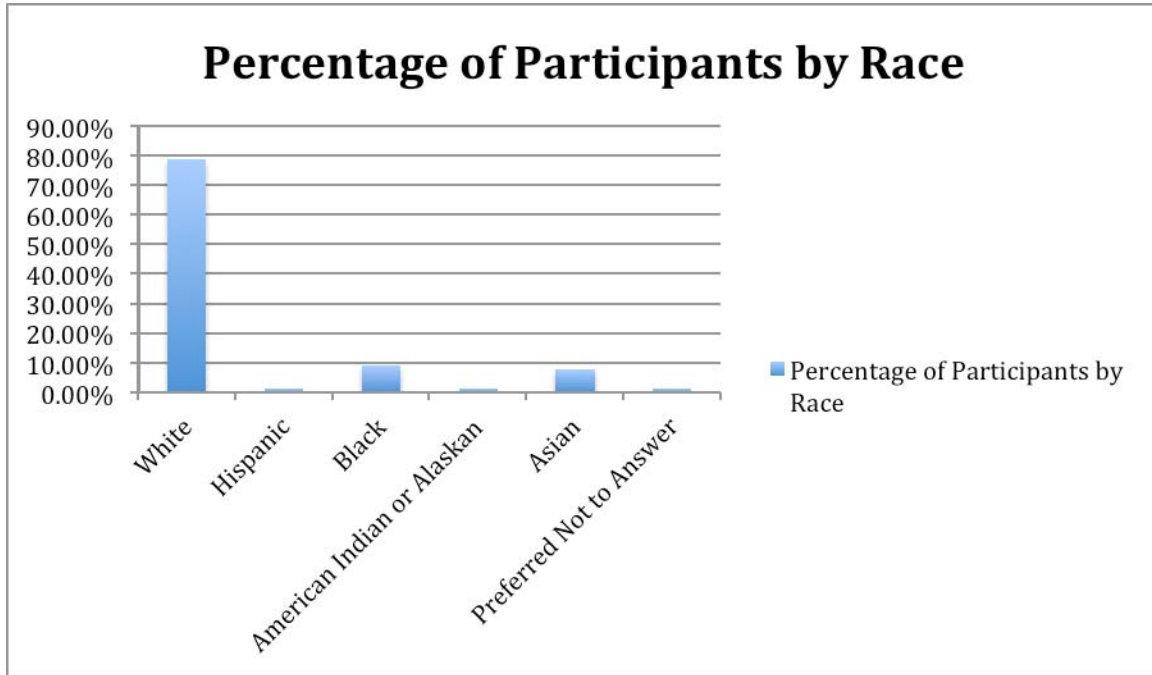
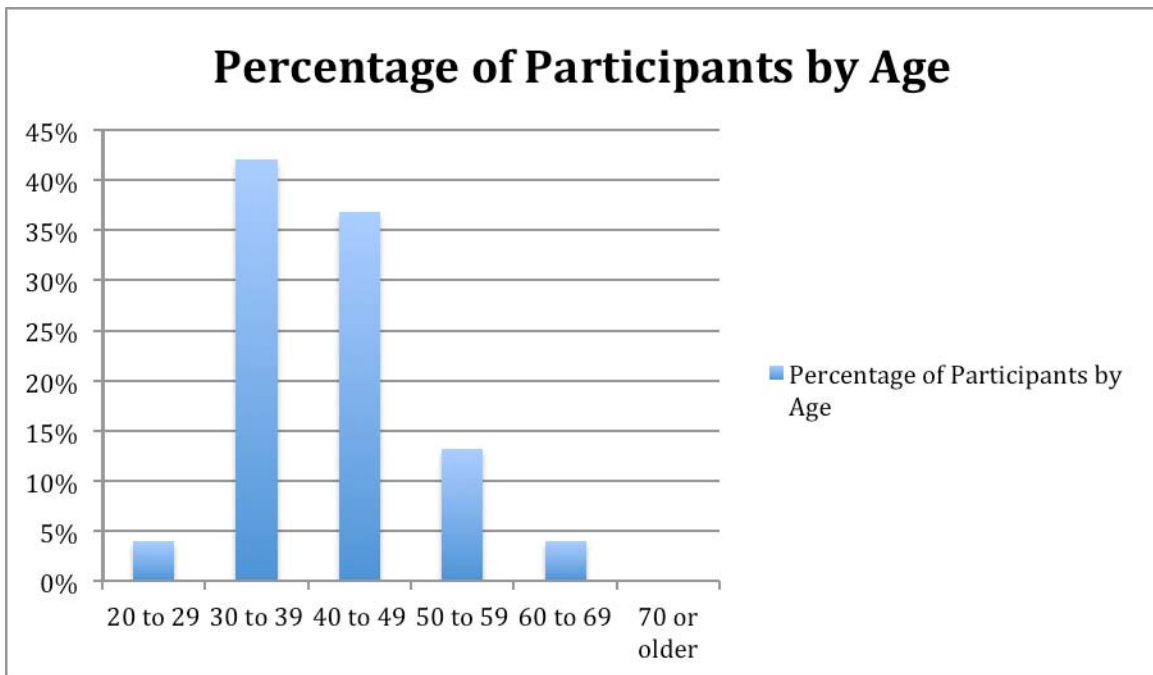
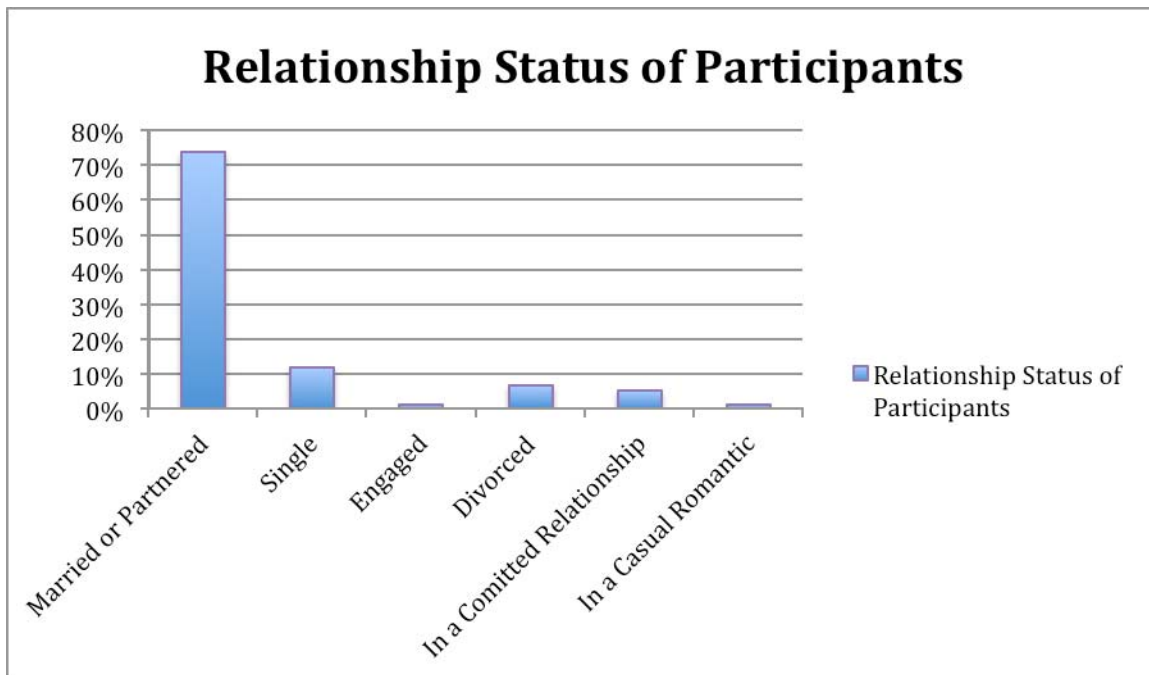


Figure 2



The majority of the participants (fifty-six people) were married or partnered, five were divorced, four were in a committed relationship (not married), one was engaged, one was in a casual romantic relationship, and nine were single. A total of sixty-eight participants (78.95%) identified as currently being in a relationship and therefore completed the RAS (Relationship Assessment Scale).

Figure 3



Analysis of the data was done in order to assess relationships between variables. A limitation of the study is that only people from the Philadelphia area were included in the study. It is possible that the survey would generate a different response in other areas of the country. The researcher expected a response bias because the participants were not mandated to take part in the study so the results are only from those who took an interest in the study. Therefore, the survey results may only be relative to the tenure-track professors who believe that there is a relationship between a female tenure-track professor's career and her romantic life.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

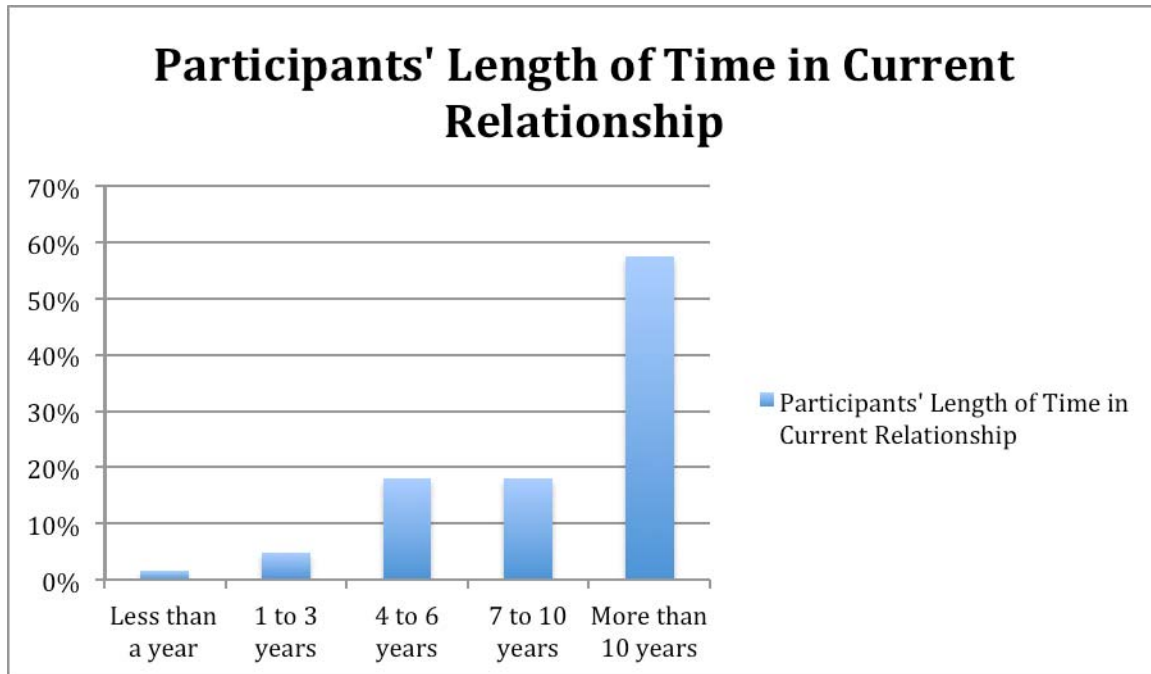
This research explored the levels of satisfaction in romantic relationships among female tenure-track professors. One group, female tenure-track professors from colleges/universities in the Eastern Pennsylvania Area, was used in this study. A total of fifty-eight out of seventy-six participants (76.32% of the sample) identified as currently being in a relationship and completed the RAS (Relationship Assessment Scale). Though this scale has been tested for reliability by other researchers, it was tested again for this study using the Cronbachs alpha test for internal reliability. This showed that it had high internal reliability ($\alpha = .894$, $n = 76$, N of items = 76).

Of the sixty-one participants who initially identified as currently being in committed relationships, thirty-five (57.38%) have been in those relationships for more than ten years. Eleven participants (18.03%) have been in their current relationships for seven to ten years, eleven (18.03%) for four to six years, three (4.92%) for one to three years, and 1 person (1.64%) has been in her current relationship for less than a year.

Out of the fifteen participants who are not currently in committed relationships, 46.67% indicated that they do hope to be in one someday, while 46.67% indicated that they were not sure whether they wanted to be in one someday, and one participant indicated that she does not want to be in one someday. Though participants were required to reveal their ages, individual responses to the age question cannot be linked to individual participants' responses to other

questions, such as relationship status and length of time in their current relationships. In future studies, it would enhance research to know the mean age of tenure-track professors who are currently in relationships and whether the length of time in current relationship is related to age. See the table below for the breakdown of length of time in current relationship.

Figure 4



A total of sixty of the seventy-six participants identified as currently being in relationships. However, only fifty-eight out of the sixty completed the Relationship Assessment Scale. It appears that two participants chose to drop out of the study instead of answering the RAS questions at that point. There was a variety of responses to the RAS questions, though the majority of participants seemed to have positive perceptions of their relationship. The survey questions can be viewed in Appendix C and the RAS questions can be viewed in Appendix D. For question #2 of the RAS, “How satisfied, in general, are you with your relationship?” 53.45% of participants indicated that they are extremely satisfied with their relationships, 36.21% indicated that they are satisfied with their relationships, 8.62% indicated an average level of

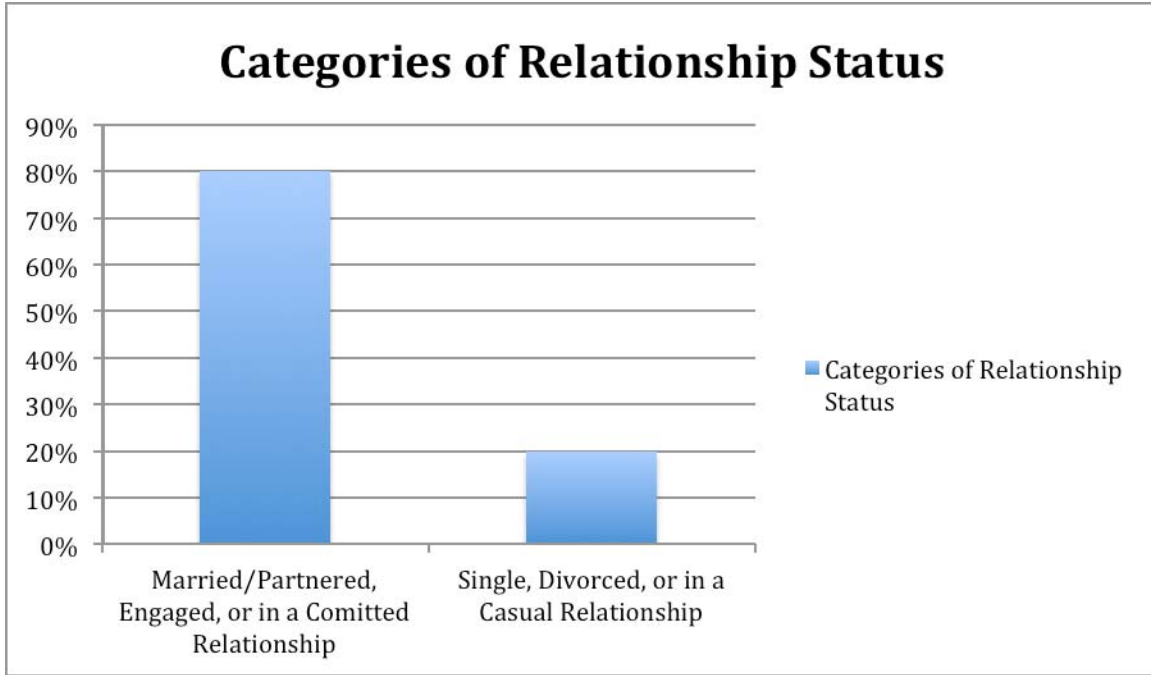
satisfaction, 1 person indicated that she is somewhat unsatisfied, and no participants indicated they were unsatisfied.

The majority (86.21%) of participants indicated that their partners meet their needs either well or extremely well. The majority (91.37) of participants indicated that they perceived their relationships to be either good or excellent, compared to most. The majority of participants (94.83%) indicated that they love their partners either much or very much. The majority of participants (81.03%) indicated that their relationships have either very much or completely met their original expectations. The majority of participants (74.14%) indicated that there very few or some problems in their relationships, rather than many or very many. The majority of participants (91.38%) indicated that they either almost never or never wished that they hadn't become involved in the relationships.

As this study investigated the participants' romantic relationships in relation to their careers as a tenure-track professors, several items in the survey related to the participants' careers were compared to question #2 of the RAS, "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" A Spearman Rho correlation test was run to determine if there was relationship between RAS question #2 and the amount of hours per week each participant devotes to her career as a professor (question #8 in the survey – see Appendix C). No relationship or correlation was found between these two. The amount of hours per week the participant devotes to her career as a professor was also compared to relationship status. As there were 6 categories of relationship status (see Appendix C), they were grouped into two categories: 1) married/partnered, engaged, in a committed relationship 2) single, divorced, in a casual relationship. 80.3% of the participants (61 out of 76) were married, engaged or in a committed relationship. A t-test was used to identify whether there was a difference in the amount of hours

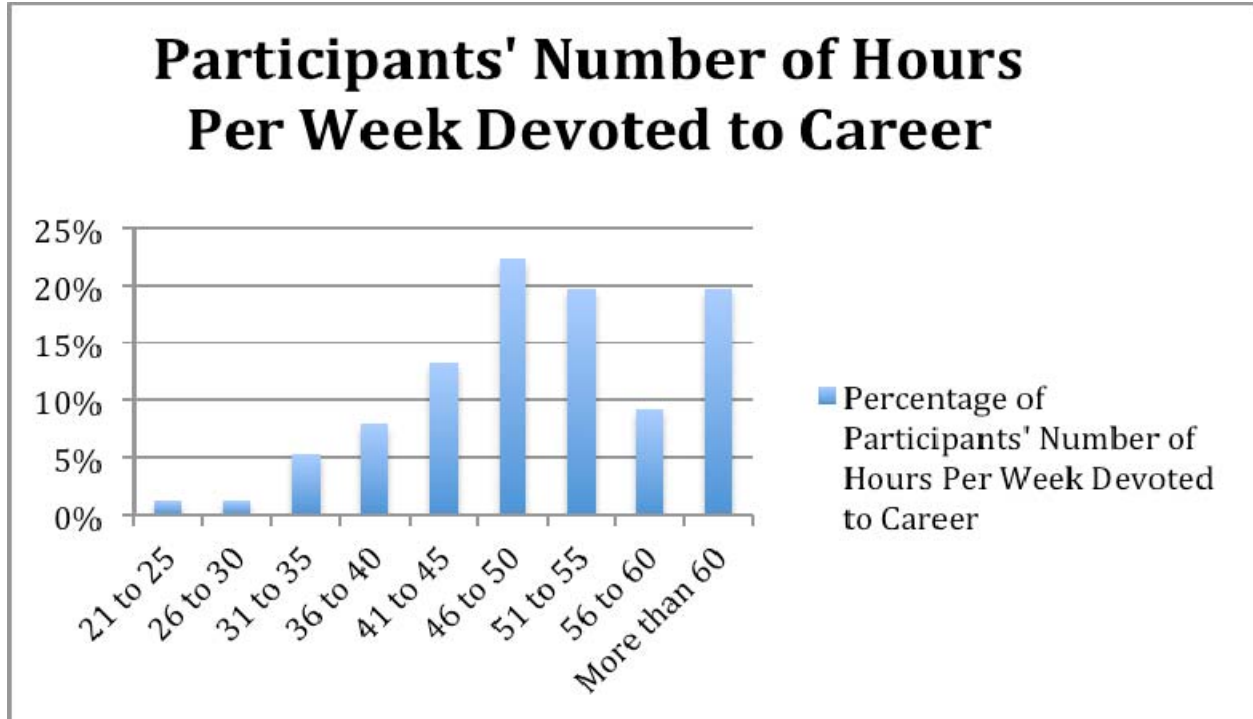
the professor devotes to her career between these two groups. The results showed that there was no significant difference.

Figure 5



One of the lines of inquiry in this study was the time-demands of careers in tenure-track professorship. Of the women surveyed, 71.05% indicated that they devote forty-six hours or more per week to their careers as a tenure-track professors. While there is variation in the number of hours each professor devotes, it is striking that 19.74% of those surveyed are devoting over sixty hours per week to their careers. While there are likely many careers that demand many more hours than “full time” (forty hours per week) it has been observed that tenure-track professorship is one of the more time-consuming careers. For the specific breakdown of the number of hours devoted by this sample devotes to their careers, see the table below.

Figure 6

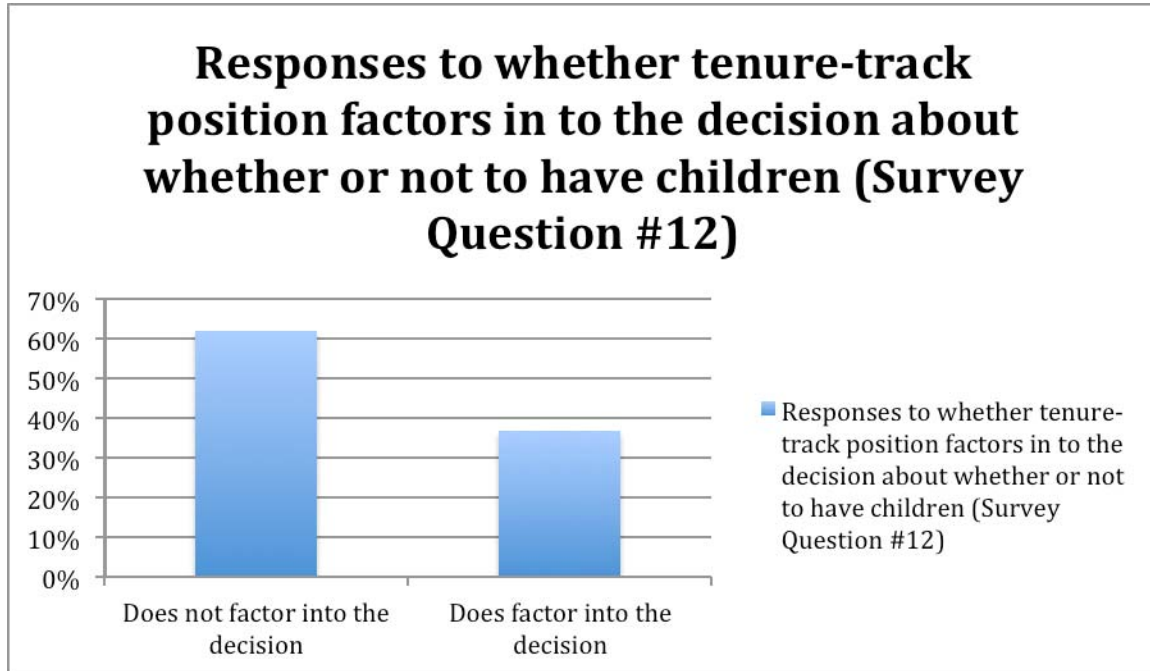


Another line of inquiry in this study was: is there a relationship between the amount of time the participant has been in her current relationship and the amount of hours per week that she devotes to her career. A Spearman Rho correlation test was run, which revealed that there was not significant correlation. A t-test was run to see whether there was a difference in the participants' levels of satisfaction in their relationships (question #2 on the RAS) for participants who have children compared to participants who do not. No significant difference was found. This same test was run with the participants' mean total RAS score (all of the RAS questions added up and averaged), and again – no significant difference was found. A t-test was also run to determine whether having children was correlated with the amount of hours per week that the participant devotes to her career and then again to compare the number of children the participant had with the hours per week devoted to career. No significant difference was found with either comparison. The researcher was interested in whether there was a relationship

between the hours per week the participant devotes to her career and the number of problems in her romantic relationship (question #7 on the RAS). A Spearman Rho correlation test was run to determine this and revealed that there was no significant relationship. A Spearman Rho correlation test was also run to determine if there was a relationship between hours per week devoted to career and the participant's perception of how good her relationship is compared to most (question #3 on the RAS). No significant relationship was found.

There were 2 open-ended, qualitative questions in this survey, which were developed by the researcher in order to get a deeper understanding of the relationship between personal romantic relationships and family life and tenure-track professorship for women. The first open-ended question (question #12 in the Survey), "Does your tenure-track position factor in to your decision to have children? If so, how?" Forty-seven participants (61.8%) indicated that their careers do not factor into their decisions about having children while twenty-eight participants (36.8%) indicated that it had some kind of effect on their decisions about having children. One response to this question was unclear.

Figure 7



Several themes, some opposing, were pulled from the “yes” responses. One of those themes is best summed up by the following quote from one of the participants, “Before tenure you have no time, after tenure you are too old.” Many of those who stated that their tenure-track position factored in to their decision to have children indicated that their tenure-track has had a negative impact on this. Some participants indicated that their tenure-track has had a positive impact. Both narratives are explored in this chapter. The responses to this question also revealed that there is a debate about how much flexibility this career offers.

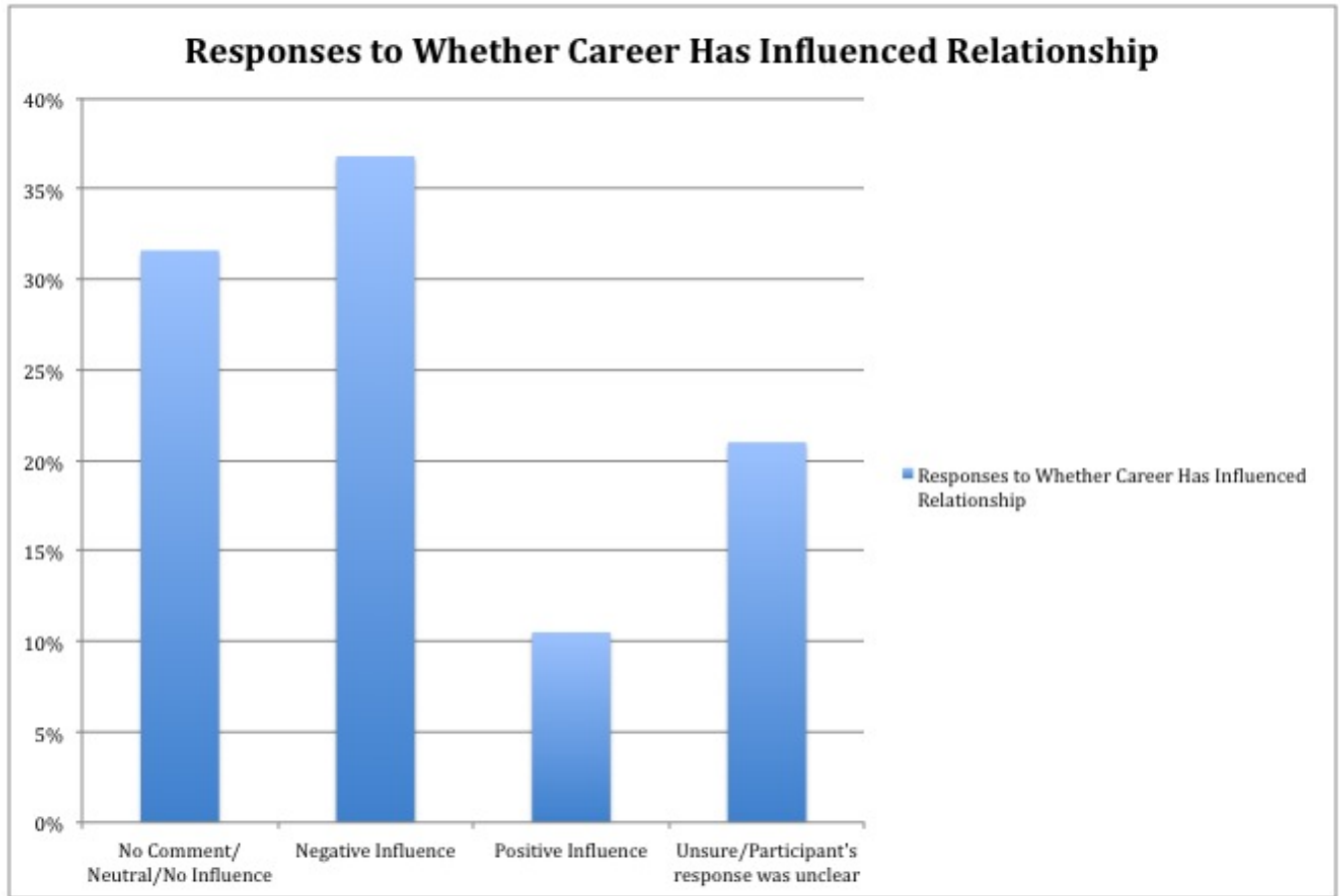
Of the seventy-six participants in this study, forty-four of them (57.89%) have children and thirty-two (42.11%) do not. Out of those who do not have children, eight (25.81%) reported that they do hope to have children, eleven (35.48%) reported that they do not plan to have children, and twelve (38.71%) were not sure whether they wanted to have children. In-depth interviews could produce interesting findings about the experiences of female tenure-track

professors with children, and possible reasons for why some female tenure-track professors do not want or are unsure whether they want children.

Participants reported problems with having children when they wanted to or planned to due to the demands (specifically limited time) of their careers. Some participants stated that they had delayed their plans to have children since starting their tenure-tracks. Several participants indicated a concern that having children would compromise their careers or that they would have to extend the tenure “clock.” One participant indicated that she and her spouse successfully timed the birth of their child to occur at the end of the school year so that she would not have to take formal leave from her position. A couple of the participants felt that a career in academia is one that is flexible and actually makes having children more possible. Some participants mentioned having observed the challenges that their academic colleagues encountered when they had children. Several participants also stated that they already had a child (or children) and would probably have another child (or more children) if they were not on tenure-track.

The second open-ended question, “Please comment on how you feel your career choice has influenced your romantic relationship(s)” produced more complex responses. Due to the complexity of responses, the researcher found it necessary to divide the responses in to distinct categories. The following 4 types of responses were the overarching themes: 1) It has not influenced the participant’s career or the question does not seem applicable to her, 2) It has had a negative influence by making the career or the relationship or both more challenging, 3) It has had a positive effect on the participant’s relationship(s), 4) The participant was unsure of how it had influenced her romantic relationship(s) or the participant’s response was unclear.

Figure 8



No comment/neutral/it has not influenced the relationship(s):

Twenty-four responses (31.6%) fit in to category 1. Some of these participants indicated that they did not perceive that their career choices had any effect on their relationships. A few participants wrote “N/A” or “no comment” in the text response box. Several of participants in this category indicated that they did not feel that their career choices have influenced their romantic relationships because their partners were also in academia, affording a mutual understanding of the demands of their careers as professors.

Negative impact on the relationship(s):

Twenty-eight responses (36.8%) fit in to category 2. Many of those responses indicated that the participants' careers kept them too busy to devote enough time to dating or to their current relationships. Some indicated that their careers forced them to look for partners who were more flexible in their own careers, willing to move around, and maybe even less ambitious. Several indicated that the time they devote to their careers created or contributed to relationship problems with their spouses/partners. Several participants also indicated that their career choices limited their options to dating and/or partnering only in academia.

Positive impact on the relationship(s):

Eight responses (10.5%) fit in to category 3. A few of these participants stated that due to the flexibility in their schedules as a tenure-track professors, it has positively influenced their relationship(s). The majority of those whose responses fit in to this category have partners who also hold careers in academia, a factor which, they indicated, strengthened their relationships. One participant added that she thinks that her career-choice would likely have more of a negative impact if her partner were not also an academic.

Unsure about the impact/unclear answer:

Sixteen responses (21%) fit in to category 4. Eleven of these sixteen responses were simply unclear. In most cases, it appears that the participant misread or misinterpreted the question. Five of these sixteen responses indicated that the participants were not sure about how their careers had influenced their romantic relationships, if at all. A couple of participants stated that it was difficult to know without experience with another career to compare it to.

These open-ended questions produced a lot of texture in the qualitative findings. They also revealed a limitation of the study; the anonymous questionnaire nature of the study only allows for a certain depth in the qualitative data. If this were conducted through in-person

interviews, the researcher could have clarified the question and asked follow-up questions based on the participants' responses. The response bias also shows through in the data. As this was voluntary research participation, those who are more comfortable discussing these issues are more likely to respond to the participation request. If the entire female tenure-track population were surveyed (or the professors who were identified and invited to participate were actually mandated to participate), the results would likely be very different. Overall, these findings, both the quantitative and the qualitative, vary widely and show that the experiences of female tenure-track professors are highly individualized.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This study investigated the levels of satisfaction among female tenure-track professors and also collected data on the relationship statuses and satisfaction levels of this group. Female tenure-track professors from colleges/universities in the Eastern Pennsylvania Area, was used in this study. A total of seventy-six female, tenure-track professors participated in the study by completing online surveys. The majority of the study was quantitative in nature with the questions being limited to multiple-choice answers with two qualitative open-ended questions. Though no statistically significant findings were identified in this research, the qualitative data produced valuable findings.

The seventy-six participants in this study range in age from twenties to sixties, with the majority (42.11%) being in their thirties. Seventy-four have doctoral degrees and two have master's degrees. Over 80% of the participants are currently married, engaged, or in a committed relationship. One could say that this population is largely successful with romantic relationship from this statistic when it is compared to the general American adult population as only around 50% of U.S. adults are married, as of 2010 (Luscombe, 2013b; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This percentage does not, however, take in to account romantic partnerships, some which may take place in states where gay marriages is not legal. As the researcher, my suspicion was that being married and/or having children would likely take time away from your career. However, there was no significant relationship found between the amount of time per week devoted to career and

relationship status (i.e.: partnered or single) or amount of time spent in that relationship. There was also no significant relationship found in the amount of time devoted to career and whether or not the participant has children (or the number of children she has). Future research would be helpful in assessing how participants as to how they manage their schedules and career demands based on their lifestyle (whether they are partnered or have children or not).

While the amount of hours per week that the professors devote to their careers did not have a strong correlation to level of relationship satisfaction, 36.8% of the participants indicated that their careers have a negative impact on their relationship. It would be useful to do further research investigating how these professors' careers negatively impact their relationships, but the suggestion of the 36.8% of responses to this open-ended question indicated that their careers kept them too busy to devote enough time to dating and/or their current relationships.

While only about 10% of participants indicated that their career has a positive impact on their relationship, over half of the participants who identified as currently being in a relationship indicated that they are extremely satisfied with their relationship. Since this study did not investigate what works and what doesn't work in relationships, it is difficult to interpret what makes these participants extremely satisfied with their relationships. While these findings might seem to be conflictual, what the findings really indicate is that relationship satisfaction in relation to careers in academia is complex and not easily explained through quantitative data. Even though 52.6% of the responses to this open-ended question did not fit into either the "positive impact" category or the "negative impact" category, they still produced rich findings.

Some participants disclosed that they are in a relationship with someone who also works in academia, indicating that there was a mutual understanding in the relationship about what the career requires. One participant stated articulately, "It has enhanced my romantic relationship

with my partner. My partner is also an academic who works in the same field. We have our own individual areas of expertise but publish in the same conferences and journals. And since we enjoy working with each other, we try to collaborate whenever possible.” Several participants stated that their career choices have influenced them to choose partners who also work in academia. A couple participants noted that they have made a point to partner with “less ambitious” partners or “a husband who is flexible and works part-time.” Another couple of participants stated that their careers have made them look for partners who are willing to move around the country with them, as their careers have required this. For example, here are a couple of the responses: “Finding a partner who is willing to move around” and “My husband had to be willing to relocate for my job”.

Some participants also mentioned in their responses that they felt that they had either unconsciously or consciously held themselves back from pursuing relationships because of the demands of their jobs, particularly the prospect of a likely relocation. This narrative is the opposite of some current literature and some current dialogue in the media, which says that many women unconsciously hold themselves back from pursuing their careers to the fullest because of the desire (and/or pressure) to partner and raise a family. There is a dialogue going on in corporate America about this notion between and about professional businesswomen such as Sheryl Sandberg (COO of Facebook) and Marissa Mayer (President and CEO of Yahoo). Sheryl Sandberg, now famous for her new book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, stated in an interview with one of *Time* magazine’s writers, Belinda Luscombe that women’s biggest obstacle to professional success is themselves, specifically their mindset (Luscombe, 2013a).

While there was no significant relationship between the amount of time the professor devotes to her career and the amount of problems in the relationship, the participants who

indicated that their careers have had negative impacts on their relationships all referenced the time demands of their career. In response to the question, one stated, “fairly negatively, I spend a lot of time working...”. Another participant stated, “Not much time to invest in a meaningful relationship.” Many of those who did not indicate a negative impact on their relationships still referenced the time demands of their careers. One participant felt that it is important to have a partner who is supportive of her schedule as a tenure-track professor, which often involves long work hours, or as she stated, “the enormous amount of time my job takes. As the findings indicate that the participants are largely satisfied with their romantic relationship, we can hypothesize that participants who indicated that their careers have negative impacts on their relationships must perceive other things to contribute to relationship satisfaction. Or that what makes relationship satisfaction has nothing to do with the impacts of one’s career.

Most of the participants responded positively to the RAS questions. They primarily indicated that their partners meet their needs extremely well, that they view their relationship as “excellent” compared to most, that they love their partner very much, that their relationship has very much or completely met their original expectations, and that they almost never wished that they hadn’t gotten in to the relationship. No participants indicated that there were many or very many problems in their relationships. They indicated that there was either an average amount, some, or very few problems in their relationship. While this can be attributed to a response bias, it is still worth seriously considering these findings. Please see Appendix D for the full RAS questions.

The other open-ended question (Does your tenure-track position factor into your decision to have children? If so, how?) also produced rich findings. The “yes” responses to this question were most in-line with my anecdotal observations. The theme of the responses of those who

indicated that their tenure-track position had factored in to their decision about having children was that the time-demands of the job are so intense that it leaves little time for having and raising children. As one participant put it, “Before tenure you have no time, after tenure you’re too old...” Another participant stated, “My husband and I have delayed having children for two years so that I have time to figure out how to manage my research and teaching loads without working all the time.” These responses to this question were paralleled the individual stories told in the current literature on this issue (see Literature Review). Many of the responses were also similar to what I have heard from my personal observation of friends, acquaintances, and colleagues who have careers in academia.

Over the past eight months, I have worked as a childcare provider for a family with one child in which both parents are tenure-track professors. Having spent time casually discussing their careers and this research project with them, many of my observations come from this particular family’s story. Both parents seem to be constantly burning the candle at both ends and lacking down time. They work at different universities because they were not able to get jobs at the same university. They live about half way in between the two universities (each having at least a 40 minute commute one way), and they work hard to arrange their class schedules opposite of each other, so that one can take care of their son while the other is at work. However, their schedules do not always work out so perfectly each semester so they hire me to pick up their son from daycare and take care of him when both are obligated to be at work.

These professors have expressed distress about the demands of their careers and its effects on their relationship and their childcare issues. They have also indicated that their salaries barely cover their childcare needs so they strive to use additional childcare (me) as little as possible. Additionally, they struggle with the decision about having more children. While they

want another child and feel pressured to have one soon due to her age, they feel that having another child before achieving tenure would throw her off the tenure track and possibly ruin her chances of achieving tenure altogether. These professors have also referenced a couple of their friends marriages (couples who are also both tenure-track professors) that have recently ended. They believe that the tenure-track career demands were the basis of the problems in the relationship.

Both open-ended questions in this study, but particularly the second (Please explain how you you're your career choice has influenced your romantic relationship), produced some unclear responses, as well as responses that seemed to answer a question that was not asked. This illustrates the importance of clearly wording questions so that the participant knows exactly what the researcher is asking. Some responses, such as "no comment" seemed to indicate that the participant was either offended or irritated by, or uninterested in the question. Some answered "N/A," which could mean that they misunderstood the question. This question should be applicable to every participant, as long as they have been in some type of romantic relationship at some point in their adult life. The question may have enhanced reliability and validity if it were worded in the following way, "How has your career as a tenure-track professor and the demands of your job impacted your love life (current, and/or past relationship experiences)?" Another lesson that was learned by conducting this study was that asking open-ended questions in an anonymous questionnaire format makes it difficult to produce clear and meaningful qualitative results, which is a known fact of research methods. Some other unclear response includes: "long distance relationship" and "had a relationship before career." If this research was conducted by individual interviews, I would have been able to clarify by saying, "Regardless of when your relationship(s) started or ended, whether you lived with your partner or not, and how

long they lasted, I'm wondering whether you think that your career impacts (or impacted) your romantic relationship(s)? If so, how?"

Conclusion

Relationship satisfaction is a complicated topic, one that is widely studied. Demanding careers undoubtedly affect people's personal lives but the ways and extent to which they affect personal lives is still not fully understood. This study produced meaningful findings, which will hopefully only be a springboard for further, more comprehensive research on this topic. Surveying a much larger sample would be beneficial to future research on tenure-track professors and relationship satisfaction.

It was my hope, as the researcher, that more people would participate in the study. Unfortunately, the first time the survey and recruitment e-mail was sent out (to over 700 people) there was glitch in the survey, which I did not realize until 142 people had attempted to participate in the study. The incomplete data had to be destroyed, due to the glitch in the survey, and I had to re-invite professors to participate a second time around with a properly functioning survey. The properly functioning survey instrument was available for a total of ten days. The response to the invitation to participate was only about half of what it was the first time the recruitment email was sent out (with the defective survey). The response would clearly have been greater if there had not been a glitch in the survey the first time. Perhaps the response would have also been larger if the time-constraints were different (if I had been able to leave the survey up for a longer period of time). However, the entire thesis was required to be completed over a 9-month time period.

It would enhance future research to compare perceptions, in various fields of work, of how their career impacts their love lives. I am sure that the 36.8% of participants in this study

who reported that their career has a negative impact on their relationship are not the only group who experience this.

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Appendix A
Recruitment Letter

Dear Professor,

You are being contacted because you have been identified as a professor holding a tenure-track position at one or more of the colleges/universities in Eastern Pennsylvania. You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Brianna Meehan for a Masters Thesis. If you are not a female professor who holds a tenure-track position or you do not wish to participate, you may discard this e-mail and I apologize for any inconvenience.

This study is being done as a requirement for a Masters of Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work. The study aims to identify the relationship between your career and your personal life. Specifically, the study investigates the perceived satisfaction levels in romantic relationships of female professors holding tenure-track positions.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated. This survey will only take 5-10 minutes of your time and you will not be identified in the study. As you will see in the informed consent form, you are welcomed to send me an e-mail directly if you are interested in knowing the results of the study.

Thank you very much for your help!

CLICK ON THE LINK TO TAKE THE STUDY:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JXRDFR2>

Sincerely,

Brianna Meehan

bmeehan@smith.edu

Candidate for the degree of Masters of Social Work from
Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, Massachusetts

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA and I am conducting a study on female professors who hold tenure-track positions at an array of colleges/universities in Eastern Pennsylvania and their self-perception of their satisfaction levels in romantic relationships. Women now outnumber men in college and graduate school and more women are filling professional positions than before. There is a lack of literature, specifically, on tenure-track female professors and the impact their careers have on their personal lives. The purpose of my study is to identify the perceived satisfaction levels in romantic relationships of women in your profession who hold tenure-track positions.

You are being asked to answer some demographic questions, as well as complete an on-line survey regarding your career, your relationship(s), and your level of satisfaction in you romantic relationship if you are currently in one. You must be an adult to participate. You must identify as female, and you must be working in a tenure-track position in a college/university. You do not need to currently be in a romantic relationship in order to participate. Your participation will take approximately 15-25 minutes of your time. Your participation will take place through an on-line program called SurveyMonkey.

Though anticipated risks of participation are minimal, you may experience distress or emotional discomfort when reflecting on your experiences in romantic relationships. As a result, I have included a list of resources on the next page where you can find a therapist if you should desire. Benefits include the possibility that you may gain clarity or new insight into your current or past relationships. Other benefits include participating in the development of knowledge that might be helpful to others. A more clear understanding of this topic will be useful for women who are pursuing higher degrees. It will also help society understand the social changes and challenges of women in academic careers. This study is being conducted as part of my Masters degree. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Your participation will be confidential. Your name will never be revealed in my study. I will receive your completed survey from the on-line program, SurveyMonkey, but your identifying information will not be attached to your survey. Once the data are collected, I will destroy the secured document containing the e-mail addresses and names of recruits. Data will be kept in a safe and secure location for a maximum of three years as required by federal guidelines and will be destroyed after the thesis is completed. The study will be presented at Smith College School for Social Work and the data will be presented in aggregate; no individual information will be identified or identifiable. If you are interested in knowing the results of the study you may e-mail me directly at bmeehan@smith.edu and I will share my thesis with you once it is completed. However, if you e-mail me, it will then be revealed to me that you have chosen to participate in the study and you will no longer be anonymous. However, your name will not be associated with your responses. Again, you name and e-mail will never be revealed in the study. If you are not

interested in participating in the study but would still like to know the results, you are still welcome to contact me.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study if you choose to even after you have started the survey. You cannot withdraw from the study after you have submitted your survey as there is no way to retract the surveys. If you have any concerns about your rights or any aspects of this study, you are encouraged to contact me, Brianna Meehan, at bmeehan@smith.edu, or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee in Northampton, MA at 413-585-7974.

BY CHECKING "I AGREE" BELOW YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY. ONCE YOU CLICK "I AGREE," YOU WILL THEN BEGIN THE SURVEY.



I agree

Appendix C

Survey

*Asterick (*) indicates that this question requires an answer*

- *1) What is your race?
 - a) White (non-Hispanic)
 - b) Hispanic
 - c) Black
 - d) American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - e) Asian
 - f) Pacific Islander
 - g) Mixed race or other

- *2) What is your age?
 - a) 20 to 29
 - b) 30 to 39
 - c) 40 to 49
 - d) 50 to 59
 - e) 60 to 69
 - f) 70 or older

- *4) What is your relationship status?
 - a) married or partnered
 - b) single
 - c) engaged
 - d) divorced
 - e) in a committed relationship (not married)
 - f) in a casual romantic relationship (not married, engaged, or single)

- 5) If you are married or in a committed relationship, how long have you been in this relationship?
 - a) less than a year
 - b) 1 to 3 years
 - c) 4 to 6 years
 - d) 7 to 10 years
 - e) more than 10 years

- 6) If our are not in a committed relationship (partnership or marriage), do you hope to be in one someday?
 - a) yes
 - b) no
 - c) not sure/maybe

*7) What is your academic degree?
Answer: _____

- *8) How many hours per week on average do you devote to your career as a professor?
- a) 0 to 5
 - b) 6 to 10
 - c) 11 to 15
 - d) 16 to 20
 - e) 21 to 25
 - f) 26 to 30
 - g) 31 to 35
 - h) 36 to 40
 - i) 41 to 45
 - j) 46 to 50
 - k) 51 to 55
 - l) 56 to 60
 - m) more than 60

*9) Do you have children? (this can include step-children)

- a) yes
- b) no

10) How many children do you have?

- a) 1
- b) 2
- c) 3
- d) 4 or more

11) If you do not have children, do you have plans to have children in the future?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) not sure/maybe

*12) Does your tenure-track position factor in to you decision to have children? (text response box)

13) Please comment on how you feel your career choice has influenced your romantic relationship(s). (text response box)

14) If you are in a romantic relationship of any sort, please click “Yes” below and continue to the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) questions. If not, click “No” below and you will then have completed your survey.

- a) Yes
- b) No

Appendix D

RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE (RAS)

Please mark on the answer sheet the letter for each item which best answers that item for you.

How well does your partner meet your needs?

A	B	C	D	E
Poorly	Somewhat Poorly	Average	Well	Extremely well

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Extremely satisfied

How good is your relationship compared to most?

A	B	C	D	E
Poor	Somewhat Poor	Average	Good	Excellent

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Almost Never	Average	Often	Very often

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations:

A	B	C	D	E
Hardly at all	Somewhat	Average	Very Much	Completely

How much do you love your partner?

A	B	C	D	E
Not much	Somewhat	Average	Much	Very much

How many problems are there in your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Very few	Some	Average	Many	Very many

NOTE: Items 4 and 7 are reverse scored. A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5. You add up the items and divide by 7 to get a mean score.

Appendix E

HSR Letter of Approval



School for Social Work

Smith College

Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

January 10, 2013

Brianna Meehan

Dear Brianna,

Thank you for making all the requested changes to your Human Subjects Review application. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

Marsha Kline Pruett, M.S., Ph.D., M.S.L.

Vice Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Danna Bodenheimer, Research Advisor