

PART ONE

WORKING/LEARNING IN THE ACADEMY WHILE WORKING/LEARNING AS A MOM

OVER THE COURSE of her academic career as a renowned sociologist, Arlie Hochschild (1997) made poignant observations about the precarious balance between home and work life. Her work therefore provides us with a vocabulary to describe the second-shift phenomenon where mothers employed outside the home continue to carry the brunt of domestic work once they return home. Hochschild's research also questions how human feelings have become commercialized in the global market place; she questions what emotional labor entails and the ways in which such labor is gendered. In many ways embodied through the chapters in this book, her work offers readers a larger political, social, and economic context for what women working in academia are facing. In this first part, we begin with "How We Learned to Stop Worrying and to Enjoy Having It All," by six academic mothers from four disciplines at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, who investigate the media-generated "mommy wars" and the need for an academic community dedicated to a discussion of the work–life balance as it applies to their lives. Michelle Kuhl, Michelle Mouton, Margaret Hostetler, Druscilla Scribner, Tracy Slagter, and Orlee Hauser question the tone of media portrayals of working women, challenge one another's notions of feminism, confront the virtual absence of discourses on fatherhood and spousal relationships, and investigate their own reactions to stay-at-home motherhood. Larissa M. Mercado-López considers throughout her chapter, "Academia or Bust: Feeding the Hungry Mouths of the University, Babies, and Ourselves," how academia as an institution is not always accepting of

mothers and their decision to breastfeed, yet there are structures in place that may enable mothers-professors to mother their children without compromising too much. In addition, she discusses how the physical and political act of breastfeeding works on both the physiological level and the psychological level and should be acknowledged as a way to remain engaged in scholarly work. In "Diverse Academic Support for an Employee, Mother, and Nontraditional Student," Wendy K. Wilde intertwines her experiences as a young student and mother with her status as a female staff member working in the academy for thirty years. Wendy began working full-time at the age of nineteen; she tells her story by showing how conversations and connections with women on campus, regardless of their status, helped her create a balanced life as worker, student, and mother. Wendy's experience is juxtaposed with Kim Powell's story of raising four children, one born prematurely the year before her tenure review and three adopted special-needs children, while she was serving as department head and director of women's studies. She concludes in "Breaking the Glass Ceiling While Being a Mother: Parenting, Teaching, Research, and Administration" that higher-education administration, with its twelve-month contract and eighty-plus-hour weeks, often assumes a life without children, thus creating an institutional loss of talented academic mothers who have excellent skills for academic leadership. Such values are also present in Virginia L. Lewis' story "To Tell or Not to Tell: Single Motherhood and the Academic Job Market," about how she lost tenure over an institutional decision governed by corporate thinking. Thrust back onto the academic job market at age forty as a single mother of three young children, she embarked on a journey that taught her the importance of family as a key academic value. Concluding part I is "Class, Race, and Motherhood: Raising Children of Color in a Space of Privilege." Irene Mata discusses her experiences as a new Chicana professor from a working-class family and the challenges and prejudices she and her children face while living in an affluent and Anglo college suburb. She contributes to the dialogue of what it means to be an academic mother, torn between a job one loves and raising children in a community whose values are often antithetical to one's own.

HOW WE LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND TO ENJOY HAVING IT ALL

*Michelle Kuhl, Michelle Mouton, Margaret Hostetler,
Druscilla Scribner, Tracy Slagter, and Orlee Hauser*

IN 2006, six academic mothers from four disciplines at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh started a sociable reading group focused on the “mommy wars.” According to Toni Zimmerman, and her colleagues (2008), the media derives high ratings by explicitly pitting working moms against stay-at-home moms on TV programs. Many in our group had noticed a growing literature of mainstream articles and books on the subject, such as Lisa Belkin’s *New York Times* article “The Opt-Out Revolution” (2003), Linda Hirshman’s manifesto *Get to Work* (2006), and Danielle Crittenden’s *What Our Mothers Didn’t Tell Us* (1999). Women’s hallway conversations evolved into a reading group that tapped into a real need for a discussion of the work–life balance as it applied to our immediate academic community. For two consecutive summers, we met monthly to examine common readings. We found we agreed on many issues, mainly the difficulty of juggling work and motherhood, but disagreed on the exact nature of the problem and the best solutions. Our meetings mixed the personal and the political as we debated feminism, swapped personal stories, and lent each other used baby clothes. Most important, we learned to stop worrying about the “mommy wars” and to value our social ties to one another.

We are exactly the target demographic at which current media judgments and exhortations are directed: thirty-five- to forty-five-year-old Generation X women. We are all middle- and upper-middle-class professional women with advanced degrees and children. Judith Warner calls us “a generation of control freaks” who have turned inward to focus exclusively on