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Patty Sotirin and Sonia M. Goltz

Abstract: We employ a feminist phenomenological methodology to explore the lived meaningfulness of the academic dual career. We contend that university approaches to resolving the "problem" of dual career fail to address partners' long-term commitments and shared challenges. Following an analysis of focus group interviews with dual career academic couples, we find that dual career

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is not merely a description but a life orientation in itself through which partners engage with personal, relational, and career possibilities and trajectories. We elaborate the thematic issues and ethical responsibilities that universities must come to terms with in order to more adequately facilitate dual careers.

Keywords: *dual career; phenomenological methodology; faculty retention; feminist research*

While hiring and retaining dual career couples is an issue across employment sectors, dual career hiring and retention has become a critical issue in academe, particularly in STEM fields. This is because most faculty, particularly women, report that they are in academic dual careers: in a well-regarded study by the Clayman Institute, 72% of surveyed academics were in dual career relationships and 36% of faculty participants had an academic partner, with more women having an academic partner than men (Schiebinger, Henderson, & Gilmartin, 2008, p. 1). Further, the report found that women in STEM fields were likely to be in relationships with partners in STEM fields: 83% of women scientists are coupled with another scientist compared with 54% of men scientists. The academic dual career couple deserves focused study not only because of the numbers affected, but also because of unique characteristics of dual career in academia. First, the academic career model is viewed as being very linear and little has been done to restructure it to accommodate life stages and family dynamics (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Probert, 2005). Second, the potential costs of turnover within academia due to dual career dissatisfaction are high. Turnover in academia incurs costs such as recruitment, training, and knowledge losses, which are exacerbated when considering recouping start-up costs in the STEM areas, which range from 100 thousand dollars to over a million dollars per faculty member and can take as long as 10 years (Callister, 2006; National Academy of Sciences et al., 2007).

Academic dual careers became more visible in the 1990s with more women in the professoriate, the feminist push for women's rights in the workplace, increased university labor needs, and the legal relaxation of anti-nepotism rules (Ferber & Loeb, 1997; McNeil & Sher, 1999; Shoben, 1997). In addition, dual career hiring has become associated with efforts to diversify academe and STEM fields specifically by attracting more women (Koerber, 2012). Thus, recruiting and hiring faculty in dual career partnerships is of increasing concern and many universities offer assistance when a prospective faculty member's partner needs employment. One study of universities receiving the first rounds of Institutional Transformation NSF ADVANCE grants (2001 and 2003) found that 80% had addressed dual career issues, whether through policies, institutional linkages, or case-by-case informal assistance (Laursen & Austin, 2014).

In this study, we interviewed academic dual career couples in which at least one partner is a research or tenure-track faculty member at a STEM-focused research university and the other partner has a professional career or aspirations for one.[1] Our goal was to identify the lived meanings of an academic dual career for those who are in this situation. We argue that lived meanings are absent from most approaches and thus responses to ongoing dual career issues are limited. Unless university policies and practices are informed by such meanings, they will fall short of adequately responding to the concerns of faculty and their partners, thus thwarting efforts to diversify faculty ranks, support faculty success, and retain valued faculty.

In the following section, we critique academic dual career policies and assumptions to show why current approaches may not resolve dual career issues. We introduce a feminist phenomenological methodology that is directed at identifying intersubjective meanings of life experiences. We then describe our focus group study and the themes that we identified. As part of our phenomenological approach, we develop a summative statement and a thematic crystallization capturing the essence of the dual career experience of our participants. Finally, we reflect on the implications of our themes for addressing dual career issues in academe.

Dual Career Issues in Academe

In this section, we identify three critical obstacles to adequately addressing academic dual career issues. First, we identify prevalent approaches for understanding and dealing with dual career issues that we contend limit and constrain university responses. Second, we identify tenacious biases that create disadvantages for dual career partners and hamper policies aimed at supporting dual career couples. Third, we identify the implications for dual career couples of the unyielding academic career path that hampers women's academic progress.

Limits to Current Approaches

Hiring a faculty member may mean finding a position for a partner in a dual career relationship. A review of ADVANCE dual career programs found that many include projects supporting dual career hires (Laursen & Austin, 2014). However, these dual career programs tend to be limited in form:

[1]Our definition intends to address academic dual career couples. Definitions of dual career vary and have included partners who have a professional degree, regardless of whether each partner is currently employed or not (e.g., see Hill, Holmes, & McQuillan, 2014), as well as partners who are both in a managerial or professional occupation (Wheatley, 2012). Inclusion in dual career studies sometimes requires marriage (e.g., Cron, 2001) and at other times requires cohabitation, but not marriage (e.g., Pixley, 2008). Our focus groups include married and unmarried couples.

many do not specify partner rather than spousal assistance, focus more on off-campus than on-campus employment, and rarely have funds to support dual career, tenure-track hires (Tower & Dilks, 2015). The assumption seems to be that dual career is a problem that needs to be solved within the existing structures of university employment and academic careers. This frame implies that dual career is a limited and resolvable impediment to faculty career progress and satisfaction rather than an ongoing commitment among life partners.

Significantly, most of these programs are concerned with placing a partner at the time of faculty hire when a partner's employment is a decision point for accepting a faculty position. For example, the comprehensive Stanford study in 2006 discussed only dual career concerns at hiring rather than examining dual career faculty across career stages (Schiebinger et al., 2008). This treats the issue of dual career as an early career issue that can be resolved at one point in time. Such an approach stresses placement and "file closure" rather than long-term satisfaction and career development. This immediate solution orientation lends itself to sub-optimal placements, the exacerbation of misunderstandings between the university and the couple, and renewed partner dissatisfactions and anxieties affecting a faculty member's capacities and retention. In reality, career issues are ongoing and the partner's career dissatisfactions can be significant factors in a faculty member's decision to leave the university (Carnes, Handelsman, & Sheridan, 2006). The complications mentioned above exacerbate the inadequacies of a short-term solution to dual career issues.

Hence, dual career must be considered an ongoing concern in faculty retention. Universities cannot afford to focus myopically on time of hire but need programs that more adequately address dual career as an unfolding set of needs, challenges, and opportunities. Beyond recruitment and time of hire, dual career is a factor in faculty decisions to stay or leave a university. A partner's dissatisfaction with career limitations can precipitate interpersonal discord impacting career performance, "reluctant staying," or a job search. This especially appears to affect women. More academic women than men perceive a loss in professional mobility due to dual career (Schiebinger et al., 2008) but they are also more likely to leave a position as a result of their partner's job offer or relocation (Dean & Koster, 2014).

Furthermore, women are more likely than men to drop out of their careers for dual career reasons (Cabrera, 2007). This introduces another shortcoming: the tendency to deal with faculty partners as individuals rather than recognizing that these partners conduct their lives and careers in tandem. While respecting the integrity of each partner's career is in line with EEO requirements and employment laws, to ignore dual career as a meaningful context in itself is to miss a critical dimension of how dual career partners

experience both their careers and their lives. Accordingly, we are interested in the academic dual career as a distinct lived experience in order to more fully inform university policies and interventions. We contend that dual career has been framed in ways that ignore the meanings of that experience for faculty and their partners.

Biases Against Dual Career Academics

Research has identified a number of family-focused biases operating to disadvantage faculty with family responsibilities including the "maternal wall," the "caretaker bias," and a parental leave stigma (e.g., Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004). Similarly, the legacy of legal restrictions on supervisory relations between married couples and fraternizing among employees contributes to residual biases against dual career employment (Quinn, 1977; Shoben, 1997). In addition, the ambivalence of current faculty to dual career accommodations has been documented such as the assumption that the dual hire includes one partner of value and one partner who might not otherwise have been hired (Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, & Rice, 2004).

Further, language is itself an issue: the "two-body problem," "trailing spouse," and the "two-fer deal" discriminate against partners in a dual career relationship. The "two-body problem" is a label that initially drew from Aerospace Physics: two planetary bodies in close proximity exert orbital pulls on each other just as two academics in a committed relationship exert influence on each other's career trajectories. However, this label is not a neutral one; aside from dehumanizing the partners, it reduces the issues involved to predictable, even inevitable influences. Additionally, labeling a partner the "trailing spouse" or assuming a partner hire constitutes a "two-body problem" invokes a subtle subordination of that person despite their credentials and competence (Holmes, 2015 p. 68).

This all adds up to a specific set of implicit biases affecting dual career faculty and their partners. Yet there has been little research tapping the perceptions of dual career faculty and partners in regard to such ambivalences. Instead, dual career discussions in the literature have almost exclusively focused on the experiences of what has been called the "first hire" rather than what has been called the "second hire" or "trailing" partner/spouse (e.g., Schiebinger et al., 2008; Hill, Holmes, & McQuillan, 2014).

Rigid Academic Career Path

The rigidity of the academic career as a linear, cumulative, and unbroken pathway has been critiqued by academic feminists who argue that this model is particularly detrimental to women's academic success (Buzzanell & Goldzwig, 1991; Probert, 2005). Research on women's career stages suggests that instead of the common linear, continuous pathway, women's careers may show alternative patterns that are responsive to family demands (e.g.,

Arthur & Rousseau, 2001; Cabrera, 2007). Childbirth, childcare, eldercare, and familial demands often weigh more heavily on women's time and energies. These familial demands coincide with demands of a conventional career pathway: maternity and tenure, eldercare and mid-career demands, or shifts in childcare time demands from preschool to high school that impinge on professional expectations and responsibilities. While "stop-the-clock" and family leave policies are common responses, these policies are short-term measures to accommodate specific and short-term needs like infant care and other caretaking exigencies that do not address the persistent responsibilities yet changing needs of a dual career couple (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

In addition, there has been little restructuring of the academic career path around life stages and family phases (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Some theorists argue that not only child-bearing but also its biological cessation in menopause can affect women's career focus, energies, and accomplishments. For example, while a male-based model of post-tenure career development indicates stages of stability, maintenance, and decline, women may renew career commitments with increased focus or vitality in post-menopausal and post-family middle-adulthood (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Yet these findings are rarely applied to dual career issues. Significantly, there are few studies that acknowledge the impact of these stages of career/life issues on both partners, whether both are faculty members or one is facing other professional or personal demands.

Given the findings of extant research, it is tempting to assume that the problem of dual career academics is adequately addressed by recruitment and retention measures, bias interventions, and career path flexibility. However, in our experience, often these solutions are created in response to changing numbers (e.g., turnover, partners placed) rather than lived experiences. We believe that framing the dual career "problem" in terms of such solutions sidesteps the fact that dual career partners experience their careers and their academic lives in the context of their dual career commitments. To design adequate dual career policies and responses, we need to understand what dual career means as a life experience. In order to shift perspective, we turn to a phenomenological approach in which the meaning of the dual career experience is conceptualized as an ongoing engagement with a particular intersubjectively-constituted lifeworld (Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 1990; 2014). A phenomenological approach emphasizes guided reflections on lived experiences and the distillation of themes that articulate what the dual career experience means for those who live it. Thus, a phenomenological approach fits our purposes well.

A Feminist Phenomenological Research Approach

The goal of phenomenological inquiry is to discover the pre-interpretive sense of a lived experience, the sense or logic of its meaningfulness that is inherent to the experience itself (Dukes, 1984, p. 198). This involves "bracketing" presuppositions and common understandings and working through a series of "reductions" or reflective distillations to discern the essence of our preconscious apprehensions of experience. Unfortunately, the richness of a phenomenological approach is frequently reduced to thematic analysis (Dukes, 1984; van Manen, 2014). We endeavor to avoid over-simplifying the tenets of a contemporary phenomenological approach while prioritizing methodological concerns. As feminist researchers, we are drawn to the poststructuralist influences incorporated in contemporary phenomenological research models, specifically, conceptions of situatedness, reflexivity, and praxis.

A key feature of a phenomenological approach is "bracketing" or suspending "the merely contingent, accidental factual particulars" of an experience (Dukes, 1984, p. 199) as well as the assumptions and taken-for-granted interpretations we use unreflectively to go about everyday life—what is called the "natural attitude." While some researchers implement bracketing as a way to distill essential themes (Orbe, 2001; van Manen, 1990), Finlay (2008) introduces an analytic "dialectic dance" between bracketing and reflexivity, a robust, reflexive, and dialectical process that involves "bracketing pre-understandings and exploiting them as a source of insight," intertwining "naïve openness and self-aware criticality" (p. 29). Vagle, Hughes, and Durbin (2009) promote the practice of bridling rather than bracketing to enact both the reflexivity required of interpretive research as well as a radical questioning of what our own experiences introduce into our research. Such a practice entails a hermeneutic shift to acknowledge the role of reflexivity as always emergent, contextual, embodied, and relational (Finlay, 2012). As feminist researchers, we are committed to a moral project of gender justice that takes relations of power as integral to everyday life. For us, bridling involves a dialectic movement between listening faithfully and listening critically. Hence, bridling is akin to the self-reflexivity that has become prevalent in feminist qualitative research as both an analytic strategy in itself and as a reassurance of interpretive integrity (Lather, 2012).

Our initial research question is: What matters in the dual career experience for dual career partners? Phrasing this question around what matters rather than asking about how meaning happens engages our phenomenological inquiry with relations of power as well as moments of significance.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The Realities of Sponsored Research

We conducted our data gathering as part of a university study into the problems of dual career hiring practices (MTU IRB #848954–2). Hence, we collected data through the framework of what phenomenologists call the "natural attitude" or pre-existing understandings that we imbue with self-evidence. This means that our focus group interviews made certain assumptions based on the mandates of our sponsored study, our knowledge of extant practices and goals, and our knowledge base as experienced researchers and scholars.

However, no matter our biases or what we asked our participants, we found in the course of our interviews that they returned again and again to stories of their experiences. We realized that our own assumptions, prejudgments, and the problem-solving approach of the study were holding us back from really engaging with dual career as an experience in itself because we were approaching the interview and data as potential grist for university policies that "solve" the "problem" of dual career hires. Given these insights, we were drawn to a phenomenological perspective. Finlay (2008) makes a similar confession:

> The fact that a research interview was involved (as opposed to philosophical reflection) means that certain practical and social pre-understandings . . . were necessarily pulled into the equation. However, it was important to (critically and reflexively) attend to the likely impact of these pre-understandings on the research. (p. 28)

In our study, the protocols of conventional social science research, the responsibilities of the IRB, the expectations of our university sponsors, and our disciplined conduct as academic researchers framed our data-gathering. While we describe the data-gathering process according to conventional protocols, we will reconsider these protocols themselves as we develop our analyses.

Participants

Volunteer participants were recruited through an open call for couples self-identifying as dual career in the daily online campus newspaper. Couples were also solicited through email invitations sent to faculty identified by other participants, a variation of the "snowball" technique (Creswell, 2007). Participation was entirely voluntary. However, each couple was provided with a $50 honorarium to cover costs that might have been incurred as a result of participation (babysitting, etc.).

A total of fourteen couples participated. Seven volunteer couples participated in the pretenure group and seven in the post-tenure group. In accord

with our IRB instructions, participant consent was documented by means of audiorecorded individual oral consent. Volunteers were divided into cohort groups by number of years at Michigan Tech: seven couples who had been at the university for fewer than six years and seven couples who had been at the university for more than six years. Hence, these cohort groups were designed to give perspectives on differing needs, resources, and opportunities rather than assuming these are uniform across career/life stages. Further, these cohort groups served as data aggregating levels so that individuals and/or departments could not be individually identified in keeping with our IRB consent contract. In addition, each participant was given a pseudonym that was used both during the group session and on the transcripts. Thus, all data were anonymized and results aggregated so that individuals and/or departments could not be individually identified.

Prior to the focus groups, we solicited demographic information through a voluntary and anonymous survey conducted through Survey Monkey. The results are shown in Appendix A and indicate that while most of our participants identified as white, heterosexual, and childless, there were differences within each category. For example, three participants self-identified as Asian and two as Hispanic while two couples identified as international faculty. Three couples in the pre-tenure group had young children while three had no children. Four couples in the post-tenure group had adult children while one couple had no children. One same-sex couple participated. One couple included a faculty member and a non-academic administrator, but we included this couple given the partner's long-term association with academe. Most people did not know each other personally although they recognized faces. Just as important as the demographic features of our participants, a phenomenological approach requires varied perspectives to explore the lifeworld situations of the participants.

Varied Perspectives

Important to phenomenological analysis are variations on a focal experience. Along with the two faculty career stages that we used to organize the focus group meetings, the career status of each partner created an additional perspective that framed dual career experiences and varied among couples. Significant was whether only the faculty member received an initial offer or both partners received an offer during the initial hire. Another significant variation was whether a position was created for the non-faculty partner and whether this was permanent, temporary, or a "soft money" position. A final consideration was whether the faculty hire was male or female. What is significant for our study is that when we conceptualize dual career as an orientation in itself, these distinctions offer lived variations that both complicate and affirm the constitutive dynamics of such an orientation.

Focus Group Interviews

Three 60-minute face-to-face cohort focus groups were conducted by the first author and observed by the second author. All sessions were relatively unstructured in order to allow the foremost concerns of the couples to emerge. However, we encouraged reflections through a set of open-ended questions organized in three parts. We began with questions about the couple's dual career experiences, then asked participants to frame these earlier stories in terms of advantages and disadvantages, and finally invited recommendations based on their experiences. While this approach affords considerable freedom to participants for emergent topics and development, we were sensitive to inhibitions, the implicit sway of group pressure, cultural influences, and university politics that might contribute to inadvertent repression of marginalized or varied perspectives. The first author transcribed all audiorecordings, yielding 120 double-spaced pages. Both authors read through the transcripts independently and multiple times.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL PROCESS

The phenomenological analysis we developed is informed by van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic frame and Rieman's (1986) useful formulation modified by our concerns expressed earlier regarding the need to bridle rather than bracket lived relations of power and meaning and our feminist commitment to praxis. The process involves a series of interpretive "reductions" or crystallizations to discern the meaningful themes that structure participants' understandings of their dual career experiences (Orbe, 2000). After transcribing the audiorecordings ourselves and reading the resulting transcripts several times without making notations, we did line-by-line highlighting of sentences or phrases in which our participants described the nature and feeling of their lived experiences. While these highlighted statements often appeared thoughtful and reflective, they nonetheless express perspectives within the natural attitude. Thus, we attempted to discern themes that may or may not have been explicitly expressed while bridling our own assumptions about the dual career experience.

We reread the highlighted passages to identify themes that articulated a more encompassing understanding of some aspect of the lived meaningfulness of dual career. According to van Manen, this process involves interpretive invention, reflexive discovery, and disclosure of meaning. Themes "give shape to the shapeless" by giving "temporary and exemplary form" to the experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 88). We then revisited these themes in order to formulate what Reiman calls an "exhaustive description" or summative statement that articulates a plausible structure of the phenomenon across the various dual career experiences of our participants (Rieman, 1986, p. 95).

Lastly, we engaged in a final interpretive reduction to advance a descriptive phrase that crystallizes our participants' dual career experiences. We present this characterization in our Discussion section.

Verification and Reflexivity

Verifying findings has become a methodological standard in qualitative research (Creswell 2007), and our process did include such verification although admittedly seeking agreement from participants, between researchers, and across various and fluid perspectives fits uneasily with our phenomenological approach. First, we both read through all transcripts independently and did line-by-line coding in order to develop an intimate familiarity with participants' descriptive interpretations. We then met frequently to talk through our unfolding interpretations.

Second, we did a member check with all participants by inviting their feedback on a draft of a thematic report that we subsequently submitted to a university committee on dual career policies. The report identified initial descriptive themes and supporting transcript passages but was not couched as a phenomenological study. We verified with all but three of our participants that the report conveyed their experiences and ideas and the responses unanimously affirmed our report. Several of our participants thanked us for doing the study and expressed their hope that their experiences might inform changes in policies and practices. As noted above, this problem-solving assumption became a critical cue in both bridling and thematic reflections.

The most important "check" on our process was our engagement in collaborative reflexivity. We frequently talked about our own responses to the interview transcripts in terms provided by Vagle (2014, p. 132): the resonances of certain passages for us; the ways our own experiences and preconceptions narrowed our interpretive perspectives; what shocked, surprised, and intrigued us in the data; and a constant check on how multiple contexts—of intelligibility, disciplinary allegiance, intersectional identities, and institutional/historical locations—impinged on our inquiry. For example, we did not bracket but "bridled" our own experiences of dual careers in academe. Both of us have had dual career experiences since well before the notion of dual career was common. The lead author was part of a dual career academic couple until her husband was denied tenure and left the university and the marriage. The second author has navigated a dual career marriage throughout the three decades of her academic career. Additionally, we are both full professors, female, heterosexual, have grown children, and one is Caucasian and the other Caucasian/Hispanic. These experiences were part of our ongoing "bridling" throughout the interpretive process: sometimes the resonances with our own lives created more openness to the data while at other times, we had to "rein in" our own lived understandings to listen to what our participants shared with us.

We also maintained a sensitivity to issues of power. For example, dual career partners are rendered here as vulnerable to the exploitation of institutionalized academe yet faculty are privileged subjects within larger relations of material and social capital. We are aware that our interpretations emphasize their vulnerabilities even as we purport to discover an essential meaningfulness that transcends such disparities. This methodological ambivalence is exacerbated by our IRB authorized mandate to investigate dual career as a "problem," thus positioning our participants as deviating from the normative academic career trajectory. Given our feminist commitments, we take this pressure to fit otherness to a normative model as a point of inquiry, engaging in ongoing reflexive questioning of our own interpretive orientations. In the following discussion, we draw on these reflexive tensions.

THEMATIC FINDINGS

The meaningful statements we highlighted in the focus group transcripts clustered into three themes dealing with cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions: rational self-advocacy tempered by vulnerability; relationality; and moral reciprocity and betrayal. We offer examples of the statements or phrases that precipitated each theme.

Rational Self-Advocacy Tempered by Vulnerability

Our participants repeatedly talked about having a "long-term" career plan for both partners and advocating as dual career partners. For both junior and senior cohort participants, pursuing two careers was understood as posing problems that the partners had to figure out for themselves. Rather than counting on the university to propose options, participants were clear that it was up to them to negotiate for opportunities and problem-solve their own situations. As Anise explained, "We have had other new faculty come to us and say, 'How did you get the really great position for Trevor when you came here?' Well, no, (laughs) there wasn't a really great position for Trevor. We figured something out . . . and that has been a challenge." In this regard, Dmitri, a junior faculty partner, held that faculty candidates should negotiate for dual career assistance because meeting the needs of a top candidate was in the university's best interests: "They want you as much as you want to be there. You're interviewing each other. So I would say yeah, go in and negotiate for both of you. . . .Because for retention, the university should want that anyway." As Dmitri observes, advocating for dual career needs is based on a rational assessment by both the university and the couple of mutual benefits and several participants characterized their efforts to realize satisfactory accommodations as both reasonable for their situation and well-earned given their value to the university.

Despite the seemingly rational basis for self-advocacy, participants expressed uncertainty based in vulnerabilities like lack of information and idiosyncrasies of key administrators (like chairs or deans) that undermined their advocacy strategies. Ian argued that some faculty, particularly international faculty, might have too much at stake to engage in dual career negotiations. Lola admitted that she was afraid to bring up her dual career issues during her interview; Isabella confessed that she would not do so until a job offer was in hand; and Stella successfully negotiated a staff position for her partner Gabrielle, but as she told us, "The not knowing how permanent that was going to be was stressful for us for quite some time."

Even those who had successfully negotiated a dual career accommodation expressed uncertainty about whether a temporary or soft-money position would be renewed, whether a full-time or tenure-track position would materialize, or whether they would have to leave the university to move out of an undesirable position to realize their career goals. These are ongoing concerns that extend well beyond the point of hire and change in nature and exigence as time goes on. As Anise explained,

> So at first the challenge was, you know, how do you get a job where you're making best use of Trevor's skills and where he's fulfilled in what he's doing. And that happened. . . . But now the question is how do you make that more stable. . . . And that comes down to money and . . . the right people being able to be nimble in securing resources. And [the University] is a lot of things but nimble is not one of them.

Anise's story reveals self-advocacy but also a sense of being stymied by people and resources not under their control. Across our participants, a sense of vulnerability expressed variously as uncertainty, luck, or powerlessness undermined rational plans and strategies.

Several junior cohort couples expressed uncertainty about whether they could make long-term life decisions such as buying a house or having children given the ambiguities of their dual career trajectories. For example, Isabella told us that she and Raphael had decided to take having a second child "off the table" because of the uncertainty of her efforts to secure a full-time faculty position. Similarly, research scientists Anya and Cooper explained that they had looked at houses but decided against buying because of their uncertainty over their soft-money positions. In addition, because the verbal promises made to Cooper about collaborative work and grant projects had not materialized, Anya said, "That's part of the reason why we're definitely considering leaving. Because we don't want to have kids here." In the course of our study, they did leave the university, and two other couples began job searches.

Along with uncertainty, almost all participants in both the junior and senior cohorts described some aspect of their dual career experiences as "lucky." Rather than a rational process, they found that successful self-advocacy entailed some reliance on nonrational factors like luck. For example, Beryl reflected on having three administration positions to choose from: "That was a lucky timing thing. And that just happened that year, if it had been a year before or a year later it might not have happened." Lola also described her experience as lucky: "Fortunately we have been really lucky. Our department and the dean have been, were great in creating a new position. . . . We ended up getting two tenure track positions. Which was unheard of. So we are very fortunate." Her partner Sam observed, "We were very lucky that we had collaborative chairs from both departments." These couples credited nonrational factors for their success in landing two career positions: timing and the good fortune of working with willing administrators.

Rational plans, problem-solving, and self-advocacy are aspects of the natural attitude toward experiences in the world that confer a sense of agency and control. Yet across the various experiences voiced by our participants, we discerned a prereflective sense of vulnerability. While participants championed self-advocacy, they also characterized their dual career ambitions and experiences as vulnerable to nonrational factors. The whims and vagaries of administrator personalities, university budgets, even fate or "luck" were seen as critical complements to strategic planning and rational problem-solving. A junior cohort participant expressed this sense of vulnerability well: "[O]nce we agreed to come here, we felt really trapped because this is a rural area and there are not opportunities elsewhere, we feel like we have to accept whatever we're given. And we have no power to negotiate now, because we came and so we're now here and they don't have to make us happy anymore." While the situation for many of the couples was temporary or uncertain for the accompanying partner, vulnerability was integral to the couple's career orientation and not just to one of the partners.

Relationality

While our first theme emphasized the cognitive dimension of dual career as a meaningful context, our second theme emphasizes an emotional dimension. Members of all focus groups characterized their feelings about both their initial dual career experiences and their ongoing or current situations in emotionally intense terms like frustration, fear, anxiety, apprehensiveness, and emotional devastation. Further, these feelings were often cast as features of the relationship, particularly dissatisfaction, uneven sacrifice, and work/family stress. Participants described how partner dissatisfactions and unhappiness can dominate a marriage or committed relationship, stress both partners, and impact major life decisions (having a child, buying a house)

including whether to stay at the university. Distress emerged as an affective chorus across the cohorts. For example, in the senior cohort, Beryl noted that after she was denied tenure, she and her partner went on the job market: "We both went through the interview [process], going on the market, and it just wasn't really working out. And it was emotionally devastating. . . ."

Career sacrifice was distressing for both partners although this usually applied only to the accompanying partner's career trajectory. In the senior cohort group, several women shifted or delayed their careers to accommodate faculty partners or stay home with children; this was viewed as a sacrifice by both partners. For example, Harvey said, "We literally sit here with Muriel who should be a full professor. . . . So it's literally people who are set back ten, fifteen, twenty years in what they might be doing." Pauline, a junior cohort partner, explained,

> We've moved around ten times in the last ten years. We don't really want to move again. And then for me, I left my profession for about ten years and I kept my foot in the door enough. But I had so much potential and I was doing so well in that profession. But now I want to re-engage in something meaningful, I want to find my place.

Other partners talked of accepting a position that did not meet their career ambitions. Most poignantly, Isabella was in tears as she shared: "A lot of people I encounter just think that if they wear me down enough then I'll be willing to be an adjunct for the rest of my life. And that I just haven't accepted that that is my lot in life." Unlike Isabella, Maria was in a permanent campus position but she too described it as a career compromise: "I am an outdoor environmental education teacher and I'm advising [undergraduate] students. (laughs) So I would say that's a compromise. That's a huge compromise. I am not directly in the field that I would like to be but I like the job that I have."

Career sacrifice was facilitated by the university when partners felt rushed into accepting short-term or immediate positions (for example, clerical or instructor positions) that deflected or hampered long-term career goals. Feeling trapped in a dead-end position was a repeated concern. For example, Clio, a partner in the senior cohort, observed: "I was encouraged to find any job at Tech right away. And I resisted this cuz I saw that if I had taken a clerical job . . . that it would affect . . . my trajectory. And I am confident that that is true. And it is very sad to see." Maria, the junior cohort partner working as an advisor rather than a teacher, confessed feeling plateaued: "I feel like, in my position, I've plateaued. Like I don't know where I would go from my position. So if I ever wanted to move up or to do something different . . . I have no idea which direction or who I would even go to to begin that conversation." Beryl responded: "I feel the same way." Clio added, "And I do too."

Stress was evident in descriptions of work/family tensions. With a young child, Anise and Trevor noted that "figuring out the pattern of our home life has been an additional layer of challenge." They had to wait until preschool to get into the university's childcare facility given limited capacity; once there, they struggled to match their own schedules with that of the daycare. On school holidays and snowdays when the daycare is closed, the university's childcare policy is that children are not allowed in university offices, labs, or classrooms. For Anise, this is another example of the university's failure to develop creative responses. She said just looking at the policy "makes my blood boil (laughs)." Though her tone was facetious, the sentiment was both frustrated and angry and shared among the participants. Sam, an international faculty member whose wife held an instructor position, spoke of the stress of unrelenting work/family demands:

> I thought when I was a postdoc, I was working very hard but when I . . . [came] here and started having kids, we're working 24/7 and still [it] doesn't finish. But still we try to do even some compromise. . . . But we found it very very hard to have two kids and both of us working full time. So that's the challenge. I still cannot find a good solution for it rather than saying no to the work.

Sam's comment suggests that both partners are making career sacrifices to manage work and family demands and this points to the importance of adequate university policies for supporting dual career faculty. While university administrators are now talking about "work/life integration" policies, dual career couples continue to struggle to be both parents and academics.

Across our cohort groups, participants described various experiences in terms of distress, struggle, compromise, and sacrifice. We discern in these descriptions a fundamental relationality. According to van Manen, relationality is an "existential," one of four fundamental lifeworld themes including spatiality, temporality, corporeality, and relationality or communality (1990 p. 102–105; also Adams & van Manen, 2008, p. 619). Alonso's description of his long-term dual career experience crystallizes the rhythms and intensities of this existential relational orientation:

> When Rhoda was in a situation where she was manifestly unhappy and feeling stifled . . . that patent unhappiness in our relationship was kind of the featured story day in and day out. . . . [T]hat whole thing is gone now, at some level. . . . But what has also changed . . . is I don't find this a pleasant place to be anymore. . . . because the spirit of collegiality and moving forward as a team seems to have been lost around here. It's just not a happy place to be for me.

His partner's and then his own unhappiness as "the featured story" at different points in their careers entails a fundamental relationality inherent to the dual career experience. In other words, dual career entails an affective

engagement that infuses both partners' experiences of personal and professional life. While this may seem obvious given that dual career by definition involves relationship commitments, the impact of a partner's unhappiness or the relational indebtedness incurred through one partner's career sacrifices on a faculty member's success and satisfaction has been overlooked in the literatures on dual career solutions and work/family integration.

Moral Reciprocity and Betrayal

Our final theme describes an expectation of reciprocal commitment between the couple and the university betrayed by the university's failure to fulfill promises or reward long-term contributions. In all focus groups, participants explicitly expressed their commitment to the university and the community. For example, Beryl and Lucas in the senior cohort had decided to stay at the university after Beryl was denied tenure because "It's not like we just did this for a year to pick up our roots and go somewhere else. We're committed to [this university]." In the same discussion, Trevor acknowledged, "We've uttered the same words you have. We're committed to this place, this community, this university. We have been for quite a long time even when it wasn't a particularly good situation for either of us. We still feel that way." In the junior cohort group, Pauline and Dmitri anticipated leaving if she couldn't get a faculty position on campus. Pauline shared, "[W]e're so happy here, we've set up roots with our kids and my husband loves his position. So, yeah, that will be our struggle. . . ."

Although these couples expressed their commitment to the university, they also described perceptions of failed promises, disrespect, and a betrayal of trust by university administrators and colleagues. Junior cohort couples spoke over and over about recruitment promises for the partner that did not materialize once they came to campus. For example, Anya recalled:

> [T]here were certain arrangements that were suggested were possibilities before we arrived and then when we did arrive they were less than amenable to follow through. . . . that was very frustrating and because I directly work with those people it's also a little bit [groan] continuing to be edgy. . . .

Another junior cohort faculty member observed, "[W]e were given the impression in phone conversations and in person before we came that there was going to be that long term possibility and then once we came it turned out that there was not anymore."

More insidiously, a few couples spoke of their concerns about deliberate constraints or even retaliation by powerholders at the university. In the senior cohort group, Rhoda, a full professor, confided: "I was pursuing other higher avenues and I was told that I would never probably be able to go there because of my husband's personality and that I listen too much to

my husband." Isabella and Rafael told a story of meeting together with their Dean to make it clear that without dual career faculty positions, they would leave. Isabella recalled: "And he essentially was relatively clear that he didn't care about retaining either of us. . . . he suggested that we look elsewhere." And Rafael added: "He was forceful enough with that in both of our cases that that made me feel that maybe he was trying to imply that he was going to try to prevent my contract from being renewed because we had brought this up as an issue."

Across the cohorts, there was a sense that participants viewed themselves as engaged in a zero-sum struggle with the university. As Beryl put it: "And so that's been really frustrating in that we had to fight for what we got and we got it. . . ." Often the particular administrators were not named; instead, a faceless, untrustworthy, and somewhat menacing entity—"the university"—was posed as the antagonist. Anise and Trevor described ongoing negotiations to realize adequate opportunities and salary for Trevor. He spoke for all of the dual career couples as he summed up the moral issues involved in their dual career negotiations:

> It's not just about the money, it's about using it effectively and leveraging what it is that person has come here to do or has and has maybe spent years and years here putting together. And more effectively, take some time to be creative. I don't think anybody in this room came here and said, 'I'm here (hits the table) and I'm here with my significant other. Give me a bunch of money and an office.' None of us want that or expect that, that's unreasonable. Obviously, we've all worked really really hard. Top to bottom. We just, I guess again its back to reciprocation. We'd like to see that reciprocated. . . . We've all spent time putting the pieces together to build what we have, whether it's tenure track or otherwise. Whether it's collaborations and networking at the university and in the region. There's a lot to build on there. It's a shame to waste that.

Trevor's statement expresses the moral stakes and affective intensities of the dual career experiences we tapped in this research. His frustration was palpable: he and Anise were only asking for what they deserved by virtue of the value of what they had accomplished yet the university's self-defeating failure to respond creatively left them with little recourse but to fight for a just response. Beyond rational self-advocacy, many of our participants expressed this sense of injustice over the university's failure to recognize and reward hard-earned merit and this was especially the case for non-faculty partners.

INTERPRETIVE REDUCTIONS

Based on the themes that emerged from our focus group interviews, we propose that dual career is itself an orientation, a way of moving through and engaging with lifeworld contexts of academe, couplehood, parenthood,

professoriate careers, the academic job market, and a variety of social intersectionalities. In this section, we advance our interpretive crystallizations (reductions) of the statements and meanings that articulate this orientation. We begin with a summary description of the dual career orientation that integrates the themes that emerged from the focus group statements. Reisman (1986) explains the goal of this interpretive reduction as the creation of "as unequivocal a statement of the essential structure of the phenomenon as possible" (p. 95). While our poststructuralist commitments forestall a claim to an "unequivocal" and "essential structure," we nonetheless find the summary description a useful construction of the dual career orientation as our participants lived it even as we recognize that any such statement remains partial, contextual, and revisable (Lather, 1991). We offer the following statement without comment as a catalyst to further reflection while reflexively acknowledging its interpretive audacity.

Summary Description

Dual career partners hold ongoing expectations of dual career problem-solving as a negotiation among rational actors conducted through strategic plans and goals; yet they are thwarted by nonrational forces including myriad uncertainties as well as the failure of various university authorities to act in the university's best interests. In addition, they find that dual career problem-solving involves serendipitous forces especially luck and good timing. Dual career partners are locked in an ongoing struggle with various administrators ("the university") to realize career goals and professional value, manage academic and family responsibilities in the face of either inadequate or inaccessible resources and facilities, and adapt to changing demands and needs. They are alone together, separate from other colleagues who are not perceived as engaged in the same struggles, always trying to "figure it out," making compromises, and dealing with the professional, material, and emotional fallout of an accompanying partner's career sacrifices, struggles, and successes. The uncertainties of both the tenure process and a partner's career trajectory make this an intensely emotional experience involving frustration, fear, anxiety, apprehensiveness, doubt, feelings of disrespect, exhaustion, and isolation. Nonetheless, both partners make significant commitments professionally and personally to the university, the community, and their careers in the face of uneven and unreliable collegial, departmental, and institutional reciprocation. Both partners are troubled by this unreliable reciprocity, their unmet expectations, and the often uncreative and sluggish efforts by university authorities to give access to and support for opportunities and resources. Finally, there is a moral dimension to the experience of dual career. While couples expect and feel they have earned respect, recognition, and opportunities, they are confronted, sometimes unrelentingly, sometimes periodically, by unfair, unjust, or dismissive practices and policies.

Final Reduction: Duressed Autonomy

We now follow van Manen's (1990) guidance in a final interpretive reduction that captures the experience of the dual career orientation in one phrase. According to van Manen, "phenomenological themes are not objects or generalizations; metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes" (1988, p. 90). We condense the lived meaningfulness of the dual career experience into a contextualized "knot" of existential significance: duressed autonomy. We come to this phrase through reflections on our thematic reductions and in consideration of the existentials of temporality and relationality (van Manen, 1988, p. 102–105). Thus, we propose that duressed autonomy is a fundamental feature of dual career as an orientation in itself through which partners understand themselves and their career possibilities and trajectories.

Duressed autonomy implicates van Manen's relational existential of communality as well because our transcripts indicate that participants felt a lack of connection with other dual career couples. For some, the focus group was the first time they gave sustained thought to the situation of other dual career couples among their colleagues. Others claimed they were surprised to hear about the struggles of couples they had perceived as doing well. In the course of the focus groups, they recognized each others' challenges, frustrations, expectations, and strategies. This expression of a desire for connection during the focus group discussion was reinforced when participants lingered well after the formal discussion had ended, to connect more deeply with other participants with similar experiences. Yet even as they acknowledged similarities, they seemed to assume that their problems were particular to their own biographies and situations. Thus, a sense of existential aloneness in struggle was evident as each couple engaged their specific challenges. For example, advocating for a dual career partner as a condition of the faculty member's hire or retention decision is undertaken as an autonomous and individual action even though every couple endorsed this strategy. Dual career partners negotiate for themselves, advocate for each other, and struggle alone together to manage their responsibilities, assert their value, and claim opportunities and respect.

Yet given the emotional intensities and moral issues of dual career, we find that dual career autonomy is under duress in a multitude of ways, from the stress of balancing career and family demands to career-damaging isolation and relationship-ending frustrations and unhappinesses (Singh, 2016). In other words, dual career is apprehended in duress. The nature of duress changes over time—the temporal existential—from the angst of hiring and early career and life responsibilities through the dissatisfactions of successful full professors. Thus we have the myriad uncertainties and commitments to

ambition and partnership in early dual career and the corrosive cynicism and long-term disappointments of late dual career. Duressed autonomy highlights the shifting moments of distress, struggle, unfairness, and isolation marking dual career as an orientation that affects the way academe and domesticity are lived. This orientation impacts not only professional research/scholarship and competitive and collegial relations but partnering and parenting as well.

Our findings have implications for current practices in dual career accommodations. One point drawn from our theme of relationality is that accommodations cannot be made for each individual alone without involving the other partner; thus, universities would be well advised to address the couple as a couple. This means not only hiring two people but engaging the couple rather than two separate individuals in subsequent assignments and career turning points. For example, Sam suggested that dual career faculty partners should be considered as a unit when scheduling classes even if they are in different departments. Similarly, career issues encountered by one partner cannot be understood as affecting one individual only but rather the dual career itself. For example, when the first author's husband was denied tenure, no one in the chain of command spoke with her about the implications for her career even though she was coming up for tenure within two years. Even as dual career partners must be adaptable—for example, shifting career ambitions to mesh with whatever opportunities are available—so universities must be more creative and nimble in adapting resources to dual careers. Dual careers might be addressed as coordinated trajectories rather than as individual and autonomous.

In addition, the gendered dynamics of dual career are neither inessential nor inconsequential to this experience: women faculty are more likely to be partnered in a dual career couple than men, and dual career accommodations are often construed as a gender issue because a woman is the accompanying partner or because a woman won't join the faculty unless her partner has a position too. Our focus group discussions lend support to the concern expressed years ago by O'Neil, Mastrandrea Fishman, and Kinsella-Shaw (1987) that dual career has not been sufficiently discussed within the context of gender roles. For example, dual career decisions are still affected by what has been called "career hierarchy," referring to which partner's career takes precedence when resolving career conflicts (Pixley, 2008; Winkler 1998; Williams 2010). It appears that dual career demands for flexibility and personal sacrifice remain gendered, especially in relation to competing work and family demands (Koerber, 2012). In our study, sacrifice was ascribed only to the women in dual career couples although there were several men whose careers were in non-tenure-track positions in contrast to female partners in tenure-track careers. Further, only women described being plateaued in created positions that did not match their career aspirations nor offer any

growth trajectories. And it was a woman who cried as she described her determination to realize her career goals despite resistance from administrators. We hold that gendered power dynamics must be acknowledged as a critical feature of the dual career experience of duressed autonomy.

CONCLUSION

We began this project in order to understand the thematic meaningfulness and what "matters" in the dual career experience. Through a series of interpretive reductions, we moved from expressed themes to underlying meanings and finally to a crystallizing insight into how dual career matters. Our conclusion is that dual career is itself an orientation that matters, affecting the meaningfulness of professional and personal relations and activities alike. Thus, phenomenological analysis has proven valuable to a deeper understanding of the dual career experience.

We conclude that existential vulnerabilities, moral disregard, emotional intensities and material, social, and professional injustices mark the duressed autonomy of the dual career experience for our participants. Obviously there are productive and satisfying aspects of life as a dual career couple as well: resilience, ambition, and shared passion for academic work and family life among them. Our interviews tapped a particular orientation. Yet it is one that should inform dual career policies and programs. Dual career is not an institutional or career "problem"; it is an existential phenomenon that begs not just rational resolution but ethical response.

APPENDIX A

SENIOR COHORT		*JUNIOR COHORT*	
RANK	*#*	*RANK*	*#*
Associate Prof	4	Asst Prof	6
Full Prof	4	Lecturer	2
Prof of Practice	1	Instructor	1
Administrator	2	Rsch Associate	2
Rsch Scientist	1	Staff	1
Academic staff	2	Graduate Student	2
YEARS at University	*#*	*YEARS at University*	*#*
6-10 years	8	1 year	6
11-20 years	4	2 years	6
>20 years	2	3 years	2
RACE/ETHNICITY	*#*	*RACE/ETHNICITY*	*#*
Caucasian	10	Caucasian	9
Asian	1	Asian	4
Hispanic	1	Hispanic/Latino	1
N/A	2		
CHILDREN	*#*	*CHILDREN*	*#*
None	3	None	6
1 child	4	1 child	2
2 children	3	3 children	1
No answer	4	No answer	5

*Participants reported number of children as individuals not as couples. The high rate of no answer may be because some individuals thought their partner's answer would be recorded as theirs also but since the demographic survey was anonymous, we had no way of making that connection.

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