

**THE PRESSURES WORKING MOMS FACE PERFORMING IN THEIR
CAREERS AND THEIR HOMES: CREATING AND FOSTERING
RESILIENCY IN A SOCIAL MEDIA SATURATED SOCIETY**

by

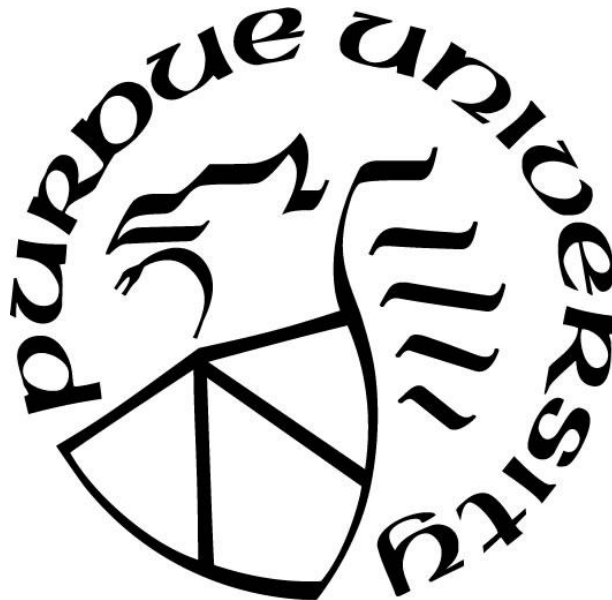
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*Dedicated to my two children, L & B; may you always know that I did this in part for you and
your bright futures.*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how working moms show resiliency in the age of social media; consumed by the pressures to excel in their careers and in raising their families. Fifteen self-identified working moms are interviewed about their reason(s) for working, their purpose behind their social media usage, the challenges and rewards of being a working mom, their definition and their assumption of society's definition of what a working mom is, and how they overcome tough days. The following themes emerge: moms assessing situations, moms adjusting their daily lives, self-scrutiny, money, expectations, the influence on the children, and the gleaning of humor not hate from social media platforms. These themes are supported by participant voices and existing literature to add to research surrounding this important topic. Limitations and future directions are also discussed.

“We expect women to work like they don’t have children and raise children as if they don’t work.” -Author unknown

The year is 2022 and we rarely hear women being referred to as “barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen” (Iannone, 2018). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), more than 57% of women are participating in the workforce. Women add value to the workforce, but their presence in the workforce doesn’t come without its challenges. Working women, who are also mothers, face issues of unequal pay, finding and keeping quality childcare, inflexibility and rigid structures centered around a single person without children, fear of losing their job upon return from having a child, the guilt of missing out from their children’s lives, and constantly wondering if working was the right decision (Bunce, 2018; Cho et al., 2019; Collet, 2011; Ibarra et al., 2010; Martin, 2004; Wieland, 2011).

While working moms have been the center of research only in recent history (Cripe, 2017; Hochchild, 2012; Kirby et al., 2016; Lupikawaty et al., 2017; Odenweller et al., 2020; Ranson, 2012; Turner & Norwood, 2013), there is but little insight into how resiliency is communicated from working moms especially as it pertains to the influences social media has on their lives. The purpose of this thesis is to discover how working moms communicate resilience and how social media influences this pursuit. Unlike the structure of a traditional thesis, we begin with my narrative, followed by a literature review, which ties back to my narrative, followed by methods, findings, and conclusions. This format captures my experience as a working and academic pursuing mom who played a major role during the time spent on the thesis.

MY NARRATIVE

This thesis begins with my story. The blending of my identity as a mom, my work, my pursuit of a master's degree, and my time on social media led to me wanting to examine the impact all of this has on working moms. Bradshaw et al., (2021) inform us how mothers use social media for information, support, and advice from other mothers. However, my narrative demonstrates that when I am on social media, I fall into the comparing trap, questioning my worth, my abilities, and my guilt level.

The narrative highlights my internal and external thoughts, perceptions, and reactions to photographs seen on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Autoethnography, a form of qualitative research, can be used as a method or methodology in an attempt to discuss personal experiences and insights, and offer an avenue for self-reflection (Chapman-Clarke, 2016; Jones & Adams, 2016; Poerwandar, 2021; Simpson & Archer, 2017). Autoethnography was chosen as it provides the readers with an understanding of the researchers' personal experiences when engaging in social media. The images below are some of what the researcher comes across in regards to being a working mom. The images also start a conversation among working moms both on and off social media platforms.



Figure 1. The pressure on parents is out of this world, 2022

My finger hovered above the left key of the mouse below my hand, as I stare at this post. Sharon shared the post to congratulate her daughter on being potty trained before turning three. I stare at it, my mind whirling in different directions, wondering “why am I jealous of this post? Both of my children are potty trained. I should at least be able to type congratulations.” But I can’t.

I can’t.

It isn’t because my children aren’t potty trained. They are; but, the whole process did not come without struggle. The number of nights we rolled out of bed to change sheets because of an accident with two children hasn’t stopped. Despite being five and being able to sleep through the night staying dry, sometimes my daughter has an accident. The youngest, four, still wets the bed every night.

EVERY NIGHT.

While he potty trained relatively easily, once he stopped wearing diapers he went into big boy pants.

“No. No trainers,” he yells as I try to pull them up to his little legs after bath time so there would be another layer of protection.

*Why don't our children stay dry at night? Did we fail them? Is it the TVs in their rooms?
Do we stop drinking long enough before bedtime?*

“So,” I ask June, a new friend whom we invited over to dinner with her partner Tom, “are your children able to stay dry during the night?”. The words still hang there, like the stench of a burnt roast, when the regret sets in. I suddenly become aware of my facial muscles, working them internally to not show jealousy, sadness, or even anxiety as I wait for June to answer the question. I fear hearing the exact opposite of my experience.

My children were potty trained by 18 months with no overnight accidents.

Lindsay, my advisor once shared, that my children still have accidents and my youngest is five.

I continue to stare at Sharon's post. Then scroll down some more when a video from another friend features her six-and-a-half-year-old reading.

I can't watch this. What if B isn't reading at six and a half...will I be a bad mother? When should she be reading by herself? Tomorrow, we will start with reviewing our letters and then moving to sight words and by the end of next week, she will be reading chapter books...Forget that, she will win the noble prize in literature at age ten.

I log off, realizing I am getting nowhere with feeling better about myself as a mom as I continue to scroll.

After My Kids Go To Bed I Just Sit For An Hour And Recover From
The Trauma 🤔👤

Figure 2. Through Emma's eyes, 2022

The instructor strolls into class, ready to begin the evening, starting with the weekly question: what is one thing you enjoy doing by yourself in your free time?

Do I get any free time? I can't help but ponder as I listen to my classmates give their answers. *Wait, I don't get much time alone now that I have children. My alone time consists of driving to and from work and listening to whatever I want, without the cries of mom from the backseat.*

I pull into the driveway, turn off the engine, unbuckle the children, and we enter the house, each of us dropping our bags by the kitchen table. The smell of dinner fills our nostrils as it sits waiting in the crockpot.

"Okay, after dinner, we need to do a packet of homework," I say to L. In the back of my mind, I wonder *"really? Homework at five? For preschool? What is homework going to look like when she enters kindergarten in a public school next year?"*

Unlike some of my colleagues, my day doesn't end when I walk into the house. Instead, I begin with what Hochschild (2015) describes as the concept of mothering being similar to a second shift job. I am no longer advising students and attending meetings, but I am getting dinner on the table, cleaning up after dinner, helping with homework, doing my homework, bath time, and bedtime before I take a minute for myself.

Am I doing the right thing...being a working mom? Did I do anything that would make tomorrow's self proud? Did I laugh enough? Smile? Encourage my children? Say I love you? Yell? Did I lose my temper and not apologize?

Do I give myself time to decompress from the day's events...the trauma as the social media post refers to?

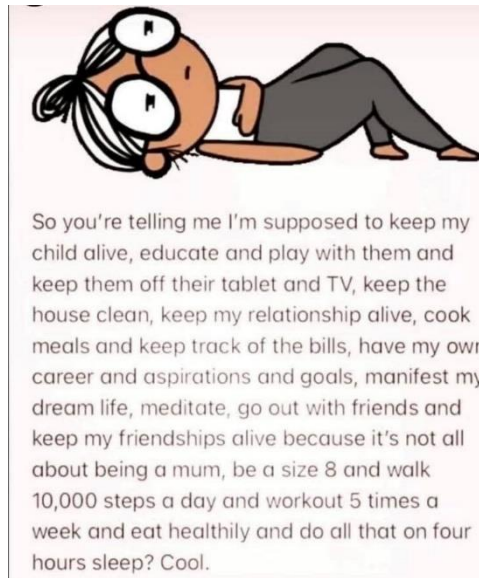


Figure 3. As a parent, we are expected to do so much more, 2021

Before leaving the house, I make sure the crockpot is plugged in, coats are on and zipped, shoes match, each child has used the potty, and I have what I need for work. We climb into the minivan and off we go.

Nine hours later we return home.

Some nights when we arrive home, I rush to change L into her dance outfit and we are back out the door lickity split. I say hello to the other moms as L rushes to join her classmates. I sit with the other mothers, making the polite head bob since smiles are masked. *I loathe dance class on Mondays, I start typing on social media. Mondays are the worst day of the week as I just want to get home, kick off my shoes, change in my evening clothes, loaf on the couch, and parent from afar until bedtime. But I did encourage her to take dance.*

I look up from my phone and shake my head to delete the negative thoughts. I look at L and she smiles and I feel guilty for even having the thoughts. I put down my phone and shift my

attention to watching the class, instead of longing for the comfiness of my couch and distracting myself with social media. *I need to practice being present.*

“Tonight’s dinner will be like opening a basket on Chopped,” I say as I enter the pantry looking at what is left on the shelf as I wait to find time to hit the store. *Vegetable broth, pancake mix, spiral noodles...* I wonder what I could do if I had those ingredients; but instead, the pantry is filled with crackers, fruit snacks, canned veggies, and tortilla chips. *Guess it is a fruit snack, cracker, and cheese night.*



Figure 4. When the kids are destroying the house, 2021

Providing my kids with 12 different activities, hoping they will leave me alone for 5 minutes



Figure 5. Providing my kids with 12 different activities, 2022

I HATE playing with my children.

But hear me out.

I can't stand pretending to play monster truck jam for more than about three minutes. The banging of the truck into the truck and then over again and over again.

I can't stand pretending we're chefs in my daughter's restaurant, asking for everyone else in the room's order for more than about two minutes.

"And what would you like for lunch?" she asks me for the fifth time. "A plate of spaghetti and meatballs."

Daily it is "mommy, play with me". *Meh. Ugh. No. Go play by yourself*, I want to yell but instead keep that thought to myself. Then I notice L staring at me and I realized it came out of my mouth and she heard it. There is a difference between playing by one's self and playing independently. B is so much better at independent play.

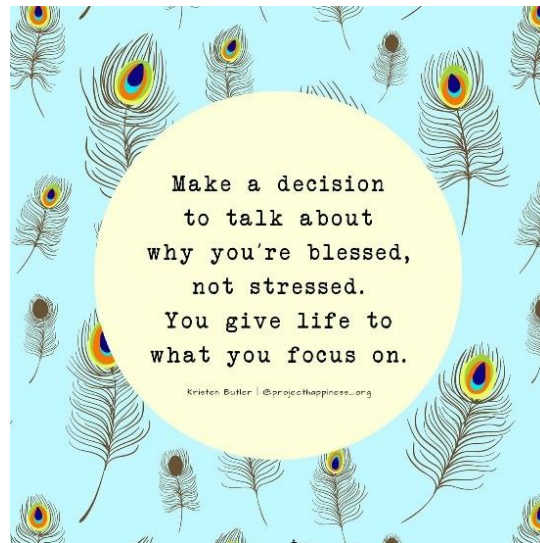


Figure 6. Project happiness, 2022

I try to write positive things on my social media threads...most of the time. The positiveness is even more necessary when I want to post about my children. I'm "sharenting" (Verswijvel et al., 2019) since they haven't given me consent to write about them, place pictures of them in my feeds, or understand what posting on social media means at their young ages.

I never want L & B to be viewed in the eyes of my social media peers/friends as "bad children" because I don't believe any child is bad.

I struggle with even posting about their struggles or my struggles as their mother. I know I am approaching this point when I find myself "doom scrolling" looking for posts by my friends and network about the challenges they are dealing with that day or week. I just want to be able to scream "ME TOO."

One mom friend of mine was brave enough to do so and wrote:

"To the elderly lady in the Sam's Club parking lot this morning: I don't know if I should thank you for trying to help when my six-year-old was throwing an epic tantrum and I was half carrying him kicking and screaming to the van. He's 44lbs and I hadn't stretched or warmed up for that kind of cardio workout. What I should tell you is that instead of yelling at him, saying "You're being ridiculous, listen to your mother", I would have appreciated some help. Push my cart with my screaming three-year-old. Help me carry my son. Or just come up and ask if I need help. Or pat me on the back and tell me I'm doing a good job (on second thought, don't do that, I don't like to be touched).

Sincerely,

An exhausted mother who's just trying to do her best for her son that has challenges."

This post touches my soul. How many times have I found myself in a similar situation? Seen other moms in this situation?

What this mom posted was real and raw and beautiful. *Now how can I begin to do that, without fear of wondering what others will think?*

**AND THEN ONE DAY
WE DECIDED WE WERE
TIRED OF SLEEPING IN
& DOING WHATEVER
WE WANTED IN A CLEAN
HOUSE, SO WE HAD KIDS.**

Figure 7. And then one day, 2021

That snow day you got to enjoy in your pajamas watching adult-only content on your streaming devices while eating popcorn and sipping on your favorite wine?

My snow day was spent cleaning up rice from the magical sensory bins that weren't supposed to escape, running to the bathroom when my son hollers to me to wipe his butt after doing his business, and doing everything in my power to get them to at least settle down so we can attempt some quiet time/nap time.

Then there's the attempt to play outside, where it turns out that it takes more time to dress them than the time they choose to stay outside.

I wish I had days again where I could Netflix and chill without feeling some sort of guilt.

I LOVE my children and I don't regret having them when we did, but I miss the days when we didn't have them.

Even typing, much less thinking this, makes me feel like some sort of bad mom.

My dentist commented on how well
my children behaved. I told her I was
lucky, and her response without
missing a beat was, "Don't discredit
yourself. It's not always luck. It's you.
Good job, Mom."



Figure 8. My dentist commented on how well my children behaved, 2022

I received this comment a few times but one time, in particular, meant a lot to me.

Judy is a friend whom I admire and adore. When she commented, Judy and her husband didn't have children; but they came over one night to play cards with us.

"Gin," my husband said as we laughed when I had to remind him that wasn't the game we were playing. The children came in and said good night, asking to be tucked in. When I returned to the card table, Judy leaned over and said "your children are well-behaved."

I immediately replied, *"It's been a good day here and they aren't always this well-behaved."* What I should have done was taken in the comment and simply replied with a *"thank you!"*.

Our faith is very important to us and we are striving to raise children who also have faith. When L's dance teacher told me after class one night that she prayed for her class, comprised of 13 preschool dancers (many of whom she only knows through dance), out loud, my mama's heart began to swell, much like the Grinch's, as it swelled three times more with love.

When L writes on her preschool papers that she loves daddy, mommy, her brother, and God, my soul rejoices.

And when L tells me in the car that when she goes to sleep tonight, she plans to pray to God... I know we're doing something right.

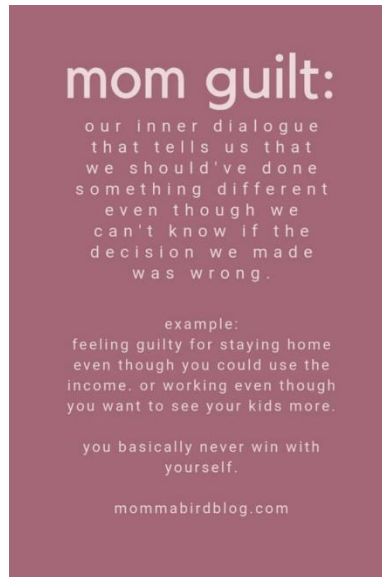


Figure 9. Havens, n.d.

This image resonates deep in my soul. No one and I mean NO ONE, tells you about mom guilt before, during, or after you have a child. This is something I struggle with all the time. This is something I told my mental health counselor I'd like to work through this coming year.

I know guilt is self-imposed, but why do moms feel it and not dads?

Why are moms willing to post about it and dads aren't?

I feel guilty when I take a day off and still send the children to daycare. I feel guilty when I take a day off, keep the children at home, and allow more screen time than normal. I feel guilty when I don't feed them a nutritional meal every night for dinner. I feel guilty working outside of the home, even though we have to have my income to live the life we want. I feel guilty when my husband and I go on a date and don't take the children. I feel guilty saying "no" to my daughter

when she begs to come to the store with me, but I don't want to deal with the extra hassle of her coming along. I feel guilty when her toys cost more than his.

The worst part of this mom's guilt?

No matter the answer, choice, decision, etc., guilt remains. I wish we'd talk about it more as moms and parents and support each other. Besides, do I honestly think when my children are grown, they will care about even half of this stuff, that keeps me up at night? I think not.



Figure 10. Working moms in the time of COVID, 2021

Working during the pandemic was one of the least proud moments of my career both as an employee and as a mom. *If my employer doesn't deem going into the office safe for us, why would I send my children to daycare, a literal and metaphorical cesspool for germs?!* This meant working from home, while either my mom or my mother-in-love watched the children. My office setup was a black folding card table and a folding metal chair in our master bedroom. *I hate this setup. We don't have the space in our home for a home office and I never wanted that.* Work should be done at work; and when I'm home, I want to be present and not working. *Mom, are you working again?* my daughter would ask for the millionth time regularly. This was heartbreaking to hear. I worked 40 hours a week and attended graduate school part-time. When I wasn't working for my job, I was

attending class virtually and doing my work on the same laptop I used for my job. *She doesn't know the difference. This is only a season; it won't last long.* It lasted longer than I ever wanted. I yelled more than I ever anticipated and my children joined more student appointments and staff meetings than any amount of hands and feet could count. *I get NO alone time; I miss my commute* I vent to my partner, who never stopped going to work. *You get alone time from the moment you walk out the door in the morning until you come home at night. I walk out of my bedroom at five and instantly, I mean INSTANTLY I am a mom. I get no alone time, plus I hear the children all day long, whining, not listening, and being disobedient.* Then go do something for yourself, my partner refutes, also going on about how he's tired after working all day. *What's there to do? You're not supposed to go anywhere- it's not like I can go get my nails done or go out to eat with a girlfriend. And you can only drive around endlessly for so long* I continue loudly, with no end in sight on my rant. I was DONE with working from home full-time and so happy to go back. It reinforced for me two things: being a stay-at-home mom still isn't for me and working from home full-time isn't all it's cracked up to be.

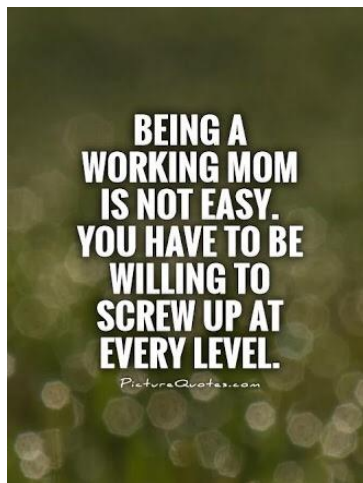


Figure 11. Being a working mom is not easy, 2015

I am dog tired when I leave work sometimes. *It might be because I stay up way too late watching shows and cherishing what little alone time I have* I think as I try to humble myself. This is where I fantasize about my coworkers, who get to go home after a long day at the office and just throw themselves on their couches, similarly to what my children do when they're having their 2574 tantrum of the day.

I didn't meal plan for the week. *Way to go mom* I say to myself, feeling defeated and criticizing myself for not having it all together. *Do you want rice or mac and cheese* I ask my children for the 4th time this week? *I don't even care anymore about serving a well-balanced meal like my mom always did. We live in different times and fed is best* I think as I try to make myself feel better and reason with my inner critic.

I won't be in today, I have a puking child and it's been going on since 2 A.M. I can't keep my eyes open I text my boss as soon as it becomes a reasonable hour to send such a note. I cancel ten student appointments. *What does my team think of me? This is the second time this week I have had to call in because of puking children.*

Whenever possible, choose to stay home with your sick child overthinking your job is more important I share this with a brand-new mom, about to head back to work for the first time after postpartum. *Practice what you preach, sister* I tell myself. *I am replaceable at my job; I am not at home.*

I will never regret being with a sick child, I may regret not staying home with a sick child, especially when I am whom they want when they are sick.



Figure 12. If you think being a mom is hard, 2022

Being a mom is a full-time job. The laundry, for example, never stops.

It. Never. Stops.

Also, the children never stop eating. And I mean NEVER! A meal just finishes and I think the children ate well. *Mom, can I have a snack? Are you kidding me?* I think to myself, *you just ate!*

I never think about the monetary value of being a mother, but I *feel* it when I come home exhausted. I can only keep up on things for a certain time. I clean the house top to bottom and try for approximately three days to keep it clean and then I get lazy. *I'm not a lazy person though* I again reason with myself. *I am a tired working mom just doing my best* I continue. I come to work sometimes in a fog, but I give it my all, every day.

For my children and their future. I bring value to my work because I am a mom and I bring value to my home and children because I work. I have found a purpose in working.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life balance and/or blending continue to be the focus of research after more than two decades of investigation (Wieland, 2011). More specifically, working mothers and their unique circumstances are an area of interest for many researchers as women continue to enter the workplace at increasing rates (D'Enbeau, Villamil, & Helens-Hart, 2015; Favero & Heath, 2012; Johnston & Swanson, 2003). A woman typically either works solely in the home, raising their children and completing many of the household tasks or works outside the home and is likely physically, mentally, and emotionally unable to provide the same level of role responsibilities in the home (Denker, 2013; Kandel et al., 1985; Kirby et al., 2016).

To set the groundwork for this study, the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) is introduced and explained. Next, various areas of research that contribute to work-life balance and social media use by working moms are discussed. Specifically, this area examines social media and motherhood, mom guilt, childcare, moms vs. dads, careers and promotions, pressures, and mental health. But first, we start by providing a review of CTR.

Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR)

Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR), coined more than 10 years ago, is a versatile theory used to explain how human beings learn to understand and navigate the overcoming of struggles (Buzzanell, 2010). The process of overcoming struggles in life is defined by Buzzanell (2010) in five stages: “(a) crafting normalcy, (b) affirming identity anchors, (c) maintaining and using communication networks, (d) putting alternative logics to work, and (e) downplaying negative feelings while foregrounding positive emotions, such as hopefulness and self-efficacy” (p. 1). The first step, normalcy, (Buzzanell, 2010) is defined as being able to

identify the source of struggle and work to find a way to deal with what happens. This is demonstrated in my narrative when I recall being a working mom during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second step is affirming identity anchors such as by communicating the identities associated with the coping with the source of struggle along with the resiliency of pushing through the source of struggle (Buzzanell, 2010). This can be seen in my narrative as I find community with other working moms going through similar struggles as posted on their social media threads. The third step, maintaining and using communication networks, is the mutual support of oneself and others through networks, communication interactions, and relationships (Buzzanell, 2010). This is demonstrated throughout my narrative as I use social media to find support for myself and my family. The fourth step is putting alternative logic to work; this step is defined as learning to get creative in the organization of sources of struggle (Buzzanell, 2010; Venetis et al., 2020). This is illustrated when I declare in my narrative that I will never regret staying home with a sick child. The fifth and final step is foregrounding productive action, which is acknowledging all emotions associated with the source of struggle and working towards established goals using that emotion to accomplish them (Buzzanell, 2010). This is illustrated in my narrative when I discuss mom guilt and how it fuels me to keep going, even on rough days.

CTR is interpretive in nature and is considered a broad theory, which means it is used in multiple areas of communication such as military research (Villagran et al., 2013), employment and employment loss (Buzzanell & Turner, 2003), healthcare-related matters such as cancer patients (Manne et al., 2010), and in traumatic events in history, including but not limited to, the events surrounding World War II (Coutu, 2002). Communication scholars investigate resilience in a multitude of contexts, including individual, familial/relational,

communal, and organizational (Afifi, 2018; Buzzanell, 2018; Buzzanell & Turner, 2003; Tian & Bush, 2020). This study on working moms touches upon each of these areas: the individual as the woman becomes a mom, familial/relational in how this identity change and lifestyle affects family dynamics and relationships, and communal and organizationally in how an identity shift can also shift priorities, values, mindsets, and the like.

Scholars used CTR to study a vast number of phenomena. Buzzanell and Turner (2003) explained job loss, particularly as it pertains to (re)instituting traditional masculinity. They discovered that those who lost their jobs either brought their emotions to the foreground or suppressed them to the background, attempting to create normalcy of both losing their job and what their new jobless world would be like, and the (re)institution of traditional masculinity, which can be linked to putting alternative logics to work (Buzzanell, 2010; Venetis et al., 2020). This theory has been used during a military deployment (Villagran et al., 2013), as military personnel crafted a new normal as a way to “reconcile “contradictory realities” of separation and reconciliation with their partners” (Villagran et al., 2013, p. 782). Military families learned of the growth of their social media networks, by adding their military families to that network while maintaining their other, existing social networks (LeBlanc & Olson, 2015; Villagran et al., 2013).

Finally, researchers identified how alternative logic can be put to work, especially when a military spouse comes to realize that their military family member is in constant physical danger (Villagran et al., 2013). Venetis et al (2020) examined predictors and outcomes of the five resilience processes: (a) crafting normalcy, (b) affirming identity anchors, (c) maintaining and using communication networks, (d) putting alternative logics to work, and (e) foregrounding productive action by observing “pathways between communication efficacy and

relational quality to dyadic communicative resilience processes and from these processes to outcomes of health management and evaluations of dyadic coping” (p. 49).

Next, researchers dabbled with CTR when studying social media. Social media provides an additional avenue for which users can find ways to communicate and enact resiliency (Cohen & Richards, 2015; Venetis et al., 2020). Cohen and Richards (2015) posit that resiliency and coping mechanisms are self-organized. As the authors allude to, there isn’t a great deal of research in the area of self-organized coping mechanisms and resiliency (Cohen & Richards, 2015). Studying working moms will allow for further research in this arena to be conducted. Given the versatility of the theory, CTR seems appropriate to examine working mothers.

Eddington (2020) points out that resilience proves to be optimistic in nature. That said, resilience involves making sense of one’s lived experiences, both positive and negative (Eddington, 2020). Resilience spawns from disruptions in one’s day-to-day interactions and communicational abilities (Coutu, 2002; Eddington, 2020). Furthermore, resiliency “manifest[s] using identification frames (e.g. familial, ideological, and destruction-renewal)” (Eddington, 2020, p. 116). Researchers must ask themselves and others if resilience is a trait or learned behavior.

CTR posits that resilience is not simply a communicator trait; it’s an outcome of conversational discourse (Venetis et al., 2020). A positive ability to be resilient leads to a higher quality of relationships and communication efficacy (Manne et al., 2010; Venetis et al., 2020). This has been seen in past research with cancer patients, as the level of intimacy in their relationships played a part in their ability to embody resiliency (Manne et al., 2010). When relationships were healthy and communicative, resiliency was greater. Resiliency simply cannot be discussed in the context of CTR without acknowledging the stressor(s), which ultimately

begins the process of obtaining resiliency (Buzzanell, 2010/2018; Venetis et al., 2020). Now that we know a little more about what the research argues about resiliency and how CTR has been used in different contexts, the next section examines resiliency as a process, will go more in-depth about stressors, and the regaining a sense of normalcy.

CTR as a Process

CTR defines resilience as a communicative process where individuals and organizations incorporate and encourage productive change after difficult life experiences and situations (Buzzanell, 2010). Stressors can, however, alter perceptions of self and sense of one's self (Buzzanell, 2010; Venetis et al., 2020). The process towards resiliency and the steps to achieve resiliency mean a period in which one regains their sense of self, or so it is hoped. Similar to cancer patients and survivors resuming daily routines post-cancer diagnosis/surgery, new working moms can regain a sense of normalcy is returning to work (Venetis et al., 2020).

Despite the focus on self, Afifi (2018) argues that the concept of resilience as described in this theory remains hard to fully comprehend. Scharp et al. (2020) agree, arguing resiliency is a personality trait, noting the importance of “focusing on ongoing communicative processes of adaptation and transformation, reactivity and proactivity, stability and change, disruption and reintegration, destabilization and restabilization” (p. 209). Buzzanell (2010/2018) refutes such claims by positing the importance of resiliency involving both the individual and the process by which the individual comes to communicate resiliency.

CTR is useful in “affirming and anchoring identities” (Eddington, 2020, p. 116). This has been helpful for spouses of military personnel in learning to lean into their new identities as their spouses go off to war (Villagran et al., 2013). Though great research has been conducted in the area of resilience, there is still a lack of such in analyzing the resiliency demonstrated

and communicated amongst spouses of military personnel (Villagran et al., 2013). Resilience is a relational process; a construction and co-construction of new stories as life changes and evolves (Buzzanell, 2010; Scharp et al., 2020; Tian & Bush, 2020; Villagran et al., 2013). This process also recognizes the tension between hope for the future and the reality of the situation today (Buzzanell, 2010; Scharp et al., 2020). If anyone can attest to this tension, it would be milspouses and cancer patients and their supporters/caregivers (Manne et al., 2010; Villagran et al., 2013).

CTR doesn't claim that though resiliency is present, struggles don't exist. CTR is all about learning to lean into what's happening now with the knowledge that the future can still be filled with hope. As mentioned above, cancer patients, though facing bad news at times, can learn to be resilient. Milspouses and their military partners, though facing death at any winding turn, can learn to be resilient. In like manner, CTR provides the foundation that working moms, though facing conflicting obligations between their career and their motherhood, can learn to be resilient and communicate their process to others.

Though it is clear that CTR has been studied regarding parenting and alienation, there is a gap in understanding about how working moms specifically work to achieve resiliency and the process in which it happens through platforms such as social media.

Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) and Working Moms

Resilience and communication don't happen overnight. Resilience is a journey, not a destination. Motherhood, in like fashion, is a journey, not a destination. From my narrative, it is clear that resiliency in my being a working mom has been a journey that isn't over yet. Every day is different and some days are better than others as it pertains to showing and communicating resiliency. CTR examines the process of individuals overcoming struggles.

What CTR lacks is its application to social media usage/communication about working moms. New mothers go through a process of overcoming their hormonal changes, the introduction of life, and the impact the new arrival has on themselves and their relationships (Cronin-Fischer & Parcell, 2020; Scharp & Thomas, 2017). Hence CTR would outline the process mothers undergo to keep going forward. Given this, the first research question presents itself:

RQ 1: How do working mothers use communication to create/foster resiliency?

Social Media and Motherhood

Social media is well established and there are many platforms available to its seemingly addicted users. Some common platforms include Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Pinterest, and Snapchat. Working moms come to know and utilize social media for a variety of reasons. For some working moms, social media is an escape from the pressures of the office and home (Archer & Kao, 2018; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Reer et al., 2019). More than what working moms would like to admit is the fact that what is seen on social media about other working moms can and does cause them to question their parenting choices, question career choices, or even question if they are doing anything in life well (Chae, 2018). This was demonstrated through the sharing of certain memes, social media posts, and self-scrutiny in my narrative.

Social media is portrayed as a source of validation for some but has also been a source of competition, comparison, and overall harm for a mom needing rest, support, or reassurance (Abetz & Moore, 2018; Archer & Kao, 2018; Odenweller et al., 2020). Archer and Kao (2018) found that some moms' motivations for using social media "ranged from social support and connection to family and friends, 'zoning out' and not 'missing out'" (p. 133). When moms use social media, they are participating in "selective self-presentation" (Collett, 2011, p. 329). This is where moms

choose to portray their lives in the way they see fit and in a way that makes them appear as they want to be seen, not necessarily for how they are, outside of social media.

What can be hard to decipher for exhausted and tired working moms is the extent other working moms' post is transparent versus the extent it is selective and perfected content for sharing, as several studies have found (Chae, 2016, 2018; Jang et al., 2016; Lee, 2014; Reer et al., 2019). Comparison can be the thief of joy. It can be difficult for working moms to only see the best and most presentable selves portrayed on social media outlets such as Facebook and Instagram; knowing this can often be so far from the reality and truth of such private lives. Working moms feel pressure and guilt that they must look and act the part of a working mom, whose life is well put together, dinner is on the table each night, and crafts are ready for after school (Collet, 2011).

There is a lack of research overall on how working moms navigate the conflicting messages on social media. This begs a question about resiliency and how moms persevere despite the conflicting messages on social media. Some women make sense of their working mom's life through this outlet, yet working moms still aren't openly talking about it. This needs to be unpacked and normalized. This ever-evolving topic is deserving of study as it can and often does have a significant impact on working moms' confidence, self-esteem, and even mental health (Kaufmann et al., 2017). Given this, the next two research questions present themselves as follows:

RQ 2: How does working moms' use of social media communicate a source of struggle?

RQ 3: What steps do working moms take to overcome their use of social media/social comparison?

Mom Guilt

Research (Martin, 2004; Wieland, 2011) reveals that moms experience guilt if they choose to stay home and raise their children or if they choose to work outside of the home, while also raising their children. Guilt is part of everyday life but there is something unique about the guilt associated with motherhood. Questions arise such as: “Did I make the right decision to stay home or to work?” “Did I sacrifice my career to raise my family?” “Is that selfish of me?” “Am I a bad mom if I want a career and chose to pursue that career?” “Did I have my children too early in my life or too late?” “Am I too old to have children?” (Budds et al., 2013; Gossett et al., 2013). Guilt will arise regardless of the choices made and it can be difficult not to let guilt consume a mom who already has enough to think and care about.

Most careers have a moderate to elevated level of stress associated with it. Denker (2009) notes moms working in academia attempt to “perform both the role of perfect academic and perfect partner/parent/child” (p. 108). This pressure can cause mom guilt when the demands of the workforce swallow up the role of motherhood, making it appear as if her career is somehow more important than family. Spradley et al., (2020) took this one step further and examined found guilt present in academic mothers during COVID-19 while many of them were working from home. Unlike most other conflicting roles, there are more negative and immediate repercussions for not performing well in the workforce while the lasting effects of not performing in motherhood will take some time to present themselves, especially if ones’ child(ren) are younger in age. These can be a result of the social construction of what is expected in the workplace (May & Mumby, 2005).

For purposes of this research, working moms are defined as a woman, who have one or more of their parents alive, and have friends and a life outside of being a working mom. This means there is guilt associated with self-care, taking care of a parent, or choosing to stay late after work to get drinks with coworkers. There is guilt associated with not spending time with the

children or not spending enough quality time with them. And the question of whether or not the load is carried fairly (meaning the partner gets to spend time with their friends, and coworkers too) is also needing thought (Hochchild, 2012). This can result in role conflict, as Cho, et al. (2019), describes when a person is given several tasks, which often directly contradict one another.

Childcare

Childcare can be another cause of mom guilt (Haney, 2020). Once a woman finds out she is pregnant, she should almost immediately consider childcare and begin to weigh various options. Because the infant room at most childcare facilities has the lowest ratio of teacher to student as infants require the most time and assistance in their everyday lives, spots can be incredibly scarce to come by (Albanese & Farr, 2012). Waiting lists can be several children deep and can remain at a standstill for a great length of time (Albanese & Farr, 2012).

When a childcare facility is chosen, closures and required temporary departures from the facility can occur for several reasons and with little to no warning: a child is exposed to or tests positive for COVID-19 (Yong, 2020), a child contracts Hand, Foot, and Mouth, a child cannot keep their fever down within 24 hours without the assistance of medication, or there is a kitchen remodel and there are no microwaves to warm the children's lunches available (Albanese & Farr, 2012). If an in-home childcare opportunity is chosen, there may be days when the owner has a personal appointment and needs the day off. Where will a child go then? If a family member is caring for the child, they may become ill themselves or as a result of the ill child. This could also cause a situation in which there is no alternative childcare available which then causes stress (Albanese & Farr, 2012; Haney, 2020; Kimball, 2016; Lupikawaty et al., 2017; Yong, 2020).

When childcare is unavailable for any number of reasons listed above, one of the parents is then needed to stay home and care for the child. Because working moms typically have lower-

paying jobs and their jobs tend to be more flexible in nature, they are the ones who must sacrifice a day in the office to care for their child (Albanese & Farr, 2012). And that's not to say they don't want to care for their child, but it can be incredibly stressful to move around calendars, cancel meetings, send out emails detailing what needs to be covered, etc. (Albanese & Farr, 2012; Haney, 2020; Kimball, 2016; Lupikawaty et al., 2017; Yong, 2020).

It's important to remember the cost of childcare (Albanese & Farr, 2012; Haney, 2020; Lupikawaty et al., 2017). While family providing free childcare can provide relief of financial burden and provide valuable intergenerational interactions and relationships, many working moms end up transitioning to being stay-at-home moms because most of their entire paycheck goes straight to childcare if familial childcare isn't an option (An, 2016; Haney, 2020; Lupikawaty et al., 2017). This can be embarrassing, frustrating, and even sad for a mother to realize that their participation in the workforce was merely paying for their child to be taken care of (An, 2016, 422; Haney, 2020; Medved & Kirby, 2005).

Research shows that family support with childcare can be sources of support and exemplify supportive communication but there are costs (An, 2016; Haney, 2020). This can cause physical exhaustion on the family member acting as the caregiver and tensions can arise between the parents of the child and the caregiver if differences in opinion about parenting choices (An, 2016; Haney, 2020).

Though research posits that mom guilt exists and a multitude of factors can add to the stress of working, such as the decision to work, the stress of the job itself, the roles, responsibilities, and stress of being a spouse, the cost and stress that accompanies childcare, there isn't adequate research that discusses how working moms can exhibit resiliency in this area. Studying how this is an anchor of identity for working moms will shed light on mom guilt.

Careers and Promotion

The labor force in the U.S. has seen a drastic increase in moms working in the past two decades (Buzzanell & Liu, 2005; Denker, 2009). While women make “81 cents to the dollar” in comparison to men, purpose can be found in having a career (Bunce, 2018, p. 22). It is not easy though to have a career while being a mother. Employers expect that while at work, work is the number one priority. While that would like to be the focus for working moms, that is certainly not the reality all of the time. Racing thoughts can often consume a working mom regarding their child’s welfare, their ability to learn, and the latest memory stored for the day of them crying as the mom left them in the hands of strangers at a childcare facility to head to the office. Attempts for flexible work arrangements have come about, partially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though some flexible work arrangements have been made in recent years, there is a general lack of consistency and equity among companies, departments, and employees, particularly among those who don’t have children, can’t have children, or don’t wish to have children (Golden, 2013; Hayden, 2010; Tracy, 2008). It’s important to mention uncomfortable work environments or feelings of hostility when seemingly unfair treatment is provided to some employees with children and not others of those without children (Zhang & Yao, 2019). This translates to promotions, raises, and betterment opportunities at places of employment.

When it comes to the opportunity for promotion, many companies have reservations about a working mom’s ability to take on more responsibility and a have a greater need for priority for their position and their place of employment (Geiler & Renneboog, 2015; Sabharwal, 2015). Sabharwal (2015) discusses the glass ceiling metaphor, a pinnacle of a working mom’s career, a concept inevitably on their minds already, but causing stress and feeling the pressure. Therefore, the working moms who are up for promotions feel the need to make their careers their top priority, leading to incredible internal pressure (D’Enbeau et al., 2015; Denker, 2013; Johnston, & Swanson,

2003; Kandel et al., 1985; Kirby et al., 2016; Turner, & Norwood, 2013). This runs into the research positing a difference between “work” and “meaningful work” (Zorn & Townsley, 2008).

Hewlett (2007) acknowledges and challenges companies and industries alike to consider how they can keep working moms on the road to happy and gainful employment knowing the future will likely lack talent, which can even be seen in today’s global economy.

It is evident through current research that though great strides have been made in career and promotional opportunities for working moms, it is unclear how these women face and overcome the struggles they continue to face today. Learning about their resiliency efforts and ways working moms seek to learn how to overcome barriers and obstacles (like through social media support) will aid in the understanding of resiliency in this area.

Pressures

“Doing personal life sometimes falls into direct conflict with what is considered the work of any employee” (Denker, 2009, 108). One of the biggest pressures moms face is returning to work after the birth of a baby. Unfortunately, the U.S. has one of the shortest and arguably worst maternity leave structures of any other civilized country (Booth et al., 2018; Dixon & Dougherty, 2014; Meina & Buzzanell, 2004). Most women, whether it be for financial reasons or otherwise, return to work well before they are physically, mentally, and emotionally ready. Women aren’t taking their full allotted amount of time off (Meina & Buzzanell, 2004). Some feel pressure to return for fear of losing their position within a company, while others feel the pressure to resume work despite having just had a major life change (Booth et al., 2018; Buzzanell & Liu, 2005; Meina Liu, & Buzzanell, 2004).

Working moms face the pressures of situations, issues that arise, and stressors that occur in everyday life that directly contradict workplace expectations (Bridges, 2018; Dixon &

Dougherty, 2014; Dow, 2008). A child is sick and that important meeting has to be missed. The pressure to still show for that meeting can be incredible and overwhelming. With that can come the temptation to send a sick child to daycare or the sitters, knowing they are unwell and likely want the loving care and compassion they know only their mom can provide. Because the workforce has been gendered and mainly domineered by masculine views, it's important for women to change that status quo and prove to the workforce that they believe, have things to add, and is therefore pressured in addition to being a mom to also be at peak performance (D'Enbeau, Villamil, & Helens-Hart, 2015; Dow, 2008). Women have largely entered workforce places where the combination of work and motherhood is not supported, encouraged, or even tolerated (Dow, 2008).

Mental Health

Mental health must be in the conversation when social media platforms are being utilized by working moms. Social media usage has been linked to decreasing mental health among moms (Jang & Dworkin, 2014; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Reer et al., 2019). While postpartum depression, anxiety, feelings of loneliness, and hopelessness can happen to anyone, Kaufmann et al. (2017) and Scharp and Thomas (2017) found that income levels are a factor in increased negative mental health, increased use of Facebook as an unhealthy coping skill, and can be at a much higher risk for postpartum depression. This is concerning as most women continue to be paid far less than their male counterparts for the same work (Bunce, 2018; Ibarra et al., 2010). The fact that working moms aren't paid appropriately for the work they do in comparison to their male counterparts, can cause mental health concerns (Geiler & Renneboog, 2015). Working moms are thinking about having a purpose, modeling the way for their children, and trying to prove they too can bring in income for the household. Having to think about and worry about what is expected of

them, the pressures they face at work, feeling guilty for using childcare to work, trying to find validation on social media platforms to ultimately be let down and feel less than a fit mom, can seriously weigh heavy on the hearts and minds of these women (An, & Chou, 2016; Cripe, 2017; Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Gray, 2013; Guan & So, 2016; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010; Jang, & Dworkin, 2014; Kirby, 2006; Kirby & Krone, 2002; Liechty et al., 2018; Lin, 2016; Maxwell & McDougall, 2004; Tang et al., 2016). There are no awards for taking on motherhood and a career, unfortunately.

Given the existing research regarding social media and motherhood, mom guilt, childcare concerns and burdens, expectations of moms versus dads, careers, and opportunities for promotion, pressures moms face, and the toll all of these other factors can have on a mom's mental health, there is a need to examine a working mom's ability to persevere through it all. This led to the following research question:

RQ 4: How do working moms persevere and exhibit resiliency despite the conflicting messages on social media, guilt, and pressures of motherhood?

Summary

Despite the literature existing surrounding mothering communication, the process of communicating resiliency is missing. Hence, this seeks to address four research questions:

RQ 1: How do working mothers use communication to create/foster resiliency? We thus posit

RQ 2: How does working moms' use of social media communicate a source of struggle? We thus

want to uncover *RQ 3:* What steps do working moms take to overcome their use of social media/social comparison? Finally, we ask *RQ 4:* How do working moms persevere and exhibit resiliency despite the conflicting messages on social media, guilt, and the enormous pressures of

motherhood? To discover the answers to these research questions, we implore semi-structured interviews with fifteen working moms.

METHOD

To explore how working moms persevere despite the conflicting messages on social media, guilt, and the enormous pressures of motherhood, a semi-structured interview seemed most appropriate. This research was conducted in late 2021 and into 2022. As of that time, the global pandemic of COVID-19 was still occurring. Though vaccines and boosters are now being offered and taken by many, precautions are still in place. Following the protocols of my university, interviews were conducted through virtual means. Participants needed to meet the following criterion: be a mother (biological or otherwise), be working, and regularly use social media (defined as engaging on a platform at least one time per day).

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a call outpost on the researchers' main social media outlets: Facebook and Instagram. The share button was enabled on Facebook, allowing friends of the researcher to share the call outpost on their wall, which could mean sharing exponentially. Snowball sampling was used. The callout post, which can be found in Appendix A.1, explained the criterion for participants, which included being a mother (biological or otherwise), working, and regularly using social media (defined as engaging on a platform at least one time per day). The callout post also served as an information piece, letting potential participants know the interview would be conducted virtually through Zoom. Interviews were estimated to last anywhere between 45-and 60 minutes. Interested participants were asked to email the researcher, noting their interest in the study. Once received, participants were emailed a copy of the consent form (Appendix B.1) to read. Participants were then instructed to fill out and return the research participant demographic questionnaire (Appendix C.1). Both the consent form and the research participant demographic

questionnaire align with the IRB protocol and approval obtained. Once the research participant demographic questionnaire was returned, the researcher worked with the participant to schedule a time to conduct the interview. Each participant would go on to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher, during which an interview protocol guide was used (Appendix D.1). When necessary, open-ended and/or clarifying questions were asked to clarify questions/responses or to allow the participant to expand upon their response.

Each interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed automatically, both through the Zoom platform. After the interview, each participant was thanked for their time and participation in the study and allowed to participate in member checking once early results became available. Lastly, they were reminded of their rights as a research participant.

Participants

Fifteen self-identified working moms were interviewed. Their ages ranged from the 18-26 bracket to the 45-53 bracket, with the most being in the 27-35 bracket (n=9). Their education included high school diploma (n=1), bachelors (n=5), masters (n=7), and Ph.D. (n=2). Their geographical location included the Midwest (n=13), the North (n=1), and the East Coast (n=1). Their number of children included one (n=5), two (n=6), and three (n=4). Their frequented social media platforms included Instagram (n=12), YouTube (n=3), Facebook (n=15), Twitter (n=3), TikTok (n=5), Pinterest (n=3), and Snapchat (n=4). While a diverse population was the goal, 100 percent (n=15) identified as White/Caucasian, Female/Cis-gender/Heterosexual, and married at the time of their interview.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym following their interview.

IRB approval was secured, protocol 2021-1716.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data began with the author reading through the entire data set once, to familiarize herself with the data in a holistic manner. The author read through the data set again, this time making notes of ideas that appeared in the data. The data set was then reviewed again and the process continued of noting ideas, which later became codes after appearing multiple times and/or in multiple parts of the data set. Once no new ideas emerged upon reading through the data set, the researcher began inputting the codes into a table, noting which transcript had that codes present, providing examples, and listing the reasoning for the codes.

Following the coding, categorization of the codes occurred. Similar to Miles et al. (2020) and Keane's (2022) approach, notes were written in the margins to ensure the correct category was assigned and that each category was appropriately developed. Physical copies of the transcripts were saved and referenced frequently in deciphering themes. The themes were then explored and understandings were drawn. This portion of the data analysis took a few days, understanding the importance of representing narratives well and then being able to conclude them. The final themes are what follow in the results.

Disclaimer

Before moving into the results section, the researcher would like to be transparent about any partiality or preconception(s) which may have occurred during the data collection process. First, the researcher is a mother herself, as she discusses in the early sections. Secondly, she experiences many of the pressures the literature review lays out such as mom guilt, challenges with childcare, pressures in her professional career, and struggles surrounding mental health. The experiences of the researcher mirror that of the data regarding the creation and fostering of resiliency.

The use of participants' voices is crucial for capturing their unique perspectives and experiences, as opposed to paraphrasing and making assumptions about what their narratives mean.

RESULTS

The purpose of this research study is to uncover how working moms illustrate resiliency despite conflicting social media messages and pressures at work and home, which are often competing. The themes include: moms assessing and adjusting, self-scrutiny, reasons moms work, and the gleaning of humor not hate from social media platforms.

Assessing and Adjusting

The first theme, assessing and adjusting, mirrors Buzzanell's first category of resilience: crafting normalcy. However, unlike other studies (Abetz & Moore, 2018; Albanese & Farr, 2012; An, 2016; Archer & Kao, 2018; Budig & England, 2001; Chae, 2018; Collett, 2011; Cripe, 2017; Denker, 2013; Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Fuller & Hirsh, 2019; Hayden, 2010; Jang & Dworkin, 2014; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Lee, 2014; Lin, 2016; Reer et al., 2019), mothers assessed the situation at hand, whether it was to share or not share on social media, keep a sick child home from school, or eat out or eat in. This supports crafting normalcy, which is what Buzzanell (2010) posits as "normal" as both a constant and desirable outcome. Mothers weigh the pros and cons and examined each situation to make the best decision at this moment. As Buzzanell (2010) would argue, this is legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding positive emotions, which involves recognizing, validating, and allowing negative feelings towards a situation to be present as a way of then also being able to find a way to be productive in that situation. Maura demonstrates this theme by detailing how she goes about assessing her sick child to decide 1.) should she stay home from work, 2.) ask her spouse to stay home from work, 3.) ask her grandparents to look after the child, or 4.) send the child to school.

I would honestly like, okay, what are their symptoms how bad are they? If she's just got the sniffles or whatever. I mean, my parents watch her, my in-laws watch her, so it's like what are your symptoms? Like if she was throwing up or whatever, I would call off and stay home with her, but if she's just got the sniffles, I would just call and say hey she got the sniffles whatever you know.

Other participants found that assessing the situation required discussing options with their spouses.

Lucile explains this when she said, "Well, my husband and I would look at each other and panic, and then decide who has the least amount of pressing issues that day." But even before deciding, the child must be assessed. Gloria explained that "Um, obviously like I look at my [child] and evaluate her first like are we cold or flu are we like, feverish when we look at that. And I look at my day and see, like, who's staying home me or [my spouse], which one of us can rearrange our work schedules to stay home and if neither one of us can, we call grandma." Assessing a sick child's level of sickness and weighing options supports early research that examined how personality traits aid in resiliency as this study found that when conscientiousness was high, resiliency was also high (Marica & Maftai, 2021). Their work posits that when assessing a situation is done with conscientiousness, peace is felt knowing that every circumstance, outcome, and consequence was considered and weighed appropriately (Marica & Maftai, 2021).

Part of assessing the situation means that participants critically examine their daily schedule and adjust as needed. If working moms had more flexible jobs, adjustments needed to be made on their end more often than on the end of their spouses. Mallory explained, "[Having a sick child] would normally fall on me, and always has," meaning her spouse never stayed home to care for the ailing child. Gwen reiterated Mallory's statement but reminded herself that "I have to miss work and take care of my family." Not only did the flexibility of their work schedule come into play here, they considered the type of work and their work environment before deciding. Gloria explains:

I would say [my job] probably more flexible in the sense of I have a very understanding boss who always puts my family first and is like, go go go to like being with the [children]; work always comes second.

It is important to mention there was one narrative where the spouse, whose profession was law enforcement, had a sick time and the working mom did not, meaning the spouse was able to stay home more easily when deemed necessary.

Fuller and Hirsh (2019) discuss that flexible jobs- particularly as working moms perceive their jobs to be as such -- reinforce stereotypes about their roles within a place of work as being less important; therefore, undermining a working mom's ability to contribute meaningful work. While flexibility intends to make the workplace more equitable, it is allowing the cycle to continue where the spouses are holding higher, less flexible positions and the working moms are then needing to adjust their work schedules to care for the family's needs (Fuller & Hirsh, 2019). Since the norm is for the spouse of a working mom to make more money, the working mom must be willing to make adjustments and take on more of a role as a caregiver within the house (Ranson, 2012; Warren et al., 2009).

Self-scrutiny

The second theme, self-scrutiny, is defined as a working mom comparing themselves to other working moms, questioning their value as a working mom, feelings of inadequacy, or assuming that what they are doing isn't enough (Dijkstra et al., 2010). Feminine behaviors, such as being nurturing, caring, and soft, can cause a working mom to feel inadequate when evaluating the day at work, at home, or both (Jackson et al., 2021). Maura demonstrates this when she silently questions "How are they [other toddler moms] doing this? How are they [other working moms] making it work? You know, working a full-time job and then coming home to a toddler". Other participants mention struggling with the same comparison and self-scrutiny game. Gwen, an

elementary school teacher, said “I felt bad. I wasn't there for my own [children] at school” in response to missing out on school parties for her child because she was in her classroom with her school children. Lucile discloses her feelings in regards to constantly feeling like she’s never doing enough “I’m either letting someone down at work, or letting myself down at work, or I’m letting my family down.” Gloria, similar to Lucile, wonders “am I neglecting my family, because I am focusing on all the fires at work?” Both moms acknowledge the work it takes to feel successful in their careers and their homes. Beth chats with me about mom guilt, noting that it “makes you feel like you suck at both jobs [referring to motherhood and their job].” When bad days happen, Gwen, shares with me that she tries to think of how to improve saying “I'm trying to come up with a plan to make the next day better like, what can we do, can you [speaking of their spouse] take this on or could we do that?” This comment illustrates her feelings of self-scrutiny in how hard she is on herself, believing that she needs to work on her parenting to make days better. Gwen also mentions feelings of scrutinizing herself as she explains:

You just feel like you can't give 100% to both areas, and I feel like my [children] are so much more important. But also, my work is really important and there's an entire classroom of six and seven-year-olds that are counting on me to be there for them.

These experiences align with Buzzanell's (2010) concept of affirming identity anchors, as these working moms explain who they are for themselves and to others.

Self-scrutiny can be more common in working moms as there are felt pressures (Jackson et al., 2021), common to women, about what they should or shouldn't be doing. Felt pressure, as Jackson, et al. (2021) describes it, involves conforming to (or avoiding) gendered behaviors. Lucile demonstrates this felt pressure when she mentions that “working parents in general, but more specifically moms, because like I said earlier, I do think it's different for working moms than it is for working dads; someone has more of the burden in raising the children.” Lucile feels that the

burden of raising the children falls more on her than her spouse and when the felt pressure consumes her, she feels inadequate. Though the needle has begun to move away from masculinity as the golden standard, femininity continues to compare itself against that standard, constantly falling short and causing doubt, the continued questioning of the value and worth, and the assumption that enough is never actually enough (Jackson et al., 2021).

Similar to the felt pressures are the expectations of being a working mom. Being a parent is one of the few rites of passage in life that doesn't require formal or informal training, an advanced degree or some level of education, a license, or anything similar showing readiness, mastery, or even an understanding of what that will look like, yet working moms have expectations of themselves that are self-imposed; a list, if you will, of the "should and should not" of the motherhood gig. Sidney demonstrates this when she tells me "I always thought I should work." This illustrates that despite her role as a mom, she feels that working is an expectation she should meet. Gloria, confident in her decision to work outside the home, adds "I don't think I could give [my children] what they would need if they would stay at home with their mom all the time." Gloria is assuming both the expectations of a stay-at-home mom and expectations of her as a mom as implied by her children.

What repeatedly came through the narratives about this theme is the notion that working moms are setting expectations of themselves that others may not set for themselves. On the contrary, working moms feel there are societal expectations of them to which they must live up (Guillem & Barnes, 2018). Maura admits to me "after a long day at work, you come home and turn on Mickey at five o'clock at night. Okay yeah, I probably shouldn't do that." Those societal expectations can also come from social media, causing moms to once again engage in the game of comparison as Mallory mentions "You feel like you're not keeping up with things; comparing

yourself to a mother of two other moms; I feel like I'm failing compared to everyone else." Beth's narrative runs parallel to Mallory as she says to me:

You feel like you're not doing enough at home, it makes you feel like you're not doing good enough at work. The time I have to put into work makes it feel like that's more important, but it's not. The truth is my family is more important.

These expectations cause immediate and debilitating stress, anxiety, and even depression because working moms don't feel like they are measuring up (Kaufmann et al., 2017; Scharp & Thomas, 2017) Gloria provides an outstanding example of such when she shares "... and then I feel like a complete failure" in regards to not meeting the expectations of herself or perceived expectations of others. These expectations often surface through the media broadly, although social media seemed to be an area working moms felt like the place the expectations spurred from (Hundley & Hayden, 2016; Lang, 2008).

Reasons Moms Work

The reasons moms work was another theme discovered in the data. Money was a big factor in moms working. All but one working mom explicitly mentioned the need for working as it relates to the need for money. Maura is transparent in saying "we [referring to both her and her spouse] need the money; we both have to work." Beth echoes that statement and simply says "I had to financially." Sarah, whose narrative is similar to that of Maura and Beth, has the cost of living to contend with in regards to the financial need for working:

To be candid, I didn't have a choice like when I had Mona. I didn't want to go back to work but had to because of where we live. We live in the northeast and like the cost of living, just like a lot of other places [was] just astronomical at the time that I have Mona. We were in Connecticut, which again is like very affluent; the cost of living is like through the roof now [that] we're in Boston, [it's] the same thing.

Though Andie tried to stay at home with her first child, just as Sarah wanted to, she came to the realization that financially, heading back to work was just what had to be done, stating

frankly “We have bills to pay. Bottom line. I did the stay-at-home mom thing when Kenry was an infant and went back to work when she was like five months old, because I just, I had to.” Some participants, like Gwen and Holly, mention how different their lives would be if they didn’t work. Gwen mentions that her work allows them to “live a more flexible lifestyle.” Holly adds “I think, [it] is just out of necessity, um, you know, financially, [to] not be in the place we’re in if we had to rely solely on my husband’s salary it’s just, it wouldn’t be feasible.”

Budig and England (2001) discuss “mother-friendly” jobs; jobs that allow you to combine motherhood and gainful employment. Though this gives working moms an avenue with which to contribute to the household income, these roles do not allow them to move up, fight for equity pay, or separate themselves in the workplace as someone other than a working mom (Budig & England, 2001). This keeps working moms on a never-ending and going nowhere carousel.

It should be mentioned that one participant denoted that they make more money in their family now especially, in comparison to their spouse. The working mom, in this case, is the breadwinner; though no other participant mentioned such.

Another reason for moms working was for the benefit of their children. Many participants mention working so they can do more things with their children and know the example their working is setting for their children.

Moms and their daughters specifically were discussed. Two moms were able to recall specific encounters where their daughters told someone else about their mom’s job and that has always resonated with those working moms because to them, their girls see them working, and “it clicks [;] my mom can do this, so can I” (Lucile). Lucile mentions the importance of “emulating the positive things” for her daughter, knowing that her experience in working and being a mom is being watched and listened to.

These conversations align with the term meaningful work as Scarduzio, et al. (2018) describe it as meaningful work in the context of parent-child relationships. These working moms find value, a purpose, and meaning in their work, as Mallory posits when she shares that “I like my job and I like having a profession.” In the same way Gwen shares:

I made this choice in choosing to work for self-fulfillment. Not that I’m not fulfilled with my [children] but just an identity outside of the house and also so that we can live a more flexible lifestyle.

Gwen and others’ narratives speak to Buzzanell’s communicative process of putting alternative logic to work (2010). This process involves the creativity of using alternative logic(s) or thinking about the situation from a different viewpoint, and is recognizable when working moms realize that working is more than just for financial necessity; it’s about creating meaningful experiences of work for a mom and showcasing that as an example for their children.

A sense of pride was also mentioned in several of the interviews, but Maura’s narrative is a superb example of such pride in the way she speaks highly of her presence and therefore influence in her job and in knowing she can work and parent:

I am prideful that I mean I can, I have a job. I work 40 hours a week or more. And it's, it's rewarding. I mean, I get to see progress with my [children] and I mean I get to see these [children] in my class grow throughout the year. And we look back at the end of the year and say how far these children have come. You know, I might have [children] start beginning the school year that they can't talk at all and by the end of the school year they're talking in three or four-word sentences. So, I mean it's a rewarding job. I love it. And then to know that hey you know I can do both at the same time.

Working, for these moms, allows them to have and remember memorable messages (Kerr et al., 2020), particularly coming from their child(ren) about the working experience (Scarduzio et al., 2018). Work for these moms has become so much more than a way to make money; it’s done for the child(ren).

Gleaning Humor not Hate from Social Media Platforms

Moms searching for humor and running from the hate from social media platforms was the final theme that surfaced during the data analysis. Undoubtedly, working moms are searching for some light-hearted humor and positivity, and are seeking that specifically from their social media platforms. This theme runs parallel” to Buzzanell’s idea of maintaining and using communication networks (2010). Mallory, a huge TikTok fan, shares her obsession with the humor it brings to her life as a working mom:

TikTok is just entertainment. I enjoy TikTok a lot. If you get your algorithm going right you find content that you enjoy and speaks to you and in the case of this like moms that don't have it all together and, you know, they make light of it, and it makes you feel better. So TikTok is more entertainment and you know the stuff that I'm interested in.

Zenia also demonstrates the light-hearted nature she’s looking for when using social media. She explains “it’s a nice break in the day to be able to just keep in touch with people and know what's going on with people's lives.” Similarly, Ruby tells me she enjoys “a certain realm of it that's like for encouragement. Either like spiritual or things I'm interested in or like I follow a couple of management [groups], service kind of like information [groups], or like motherhood ones.”

The participants are looking for a distraction as they mindlessly scroll (Beth). Though they may be bored (Lucile, Cassie) when scrolling, they still enjoy using social media “to look at pictures of my friends and pictures of their families and their cute puppies” (Gloria). And even though social media platforms can trigger the comparison game, sending working moms into a spiral of self-scrutiny, there is still a pull towards it- an escape from the realities of these women’s lives. A parallel in research can be seen here, with this idea of compulsive social media use (Coduto & Anderson, 2021). Even though there is a lack of impulse control, in this case, to scroll, and there are some potentially large negatives aspects to it, these working moms still choose to engage in

some capacity (Coduto & Anderson, 2021). It's important to keep abreast of the motivations for being online, and in this research, it is to escape (Coduto & Anderson, 2021).

Participants noted logging off, unfollowing, or choosing not to engage when posts are emotionally charged or make them feel drained (Beth), filled with explicit language or ruthless undertones, (Sidney, Gwen), involves politics (Mallory, Gloria, Maura, Gwen), relating to child abuse or violence (Maura), or are blatantly racist or ignorant in nature (Lucile).

RQ1: How do working mothers use communication to create/foster resiliency?

The sheer brilliance of working moms having to use communication to create and foster resiliency is abundantly evident in the data from this research. This communication, often internal, can be seen when moms like Gwen take an experience of a bad day and use it as a tool to improve the situation or her ability to handle a similar situation in the future. She says “I'm trying to come up with a plan to make the next day better.” Though she may have never spoken those words aloud, she is creating resiliency within herself to keep moving forward. Ruby shares that she will “cancel things like if things are just—the wheels are falling off.” While she may never explain why she canceled obligations (and owes no explanation), she is communicating that she needs a break or some space so she doesn't burn out. Zenia mentions having a tremendous support system: her husband, whose job is flexible, her parents, and her in-laws, all of whom she would consider reaching out to on tough days. She would connect with one of them and ask if they'd be willing to come over and watch her son so she could have a break. Because of this experience and the support she experienced, she notes “if someone needed help, absolutely I'll help you just because I want to be a helpful person in life.” In this way, she is fostering resiliency for other working moms, in the form of support, because she knows first-hand what that's like. This aligns with the research LeBlanc, et al (in press) recently completed surrounding the resilience of motherscholars, a

specific group of working moms, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their work demonstrates how support leads to resiliency (LeBlanc, et al., in press).

RQ2: How does working moms' use of social media communicate a source of struggle?

The data reveals sources of the struggle for working moms in their use of social media. After reading, making notes, coding, categorizing the codes, and producing themes from those codes, there are a few sources of struggle which emerge. The first is the mindlessness of social media use, during certain times. Beth mentions “just mindlessly scrolling ... because that's what I do when I nurse [my son].” Lucile can relate and says “Um, why do I look? Boredom, or now it's just like a thing, you know, I just look.”. Both moms allude to social media as an outlet, suggesting a struggle. That struggle could be inattentiveness or a need for stimulation outside of work or parenting, as both can be overstimulating or overwhelming at times. Another struggle is feeling less than or inadequate in comparison to other moms. Beth talks about feeling like a “hot mess” and seeking affirmation of that from others in the trenches on social media. Later she recalls messages on social media that make her feel like she’s “prioritizing my work over my kids, you know I see people post about like how you're missing out and I guess that makes me feel discouraged.” Social media can either create a source of struggle or validate that existing source of struggle, depending on when a working mom engages in social media usage.

A final struggle is the negativity working moms run into when engaging in social media. Multiple moms, including Beth, disengage from their social media platforms when the posts they see make them feel emotionally drained or are emotionally charged in nature. Instead of validation and support, Mallory, Gloria, Maura, Gwen, and others mention seeing political posts and other posts where social media users can have very polarizing opinions, causing drama and a sense of

uneasiness. Maura, a preschool teacher, struggles to see posts about child abuse or violence of any kind, as she witnesses similar scenarios in her classroom.

RQ3: What steps do working moms take to overcome their use of social media/social comparison?

Though not explicitly stated, there are measures working moms take to rid themselves of the comparison thoughts brought on by their engagement in social media. Rowan talks about her presence on social media and notes that “like not all moms can be there like there I probably missed 50% of holidays with my kids because, like, [of] the demand of my job”. She goes on to talk about how “we don't always all get that like picture-perfect Christmas[es]”. This example exhibits the comparison she feels as she sees others posting their seemingly picture-perfect Christmas. She discusses throughout this conversation that she feels she has to combat her feelings of comparison because she doesn't work a traditional, eight to five with no weekends type of job. She posts about Santa and the Easter bunny coming early because she has to work on those holidays and says “we have to tell our kids, like, let's write a note and [see if Santa can] come one day early, you know.” Rowan recognizes the almost always impossible standards when she sees other working moms post “here's my picture-perfect family, and I've had five kids and have six-pack abs and we get pictures taken every three months. Look at us.” To overcome this comparison, Rowan notes that she “scrolls past them” about posts that cause feelings of comparison, because she recognizes that those posts are often polished presentations of a family, which isn't always reality. Andie also speaks to the comparison game:

It's, it's rough, and, I've touched on this before with other people. Because I think [with] social media, you only see a small part of the picture, whatever that person's posting what they want you to see. Um, and so it's hard because sometimes you'll see these working moms like oh had a busy day at work, took the kids to gymnastics,

took the other kids to soccer, and did this and this and cooked this and it's like, how do you find time to do that all? So I think it's just in, you know, everybody compares even though. Comparing is horrible. But you might see that and be like, Well, why can't I cook a meal? Why can't be I...? I mean my kids don't want to do activities, thank God. It's just a big comparison game.

For Andie, she's able to remove herself from the post she saw on Facebook and realize that her children don't want to do activities, so it's not even something she has to or should worry about. Similarly, Cassie notes "I think social media makes people compare their lives, their kids, their abilities, and being a parent to others [when] in reality everybody's different, every child is different, so some people might do better with discipline, etc." She is both recognizing the comparison that is present, but also taking a step back and realizing that it's not something she should give attention to. Many of the moms interviewed display recognizing the comparison and then removing their life from it knowing that their lives and their children, as Cassie denotes, are different and therefore shouldn't be compared.

RQ4: How do working moms persevere and exhibit resiliency despite the conflicting messages on social media, guilt, and pressures of motherhood?

The analysis of the data demonstrates the resiliency and perseverance working moms possess to drown out the voices in their minds about guilt, the pressures of being a mom, and social media's conflicting messages. To address this research question, two commonalities emerge: (1) the pride working moms take in their work, in contributing financially to the household which pushes them to keep going, and the pride others have for them, and (2) the example working moms are providing for their children, daughters specifically, which encourages a continuance of resiliency.

Rowan speaks to the pride felt by her and her family:

I have honestly a ton of pride in being a working mom. My kids found a ton of pride, especially since I went back like later in life not that I'm that old but to get a Master's degree. They were so proud of me, you know, like getting my degree and passing my test and getting a new job and like I think they're like we have a lot of pride in that. I mean there are benefits to everything it's not like just for money. I didn't just go back to school for more money or anything like that. I was bored [with] what I was doing like I was bored out of my mind like I had no purpose in life. So, like, I think I have a lot of pride in being a working mom, I would say.

In this example, Rowan discusses how she went back to school to have more pride in her work as a Physician's Assistant. Moreover, she mentions the money aspect and that while money isn't everything, it is important enough for her to mention. Finally, she mentions her pride and the pride her three boys have for her as they witnessed her going back to school, despite the time away, which did cause some feelings of guilt.

What Anna describes illustrates the example working moms are providing for their daughters and its impact on resiliency:

My mom, my mom's mom like she's always worked. So I think like, I guess, I feel a sense of pride and now like I'm following in her footsteps and it's something hard.

It's a choice you have to make every day. So, I feel consistently challenged in that. And, like I have a lot of respect for mom and for, like other women in my life who have done it so I think that piece more than anything is just like being able to do something that's is like really, really hard.

This was an unexpected finding in that Anna mentions her mom and grandmother, while others, like Lucile, mention her daughter when she denotes the importance of "emulating the positive things" for her daughter. Taken together, these two exemplars reveal moms persevering and exhibiting resiliency despite social media's conflicting messages, guilt, and pressures of motherhood.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this research is to explore how working moms show resiliency in the age of social media usage. The semi-structured interviews reveal four themes positing how working moms exhibit resiliency in moms assessing and adjusting, self-scrutiny, reasons moms work, and the gleaning of humor not hate from social media platforms.

Assessing and adjusting for working moms spotlights the still present gap of responsibility between working moms and dads (Collett, 2011; Haijing, 2016; Shapiro & Gottman, 2005). Because working moms in this study hold more flexible positions, there is an implied and greater need for them to assess a workday when a situation, such as an ill child, presents itself.

The theme of self-scrutiny commands more research about the pressures working moms face (Booth et al., 2018; Buzzanell & Liu, 2005; Meina Liu, & Buzzanell, 2004), the mental load of motherhood (An, & Chou, 2016; Cripe, 2017; Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Gray, 2013; Guan & So, 2016; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010; Jang, & Dworkin, 2014; Kirby, 2006; Kirby & Krone, 2002; Liechty et al., 2018; Lin, 2016; Maxwell & McDougall, 2004; Tang et al., 2016), and the guilt moms encounter (Budds et al., 2013; Denker, 2009; Gossett et al., 2013; Haney, 2020; Martin, 2004; May & Mumby, 2005; Spradley et al., 2020/2021; Wieland, 2011). There is a continued lack of relevant research to aid in the understanding of how these factors impact working moms and their ability to do their jobs in and outside of their homes, though this research contributes current findings for a more in-depth analysis of such a concept.

There is now evidence of the many factors contributing to a mom deciding to work outside of the home for money in exploring the reasons moms work. While the initial reason is often the money, working moms have found meaning and pride in their work (Scarduzio et al., 2018) and

are recognizing the example they are setting for their children in working (Kerr et al., 2020), which should be considered when discussing working motherhood rhetoric.

The gleanings of humor not hate from social media theme provides a starting point to addressing gaps in the current literature surrounding the intersectionality of social media and motherhood not as an escape from the pressures of working and parenting (Archer & Kao, 2018; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Reer et al., 2019), but as a way to decompress and find humor amongst the chaos of any given day.

Finally, the utilization of CTR in this research has proven to be fruitful. This theory's generalizability holds with this theory being applied to working moms who engage regularly in social media. The themes garnered from this study fit well into the five-stage process Buzzanell (2010) posits in terms of overcoming struggles. The answers to the various research questions posed also parallel the various aspects of this theory.

Implications and Future Directions

Despite these limitations, this current study provides important narratives, along with new insights, which can be added to the existing literature regarding working moms, the enormous pressures working moms face to perform in their careers and their homes, and working moms and their social media consumption. In addition, this research helps to fill in current literature gaps about how working moms navigate the five-stage process of overcoming struggles as defined by Buzzanell (2010) in their everyday lives, such as those caused by social media usage.

Though it is the hope of the researcher that light has been shed in regards to the embodiment of resiliency while battling the pressures of being a working mom for these women, there is more research to be done. Future research should examine the definition of resiliency for working moms and the accumulation of understanding and knowledge of that term for women who do not use

social media. Comparisons could also be drawn between working moms who use social media and those who don't to see if levels of resiliency differ among the two populations.

Limitations

The demographic diversity of the participants of this study was severely underdeveloped in three areas: race/ethnicity, sex/gender identity, and marital status, all of which could impact the results. The sample included 100% (n=15) of working moms identifying as white/Caucasian. Additionally, 100% (n=15) identify as being Female/Cis-gender/Heterosexual. Each of the participants (n=15) was married at their participation. Future research should consider the experiences of working moms who are not married (including, but not limited to, divorced, widowed, single, estranged, etc.) who do not identify as White/Caucasian, and finally of those who identify as something other than being Female/Cis-gender/Heterosexual. Additional insights may come forth as a result of increased diversity in these three specific areas.

A second limitation is the snowball sampling method used in this study. Though the researcher requested the initial call-out post be shared broadly, proper representativeness is not assumed, especially if the participants have similar beliefs and values as the researcher (participation bias). If this study were to be duplicated, another sampling method could be considered.

A final limitation is the potential bias of interpretation of the data by the researcher, who also identifies as a working mom. A lack of follow-up or clarifying questions could have led to some incorrect assumptions about the data collected. Member checking, which wasn't offered in this study, is an instrument used to check the accuracy of the account as told by the participant (Candela, 2019). The overall lack of effort to maintain validity could cause an issue with understanding the data.

Conclusion

Although the demographic representation of this study did not turn out as anticipated, rich narrative data surfaced, in particular as it pertains to resiliency resembling working moms assessing daily situations and adjusting as a normal, everyday practice. The expectations working moms both put on themselves and feel are put on them by society emphasize the mental-load of motherhood. Working moms are selfless and work to make their children's lives more enriched and sometimes use social media as a way to escape and find comic relief to their not-so-put-together lives.

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APPENDIX A. CALL FOR WORKING MOM RESEARCH

Appendix A.1 Call for Working Mom Research

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The Pressures Working Moms Face to Perform at 100% In Their Careers and In Their Homes: How Social Media Influences Working Moms

Lindsay Butcher, Graduate Student

Sarah Symonds LeBlanc, Ph.D.

Department of Communication

Purdue University Fort Wayne

IRB: IRB-2021-1716



Photo was taken from: <https://blog.themomproject.com/the-value-of-working-moms-ashleys-story>

Hello! Are you a working mom who also uses social media? If so, would you please consider sitting down for an interview with me via Zoom for my graduate thesis research?

Participants need to meet the following criterion: be a mother (biological or otherwise), be working, and regularly use social media (defined as engaging on a platform at least one time per day).

Zoom interviews will last anywhere between 45-and 60 minutes. Interview questions center around pressures working moms feel, ways they use social media, and how working moms preserve.

I hope to shed light on the pressures working moms face to perform at 100% in their careers and home and bring to the surface ways working moms find to preserve and exhibit resiliency. If you're interested in participating, please email me at lindsay.butcher@pfw.edu.

APPENDIX B. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Appendix B.1 Research Participant Information Sheet

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The Pressures Working Moms Face to Perform at 100% In Their Careers and In Their Homes: How Social Media Influences Working Moms

Lindsay Butcher, Graduate Student

Sarah Symonds LeBlanc, Ph.D.

Department of Communication

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Key Information

Please take the time to review this information carefully. This is a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary which means that you may choose not to participate at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may ask questions to the researchers about the study whenever you would like. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this form, be sure you understand what you will do and any possible risks or benefits.

This study is designed to investigate the pressures working moms face and the ways they exhibit resiliency. We believe this study will provide minimal risk, but we do have protocols in place to assist moms who communicate high levels of stress/pressure or make comments about self-harm. However, we have designed the interview protocol to not illicit this type of information. This study is expected to be completed by May 2022.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to examine how working moms persevere and exhibit resiliency despite the conflicting messages on social media, guilt, and the enormous pressures of motherhood. Specifically, we aim to identify steps working moms take to overcome their use of social media/social media comparison. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a working mom who uses social media.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

If you agree to participate, you will be first asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. Completion of this form should be 10-15 minutes. When we receive your demographic questionnaire, a member of the research study will contact you to set up your interview. You will be asked approximately 19 questions. This interview will be recorded and transcribed. All data will be stored in a password-protected file folder on a password-protected computer. All identifying information will be removed. The interview data will be kept separate from the demographic form.

How long will I be in the study?

We hope the interview will last 30-60 minutes. However, the length of the interview is dependent on how much information you are willing to share. Because you are a working mom, we can schedule a second interview time to complete the interview, if needed. We understand that your time is both sparse and valuable.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

This research poses minimal risk, no greater than everyday life. Some of the questions asked may be upsetting, or you may feel uncomfortable answering them. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go to the next question. While we have worked hard to avoid such questions, there is a possibility that some of the questions asked may make you angry, emotionally upset, or stressed out now or at a later time. A list of support services will be available to participants.

Breach of confidentiality is always a risk with data, but we will take precautions to minimize this risk as described in the confidentiality section.

Are there any potential benefits?

There are no direct benefits to the subjects. There may be no personal benefit to your participation in the study, but the knowledge received may be valuable to improving communication with working moms who use social media, in providing real-life examples of how resiliency is shown despite the pressures working moms face.

Will I receive payment or another incentive?

There are no payments or incentives affiliated with this study.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. No names will appear on any of the records sought. Unless requested by the above-mentioned institutions, all obtained information will be kept confidential.

As part of the interview process, we will collect your data form and have a member of the research team contact you to set up an interview. At the beginning of the interview, you will be assigned a pseudonym. At this point, all of your responses will remain confidential and the pseudonym will be used in place of your real name.

Your data and consent form will be kept separate. Your consent form will be stored in a locked location on Purdue Fort Wayne property and will not be disclosed to third parties. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym/fake name and no additional personally identifiable information will be stored with your responses. Data will be collected on a secure server and then downloaded to a password-protected computer and protected file folder. Data will be stored electronically while in use. Data may be kept for a maximum of seven years and then be destroyed.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or, if you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Whom can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about this research project, you may contact our lead researcher. Please contact Dr. Sarah Symonds LeBlanc, Assistant Professor of Communication at Purdue University Fort Wayne. She can be reached at 910-330-5708 or by email at leblancs@pfw.edu.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu), or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University

Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032

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West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

To report anonymously via Purdue's Hotline, please see www.purdue.edu/hotline.

APPENDIX C. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix C.1 Research Participant Demographics Questionnaire

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The Pressures Working Moms Face to Perform at 100% In Their Careers and In Their Homes: How Social Media Influences Working Moms

Lindsay Butcher, Graduate Student

Sarah Symonds LeBlanc, Ph.D.

Department of Communication

Purdue University Fort Wayne

IRB: IRB-2021-1716

Semi-structured Protocol and Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Information:

1. What is your age?
 - a. 18-26
 - b. 27-35
 - c. 36-44
 - d. 45-53
 - e. 54 and older
2. How would you describe your race/ethnicity?

3. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. High School Diploma
 - b. Associates Degree
 - c. Bachelor's Degree
 - d. Master's Degree
 - e. Ph.D. or equivalent
4. What is your geographical location?
 - a. Midwest
 - b. North
 - c. South
 - d. West
 - e. East Coast
 - f. Outside of the U.S.
5. How would you describe your sex/gender identity?

6. How many children do you have?
 - a. 1

- b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6+
7. How would you describe your marital status?
-
8. What social media platforms do you use regularly (defined as engaging on a platform at least one time per day)? (Please choose all that apply)
- a. Instagram
 - b. YouTube
 - c. Facebook
 - d. Twitter
 - e. TikTok
 - f. Pinterest
 - g. Snapchat
 - h. Other
9. Are you a part of any social media groups for working moms? If so, what are some you can think of?
-
10. How often do you scroll through social media during a given day, would you say?
-

APPENDIX D. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Appendix D.1 Semi-structured Interview Protocol

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

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Semi-structured Protocol and Demographic Questionnaire

Open-Ended Interview Questions:

1. How would you handle a sick kid on a workday?
2. If you're in a relationship. who has the more flexible job and why?
3. Why did you choose by choosing to work?
4. How would you describe how your place of works' family policy? How does that policy impact the requested and non-requested time off?
5. What is your purpose behind your social media usage?
6. How do you perceive social media influencing your self-perception of yourself as a working mom?
7. What common themes do you see on your social media thread(s)?
8. How do you choose who/what to follow on social media?
9. How would you describe the mom guilt associated with being a working mom?
10. What sense of pride do you feel in being a working mom?
11. What have you found to be the most challenging as a working mom?
12. What have you found to be the most rewarding part of being a working mom?
13. What things have surprised you in being a working mom?
14. What sorts of messages on social media stand out to you as a working mom? How do they make you feel?
15. What sorts of posts influence you to log off?
16. How would you define a working mom?
17. How do you think society would define a working mom?
18. How do you overcome rough days?
19. Is there anything else you'd like to share that I haven't already asked you about?

PUBLICATIONS

- LeBlanc, S.S. & Butcher, L.M. A role-conflict with mom: The mother-daughter relationship and the enactment of the mothering role. In A. Meluch & H. Walter (Eds.), *Casing Communication Conflict: Case Studies in Conflict Communication*. Kendall Hunt.
- LeBlanc, S.S., Butcher, L.M. [1], & Mitchell, R. P. (November 2020). "Just give me a break for 10 minutes": Postpartum mothers and their perception of social support. Part of At the Crossroads of Health and Gender: Qualitative Reports of Women's Experiences of Supportive Communication in Health Contexts. Accepted for National Communication Association Annual Conference Indianapolis, IN.
- LeBlanc, S.S., Butcher, L.M., & Mitchell, R. P. (November 2020). "I don't know what I am doing": New moms and the postpartum social media support groups. Part of Online self-disclosure and social support in understudied groups. Accepted for National Communication Association Annual Conference Indianapolis, IN.
- LeBlanc, S.S., Mitchell, R.P., & Butcher, L.M. (under review). "She's Being a Jerk and that's Okay": Mothers Perception of Social Support and Supportive Communication Postpartum. *Submitted to Journal of Social and Personal Relationships January 14, 2022.*
- LeBlanc, S.S., Mitchell, R.P., Butcher, L.M., Russel, J. & Navarro, J. "No one ever talked about...": New mothers, anxiety, and the postpartum discourse. *Submitted to the Journal of Family Communication April 1, 2022.*