

## **In competition: A narrative of a young scholar**

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### **Abstract**

*In competition*

*Growing up in a foreign land  
Mixing with a wealthier man  
Charity student prove yourself  
Never quite measuring up*

*I dreamed about becoming a teacher  
It wasn't enough, be a doctor, be a lawyer  
Status in society is the aim  
Working for financial gain*

*Grow up  
Hurry up  
Measure up  
Don't give up*

*In competition don't give up  
Be the best  
Cover the test  
Grow up, measure up*

*Get a degree  
Then another and another  
You're are not doing it fast enough  
Hurry up finish up  
Get married have a kid  
Hurry up measure up*

*Save your money  
Buy a house  
Grow up measure up*

*Make us proud  
Grow up get a job  
Hurry up measure up*

*Be the youngest in your crowd  
Want the best! Do your best!*

## **Introduction**

This is a case study investigating the journey of a young scholar as she moves from a graduate student to a tenure track position and her journey, it's not yet finished. This case study highlights the complexity of a career journey and the influences of family and mentors/teachers. The case study amplifies the inability to separate the self from the child, self from the student, self from the partner, self from the teacher, and self from the professor and the researcher.

The "call for papers" came out on Memorial University's list serve for a special edition of the *Morning Watch* "on becoming a researcher" with two of my *Writing Group* colleagues as editors. I immediately wanted to support their endeavors with a paper on my own journey and write the *narrative of becoming a researcher*. Having not been schooled in narrative inquiry I set about the journey of discovery. I started reading about narrative methods, attempting to understand what it means to do narrative research. I read several works written by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), Connelly and Clandinin (1990), Clandinin and Connelly, (1996), Clandinin, Pusher, and Murray Orr (2007), Denzin, (2009), Polkinghorne, (2007) Richardson (2000), and Richardson (2001), to name a few. I found myself more confused than enlightened about the approach as I stumbled into debates, differing points of view, and critiques about those views. There are multiple definitions of narrative research, however, I found myself drawn to Polkinghorne's (2007) definition, "narrative research is the study of stories" (p. 471).

## **Methodology**

In the beginning I thought I would write about my own journey of becoming a researcher. I started the writing process and quickly found that I exposed the "self" and indirectly my family for all to read, at least those who read the *Morning Watch*, a public document. In presenting my personal reasons for researching in the area of special education I felt a sense of extreme vulnerability. What I did, was to stop writing, go back to the literature, read and read. I wondered why I was doing this; what were my motives? I know that when I am uncomfortable or unsure of how to approach a topic, procrastination, in the form of collecting more articles, books, chapters and reading text, is my fall back. In examining and reflecting on this "procrastination" I realized that I did not want to expose my family. Laurel Richardson (2001) discusses the ethics of writing about the self and the associated risks and states "Can you write about your department without serious consequences to yourself or your students? What about your family? Who might you be hurting?" (p. 37). With this in mind I changed gears and completed a more traditional qualitative study in the form of a case study of another researcher, using narrative methodology.

The researcher, who I gave a pseudonym, Roxanne, listened to my deliberating about how difficult I found writing about myself and volunteered to write a narrative of her own journey for me to analyze and write about for this special edition. Therefore, the process of participant selection would be considered one that was "purposeful", in that the Roxanne was required to have experience with the phenomena under study. Sandelowski (2000) describes purposeful sampling as an approach to data collection "where the researcher wants to ensure that certain cases varying on preselected parameters are included" (p. 250).

I had difficulty starting the process of writing, I wanted to honor Roxanne, and give voice to Roxanne's story. I reread Laurel Richardson's (1994) article *Writing: A method of inquiry* in

which she describes writing formats including metaphor, experimental representation, poetry and drama. Richardson states, “Settling words together in new configurations lets us hear, see, and feel the world in new dimensions. Poetry is thus a *practical* and *powerful* method of analyzing social worlds” (p. 522). When I reflected on Roxanne’s narrative many of her words came to mind. I started to think how to put what I had come to learn about Roxanne’s journey in a form that would speak to her, about her, and at the same time represent her story for others to understand. I started this article with a poem, and by doing so I found I felt freed to write the rest of the article. I was schooled to write only after I had the reading completed, the analyses done, and an organizational framework in place. Van Manen (2006) suggests that “qualitative inquiry can not be separated from the practice of writing” (p.713). This process was both frightening, in regards to how will it be perceived in an academic context, as well as liberating in that I was able to write this story. However, in keeping with my previous training I needed to outline the process that I went through to ensure the process was visible.

### *Steps taken*

I met with Roxanne to develop a plan for this research. We debated whether to complete face-to-face audio-taped interviews or written narratives. To save time by eliminating the process of transcribing the interview, she agreed to write her narrative “on becoming a researcher”. Time lines were decided and the purpose of the study provided. We decided that the goal of this study was to explore the experiences of a beginning researcher based in the narrative tradition; with this in mind Roxanne’s task was to write her story of her journey.

We agreed on meeting times to discuss the narrative and the analysis of the narrative. Five meeting times were established, however, two were cancelled, one because of workload issues and one because of illness.

I kept a reflective journal during the course of our process and used the journal notes in conjunction with the written narrative. I found myself constantly thinking about my readings on narrative inquiry and the written narrative Roxanne provided. I made numerous handwritten journal entries and I also made notes on my iPhone when my journal was not available. The poem came as a part of my immersion in the story of Roxanne’s journey. My only available place to store the poem at the time was on my iPhone. All notes and reflections on the process were transferred to the journal and the journal formed a part of the data.

I did find myself uncertain once I received the written narrative from Roxanne. I thought, “Okay, now what? How do I analyze this within the framework of narrative methodology?” Narrative has many different methods depending on the author, and as a novice using narrative methodology, I needed an approach that was clear and structured. I opted to begin the analysis by adopting one aspect of Labov’s (1997, 2001) well-known method, examining the data for “complicating actions”. I recognize that there are advantages and disadvantages to using a structured approach; however, I felt this approach was appropriate for our process.

I read Roxanne’s narrative several times before beginning the coding. While reading the narrative I jotted down notes about the narrative and questions related to meaning. I coded the initial narrative using “complicating actions” as an overarching category. In coding for

complicating actions I read the narrative and coded key phrases as the primary method of data analysis.

Once the narrative was coded I once again examined the narrative, my codes, and my journal. Re-examining the data lead to further questions, I emailed Roxanne and provided her with a choice of a face-to-face meeting or responding in writing to a series of clarifying questions. Roxanne opted to respond to my questions in a written response. She suggested that writing the responses allowed her to “formulate her thoughts and write a complete response” which she didn’t think she would be able to do face-to-face.

When the written responses to the questions were received they were analyzed in the same way as the initial narrative provided by Roxanne. The responses were examined for complicating actions, and the key phrases were coded. Once this coding was completed, the key phrases from the initial narrative and the follow up questions were placed in a word document and numbered.

The key phases were printed and they were cut into individual statements. I sorted the key phrases taken from the narrative into categories “that are similar or go together” (LeCompte, 2000, p.149) and then I named the groups using broad categories. The categories were family, peers, partners, teacher, professor, and researcher. These were eventually sorted into three broader categories of family, self, and relationships.

During the coding I read an article written by LeCompte (2000) and I was struck by her statement “to create good research findings, analysis also must yield results that are meaningful to the people for whom they are intended and described in language they understand” (p.152). As a result I asked Roxanne if she would also sort the key statements. I provided the broad categories but told her she could add to these if she felt necessary. Of the 88 key statements Roxanne and I coded, 66 of them, or 75% overlapped. We discussed the differences and the rationale for their placement in the chosen categories. In writing this narrative I deferred to Roxanne’s coding of the statements.

During my career I worked as a children’s therapist with the Alberta Mental Health Board and was provided the opportunity to attend training sessions with Dr. Karl Tomm, the Director of the Family Therapy program, at the University of Calgary. Tomm often uses the “internalized other” (father, mother, brother, sister, or peer) in working with families and individuals in counselling. To do this I asked Roxanne to write “using the “I” position of another person and to speak from their experience...” of her as a researcher (Tomm, 1998, p. 411). This data was subsequently coded and used in the analyses.

The final step in the process was to have Roxanne read the first draft of the article and to provide feedback. Roxanne was given the opportunity to remove any information she didn’t agree with or was uncomfortable with, and to change any errors or omissions. Feedback was incorporated into the final version of this article and Roxanne was again given the opportunity to provide feedback.

The poetry used at the beginning of this article and at the beginning of each theme was initially written by me using the words Roxanne’s wrote in her initial narrative and her follow-up writing.

I first composed each of the verses and I asked Roxanne for feedback in regards to whether the poetry was reflective of her writing. Roxanne provided significant input into the poetry. I would suggest that end result was poetry that was developed by both of me and Roxanne; however, the words belong to Roxanne.

## **Results**

The results of this case study suggest that the journey of an early career scholar is influenced by many factors. Separating the journey that Roxanne travelled from other aspects of her life was impossible. I imagine that this would essentially be the same for any narrative regardless of the career stage or the person's journey under study. Relationships with family, peers, partners, community and the larger society are complex and they have an impact on the individual. For the purpose of this article I have divided the narrative into three main themes; family, self and relationships.

### **The family**

*I dreamed about becoming a teacher  
Status in society is the aim but  
Stability is my plan*

*Growing up in foreign lands  
Mixing with a wealthier man  
Charity student prove yourself  
Working hard to measure up*

In reviewing Roxanne's narrative from the point of view of her family, it became apparent that they were several "complicating actions" to her life journey. She grew up in a family that moved around the world. She lived in several countries during her early school years and attended private schools with extremely wealthy peers. Her parents relied on fundraising and charity throughout Roxanne's life to do their work in other countries. This meant that Roxanne's family may not necessarily have had a stable source of income. It seems that Roxanne was influenced by this instability and purposefully moved from undergraduate, to graduate degrees to ensure that she was able to secure a stable job, with a stable income, with a clear retirement plan. Roxanne reflected on her father's career and the following quote provides her rationale for needing to be secure.

My father's line of work relies on charity and as a result there was never a steady stream of income. So perhaps making it in society means I am able to secure a job with a steady income that allows for a reasonable retirement age and adequate vacation time. This steady income would hypothetically allow me to pay for braces for my son or daughter, without worrying about whether or not I would have funds for maintenance visits.

In her narrative Roxanne suggested her parents valued education and professions such as doctors and lawyers.

Both of my parents have 10 years of post-secondary education, so this further education was not something I questioned, rather it was something that was

expected if I was going to become a top achiever in my field. This was another expectation in my family, for second best was never good enough.

As a young child Roxanne would tell her parents she would be a doctor or a lawyer when she grew up to please them knowing they valued these professions. However, Roxanne dreamed of being a teacher as she loved children and enjoyed working with children and tutoring children, however, this career in Roxanne's view was not as valued by her family or her peers. "I knew I would never get rich being a teacher or feel like I had made it in society". "My best friend became an actuary... I was always mocked for pursuing a degree in education as it was perceived as 'taking the easy way out'".

During Roxanne's final year of high school she lived with her friend's family while her parents moved abroad to work. Roxanne felt that she had very little guidance or support in her decision making regarding school.

At the age of 17 I applied to university. With the exception of a few university promotional flyers, I received little support from guidance. With my parents living in China, I felt very alone in making these potentially life altering decisions. I had always been a strong student, but had to work for the grades I received in math and science. As a result, I applied to a humanities based program.

In this regard Roxanne was making adult decisions without the support of her family or from the school counseling service. These are difficult years for most adolescents and were especially difficult for Roxanne as she struggled to make these decisions on her own. .

Roxanne was the oldest of three biological children and shortly before Roxanne finished teacher's college her parents adopted a fourth child, a three-year-old girl. Roxanne's sister had some health problems and she was approved for major surgery. Her family moved back to Canada with Roxanne's sister, and at a time when most young adults are launching themselves into the working world and moving out on their own, Roxanne chose to move home. Roxanne moved in with her family so she could get to know her youngest sister. The move home allowed Roxanne to study full time in a graduate program without having the financial burden of maintaining her own living space. However, by the time she had completed her Master's her parents had once more moved abroad and Roxanne remained in the family home, continued with graduate school, and took over the care of her younger brother who had just started university. "I felt it was my role to keep the house in good order, and ensure there were hot and healthy meals on the table so that he could experience a "normal family life." Continuing to live in her parents' home allowed her to save her money which she used for a down payment on a house once she secured employment. However, Roxanne did recognize that doing her Master's and PhD at the same university may have limited her opportunities to interact with different people and scholars.

## **Self**

*Pressure from within*

*In competition don't give up*

*I'll be my best*

*Cover the test  
Cook the meals  
Grow up measure up*

*Get a degree  
Then another  
You are the youngest after all  
Hurry up prove yourself  
Volunteer then do some more  
Advocate  
Hurry up measure up  
Do the work  
Finish up  
Get a job  
Get married  
Buy a house*

Roxanne showed much strength in her decision to pursue her dreams even in the face of her family and her peers. During her first degree Roxanne made a choice to get good grades, she had reviewed the requirement for teacher's college and worked hard to achieve good grades to ensure she was successful in being accepted into teacher's college.

I knew I needed to meet the required 80% grade point average to be accepted into the concurrent education program and I knew I would need to avail of valuable work experience if I wanted to pursue a Master's program immediately after teacher's college.

During summers when most students were pursuing their social lives, taking on jobs just to earn money, Roxanne was setting up teaching experiences to ensure that she would meet the minimum requirements to be accepted into her Master's degree following teachers' college. This did come at a price; being the youngest student in her graduate programs, Roxanne always felt she had to prove herself. "I was very much aware that I was the youngest doctoral student in my faculty. I didn't want to appear young and naive, and as a result I took on additional responsibilities."

Roxanne took on additional volunteer experiences both with her peers as a co-leader of a doctoral study group and with a variety of community organizations tutoring and taking on administrative roles. She felt she had to work harder to make up for her lack of experience.

I know I'm young, and I want to be taken seriously. I want to be perceived as someone who gives back to their community. I know I am a strong academic, but I want to be perceived as a well-rounded individual, so I started volunteering... I'm excited, I want to get involved and give back to those individuals who learn differently – those individuals who have made my research possible.

Roxanne also worked on a number of research projects during the course of her PhD. She felt that she needed to work on projects so that she had experience and she would receive authorship

on published articles and in turn increase her chances of employment. Even with the experience from projects she completed with others and for her own doctoral dissertation Roxanne talked about the “Imposter Syndrome”. This syndrome has been described as, “feelings of not being as capable or adequate as others perceive or evaluate them to be” (Brems, Baldwin, Davis, & Namyniuk, 1994, p. 183). She indicated that she feels that she isn’t a researcher “there is almost a sense of mysticism associated with these individuals-similar to the *Wizard of Oz* - someone you hear from and respect, but rarely see”.

Roxanne discussed how she was privileged to work with people she admired and does not feel that she measured up. She indicated these individuals are mid-career and she was just beginning.

I am passionate about research, but I can’t say I can confidently wear the hat of researcher, at least not yet. I feel I must obtain additional research funding, and become recognized by my peers for my publications and contribution to the field, before I can confidently identify with the title of researcher.

Roxanne states that she feels disappointed in her progress since taking on her new job. Her move to a new faculty position prior to the completion of the defense of her doctoral dissertation meant she was negotiating the roles of assistant professor and student at the same time. She set timelines that she was unable to meet and was extremely disappointed.

I felt like I was unable to do my job with my dissertation looming over my head. I understand that my dissertation is part of my line of research but internally I felt as if it were part of my student life - one I needed to leave behind in order to transition into the role of a faculty member.

## **Relationships**

*Mentor’s respect*

*Get involved you’re allowed*

*Have a voice*

*Make it heard*

*Valued member*

*Take pride I think you’ve earned it*

*Giving help but not too much*

*Guiding voice is just enough*

*Prepared me for a tenure track*

*I just know that you’ll give back*

*Be your best I know you’re worth it*

One of the “complicating actions” in Roxanne’s journey towards becoming a researcher occurred when she was hired as a research assistant by Susanne (a pseudonym) an academic at the university where Roxanne was accepted to complete her Master’s degree. From the beginning, this relationship was respectful and Roxanne felt valued. She eventually took Susanne as her Master’s thesis supervisor and eventually her Doctoral supervisor. Roxanne’s choice of research

topics was also influenced by her doctoral supervisor. Roxanne's relationship with Susanne was one of the factors that significantly influenced Roxanne's decision to remain at the same institution to complete her PhD.

The relationship I encountered along the way [supervisor] pushed me in this direction. The woman who introduced me to my first research project soon became my Master's thesis supervisor and quickly became an important role model in my life...based on the advice of my supervisor, I began to pursue a career in academia. I applied to two doctoral programs and was accepted into both. However, I opted to continue to work with my Master's thesis supervisor because of the nurturing relationship that developed.

Roxanne became immersed in her supervisor's academic research and eventually decided to pursue similar research. "I don't know that my teaching influenced my research. In fact I had not been exposed to [the topic] during my pre-service teacher education or during my initial teaching experiences."

Roxanne did find a personal connection to her topic area, "from a human rights perspective". She experienced living in several different countries in her formative years and the experiences of her adopted sister influenced and motivated her to continue in this research. Growing up in China exposed Roxanne to children with disabilities who were not eligible to be educated because of their disabling condition. "My sister would not have been educated because of her [health condition]. Her presumed short life expectancy meant she would not be deserving of the time and resources surrounding her education".

Roxanne believes that the relationship with her supervisor has been a significant influence. Her supervisor instilled a confidence in her ability to do research and to become an influential academic.

I'm lucky to have such a great supervisor, she trusts me and she allows me to get involved as a colleague – not just her doctoral student. She allows me to take the lead on research projects and allows me to contribute to joint publications. To this day I would say I had the greatest thesis supervisor. She was the greatest role model in every way. She showed me it was possible to be a researcher, teacher, community advocate, and mother-and to do each job well. She helped me understand the life of an academic and placed confidence in me to lead major projects. She exerted an 'I know you can do it' motto which I soon internalized.

### ***Partners***

*Slow down take a break  
Watch TV, eat some cake  
Relax, hang out  
What's your rush?*

*Juggle your time  
Take a break we're new in town*

*Find new friends  
Let's go fishing  
Finding our way  
New people, new friends, new culture  
When will this end?*

*Finding his way has not been easy  
His new job is not the best  
This has put us to the test  
Social life not so much  
Academics! I've nothing in common  
Where do you make friends?  
On the job working in isolation  
Not enough money and no vacation*

Roxanne starting dating her partner, Frank (a pseudonym), just after she finished teacher's college and before beginning her Master's degree.

We were an unlikely match, but he was the polar opposite from my high strung father, a trait I was perhaps unconsciously looking for. [Frank] taught me how to relax, but his easy going personality also meant he was also always looking to 'hang out' and this made me feel like I had to do an even better job of juggling my time.

To add another dimension to Roxanne story: marriage. Shortly after she took the position of assistant professor she married Frank. While this was an exciting time for her she also found herself negotiating her academic work and her relationship with her new husband.

I live to work, but I found it difficult to balance my time between my academic responsibilities and my husband who was struggling with adjusting to this new province and way of life. I have struggled to find my academic voice, against my other competing work responsibilities

The new couple, in a new province, struggled to find their place. Frank initially struggled to find suitable employment and had to navigate employment on his own.

I always thought that when I moved away from my family I would be able to focus on myself and work. I had only ever known Frank as a 'happy go lucky' guy and was taken by surprise by his difficulty to adjust to our new home. I know that Frank thrives on social activities and as a result I made a conscious effort to spend more time with our cousins who are the same age... I felt little in common with my cousins who were just a few years younger than me. Similarly, Frank may feel less in common with my co-workers who already had children and are at a different phase in their lives.

*There cannot be any distractions*  
*No shopping*  
*No eating out*  
*No watching TV*  
*She must not stop*  
*Until the task is complete*

To summarize, Roxanne is a young scholar just entering her career as an academic. She had not previously worked in a full-time academic or professional position. She moved from an undergraduate student, to a Master's student, and onto being a Doctoral student. She gained her teaching experience through short-term work contracts and this is her first full-time experience. Roxanne had several changes in the past year including transitioning from student to assistant professor, she's moved from being single, living with her brother and boarders, to getting married and now living with her new partner. She also has transitioned from living in her parents' home to being a home owner, and as a result of taking on a faculty position she has had to leave her home province, leaving behind a system of supports including her family and her friends.

## **Discussion**

While I was analyzing Roxanne's narrative and preparing this paper, I found that I was engaged in a number of topics represented in the research literature. I found myself reading on topics such as stress and coping, self-esteem, identity, and career development. There is a large body of literature on each of these topics and I decided to focus on the psychology literature; therefore, I have limited the discussion to surround stress, coping, and developing a new identity.

After I looked at all the number of life changes listed in the summary, I remembered reading that getting married and buying a house were rated high on a stress scale. I searched for stress scales and found the *Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Scale* (1967). Many of the transitions listed in Roxanne's narrative are actually a part of this scale. This scale ranks certain life events on a scale of 0-100. The authors ask you to check the items that have occurred for you in the past year and you are provided a cumulative score. On this scale marriage gets a score of 50, change in one's line of work gets a score of 36, a mortgage or loan scores a 31, beginning or ending school, gives you a score of 26, and an change in residence, receives a score of 20 (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Other events such as a change in the number of arguments, change in the hours of work, taking a vacation, and experiencing a change in religious activities, were also included in this scale. The authors suggest that cumulative scores of less than 150 are considered to be at low stress; scores from 150-299 are considered moderate to high risk stress; and scores at 300 and above are considered to be very high stress. I completed the scale using information from Roxanne's narrative and her score was considered moderate to high risk, therefore, Roxanne and Frank may be at higher risk for developing an illness than an individual coming into a faculty position that did not experience the same number of life's stressful events. Even though this scale was developed in the mid-1960's it continues to be used and is prominent in the research literature that examines the links between stress and illness (Blasco-Fontecilla et al. 2012; Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Kabasa, 1979).

Change is a part of living. However, when a new graduate hopes to move into an academic position, change is very likely as academics often need to move where jobs are available (Mason & Goulden, 2002). Usually it will require that the academic move community, province, and sometimes country to take up a position (Mason & Goulden, 2002). The ability to cope with the changes that occur as a result of taking on an academic position is dependent on a number of factors. Building on the work of Kobasa (1979), Brammer (1992) suggested that a critical component of how a person copes with a transition is how much control they perceive they have over the change. In the narrative written by Roxanne, she discussed how difficult Frank found the move to this province; it is possible that Frank did not perceive control over the move in that he followed his partner, Roxanne, to support her career. While we can't know for certain without his narrative, his lack of job satisfaction and his sense of being unemployed may also have impacted his adjustment to the move.

Change can be a problem for many individuals and their reactions may range from high levels of anxiety to extreme excitement. Kobasa (1979) suggested that it is not only stress that can impact an individual and increase the risk of illness, but an individual's personality may also impact how they respond. Kobasa studied a large group of executives and analyzed the difference between those that experienced illness and those that didn't in relation to stressful events. She found that there were some personality characteristics that may differentiate those that become ill from those who do not; they include a commitment to self, active involvement with the environment, and an internal versus an external locus of control (Kobasa, 1979). The sense of loss associated with life stress and transitions can cause grief and may require a period of mourning to resolve this sense of loss. Mason and Goulden (2004) recommend that institutions hiring new faculty should be attuned to the demands of tenure and that there should be institutional commitment to assist new faculty. These researchers also recommend that provide assistance to the spouse or partner to assist with adjustment and job searches.

In the literature, there is a suggestion that individuals usually identify themselves in two major domains, work and family roles (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006; Halpern, 2008). Individuals, including academics, will be a part of a family, a community, and the world of work. There is a whole range of research on identity theory and career identity development which is well beyond the scope of this article. For example, Waterman (1999), links identity to Erikson's psychosocial stages and would suggest that Roxanne, in the course of her narrative, introduced two of the stages; "identity versus role confusion", in her pursuit of a career; and "intimacy versus isolation", in her relationships with her mentor and her partner. In contrast, Blustein and Noumair (1996) introduce the concept of "embeddedness" and suggest that identity and career identity are a part of a larger construct. "Encompassing both the relational and cultural influences [on self and identity], embeddedness is a way of underscoring an interdependence between individuals and their psychological, social, historical, and cultural contexts" (p. 437). This theory is more in alignment with Roxanne's narrative where her relationship with her family, her experiences of living in Canada and elsewhere, and her relationships with her mentor and peers are intertwined.

Separating the various roles that a person takes on throughout their life is extremely difficult. When I reviewed and analyzed Roxanne's narrative the level of difficulty became very clear. I

had difficulty separating the child, the student, the partner, the academic and the self. In trying to separate the journey towards researcher it was impossible not to consider these other roles of the self. In the narrative Roxanne wrote about difficulties balancing her world of home and her world of work. She has found the transition difficult. Halpern (2008) suggests that “faculty positions can be all-consuming in their time demands, which can make it very difficult to manage family care responsibilities” (p. 59). Halpern suggested that “psychologists, who work in universities, research labs, and other professional settings, need work policies that allow them to meet both their professional and family obligations without having to choose between the two” (p. 58).

I believe that Roxanne’s journey is common. I recently read an article by Chen and Anderson (2008) in which Chen describes her journey toward becoming a researcher. Like Roxanne, she was hired into an academic position which required her to move cities, move houses, and the demands of being an academic. “Research, teaching, supervising students, service, with so many things that demand time and energy everyday, stress is a constant factor in my life” (p. 66). McCormick and Barnes (2008) offer new academics a number of helpful strategies that could make the transition to an academic position easier. These authors offer advice for navigating the academic culture of an institution including the recommendations that new academics learn about the promotion and tenure process, seek out mentorship, and protect their time. Kostovich, Saban, and Collins (2010) strongly recommend that new researchers in Nursing Faculties take on a mentor. They suggested that to expect new graduates to compete for research funding is setting new researchers up for failure. Setting up a research agenda will be difficult because most new graduates have limited personal and financial resources and as a result institutions should set themselves up to support these new researchers. Kostovich, Saban, and Collins (2010) suggest that while doctoral studies are an arduous process, new graduates are far from being “experts”.

### **Implications**

In reading Roxanne’s narrative I believe that there is a great deal for us to learn. She is a young scholar navigating an institutional culture and a new province. These things bring with them a number of life changes, and as a result, an increase in levels of stress and anxiety. On an institutional level I think that universities need to be aware of these stressful events and plan a system of supports around new faculty if we want them to be happy, healthy, and contributing members of the academic community.

Another implication is that scholars are not isolated beings. They come with partners, children, and sometimes extended families that rely on them for support. Therefore, institutions such as Memorial University of Newfoundland should also have policies and procedures in place to assist new hires with adapting and adjusting to the new institution, as well as the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador. Most important for Roxanne would have been support for her partner, Frank. Frank moved to Newfoundland so that Roxanne could take on a faculty position, however, as a couple they were left with the task of finding employment for Frank. There was no information provided that employment supports were available, and other than reviewing the health care benefits associated with the position, no assistance was provided or offered.

Roxanne's narrative also shows the positive relationship she experienced with her supervisor and the impact it had on herself and her career. Roxanne's mentor trained her to be involved, that her opinions were valued, and that she was capable. I believe that this served as a role model for Roxanne. She states that she hopes to be able to treat her students in a similar manner.

**Coda**

*The task is complete!*

*I can't wait to start again*

*Children I'll see again*

*They will make this journey worth it*

*Getting involved, working again*

*Energizing, it's surprising*

*I love my job*

*It been worthwhile*

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