

# SEEKING TIME WITHIN TIME: EXPLORING THE TEMPORAL CONSTRAINTS OF WOMEN TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES AS GRADUATE STUDENTS AND NOVICE RESEARCHERS

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**ABSTRACT.** The primary focus of this qualitative study is an inquiry into three female teachers' experiences as novice researchers. Over the course of an academic year I maintained a focus upon participants' research experiences and their use of time as they conducted research studies. Delving into the temporal constraints that informed participants' research experiences provided insights into competing demands shaping their understanding of research. In light of current performance accountability measures monitoring the ways teachers are using their professional time, this study provides new ways to consider the multiple challenges and gendered inequities female teachers are navigating in their efforts to professionally develop and learn.

## À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS DANS LE TEMPS: EXPLORATION DES CONTRAINTES TEMPORELLES VÉCUES PAR LES ENSEIGNANTES COMME ÉTUDIANTES GRADUÉES ET NOUVELLES CHERCHEURES

**RÉSUMÉ.** Cette recherche qualitative analyse principalement les expériences vécues par trois enseignantes comme nouvelles chercheuses. Au cours d'une année scolaire, j'ai porté mon attention sur les expériences de recherches des participantes et sur leur utilisation du temps lorsqu'elles menaient leurs recherches. Chercher à comprendre les contraintes temporelles qui influencent la démarche de recherche des participantes m'a offert un regard nouveau sur les demandes multiples qui façonnent leur compréhension de ce qu'est la recherche. Dans le contexte des mesures d'imputabilité actuelles, la manière dont les enseignants utilisent leur temps professionnel est étroitement surveillée. Tenant compte de ces mesures, ce projet de recherche révèle de nouvelles manières d'aborder les divers défis et les inégalités liées au genre auxquels les enseignantes font face, dans leurs efforts de développement et d'apprentissage professionnels.

I personally think we should have more time.... I don't mean the stretching of time but... time within time... because... I feel that I am missing something... I could have... more connections with my research if there was more time. (Ece<sup>1</sup>, Group interview, October 28, 2009)

The primary focus of this qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) is an inquiry into three female teachers' experiences as novice researchers as they worked towards the completion of their graduate degrees in the midst of teaching full time in a university English language school<sup>2</sup> in Turkey. Research on teacher research has established that while conducting research may be a profound professional learning activity for teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999, 2004; Zeichner, 2003), it is also challenging for teachers to sustain as part of regular teaching practices and responsibilities (Chandler, 1999; Massey, Baber, Lowe, Ormond, & Weatherly, 2009). As part of this body of work, time as a constraint is well documented and most research has concluded that, for teachers, time for research is scarce (Borg, 2007, 2009, 2010; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012; Thornley, Parker, Read, & Eason, 2004). In the opening excerpt, one of the participants, Ece, identifies a lack of time as limiting the potential of her learning from research. While Ece's comments in this instance affirm earlier research findings, few studies have looked closely at how teacher-led research is shaped by contextual constraints and social role expectations, particularly in how personal and professional responsibilities and gendered perceptions of time pressure (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) shape the research process for teachers and intersect with their potential as research-minded professionals (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013).

In this paper, I maintain a focus upon participants' understanding of temporal constraints as they engaged in research. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: 1) to problematize and better understand time as a constraint as teachers conduct research and 2) to demonstrate the presence of gendered experiences of time pressure and of social expectations (Mattingly & Sayer, 2006) as female teachers engage in research. The findings of this study present an opportunity to consider the implications of research as a professional learning endeavor embedded in the complex conditions and contexts where teachers live (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

#### TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND TIME, AN EVER-PRESENT CONSTRAINT

Teacher research has grown to become a conspicuous presence in educational research and teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2011). Stenhouse (1975), often credited with the early development of the notion "the teacher as researcher", suggested, "from whatever standpoint we view research, we must find it difficult to deny that the teacher is surrounded by rich research opportunities" (p. 110). The proliferation of teacher research, by and about teacher researchers, supports his claim yet also depicts how the field has grown more complicated

(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Leeman & Wardekker, 2013). For example, teacher-led research has been found to provide opportunities for meaningful professional development (Vrijnsen-de Corteau, den Brok, Kamp, & Bergen, 2013), critical thinking (Hagevik, Aydeniz, & Rowell, 2012), discovery learning (Gray, 2013), collaborative collegial learning (Christie & Menter, 2009), university-school partnerships (Arhar et al., 2013; Thornley et al., 2004), and educational policy development (Rust & Meyers, 2006). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) suggest that because teacher research “is such a generative concept, it can be shaped and reshaped to further virtually any educational agenda” (p. 17). Few studies, however, examine how teachers new to research are inducted in as researchers (Zeichner, 2003).

In what follows, I discuss what is known about teachers as researchers with regards to documented benefits and challenges. As part of this discussion, I also address what is unknown, focusing particularly on the element of time as a constraint.

### ***Benefits of teacher-led research***

Many studies report research conducted by teachers as beneficial to their learning. Much of the emphasis here is on teacher growth and development of professional knowledge (Babkie & Provost, 2004; Borg, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; 2004). Because of its connection to ongoing professional learning, scholars suggest research engagement may help teachers see the familiar of their classrooms as unfamiliar (Power & Hubbard, 1999), as sites of positive change for their teaching practices, and potential opportunities for better understanding and documenting student learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; McGlinn Manfra, 2009). Teacher-led research is also said to foster capacity and confidence in teachers about their ability to conduct research (Castle, 2006) and to interpret educational policy (Rust & Meyers, 2006).

Many of these studies showcase teacher research in K-12 public school contexts (Fecho, Graham & Hudson-Ross, 2005; Castle, 2006) and specifically address this audience (Babkie & Provost, 2004; Capobianco & Joyal, 2008). A criticism of this body of work is the lack of evidence depicting teachers situated in alternative educational settings, such as private schools and university language schools, school contexts that are prevalent in many nations.

### ***Challenges informing teacher-led research***

Given the wealth of literature advocating for teacher research as a means for profound professional learning (Chandler, 1999; Zeichner, 2003), it may come as surprise to also note the abundance of literature that imparts concerns about its viability. Scholars who are more cautionary in their outlook about teacher research note the multiple challenges that research creates for teachers with the validity of its knowledge, its methods, and its goals routinely

questioned (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, 2004). Scholars also note the role of school contexts constraining the sustainability of teacher research (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013; Thornley et al., 2004) due to intensification of work (Hargreaves, 2003; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, 2011) in an era of accountability (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2006). As part of this conversation, the multiple demands of the classroom (Borg, 2010; Li, 2006) and the added challenge of finding suitable venues for teacher research (Smiles & Short, 2006) are also found to be deterrents for teachers.

Adding to the challenge of teacher research is the element of time as an ever-present constraint (Borg, 2007, 2009, 2010; Stenhouse, 1981; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012). The lack of time as hindrance to teacher research is a well-documented and consistent finding in the literature. Borg (2010) in an extensive review of the literature on English language teachers and research engagement found that teacher participants commonly cited a lack of time as the reason for not engaging in research-related activities. While these examples document a lack of time as a consistent challenge and deterrent for teacher research, little has been done to inquire more deeply into the element of time in how teachers use and perceive time in relation to the research process.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretically, several concepts inform this study: a performativity-performance approach (Morison & MacLeod, 2013), a narrative view of teacher knowledge (Xu & Connelly, 2009), and time pressure as experienced by teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Morison and MacLeod (2013) define a performativity-performance approach as a method that draws upon Judith Butler's (1990) gender theory of performativity in combination with Taylor (2005, 2006) and Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive approach. Morison and MacLeod proposed that in order to apply Butler's performativity theory, one must "*carefully* [supplement] the notion performativity with that of narrative performance in a manner that allows for the inclusion of relational specificities and the mechanisms through which gender, and gender trouble, occur" (p. 567). By complementing performativity with narrative performance as detailed in the narrative-discursive approach, Morison and MacLeod argued, a researcher is able to "draw attention to subject positioning and interactional trouble within the micro politics of particular localized discursive contexts" (p. 567) and in that way "contextualizing and making 'gender trouble' visible in real life settings" (p. 567). What is apparent in their description is that the merger between gender performativity theory with that of narrative-discursive enables the researcher to focus on relational facets of gender while attending to participant positioning and interactions in particular contexts over a period of time. Given my focus upon female teachers' experiences as novice researchers, Morison and MacLeod's conceptualization enabled me to think deeply about

participants' research experiences over time and pinpoint moments of gender trouble in relation to important others and the places in which events occurred.

As part of my framework, I also draw upon a narrative view of teacher knowledge, a body of work that understands teacher professional knowledge as composed of individuals' experiences in personal and professional contexts shaping their learning and identities (Xu & Connelly, 2009) explicitly and tacitly (Johnson, 1989). There is a wealth of narrative research in an array of educational setting and situations that illustrates the numerous ways teachers learn and develop as multiple and contextually dependent (Barak et al., 2010; Carillo & Baguley, 2011; Craig, 2007; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010; Vloet & van Swet 2010). My review of the literature informed my understanding that while much was known about the benefits and challenges of teachers conducting research far less was known about teachers' research experiences over time. Thinking narratively (Xu & Connelly, 2009) provided new insights in to how participants experienced the research process and highlighted gender-troubling moments (Morison & MacLeod, 2013) as they emerged.

Further refining my thinking about participants' accounts of their research experiences was Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2011) notion of time pressure and how teachers experience it in connection to their work in schools. Skaalvik and Skaalvik define time pressure for teachers as a combination of multiple causes. They wrote,

We refer to the combined work load and hectic workday as time pressure, which is due to multiple causes such as an increasing demand for documentation and paperwork, more frequent meetings, more frequent communication with parents, the administration and scoring of achievement tests, frequent changes of the curriculum, and participation in a number of school development projects. (p. 1031)

The work of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) drew my attention to participants' descriptions of time as it was embedded in the stories of their research experiences. Viewing time pressure through a gender performativity lens enabled me to pinpoint recurring instances across participants' accounts in which described tensions provided pivotal insights in to the ways teaching and family related responsibilities as well as the gendered expectations of others intersected with their efforts to engage in research.

## METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In August of 2009 I first met Ece, Damla, and Eda in my role as an instructor of an intensive introductory research methods course at Knowledge University, a well-established private university in Turkey. Upon completion of the course in early September and once grades had been submitted, I invited the three women to take part in a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) about their experiences as novice researchers. As part of my teaching responsibilities, I

did advise the three participants, as well as nine of their classmates, about the development of their research studies, a study that was to be completed as partial fulfilment of their master degree. The research project did not receive a formal grade and was assessed according to its completion. As part of this process, upon completion of their research, they presented their research studies to a different instructor. My role throughout the process was of supportive mentor. In addition to their status as graduate students at Knowledge University, Ece, Damla, and Eda were also instructors in the University's English language school. At the time of the study, each of the women were experienced teachers and were in their final year of a three-year graduate degree as contractually stipulated by the university language school.

Also being of particular importance in this study is the context in which it occurred. Turkey is an emerging nation economically (Hismanoglu, 2012) with a rapidly growing population (General Directorate on the Status of Women, 2008) and although the majority of the population has attended or attends schools, literacy level differences exist between genders, age groups, and regions in Turkey. Of note, literacy levels are lower in older age groups, in rural areas, and in Eastern regions with women demonstrating lower levels of literacy among these groups (General Directorate on the Status of Women, 2008; Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü / Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2012). Ece, Damla, and Eda were three well-educated women who lived in a large, urban center in the Western region of the country. All three were from middle income backgrounds, which arguably provided them with particular educational advantages over their rural counterparts (Aycan, 2004; Müftüler-Baç, 1999, 2012).

Approaching this qualitative study with a particular interest in the stories that participants shared of their research experiences, I interviewed the women individually and collectively over the course of the 2009-2010 academic year. In total there were four group interviews; these took place in September, October, and December 2009 and June 2010. The group interviews ran approximately 60-120 minutes. I also conducted individual interviews to create opportunities for participants to discuss matters that were particular to them and to acknowledge the individual pace of their research journeys. I individually interviewed each participant on two occasions in 2010 between the months of January and June. The individual interviews ran between 45 and 70 minutes. Individually interviewing participants was important during the later stages of participants' individual research studies, specifically during the more challenging stages of the study as they analysed data and wrote up their research findings. Interview transcripts were also shared with participants and they provided me with further understanding of our conversations by inserting comment boxes throughout the documents in which they clarified meaning, asked questions, and suggested possible topics for future interviews. In addition to group and individual interviews, other data sources included:

field notes, participant-generated photographs and artifacts, and blog entries from a private blog to which we all contributed.

Over the course of the study, I analyzed inductively and planned each phase of data collection according to the different stages of the research process (Phase one: Research proposal development; Phase two: Data collection; Phase three: Data analysis; Phase four: Write up of findings). Analyzing inductively enabled me to pinpoint recurring themes. As I read and re-read participants' accounts, I focused upon moments in which perceptions of time pressure and gendered expectations of others provided insights into participants' positioning in different social, personal, and professional settings and how these competed with the demands of conducting a research study. After reviewing the data sources that included temporal and gendered references numerous times, I identified three themes according to the most distinct patterns of time and gender found in participants' accounts; these refer to their shared experiences and are as follows: 1) seeking time within time, 2) perceptions of others' expectations of time use, and 3) efforts to make research a part of a multitasking cycle.

#### TEMPORAL CONSTRAINTS OF TEACHERS AS NOVICE RESEARCHERS

The participants had strong views about conducting research in their final year of a three-year program as they taught full-time. Participants saw their professional identities as being shaped by competing, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives of who they were supposed to be as teachers, professional career women, and attentive family members (Mitton Kukner, 2013). In what follows, I discuss three main themes that emerged from analysis. Excerpts from a variety of data sources (interviews, blog entries, field notes, participant generated photographs) are presented and represent a sample of the frequency with which time and gender-related elements were evident in participants' stories of their experiences. I begin with the theme "seeking time within time" because it was the most pronounced time-related pattern in participants' accounts of their research experiences and provides a backdrop for participants' academic endeavours to which the other themes are connected.

##### *Theme one: Seeking time within time*

Throughout the academic year in which participants conducted research, a recurring topic in teachers' reported accounts was their desire for more time so as to enjoy and deepen their intellectual understanding of what they were studying. Drawing upon the words of one of the participants, I refer to this theme as seeking time within time to categorize all moments and expressions in which participants described a yearning for total immersion in their research without external pressures and demands competing for their attention. Ece described seeking time within time as having operational and emotional connotations for her own learning and development. Over the course of the

academic year, Ece described time for research as an elusive luxury. In the following I share two different excerpts from conversations with Ece in October 2009 and June 2010 to highlight how being immersed in research was an ongoing ideal for Ece rather than a reality:

I personally think we should have more time... I don't mean the stretching of time but... time within time... because I would really like to take more delight in my research and unfortunately, I feel that I am missing something... the thing is I could have... more connections with my research if there was more time. Just for my understanding, my own purpose – just to gain more perspective. For example, I would really like to... have two hours... just looking for articles. Taking my time. I really don't have this luxury... [to] do something for myself. I don't have this unfortunately. (Ece, Group interview, October 28, 2009)

It was unfortunate when I collect[ed] some data, adequate data, I didn't have the luxury... to go back... and look for articles on different topics. I wish I just had [had] more time to take delight in the research process, but because of my role in the school [and] because of many other things – even the visits of my in-laws – everything affect[ed] [the research process] actually. You don't have a lot of time for luxury if you call it [that]. (Ece, Individual interview, June 1, 2010)

According to Ece, what was needed was not necessarily more time added on to the duration of her graduate studies, but blocks of time during the process in which this was the sole task on which she was able to dedicate herself. For Ece, the opportunity to further develop her own learning, however, was something she perceived as a luxury in light of other personal and professional responsibilities. Implied in Ece's account of her research efforts are unseen others, as noted when she mentioned not having time to “do something for myself” alongside her comment that “even the visit of my in-laws” had temporal implications upon what she was able to do. A recurring thread in Ece's descriptions of her learning was a tone of “what might have been” had the time to be immersed in research been a currency that she possessed.

As part of their research efforts and the desire to immerse themselves in the process, participants described the challenge of maintaining a consistent connection to their research. Participants often discussed this in connection to the regular demands of students, administrative tasks, and family obligations. Damla discussed her attempts to gather data while teaching full time as a “hectic life” in which she felt she had:

Lost track of what [was] going in my life as a researcher. Something happens in class and I want to write it down, then a student comes and asks a question or I get a phone call and I say [to myself] “I will write it [down] in the next [teaching] block.” I wish I had a chip in my mind where I could “store” all the things [that] I want to keep. Sometimes I just think: I wish I had more time to enjoy being a researcher, see my path and take decisions. (Damla, Blog contribution, October 5, 2009)



In this example, Damla noted her failed attempts to make field note writing a part of her regular teaching day and the challenge of gathering data when responsible for the learning of others. Faced with the multiple competing demands of classroom life on top of research, Damla, much like Ece, emphasized the importance of time to think deeply. Also present throughout Damla's account of her research experiences was a sense of anticipation of when she might next be able to concretely act out her role as a researcher as noted in this excerpt when she stated "I will write it [down] in the next [teaching] block." It may be inferred as well that her desire for "a chip in my mind where I could "store" all things [that] I want to keep" was a sign that putting off the research task until she found a block of time was not a successful strategy and that, possibly, she had lost potentially important data for her study as a result.

Eda, in line with what has been described by Damla and Ece, admitted that her research efforts felt like a part-time endeavour and that she often did not have the time:

to think about being a researcher — in fact I sometimes feel that there is so many other things happening that being a researcher is a part-time thing, not something that I do with consistency or with a lot of time. This is something that I would dearly love to spend more time on as I enjoy the research that I'm doing and I enjoy the writing that I'm doing. Do you think it's possible for us to have / get more hours in the day without losing anything that we already have? (Eda, Blog contribution, October 5, 2009)

In this blog contribution, Eda emphasized her lack of a daily connection with her research study as a result of "so many other things happening" and is reminiscent of what Leeman and Wardekker (2013) refer to as teacher researchers having to "juggle balls like in a circus" (p. 11). Eda's comments also underline the solitary nature of teacher research (Rust & Meyers, 2006) in that caught up in the daily demands of her teaching, her own professional learning is put to the side until she feels her other responsibilities are fulfilled. Eda's emphasis upon finding more "hours in the day without losing anything that we already have" suggests the time she is looking for is for herself, but only if other professional obligations are satisfied first.

Distinct from the daily busyness of their teaching experiences and family responsibilities, time for research was seen by participants as a luxury. Unlikely to be fulfilled, yet a lingering desire informing their understanding of the researcher they might be, had they the time to devote themselves to such tasks. Also present in participants' understanding of temporal constraints and how these informed the research process was the presence of larger social narratives in Turkish society that suggest women of their age should be more focused on marriage, child care, and family responsibilities (Cin & Walker, 2013; Sarı, 2012). Although steps have been taken to establish the legal basis for gender equality in Turkey, its "implementation is limited by the prevalent social norms and practices... particularly important for...gender equality in family and access

to employment” (Müftüler-Baç, 2012, p.14). In today’s modern Turkey women are more involved in work life and men in home life (Aycan & Eskin, 2005), yet this transition, as noted by Turkish scholars, has not been smooth as women’s daily lives are influenced by patriarchal aspects of society and rigid gender roles (Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Altınay & Arat, 2009; Sarı, 2012). Generally, society encourages women to take part in the work force providing that family and home life do not suffer because of work outside of the home (Aycan, 2004). Teaching, as a profession, in Turkey is described by Sarı (2012) as:

An occupation that [is] historically gendered and labeled as a “female profession,” [it] is one of the occupations in which societal patriarchal properties and women-based stereotypes (motherliness, emotional, empathetic, people-oriented, patient, less career-oriented, obedient, etc.) can be seen. Women teachers busy with familial affairs at home and occupational responsibilities at school have to struggle more than their male counterparts do in order to fulfill their multi-dimensional roles and expectations. (p. 815-816)

Situating participants’ research experiences within the larger context brings to light what Mattingly and Sayer (2006) refer to as the “invisible time [that] women spend coordinating and managing housework tasks” (p. 209) and that while participants saw time for research as an elusive luxury, it is important to contextualize probable reasons informing their understanding. Due to participants’ emphasis on personal and professional obligations, and in light of broader societal norms, as part of my analysis, I also looked closely for time-related patterns informing participants’ perceptions of other’s expectations regarding their use of time. In the next section, I explore this theme and discuss participants’ sense of time in connection to their perceptions of important others.

### *Theme two: Perceptions of others’ expectations of time use and social roles*

Perceptions of others who were personally and professionally important in their lives seemed to play a strong influential role upon participants’ understanding of personal time-use and social roles. All emphasized graduate studies as the metaphoric place in which the professional and personal intersected, and because of this, they felt their ability to create time solely for research was limited. Ece described this situation as “everything else we have to do... we are instructors, we are colleagues, we are wives, mothers, fathers...the distribution of roles is not very even” (Ece, Group interview, October 28, 2010). All of the participants described moments in which others’ gendered expectations conflicted with their own professional aspirations. Marriage, motherhood, and settling down were recurrent features throughout their accounts and seemed to represent for others’ important goals the women were expected to achieve. To illustrate this point, in the following excerpt, Damla recalls a conversation with her father.

You know I'm trying to lose weight, so I said, [to my father] "In March I'll be slimmer... hopefully the Master's will be over... then there will be nothing I can't accomplish in my life"... and then my father said, "No, you haven't done the most important thing." I asked, "What's that?" He said, "Come on I am waiting for a son-in-law." So this is the expectation. You don't have to lose weight, you don't have to do [a] master's... it's nothing for him... actually my father is one of the most modern Turkish men... you can get. But still, he has this expectation... a girl [who is] 33 years old, come on, get married so you can have a baby. (Damla, Group interview October 28, 2009)

Damla emphasized that despite being "one of the most modern Turkish men," her father's expectation of marriage and motherhood seemed to be more important in his eyes than the completion of a graduate degree or her personal goal of becoming more fit. In the telling of this experience, Damla implied that for her father, something about Damla is missing and that until she gets married and has children, he will continue to wait. Damla's father's perspective regarding her time use seemed to be informed by his understanding of teaching as a feminine occupation, in that, she should be able to spare time for domestic responsibilities (Sari, 2012).

Like Damla, Eda as well had pressure from her family to settle down. During an impromptu meeting, Eda described a painful conversation that she had had with her mother about her upcoming graduation in June of that year.

Eda dropped by and we chatted for a while. I guess her mother is not coming to the graduation. Eda's sister is pregnant and her mother is staying home "just in case." Yet it's more than this. Eda's mother also told her that she is "never" coming back to [visit] unless it's to meet the "significant other". Such pressure on Eda to marry...as she spoke her eyes filled with tears. Eda seemed so hurt. (Field notes, April 1, 2010)

Over the course of that academic year, all of the participants, as demonstrated in the previous scenarios, received what Müftüler-Baç (1999) refers to as the "one message," a message in which women are reminded "to marry as early as possible and [to] continue her life as a docile, pleasant wife and a dedicated, sacrificing mother" (p. 312). This confirms earlier research, which emphasizes the tensions of Turkish women in the work force and the conflict between professional and social roles (Cin & Walker, 2013; Gök, 2007; Müftüler-Baç 1999; 2012).

One may assume that the participants experienced these pressures solely at home; however, according to the women, these were also present professionally. All of the participants described others' gendered time use and social role expectations as shaping their interactions at work and noted its presence in the professional decision making of their female colleagues. During a group interview, Eda explained,

If you look at any woman [in the school] [who's] pregnant, she's either finished [stage 1 of the institution's educational training program] and they're

just about to start [a module of the graduate program] but they don't want to start [it] so they're pregnant...so it gives them a year [before they have to begin]. (Eda, Group interview, October 28, 2009)

Knowing that having children was something others expected of her as a married woman, Ece explained that colleagues often asked her "are you pregnant now?" that individuals "genuinely want to know this... I feel very badly because I wonder am I getting fat or something." Ece also had to live with this pressure at home and in the following describes a recurring scenario with her mother-in-law as a one-sided telephone call, "It's really interesting my mother-in-law telephoning... [and] I'm like baby? No. Oh, okay, goodbye" (Group interview, October 28, 2009). In an individual conversation, Ece, reflecting upon the reasons underlying her decision to delay pregnancy, explained,

First, I'm not ready and this is a very big commitment. And second I still feel young. If I hadn't things to do today I would have gone to [a nearby university campus] and sat on the grass... I still have so many concerts to attend, so, many crazy things to do with my husband, without a baby. (Ece, Individual conversation March 2, 2010)

Ece's comments show her awareness of others' expectations of her and, yet implied in Ece's account is a sense that time was already scarce and to have children at this stage would further compound the scarcity of time that she experienced.

Feeling and behaving like a researcher was described by all of the women as both rewarding and challenging in that while they valued the opportunity to further their professional knowledge and development through research, this was something that placed more demands upon their time and was little understood by others outside of the university context. Aycan (2004) suggested that the sociocultural context of Turkey impacts women's career progression in two possible ways: gender role stereotypes may create obstacles for women with family-related obligations and traditional attitudes towards women's career advancement may also create barriers. Participants' comments suggest that they understood why tensions occurred between themselves and important others in their attempts to further develop their knowledge through research and related graduate course work. They seemed to see these tensions as something they individually had to negotiate and often described their efforts to do research as part of a larger multitasking cycle.

### *Theme three: Efforts to make research a part of a multitasking cycle*

Over the course of the academic year, it became evident that participants were developing a heightened awareness of how to include research as part of their routines. Participants described their multitasking as a rhythm of trial and error in which they tentatively attempted to create pockets of time for their research in addition to teaching, administrative, family, and graduate student-related responsibilities. Early in the year when their first research efforts began with

the development of proposals, there was much tension and concern. During this phase, Damla described it as a challenging period in which she was attempting to balance multiple tasks.

Two weeks before I was trying to integrate [Instructor A's] assignment and my research reading.... I was torturing myself because you don't get anything finished, you stress yourself [out] and you look at [Instructor A's] [assignment] and nothing [is finished]... and you look at the research, nothing [is finished]... and it's Sunday evening and you have to write the weekly plan, you have essays to mark... However, because it's the evening you can't focus on just one thing. You have to be a wife... a sister, and a daughter... a friend. (Damla, Group interview, October 28, 2010)

Early in the study, the women spoke of the challenge of maintaining a focus on their research as they attended to other responsibilities, such as those described by Damla. In response to a complaint that Damla made on the blog about "finding it difficult to integrate literature into my writing because it's been a while since I looked at [it]" (Damla, Blog contribution, October 8, 2009), Eda responded that she would like to "spend some time on just my research as opposed to research and school and other courses" (Eda, Blog contribution, October 8, 2009). Damla and Eda's remarks indicate that they were finding it challenging to further develop their research due to other responsibilities, a concern that was present throughout the duration of their research efforts.

Finding time for research happened in several different ways for participants. Ece noted that she made time for her research in between family responsibilities.

Tomorrow, for example, we're planning a big breakfast... my brother-in-law is coming... normally I wouldn't have time during the week to prepare a big breakfast or spare some five star quality time with a guest... anyways we'll have a big breakfast and then I'll sit at the table and... [begin to work]. (Ece, Group interview, October 28, 2009)

Damla emphasized that she did much of her literature review reading

on the service bus.... I have my highlighter and my stuff and I'm constantly highlighting and writing just in order not to forget.... I have started taking notes on top [of the article] as I go along like "quite useful", [or] "check this". (Damla, Group interview, October 28, 2009)

Eda described her research efforts as something that she made "time for even if only for 10-15 minutes a day so that I keep on top of what is happening with my research and with my topic" (Eda, Blog contribution, October 20, 2009).

Although participants found ways to integrate research into their busy schedules, they all noted the amount of energy it took to sustain their research. Damla explained that sustaining her graduate work happened in the midst of ongoing personal responsibilities as the eldest daughter in her family.

Not this weekend but the weekend before, my father was hospitalized and I had to stay with him but I had to do [Instructor B's] assignment. It was the

first assignment and I didn't want to [make] a bad impression so I did it at the hospital. I didn't tell [him] anything I just sent my assignments. (Damla, Individual interview, March 12, 2010)

Not only was Damla concerned about her father in this moment, she was also seemingly concerned about the impression a late assignment would make upon her instructor. All of the participants noted, at varying stages of the research, the ways they attempted to balance family responsibilities alongside high quality work in their teaching and graduate studies. Contributing as well to the time pressure that participants experienced were the dual roles they held within the institution as an English language instructor and graduate student. Participants often expressed concern about how important others (colleagues, administrators, and supervisors) would perceive their completed research; as they felt negative perceptions about the quality of their research would impact their professional reputations.

Mattingly and Sayer (2006) suggested that despite greater equality in the labour force “one effect of persisting gender inequality in the domestic sphere... is that women feel more pressure to combine a high level of domestic output with paid work hours” (pp. 217-218). Not only were Ece, Damla, and Eda attempting to balance high levels of output at home and in their classrooms, they also felt pressure to produce high quality research. Understanding how participants reportedly spent their time in relation to research, does not explain how gender is constructed in Turkish society, however it does provide insights into how gender is conveyed (Hillbrecht, Zuzanek, & Mannell, 2008) and how time pressure was experienced for these women. Müftüler-Baç (1999) described this situation as “the paradoxical character of women’s emancipation in Turkey” (p. 303) as “they are all subject to the rules of patriarchy” (p. 311).

## **CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL INEQUITIES IN AN ERA OF INCREASING WORKLOAD**

This paper describes some of the ways three teachers were beginning to develop as researchers in the final year of a graduate program. The literature depicting the field of teacher-led research has established that it is comprised of benefits and challenges (Borg, 2010) for teachers in how engagement in research may provide meaningful professional learning (Babkie & Provost, 2004; Borg, 2007; Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1999; 2004, 2009), better understanding of student learning in classroom situations (McGlenn Manfra, 2009; Power & Hubbard, 1999), and capacity and confidence in conducting research (Castle, 2006), to name a few examples.

The findings of this study affirm earlier studies in how Ece, Damla, and Eda felt engaging in research was rewarding and intellectually stimulating (Vrijnsen-de Cortea et al., 2013), enabled them to think critically about the contexts in which research is conducted (Hagevik, Aydeniz, & Rowell, 2012;

Rust & Meyers, 2006), and highlighted their critical awareness of teaching as a gendered profession (Mitton Kukner, 2013; Sari, 2012; Smulyan, 2004). Upon completion of their studies, Ece, Damla, and Eda described themselves as empowered in response to conducting research (McGlenn Manfra, 2009; Zeichner, 2003).

Complicating the picture of the benefits of teacher research, however, are questions about the validity, methods, and goals of teacher-led research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) alongside the challenges of conducting research in school contexts where workload demands and measures of accountability are increasing (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013). Ece, Damla, and Eda found that research was time intensive and competed with multiple other demands, some of these demands included classroom and teaching responsibilities. Participants' perceived lack of time due to the combination of teaching and research is an important aspect of their experiences to acknowledge, and is documented in the literature as one of the challenges experienced by teachers conducting research (Borg, 2007, 2009, 2010; Li, 2006; Massey et al., 2009; Stenhouse, 1981; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012). At the same time, participants also described a lack of time for research due to other responsibilities, particularly in how family-related obligations complicated their efforts, a finding, which suggests that time as a constraint for teacher researchers, is not only contextual, but is also gendered and relational. Heavy time pressure was a prominent and prevalent feature across participants' accounts as was the presence of gendered expectations and the ways important others shaped their understanding of the amount of time they were able to invest in research endeavors. At odds with participants' feelings of empowerment were the competing demands that conducting research created for them and influenced the amount of time they felt they were able to invest (or not) into research (Menzies & Newson, 2008).

Some may criticize participants' efforts to be teacher researchers in how their efforts seemed largely focused on finding time for research rather than a stance that suggested they looked upon the process of research as a "critical habit of mind... [and a] way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 120). Cochran-Smith and Lytle propose that for a teacher researcher, inquiry as stance is *not* "something one turns off and on at given points in time and space with clearly demarcated lines between when and where one is teaching and when and where one is doing inquiry" (p. 120); rather inquiry as stance is "social and political in the sense of deliberating about what to get done, why to get it done, who decides, and whose interests are served" (p. 121). Participants struggled with the overlap of their multiple demands; particularly in the ways their contractual requirements, graduate coursework, research studies, and family obligations competed and, at times, conflicted with one another. The presence of these multiple demands arguably influenced their understanding of research as a part-time endeavor as opposed to a way of knowing. It also suggests that for female teach-

ers with busy lives and multiple responsibilities developing inquiry as stance as a “critical habit of mind” is dependent on not only the individual female teacher, but is also interrelated with the presence of supportive professional and personal networks at home, schools, and higher education contexts. Situating participants’ understanding of research within the broader societal context of Turkey and its gendered norms sheds light upon the competing demands they experienced. Also important to acknowledge is the increasing workload of teachers (Hargreaves, 2003; Galton, MacBeath, Steward, Page, & Edwards, 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, 2011), and research which shows an increase in the amount of time that teachers give to hours in school (Bruno, Ashby, & Manzo, 2012; Philipp & Kunter 2013), to planning and grading outside of school (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, 2011), and to meetings, paperwork, and other school-related endeavours (Galton, MacBeath, Page, & Steward, 2002; Galton et al., 2004). In addition, because of technological developments (such as e-mail and forms of social media), there is also a pervasive sense that teachers are always accessible (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2006). Ece, Damla, and Eda’s research experiences in relation to this body of work brings sharply into focus questions about the sustainability of teacher-led research as a professional learning endeavor, an implication that may resonate for others in similar social, cultural, and educational settings.

#### **CONCLUSION: TEMPORAL CONSTRAINTS, PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, AND DEMANDING CONTEXTS**

Teacher-led research, as part of teachers’ professional learning, is a popular and somewhat unquestioned trend (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013). The idea that teachers should be conducting classroom-based research as part of professional development (O’Connell Rust, 2009) and as part of the conversation on educational change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) points to the complexity of its aims (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013). Considering the temporal constraints of female teachers’ research experiences as contextual, gendered, and relational provides insights into the competing demands shaping their learning. Globally, in light of current performance accountability measures monitoring the ways teachers are using their professional time (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2006) coupled with increasing workload (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) in institutional contexts that prefer swift results (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013), this study provides new ways to consider the multiple challenges and gendered inequities female teachers are navigating in their efforts to professionally develop and learn.

#### **NOTES**

1. The names for the participants, as well as the institution in which they worked and studied, are pseudonyms.



2. A university language school in Turkey refers to a language school situated in a higher education setting. Institutions providing instruction in a foreign language such as English are mandated by the Turkish Council of Higher Education (CoHE) to have foreign language preparatory schools and to provide language instruction for university students who do not meet the minimum foreign language proficiency requirements upon entry into university. Instructors of university language preparatory schools are considered by the CoHE as non-tenure track teaching staff members and are different from academic staff with PhDs who are expected to conduct research and to formally disseminate their work (CoHE 2010; Mizikaci 2006).

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