



Academic Motherhood in a Post-Second Wave Context

Challenges, Strategies and Possibilities

Edited by

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Best Practices and Barriers

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KAREN SKIVERS DRAKE

MANY WOMEN HAVE BEEN ATTRACTED to the teaching profession over the years. Teaching in the higher education environment may, on face, have great appeal as an opportunity in which faculty enjoy a high degree of autonomy in their work and scheduling flexibility.

Those outside the faculty (e.g., students, citizens, even university administrators that have never worked in a tenure-track position) may perceive faculty positions to be an ideal career path for those who seek to balance work and family. It is not always evident that the research and service demands of faculty positions coupled with teaching impose a work week requiring well beyond a 40 hours. Indeed, writing is often reserved for evenings or weekends at home. As a result, the advantages of autonomy and flexibility that appear inherent in the position have the potential to turn into disadvantages as the boundaries between work and home blur, increasing the likelihood of work-family conflict. Compared to faculty members who are either single or married with a stay-at-home wife, women with young children are more likely to experience obstacles to maintaining productive time for research and publication.

This chapter examines the tenure rate among women with young children and considers explanations for the disparities. Our intention is to raise awareness of inequality, to advocate for broader implementation of family friendly policies in higher education, and to promote supportive organizational cultures. We consider explanations for the “mommy penalty” in academia including: structural inequalities, stereotypes, and attribution theory. We also integrate a best practices approach with results of a recent quality of life in academia survey conducted by the authors

through the University of Baltimore Work/Life Balance Initiative, funded by a grant from the ACE/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (hereinafter referred to as the UB Sloan Survey). The best practices approach examines family friendly policies among a variety of U.S. colleges and universities that have been recognized for family friendly policies, specifically parental leave, child-care, tenure-clock stop, and active service-modified duties. The UB Sloan Survey was administered during the spring semester of 2010 to examine policies and perceptions of barriers that discourage the utilization of family friendly policies. The results of the study represent 247 respondents from four public universities in the United States. Respondents represented a variety of academic fields across ranks: 39 percent were tenured, 24 percent were tenure-track, 24 percent were full-time non-tenure track, and 14 percent were part-time adjuncts. Through the examination of best practices combined with the results of the UB Sloan Survey we contend that policies designed to eliminate or minimize structural inequality will only be effective through supportive organizational cultures.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The number of women pursuing advanced degrees has increased over the past couple of decades. In 2005, 60 percent of graduate students were women (Sotirin). Using data from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, Martin Finkelstein, Robert Seal, and Jack Schuster found that women have made substantial gains in acquiring faculty positions across institutional types and program areas. Representing 41 percent of the total new faculty cohort, women accounted for 47.9 percent of new entries into research universities (an area of previous under-representation) while the new entries of women in liberal arts colleges have gained statistical parity with their male counterparts. Nevertheless, 70 percent of professors are male at the most prestigious universities (Wilson 2004). Similarly, male professors outnumber female professors by two to one at doctoral institutions and female professors are more likely to represent full-time faculty positions at two-year institutions (AAUP). In addition, underrepresentation persists in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The Committee of the National Academy of Sciences examined the problem of the small portion of female faculty in STEM at research universities. They concluded

that women are being or opt out at every educational transition. Most notably, while women made over 30 percent of the doctorates in social and behavioral sciences and 20 percent of the life sciences in the last 30 years, they only make 15.4 and 14.8 percent of the full professors in these areas—and the picture only gets worse for the “hard sciences” and engineering. The committee determined that women face discrimination and biases in STEM fields. Specifically, academic organizational structures and promotion/tenure evaluation criteria contain arbitrary and subjective components that disadvantage women. This is not too surprising given that the fields being male dominated is composed primarily of male evaluators. The report has specific recommendations for universities, higher education organizations, scientific and professional societies, honorary societies, journals, federal funding agencies and foundations, federal enforcement agencies and Congress. Among these, the most notable is for universities to “develop and implement hiring, tenure and promotion policies that take into account the flexibility that faculty need across the life course, allowing the integration of family, work, and community responsibilities” (8).

While women in graduate programs and the labor force have increased in recent years, the number entering full-time tenure-track positions and promoting through the ranks is much smaller and women are also more likely to work in contingent positions. A review of the entrance into full-time faculty positions reveals that women represented 39 percent of full-time faculty positions and 48 percent of the part-time positions in 2003 (Euben). In addition, newly minted male Ph.D.s with children under six year of age were twice as likely as female Ph.D.s with young children to enter a tenure-track position (Frasch et al.). When one considers occupational rank, women are more likely to occupy the lower ranks of instructor, lecturer, or assistant professor (Jacobs and Winslow; Mason and Goulden 2004b). According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2008a), women only accounted for 25 percent of the professors and 38.8 percent of the associate professors in U.S. academe in the fall of 2005. On the other hand, more than half of the instructor, lecturer or otherwise non-tenured positions (often referred to as the “second tier”) are occupied by women. A recent survey by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reported that within the rank of full professor women represented only 26 percent compared to men who represented 74 percent. When we consider the proportion of faculty

with tenure, we find that only 35.5 percent of female faculty at private institutions and 43.3 percent of those at public institutions are tenured, while their male counterparts achieve tenure at a rate of 51.1 percent and 57.1 percent, respectively (*Chronicle of Higher Education* 2008b). There is also concern that in recent years some universities have experienced a decline in tenure offers to women. For example, at Harvard University tenure offers to women have declined since 2001 (Wilson 2004).

The problem is that when academic mothers accept work in contingent positions, community colleges, or at "less demanding" four-year institutions it is often framed as a voluntary choice in order to balance the demands of work and family. This dichotomy between work and family establishes the perception that motherhood is incompatible with tenure-track positions. It is possible to assume that some might consider the demands of parenthood so pressing that there is a de facto non-negotiable priority assigned to the family responsibilities in comparison to the work. John Curtis asserts: "A part-time or non-tenure track position may allow some individual women to give more priority to their families, but their having to make that choice is an indication of continuing structural inequity in faculty careers" (22).

Establishing work in a way that positions men's lives as normal and women's as problematic places working mothers at a disadvantage. Joan Williams (2000) uses the term "ideal worker norm" to refer to jobs structured around traditional family patterns in which men were breadwinners with stay-at-home wives. The ideal worker norm has also dominated academia. According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), tenure was based on the premise of a male faculty member with a stay-at-home wife (Sotirin). Although teaching and service requirements are typically completed on campus (even though many committee reports and grading takes place at home), research is often reserved for "spare time" in the evenings and on weekends at home. Such arrangements are likely to disadvantage academic mothers who lose the "productive time" for research and publication available to women without children or men with stay at home wives (Allison; Fothergill and Feltey). A study by Ramona Gunter and Amy Stambach (based on interviews with 22 male and 22 female faculty members at a public research institution) found that faculty work under the perception that in order to succeed in academe one must spend as many hours as one can afford advancing the research work and drafting publications. Given

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the level of domestic responsibilities still resting on women today, even when they are the principal breadwinner in the household, the process places women (particularly those married with children) at a disadvantage. The men interviewed in this study tend to characterize the pursuit of tenure as a "game" to be played and won, while women perceive it as a "balancing act" whereby they must sacrifice elements of their personal life in order to ensure career success. These perceptions are also evident in recent empirical studies. Using data from the 1998 National Study of Post-secondary Faculty (NSOPF), Jerry Jacobs and Sarah Winslow found significant positive correlations between working 60 hours or more per week and publication rate. Unfortunately, the study also revealed that married fathers were more likely to work more than 60 hours per week than married mothers. Similarly, a study by Steven Stack demonstrated a statistically significant negative relationship between publication rates and women with preschool age children. Particularly disheartening is a study by Mary Ann Mason and Marc Goulden (2004a) that found that having "early babies"—children less than six years of age within five years of receiving a doctoral degree—had a negative impact on tenure rates for women but not men. Men with early babies were 38 percent more likely to receive tenure than women with early babies. Similarly, women who either waited five years after the Ph.D. or did not have children at all were more likely than women with early babies to receive tenure.

THE STATUS OF FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Family-friendly policies are organizational initiatives that have been established to assist employees in achieving work-life balance. One study by Cathy Trower and Jared Bleak of tenure-track faculty at six research universities found that among the junior faculty 46 percent were dissatisfied with the balance between personal and professional time, 68 percent stated that tenure-clock stops would be helpful while 64 percent stated that childcare would be helpful. Similarly, the UB Sloan Survey found that 46 percent of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with family friendly policies at their universities, 13 percent reported dissatisfaction, and four percent reported strong dissatisfaction. One respondent commented on the competing demands of motherhood and the university:

I feel that balancing the responsibilities as a new professor and mother of three young children is almost impossible at times. I know there are moments when one or both suffer. I don't know if there is an answer to this dilemma. My division chair and the dean of the college of education are both incredibly supportive and that helps so much—I feel that the system wide support of maternity leave, family leaves, etc. are not well supported.

As early as 1974, the AAUP issued a statement "Leaves of Absence for Child-Bearing, Child-Rearing, and Family Emergencies" (cited in the "Statement of Principles") that called for flexibility in meeting career and family obligations through reductions in workload or longer leaves of absence without loss of professional status. Nevertheless, in 2001 the AAUP found itself restating the importance of work-life balance through a "Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work" through its Committee on the Status of Women in the Academic Profession and its Subcommittee on Academic Work and Family. Included in the principles are parental leave, tenure-clock stop, active service-modified duties, and childcare.

Parental leave in the United States is typically interpreted under the *Family Medical Leave Act* of 1993 (FMLA) that requires up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for an employee to care for his or herself or an immediate family member. The legislation is limited to organizations with fifty or more employees and only covers full-time employees who have worked 1,250 hours the year prior. While this does provide job protection for women who have recently given birth, it does not benefit those who cannot afford to take unpaid leave. In some cases, women are not faced with the single option of unpaid leave as the policies and administration of this law varies somewhat in that some organizations provide paid leave. Nevertheless, many organizations interpret adherence to the law (FMLA) as a family friendly policy, which absent federal legislation, might never have been implemented within those organizations. It is for this reason we examine parental leave beyond FMLA. Not surprisingly, parental leave beyond FMLA varies among institutions of higher education. One study of 84 colleges and universities by Charmaine Yoest and Steve Rhoads found that 82 percent failed to offer paid parental leave. At many colleges and universities an absence of formal policy results in many faculty members negotiating their leave on an individual basis

(Gilbert). A study by the Center for the Education of Women (CEW) at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (2008) found that unpaid leave beyond FMLA was provided by 44 percent of the institutions within their sample. The study also revealed that leave applied to men as well as women if they were able to demonstrate the status of primary caregiver. Similarly, a study of 255 institutions of higher education found that 25 percent offered paid maternity leave (Sullivan, Hollenshead, and Smith). Once again, however, many employers might include paid sick leave under FMLA in their interpretation of paid maternity leave. Most universities combine sick leave or short-term disability to account for paid leave. In contrast, some universities offer full pay or partial pay for one semester. For example, upon the birth or adoption of a child, primary caregivers are offered one semester of paid leave at Duke University and The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Tenure clock stop is also included in the *AAUP Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work*.¹ The recommendations include stopping the tenure clock without taking a full leave of absence during the stop. This allows parents to adjust to their new role as caregivers, including those first months of sleep deprivation as well as transitioning to a new balance between work and family. Universities that offer tenure clock stops typically offer one to two year exclusion off of the tenure clock. While many universities directly tie tenure extensions to leave, it is important to point out that true tenure clock stops do not require a leave of absence.² In 1970, Princeton was one of the first institutions of higher education to implement a one-year tenure extension to female faculty members who gave birth while on the tenure clock. In 1991, the policy was amended to include adoptions and extended to male faculty members who were able to demonstrate the role of primary caregiver (Valdata). Research universities are also twice as likely to offer tenure clock extensions. According to one survey by the Center for the Education of Women (CEW) at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (2008), 92 percent of research universities provided a tenure clock stop compared to only half of the liberal arts colleges. The paradox is that tenured and tenure-track women were less likely to be employed at research universities. One explanation for this paradox is found in the previous discussion on the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. Another explanation is the leaky pipeline of female Ph.D.s—some women are “voluntarily”³ avoiding positions at such institutions in order to meet the demands of work and family.

Active service-modified duties (ASMD) represent the third principle in the *AAUP Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work*. In comparison to a tenure clock stop, ASMD provides reduced teaching loads with minimal to no pay cuts for faculty members who are primary caregivers for newborns or adopted children. According to the CEW study (2008), 21 percent of the institutions within their sample offered ASMD without a reduction in pay. Duke University has one of the most generous policies by offering flexible arrangements for up to three years. The University of California Berkeley offers ASMD three months prior and one year following birth or adoption.

Childcare is the final principle in the *AAUP Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work*. Some universities offer a wide variety of support to defray cost and/or provide greater access to meet child care needs. Campus based child care centers provide various care services to students, faculty, and staff. The National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers reported that in 2001 there were 2,500 campus based child care centers.

Center services range from child care only, laboratory schools, or a combination of both. Funding is typically provided directly through parent fees, however, subsidies and in-kind donations may also be available. Stanford University offers one of the most generous child care benefits by hosting on-site childcare through six programs and providing childcare grants ranging from \$5,000-\$20,000 for junior faculty members (Jaschik 2007). Nevertheless, the challenge for any employer that offers on-site child care is the long waiting lists. It is not that unusual for a faculty member to be on a waiting list for two years in some universities. As a result, many universities partner with external service providers. For example, Harvard offers childcare through affiliated centers that are independently owned and operated ("Report of the Taskforce"). Similarly, Duke University has partnered with 33 child care centers in the university region.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

In order for family friendly policies to be effective at minimizing or eliminating structural inequality of the academe, they must be utilized by faculty members. Barriers preventing the full utilization of family friendly policies include procedural barriers, discriminatory stereotypes,

Table 1 - Best Practices Family Friendly Policies Comparisons

| | Tenure Clock Stop | Parental Leave beyond FMLA | ASMD | On-site childcare |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------|-------------------|
| Duke | X(A) | X(\$) | X | X |
| Harvard | X (A) | X (\$) | | X |
| New Jersey Institute of Technology | X | X | | X |
| Northwestern | X(A) | | X | |
| Pennsylvania State University | X | X | | X |
| Princeton | X(A) | | X | X |
| Stanford University | X(A) | | | X |
| University of California at Berkeley | X(A) | X | X | X |
| University of Delaware | X | | | X |
| University of Maryland, College Park | X | | X | |
| University of Michigan, Ann Arbor | X(A) | | X | X |
| University of Pennsylvania | X | X(\$) | | X |
| University of Wisconsin at Madison | X(A) | | | X |

and negative organizational cultures. Procedural obstacles often have a negative impact on the use of family friendly policies. For example, the more burdensome the procedure for requesting a tenure clock stop, the less likely a faculty member will invoke the request. In addition, as more decision-makers are involved in the process the likelihood for denying a request increases. One respondent to the UB Sloan Survey stated:

Informal adjustments are sometimes made but it depends on the good will of the administrator entrusted with a particular case. Tenure clock stops, parental leave beyond FMLA, or the provision of active-service modified duties granted on an individual basis in closed meetings has the potential to result in arbitrary decisions and increases the risk of lawsuits by faculty members who believe that they have not only been treated unfairly, but also discriminated against on the basis of sex and/or familial responsibilities.

The process for granting tenure clock stops varies among universities with formal policies in place, however, most universities require a written request by the faculty member or department chair to move through the organizational hierarchy. For example, some universities require approval from a promotion and tenure committee, the dean, and the provost. Others (e.g. University of California) allow the request to move directly to the Provost or Chancellor. The reluctance to use tenure clock stops will persist as long as approval is required from chairs, deans, and provosts. One solution is to adopt automatic tenure clock stops that do not require written approval unless a faculty member chooses not to use the policy. Recognizing the problem of procedural barriers a few universities have moved toward automatic stops that do not require approval from one or more superiors. For example, a one year tenure clock stop is automatically granted to faculty members who make a request due to pregnancy or childbirth at the University of Michigan. Regardless of whether tenure extensions must be requested or are automatic, a few universities have included language in their tenure-clock stop policies to reinforce the position that faculty members who use such policies should not be subjected to heightened scrutiny or standards that otherwise would not be applied had they not invoked the tenure-clock stop.

The 1997-2000 *Master Agreement* between Northern Michigan University and the university's AAUP chapter provides that "the taking of [family] leave shall not otherwise prejudice future tenure or promotion consideration." Similarly, Pennsylvania State University's policy provides that a "staying of the provisional tenure period should not penalize or adversely affect the faculty member in the tenure review." In addition, the University of Wisconsin policy provides that if "the faculty member has been in probationary status for more than seven years, the faculty member shall be evaluated as if he or she had been in probationary status for seven years, not longer." (AAUP)

Discriminatory stereotypes are also a barrier to the utilization of family friendly policies. Women in the academe continue to be plagued by ascribed reasons for success. The success of men is often perceived to be the result of knowledge, skills, and ability while the success of women is perceived to be the result of external factors such as "being in the right place at the right time" or as recipients of preferential hiring policies. Men are often extended opportunities in admissions, hiring, and promotions based on their potential rather than past performance or experience while women with comparable credentials tend to be judged more harshly. Bernice Sandler points out, "A man with two articles in press might be seen as 'showing great promise'. A woman in the same situation might be seen as seriously delayed and the articles not seen as either scholarly achievements or a sign of potential" (7). In an experimental study comparing paired vitae of male and female applicants, department chairs were more likely to recommend males to the rank of associate professor while females with the exact vitae were assigned the rank of assistant (Fidell). In addition, female scholars whose work is published in women's studies journals are more likely to be discredited by tenure review committees (Kritek).

Mothers are also more likely to experience discriminatory stereotypes than non-mothers. One experimental study demonstrated that mothers were perceived as less competent and committed, held to higher performance standards, less likely to be hired, and if hired, offered much lower starting salaries than non-mothers or male applicants (Correll, Benard and Paik). Some faculty members have also reported lower performance ratings after the birth of a child despite increased

research activities and improved teaching evaluations (Toepell). In addition, when male faculty members or female faculty members without children work from home there is an assumption that he or she is working or researching or doing other work-related activities. In contrast, academic mothers have noted a difference in perception among their colleagues when working from home prior to having children compared to working from home after the birth or adoption of a child—there is an assumption that she is now engaged in childcare rather than work (Allison; Fothergill and Feltey).

Bias avoidance behavior typically results from discriminatory stereotypes and may be reinforced through organizational culture. Women often assume that having a child while on the tenure track will decrease their chances of tenure and promotion. Many women are reluctant to use family friendly policies available to them, particularly the tenure clock stop, out of fear of reprimand—that some tenured professors will hold them to a higher standard due to a perception that the new mothers had more time, rather than less, to conduct research (Ward and Wolf-Wendel). The majority (64 percent) of 247 respondents to the UB Sloan Survey reported fear that they would be held to a higher standard during tenure review if they took extended leave or invoked a tenure clock stop. This is consistent with the study by Yoest and Rhoads that found that utilization of family friendly policies drops when women perceive a lack of support of such policies within their departments. Others may be reluctant to take advantage of the policies available to them out of fear of resentment—that colleagues will view the faculty member as not carrying her weight in the department. Then there are the faculty members who fear that they will be perceived as less capable if they utilize family friendly policies. One study by Alice Fothergill and Kathryn Feltey found that less than ten percent of the new mothers in their sample requested a tenure clock stop and 87 percent did not request parental leave or ASMD. Similarly, a University of California survey on work-life balance found that 51 percent of female faculty respondents were reluctant to use ASMD for fear of negative tenure decisions (Frasch et al.).

UB SLOAN SURVEY

Bias avoidance is reinforced when faculty mothers bear witness to nega-

Table 2: Reasons For Not Utilizing Extended Leave and Tenure Clock Stop

| | Extended Parental Leave | Tenure-Clock Stop |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
| This option did not exist when I needed it | 85% | 55% |
| I earned tenure prior to starting a family | 75% | 75% |
| I could not afford it financially | 96% | 13% |
| Fear that I would be perceived by others in my department as not "carrying my weight" | 58% | 42% |
| Fear that I would be held to higher standards for research productivity during tenure review | 64% | 64% |

tive tenure decisions of women who used family friendly policies. At the University of California at Santa Barbara, a female faculty member had taken leave twice for childbirth through the policies available at the university. She had received excellent reviews until she had taken leave and had been a productive scholar even when compared to colleagues who had not taken leave, however, tenure was denied. After filing a sex discrimination complaint, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission investigation reported in her favor and she was eventually granted tenure (Jaschik 2005). In a separate example, a female faculty member at

the University of Oregon was denied tenure but later received a monetary settlement when an internal memo issued by the Provost stated that her duties as a mother were incompatible with her duties as a professor and that her tenure clock stop was a red flag (Williams 2004).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

While we are limited in our ability to generalize the findings of the UB Sloan Survey, the results do lend support to previous research on family friendly policies. Combined the studies provide evidence of a need for formal work-life balance policies to reduce discrimination in academia, procedural fairness in the application of those policies, and an organizational culture that supports faculty members who choose to utilize such policies. Academic mothers at institutions without formal family friendly policies should work to form coalitions of support through faculty governing structures (e.g., faculty-senate, special committees) and professional networks (e.g., American Association of University Women, Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement) to raise awareness and eliminate practices that discriminate against academic mothers. Academic mothers at institutions in the nascent stages of policy development should also raise awareness about discriminatory stereotypes and structural inequality by sharing existing research and expanding their own research agenda to promote equality. In addition, they should assess the rank and status of academic mothers within their own institution. Academic mothers at institutions with formal family friendly policies should hold leadership accountable for the utilization and effectiveness of the policies in place. This includes requiring the administration to implement formal training programs that inform faculty members, department chairs, deans, the Provost, and the University President on the procedures for faculty members to utilize the various policies. Promotion and tenure committee members should also be trained on the proper interpretation of family friendly policies, particularly tenure clock stop and ASMD, when making tenure and promotion decisions. University leadership should also be held accountable through performance measures. At a minimum, performance measures should include: assessing the utilization rates of family friendly policies by faculty members who qualified in the past five years; developing annual policy performance measures that track qualification and utilization; and tracking the career progress of

faculty members who have utilized family friendly policies. Ultimately, support from leadership is necessary with an understanding that faculty engagement is mission critical to attract, retain and encourage the best work from the faculty. Family friendly policies are essential to academic mothers in terms of loyalty, desire to participate, productivity, ability to be effective ambassadors of the institutions to colleagues, students, and the outside world in general.

¹The AAUP language for the tenure clock stop is available at: <<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/workfam-stmt.htm>>.

²Model policies for tenure clock stop are available at the University of California at Berkeley, Duke, Harvard, Northwestern, Princeton, and Stanford.

³"Voluntarily" is in quotes because the reluctance to apply for such positions in the first place as a result of competing demands represents the problem of structural inequality addressed in previous pages.

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