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Parenthood in Academia: What Happens When There Is No Policy?

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SIX

PARENTHOOD IN ACADEMIA: WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN THERE IS NO POLICY?Melanie Sue Hill, Alison Nash, and Maryalice Citeraⁱ

Abstract: In 2001 the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) declared that “the development and implementation of institutional policies that enable the healthy integration of work responsibilities with family life in academe requires renewed attention.” In the current study, we explore the perceptions and experiences of faculty at a university system that does not have formal work/family policies. Our findings demonstrate that with no formal policy, academic and professional faculty are left confused (and often misguided) about what options are available for parental leave.

Women now make up nearly half of the U.S. workforce, a dramatic shift from a generation ago when only one-third of all workers were women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Mothers are the primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of families in the U.S. (Boushey, 2009; Galinsky, Aumann & Bond, 2008) and 70% of families with children include a working mother (Galinsky, Aumann & Bond, 2008). These statistics have prompted many to reflect on that status of women in the workplace, asking questions such as “how far have we come?” and “has equality been achieved?” With more than half of children in the U.S. born into homes with two working parents, work/family balance is no longer just a “woman’s issue” but has become a family issue. Upon close evaluation, we continue to find that many of our work/family policies remain based on the “traditional” family with a male breadwinner and a stay-at-home mom -- a clearly outdated model. For example, only 10% of all employees have access to employer-supported childcare (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Quality of Life Benefits”; March 2009). Most notably, the United States is the only industrialized nation without a national government-sponsored paid family leave policy.

Without a national policy, only 9% of U.S. civilian workers have access to paid family leave (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employee Benefits in the United States”, March 2009). In 1993 The Family and Medical Leave Act was signed into law. The FMLA, entitles workers (men and women) to up to 12 weeks

unpaid leave for the birth or adoption of a child. While the passage of the FMLA was a step in the right direction, approximately half of all workers are not covered by FMLA because they haven't worked for their employer for a year, work for a company with fewer than 50 employees, or haven't worked enough hours to qualify for coverage (Waldfogel, 2001). Additionally, only 58% of qualified employees know of the FMLA (Commission on Family and Medical Leave, 1996). Moreover, many workers cannot afford to take an unpaid leave. Women still make roughly 79 cents for every dollar men make, even in female dominated jobs (Institute for Women's Policy Research, Fact Sheet, April 2009). For the nearly two-thirds of families in the U.S. where women are the primary or co-breadwinners, taking unpaid leave is often not a feasible option (Boushey, 2009; Galinsky, Aumann & Bond, 2008).

Despite the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) declaration in 2001 that "the development and implementation of institutional policies that enable the healthy integration of work responsibilities with family life in academe requires renewed attention," faculty and staff at numerous college campuses across the United States have continued to struggle to secure compassionate work/family policies. In a survey of 255 college campuses, Hollenshead et al. (2005) found on average only 25% of the schools provided women with paid maternity leave following the birth of a child that did not require women to use up their sick leave, disability leave, or vacation leave. Only 16% reported having a formal institution-wide policy for paid dependent care leave (most often for both men and women).

One thing that is consistent throughout the research is the need for universal, clear parental leave policies. Parental leave has not only been associated with greater infant health (breast-feeding, well-visits, immunizations; Berger, Hill, & Waldfogel, 2005) and children's later cognitive development (Ruhm, 2004), but also with parental well-being (Hyde, 1995). However, faculty at universities without – and sometimes with-- clear formal policies are afraid to take a leave for fear of damaging their academic reputation. This is especially true in academic settings without formal work/family policies in comparisons to campuses in which there is a culture that explicitly supports work/life balance. Drago et al. (2006) found that faculty with children frequently engaged in "bias avoidance" to escape from real or imagined career penalties associated with

using or even inquiring about family-leave policies, fearing that if they asked for accommodations they would not be considered serious academics.

While the lack of work/family policies affects both mothers and fathers, it seems to do so in different ways. For example, in differentiating between two primary forms of bias avoidance: “productive” and “unproductive” Drago et al. (2006) found men and women engaged in different patterns of bias avoidance. Productive avoidance bias, minimizing family commitments to meet work demands, seems to affect women more than men. For example, tenure-track women are more likely than tenure-track men to remain childless or single and are twice as likely as men to report they had fewer children than they wanted (Drago et al, 2006; Mason & Goulden, 2004). Unproductive bias avoidance is when faculty members engage in behaviors that hinder their ability to meet both work and family needs. Women were significantly less likely to ask for a reduced teaching load, parental leave, and to have their tenure clock stopped than men when they need it for family reasons out of fear that it would lead to adverse repercussions for their career. Fifty-one percent of faculty mothers reported coming back to work after having a child sooner than they would have liked because they “wanted to be taken seriously as an academic” (compared with 14.4% of fathers).

Several authors suggest that women’s fears may be warranted, linking the limited availability of work/family policies to broader inequalities in women’s status in academia (e.g., AAUP, 2001; Drago & Williams, 2000; Hollenshead et al., 2005). For example, research has found that while PhDs are increasingly being awarded to women (Galinsky, Aumann & Bond, 2008), women are consistently under-represented among tenured faculty (AAUP, 2001; Glazer-Raymo, 1999). In a longitudinal study of over 34,000 doctoral recipients, Mason and Goulden (2002) examined whether family-friendly accommodations (or lack of) in academia contributed to the disproportionate representation of women in tenure-track positions. Overall, Mason and Goulden found that for women, babies do matter. Women who had children early in their careers (within 5 years of obtaining a Ph.D.) were far more likely than all others to find themselves in non-tenured teaching positions (e.g., adjuncts, lecturers), rewarded with less pay and fewer benefits. Tenure-track women, across various disciplines, who had children early in their careers, were less likely than their male

counterparts with children to achieve tenure (56% of women, 77% of men who had babies early on in their career earned tenure within 14 years of receiving their PhD). In contrast, men who had babies early on in their career were actually more likely to achieve tenure than everyone else (38% more than women counterparts with children and 6% more than male counterparts without children).

Since the academic structure was built with the traditional male scholar in mind, it does not take into consideration unique dilemmas that female scholars face. In particular, the tenure timeline coincides perfectly with women's prime childbearing years leading some women to feel forced to choose between their academic career and having children, or struggle to balance the intensive work required to establish an academic career with the all-encompassing requirements of being a new mother. While women are increasingly represented in the paid workforce, they continue to do more housework and childcare than their male peers, regardless of how many hours they work for pay (Heath, Ciscel, & Sharp, 1998). Women with children report spending over 100 hours each week on professional, caregiving, and housework responsibilities, compared with 85 hours each week for men with children (Mason & Goulden, 2004). Such research illustrates one of the ways women are "disproportionately affected by conflicts between the ideal academic career trajectory and family needs" (Hollenshead et al., 2005, p. 42).

In addition, many mothers face the unique physical realities of childbirth and breastfeeding. The lack of a national paid parental leave policy means that many mothers who are still breastfeeding do not have the option of remaining home with their infants. The recently released extensive report *The Surgeon-General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding* (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011) promotes breastfeeding for a variety of reasons, from the health of the baby and mother to economic concerns. Thus, mothers are given the message that to be good mothers and responsible citizens, they should breastfeed their infants. Yet without paid leave, mothers who are breastfeeding may need to return to work very soon after giving birth. They must then figure out a way to incorporate breastfeeding and/or pumping their milk into the midst of their workday.

On the state level, there are laws that are designed to support

lactation in the workplace. All but one state (Nebraska) have legislation allowing breastfeeding in public places. Fifteen states, including New York, have legislation mandating employer lactation support (Center for Disease Control, 2009). The laws in New York State regulating breastfeeding permit breastfeeding in public places, excludes breastfeeding of infants from exposure offenses, prohibits discrimination against breastfeeding mothers, and states that “employers must allow breastfeeding mothers reasonable, unpaid break times to express milk and make a reasonable attempt to provide a private location for her to do so.” (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2009). It is unclear whether or not New York State breastfeeding laws provide sufficient support for lactating mothers in academia.

In the current study, we explore faculty perceptions and experiences in a university system that does not have formal work/family policies. We were interested in how much faculty know about what is (and, perhaps more importantly, what is not) available in terms of family leave. What creative accommodations do faculty with children make and what are the costs to these special arrangements? Are there differences between the knowledge and experiences of male and female faculty with regards to negotiating leave? Without paid leave, how do women recover from childbirth and breastfeed their infants? Do New York State lactation laws provide sufficient support for breastfeeding faculty mothers? To answer these questions, we focused on three issues: 1) faculty members knowledge about the family leave policies at their institution, 2) their experiences in juggling work and caring for newborns or newly adopted children, and 3) the experiences of mothers who faced the tasks of recovering from childbirth and breastfeeding and/or pumping while attending to their careers.

Method

In order to undertake this study, qualitative methods were employed. Participants were assured of anonymity and regular check-ins with participants and researchers were conducted.

Participants.

Academic and professional faculty at the State University of New York at New Paltz were surveyed regarding their attitudes towards

and experiences with the university's parental leave policies and practices. Eighty-eight academic and seventy-three professional faculty members participated in the survey. The majority of respondents were female (72%), and were parents (69%). Of the parents, more mothers (72%) than fathers participated. Of the parents who were academic faculty (n=56), 33% were tenured, 35% untenured, and 16% were not on a tenure track. Of the parents who were professional faculty (n=52), 28% were permanent employees and 38% were term employees.

Procedures and measures

An email describing the purpose of the study was sent to all faculty and professional staff, inviting them to complete an online survey using SurveyMonkey. There were two versions of the survey--one for academic faculty and one for professional faculty. Both versions contained items that assessed two major areas: 1) clarity of policies and 2) parental/maternity leave experiences. To assess clarity, all of the participants (N=159) were asked questions about their knowledge of what parental-leave policies existed on our campus, and the perceived clarity of these policies. Participants who were parents and had experiences with taking parental/maternity leave (N=110) were additionally asked how easy it was for them to find information about parental leave policies, whether or not they received conflicting information about what options were available, the length of leave they took, and their satisfaction with their leave. We also asked parents how much the goodwill of their chair/supervisor and co-workers influenced parental accommodations and how much their tenure status influenced their ability to negotiate a leave. Finally, to highlight one of the unique obstacles faced by many women, we included questions pertaining to the experiences of mothers who returned to work while still breastfeeding.

For each issue, we asked questions in two formats: 1) Questions in which answers were based on a Likert Scale so that respondents rated how strongly they agreed or disagreed with particular statements, and 2) open-ended questions that allowed respondents to use their own words to describe their beliefs about policies and their experiences in trying to meet the competing demands of their new babies and their academic careers. In line with feminist research methodology (Rheinharz, 1992), our goal was not only to summarize perceptions of policies, but to give our participants a

voice and to value their subjective experiences with the goal of changing social inequality.

Results

Clarity of policies.

Most participants indicated that the university's policies for maternity and adoption leave and accommodations for parents were unclear. Misunderstandings were revealed in their responses when asked to identify all of the options that were available to someone taking a leave for the purposes of child birth: 42% thought that the use of sick days was required, only 44% understood that unpaid leave (such as FMLA) was an option, and 27% were under the mistaken belief that 6 weeks of paid parental leave was available. Approximately one third reported that they did not know what options were available. No significant gender differences were found.

Parents reported a similar lack of clarity when seeking information about their parental leave options. Only 11% of parents, women and men alike, reported that finding information about parental leave policies was easy. Twenty-six percent of the respondents reported receiving conflicting information about what leave options were available. Open-ended responses further support the conclusion that parental leave and accommodation policies lack clarity:

- Didn't realize that six week paid leave required you to use sick days (female, academic)
- Sick time could not be used as maternity leave so I had to apply for a sabbatical (female, academic)
- No one seemed to know – human resources and the union provided different answers (male, academic)
- Three different people in HR gave me three different answers about how I was supposed to charge my time off and if I would be eligible for health benefits if I wasn't charging full sick leave (female, professional)

- I got different answers from different offices (male, professional)

Parental/Maternity leave experiences

Length of leave. As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, the amount of time that mothers and fathers took for leave varied considerably, ranging from no time to almost a year. The modal leave was 12 weeks; however there was very little consistency in the length of leave taken overall. On average, professional faculty took significantly ($t(41) = 2.05, p=.046$) longer leaves in weeks ($M=18.52$) than academic faculty ($M=10.2$) (See Figure 3).

Satisfaction with leave. Nearly 50% of the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with their leave arrangements. Not surprisingly, given the differences in the length of their leaves, professional faculty ($M=4.69$) were significantly ($t(61) = 3.762, p=.000$) more satisfied with their leaves than academic faculty ($M=3.06$). (No significant gender differences were found.). Open-ended comments illustrated the dissatisfaction some women in particular felt with the amount of leave they were able to take and the constraints they faced to taking adequate leaves. In examining the open-ended comments, it appeared that many mothers, both faculty and professionals, came back to work before they wanted to due to external constraints (e.g., financial needs, limited sick or vacation days, loss of health insurance) and social pressures (e.g., pressure from supervisor, concern for students, concern about not being taken seriously).

- I gave birth in mid May and did my final grading in the two weeks immediately after. I worked the semester, but HR required that I use my sick days through the “unofficial” end of the semester in June because I was apparently “unavailable.” I didn’t want to take the six weeks leave toward the end of the semester out of concern for my students. Nor did I want to use up all my sick days. HR seemed oblivious to my own personal sacrifices (I believe the stress of this arrangement contributed greatly to the postpartum depression I experienced). (female, academic)
- I wasn't able to take off enough time to recover from the birth much less find suitable day care for my child (a licensed day care can't take children under the age of 6 weeks). I couldn't afford to take unpaid leave and I was in

my first year here so wasn't covered by FMLA. (female, academic)

- I could not even use my accumulated sick time as maternity leave. Since my daughter's birth occurred during my sabbatical, I had a double burden of proof in getting another sabbatical (female, academic).
- ... I had to come back sooner than I would have liked because no one was hired to replace me in my absence. (female, professional)
- The decision I made regarding taking time off was a result of not being able to afford another alternative and pressure from my supervisor to return to work as soon as possible. I had recently been promoted and had many new responsibilities. No one had been hired to do my work while I was away, it all waited for me to return. I still feel cheated because I was not able to spend very much time with my newborn and with my older child. (female, professional)
- Because I had to spend so much of my pregnancy in the hospital or on bed rest, I did not feel comfortable asking for additional unpaid leave (female, professional).

The fathers in our sample reported a lack of support for their role as a father from their colleges and superiors and regret at not being able to spend as much time with their newborn child as they would have liked.

- I would've liked to stay home longer with my wife and newborn (male, professional)
- My spouse shouldered nearly all of the child care responsibilities during the semester in which our child was born. I was unable to relieve her as much as she needed (male, professional).
- There was no recognition by my Chair, Dean, etc. that a male faculty member could have child care commitments. In fact, my Chair made a point of pointing out in a review

letter about a female colleague that she has accomplished all she has in addition to 'providing primary care to a young child' while no such statement was made in my case even though I was providing an equal amount of care (male, academic).

- I was basically on my own. There was no help on child care, no stated policy in the department about missing/covering classes, and I was given an overload my first semester and made responsible for teaching the largest course in the department. (male, academic)

A large proportion of the respondents (nearly 40%) indicated that not having tenure or permanent appointment influenced their ability to negotiate arrangements/accommodations related to their parental commitments. Seventy percent indicated that the accommodations they received depended on the goodwill of their supervisor/chair and 60% indicated it depended on the goodwill of their co-workers (no significant gender differences).

Breastfeeding at the Workplace. To understand the unique challenges for mothers who return to work while still breastfeeding, we included several Likert-type questions about breast-feeding in our questionnaire. The majority of our total sample (59% of parents & non-parents) disagreed with the statement "SUNY has clear guidelines for accommodating nursing mothers". Of the parents, 24 women reported that they breastfed their newborns (30.8% of mothers in our sample; 44.4% academic, 19% professional; $X^2(1)=5.87, p=.015$). Of these women, only 20.9% found that it was easy to make arrangements needed to support breastfeeding. The majority reported that chairs/supervisors and their co-workers were neutral (neither supportive nor unsupportive) in helping make these arrangements.

To better understand how mothers managed the feat of combining breastfeeding and working away from home, we asked participants "What arrangements did you make so that you could continue to breastfeed your infant after returning to work?" Their responses revealed several challenges to breastfeeding/pumping milk at work: finding a private place, finding times to incorporate pumping into a work schedule, and dealing with embarrassment and discomfort about pumping at work.

The descriptions these women provided of their situations highlight the machinations that women must go through to juggle their parent and career roles. For example, some women described their struggles in finding a private space in which to pump breast milk. Those participants who didn't have a private office reported pumping milk in their car, in their research lab, or at home before and after work. Others reported feeling too embarrassed to pump milk at work. Similarly, participants talked in depth about their struggles finding time to pump breast milk or nurse their newborns. Many of these struggles resulted in women experiencing diminished milk or discontinuing breastfeeding earlier than they would have liked due to the difficulties in making it all work. Below are some sample comments:

- I fed, sped to work for 4 hours and sped home again full and uncomfortable. (female, academic)
- My office is private...I pumped there, but not frequently enough because I fit the pumping times to breaks between our three-hour studio classes. I pretty much lost my milk during spring break when my daughter was about 5 months old. Very upsetting – in hindsight I would...leave my class to pump every 2 hours. Once when meeting a [female] colleague was pressing, we talked while I pumped. A bit ridiculous, but it worked. (female, academic)
- I was scheduled for two 3-hour classes back-to-back with 10 minutes in between. I had to end the first class 10 minutes early and start the second class 10 minutes late in order to make time to pump. On paper that sounds okay, realistically, I was always asked questions after class and never had 30 minutes. I fully believe this caused my milk supply to diminish and resulted in my son to stop nursing before I would have liked. (female, academic)
- I had to wean them to those hours when I was home. It was very tough. (female, academic)
- I would pump late at night, and early in the morning to cover the time when I was at work. I was exhausted until I stopped breastfeeding and switched to formula. I was only

able to continue breastfeeding for two months following my return to work. (female, professional)

- I was too embarrassed to pump breast milk at work. I breastfed part-time only – in the morning and a night. I kept the matter private. (female, professional)
- I do know a faculty member who was able to manage with a breast pump at work, but I did not have the flexible schedule or the privacy that she had. I managed with a breast pump at home to store supplemental milk for my son as long as I could. I did not discuss this with my supervisor or co-workers; I felt it was a private issue. (female, professional)

Women's responses reveal their determination to be good mothers and to do their jobs well in what is clearly an unsupportive environment. Neither adequate parental leave policies nor sufficient workplace lactation policies are in place. Thus, women often must return to work earlier than they want, often while still breastfeeding. Yet managing this in the workplace is extremely difficult. Not only do they face the challenge of finding a place and time to breastfeed or pump; cultural taboos lead to women's silence and embarrassment about their struggles. Many respondents wrote that they kept the matter private – feeling the need to be secret was yet another obstacle to balancing the demands of career and breastfeeding.

Discussion

Our study demonstrates that with no formal policy, faculty and staff are left confused (and often misguided) about what options are available for parental leave. Expecting parents are left scrambling to find accurate information and are often given conflicting information. The leaves they are able to arrange depend in large part on the goodwill of supervisors and colleagues, and are dissatisfying for almost half of the participants.

Lack of clarity

A study conducted two short years after FMLA was enacted found that only 58% of qualified employees knew about FMLA

(Commission on Family and Medical Leave, 1996). Apparently not much has changed in the intervening years. In the current sample, only 44% of academic and professional faculty knew that unpaid leave was an option, despite it being available through FMLA to all employees that have worked at the university a year or more. Even more startling is the fact that 30% of employees who thought that 6 weeks of paid maternity leave was an available option when, other than using sick days, no paid maternity leave is available at our university. Similarly, participants reported investing considerable amounts of their time seeking out information about their options (time that they could have been spending on their scholarship instead) and getting conflicting information from various sources on campus.

Formal work/family policies and informal options should be widely publicized. As Orloff (1993) argues, ignorance of social welfare policies (like the FMLA) can actually work to reinforce the social inequalities that such policies are designed to rectify. Informing relevant personnel (e.g., faculty/staff, human resources, chairs/supervisors) of the available parental leave policies not only improves the use of such policies but goes a long way toward creating a culture in which work/family balance is supported and all employees are valued. Universities could provide orientation sessions for new faculty members, training workshops for supervisors, and publish information about available leave options in faculty handbooks, through brochures, and on websites. Unions can also play an important role in informing employees about available policies and rights. Kramer (2008) found that employees who were members of a union were significantly more knowledgeable about their parental leave rights than nonunion members. By clearly publishing work/family policies we free up faculty to do their work, rather than wasting numerous hours researching and sifting through conflicting information and would hopefully avoid disparities in accommodations being offered.

Length of leaves

Our participants reported a significant variation in the length of the parental leaves they took. Much of this variation can likely be attributed to the lack of a formal, uniform policy as well as differences in how successful individuals were in negotiating their own idiosyncratic deals. One interesting finding was the difference in leaves reported by academic and professional faculty

with academic faculty reporting shorter leaves than professional faculty. It is important to note that the academic and professional faculty that make up our sample face different constraints related to taking a leave. When taking a leave, the professional faculty are able to use a combination of sick leave, annual (vacation) leave, and unpaid leave. Additionally, our university allows professional staff to “donate” vacation days to a coworker who is in need of extra days for a leave.

In contrast, academic faculty do not receive annual (vacation) leave and as a result they cannot participate in the “donation” of days. Further, the work life of academic faculty is structured around the academic calendar with a circumscribed commitment to students. Many academic faculty commented on the pressure to return to the classroom and their obligations to students. As one woman described, despite being required to take sick leave for the birth of her child, she still graded papers while on leave because of the academic expectations around her commitment to her students. Not only did she not get the time to spend with her newborn, she was penalized on top of this. In developing and implementing work/family leave policies, universities should take into consideration the unique issues that need to be included to allow for equity between academic and professional faculty (e.g., allow for 1 semester leaves, funding for substitute teachers).

Dissatisfaction

Many participants reported feeling dissatisfied with the leave arrangements they were able to negotiate and felt pressure to return earlier than they would have liked. With inadequate provisions for paid leave, financial constraints prevented many parents from taking unpaid leave. Many expecting parents are early in their careers and may not have money saved up to support an unpaid leave, nor the sick days accumulated to sufficiently cover the time off needed. As many of our participants commented, the lack of a paid maternity/parental leave policy forces mothers to return to work before they are ready, or make the choice to stay at home despite an interest in integrating motherhood and their careers. Not surprisingly, given the difference in length of leaves taken by the professional faculty in our sample were significantly more satisfied with their leave arrangements than academic faculty.

There were very few significant gender differences on the quantitative questions in the current study. For the most part, men seemed to report attitudes and beliefs that were similar to women. However, this may be a power issue as the sample size for the men was small. With a larger sample size, some of the differences may become statistically significant. The lack of significant gender differences could also be due to a self-selection issue—i.e., it may be that men who had problems were the ones most likely to respond to the survey. Therefore, we are extremely hesitant to draw any conclusions regarding potential gender differences. Future research with a larger sample of men is suggested. Answers to the open-ended questions did provide some differences in terms of the themes reported by the male and female participants. Specifically, the mothers in our sample seemed to struggle with securing an adequate leave to recover from childbirth and sufficiently take care of their newborn; breastfeeding was particularly challenging. Fathers on the other hand felt cut off from and/or not recognized for their role in the care of their newborns. This is consistent with research that has found organizational culture, particularly in relation to parental leave, to be a significant predictor in father's involvement with their children (Haas, Allard, & Hwang, 2002).

Breastfeeding accommodations

Our breastfeeding data highlight struggles that are unique to women in attempting to balance career and family. Women in our sample clearly articulated the difficulties with breastfeeding their infants once they return to work. Despite strong advocacy for breastfeeding by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2005) and the Center for Disease Control (2009), barriers in the workplace made it impossible for several women in our sample to continue breastfeeding. In addition to allowing faculty and staff the time to pump breast milk, universities by law are supposed to “make a reasonable attempt to provide a private location for her to do so” (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2009). Our data indicated that the women in our sample struggled to find time and a place to pump, as well as with perceived cultural taboos about pumping in the workplace. Thus, it is clear that current national and state policies did not lead to sufficient accommodations for nursing faculty mothers.

In March 2010, the national health care reform legislation, the

Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act, was signed into law by President. It requires organizations with more than 50 employees to provide “A) a reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for 1 year after the child’s birth each time such employee has a need to express the milk, and B) a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from co-workers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.” [Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care HR 3590-Sec4207]. It remains to be seen whether or not such laws will be sufficient to support breastfeeding as an option for nursing mothers in the workplace.

Guidelines are already in place from the American Architectural Association for the creation of such dedicated ‘lactation rooms’ equipped with refrigerators, sinks, comfortable chairs, and designed for privacy (York, 2008). Such rooms are available in some businesses (Tuttle & Slavitt, 2009) and universities (e.g. Duke, Yale, University of Iowa, Oregon State) and have been found to be helpful. But adequate, well-equipped spaces must be coupled with flexible work schedules so that women can find time during the day to breastfeed or pump in a non-frenzied atmosphere. Stress around breastfeeding is not healthy for mothers or infants. Pumping in the car, speeding home “full and uncomfortable,” or giving up on breastfeeding should not be seen as adequate solutions to balancing the demands of parenting and career.

Conclusion: Need for Family Leave Policies

Our data indicate that parents go to great lengths to figure out how to do a good job both at work and at caring for their newborns. A clear family leave policy would go a long way to providing the support necessary to enable parents to do a better job with both endeavors. Furthermore, research has consistently found that paid parental leave improves children’s health, improves economic conditions of families, and benefits employers by reducing staff turnover (see Galtry & Callister, 2005).

A variety of factors are important to consider in meeting the diverse needs of mothers, fathers, and infants. For example, work/family policies should take into account the unique needs of women and men. While mothers must negotiate enough leave to support their recovery from childbirth and their ability to

breastfeed their newborns, recent research has supported the importance of family leave policies for fathers. Fathers who take some parental leave are more likely to share childcare responsibilities (Haas 1992; 1996) and spend more time with their children throughout their lives (Pleck, 1992; 1993). However, men are not free from gender discrimination. Supporting the comments of our male participants, Almer, Cohen and Single (2004) found that fathers who use flexible work arrangements were rated as having a greater lack of commitment to their job than mothers.

Additionally, family leave policies need to recognize the unique needs of professional and academic faculty. For example, it is often easier to find temporary replacements for professional faculty, whereas academic faculty it seems have a somewhat easier time finding time to integrate breastfeeding into their work day.

Some suggestions for policies provided by our participants include: flexible work hours, reduced work loads/part-time options with health benefits, shared positions, coverage for the work of professional and academic faculty when individuals are on parental leave, and parking passes allowing pregnant women closer parking options. As one of our participants aptly said,

Paid leave (preferably a whole semester – for the sake of the family as well as for the educational continuity for students, and administrative responsibilities of colleagues and department), reduced work-load after the end of parental leave and clear information are all needed in order to be productive faculty members and responsible and caring parents. Believe me, I know!! This latter statement is based on becoming a parent in the US while watching my European colleagues being able to balance their family and work life to a much better extent.

Several universities (e.g., The University of California system, The University of Virginia, Denison University, Michigan State University, Cornell University, Boston University) already have family friendly work policies that can serve as models (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/WF/leavepolicies.htm>). For example, faculty at these universities are eligible for at least 6 weeks of paid leave and the option for modified duties (partial or full relief of teaching duties) upon return. Such efforts go a long way to creating a work environment that recognizes the importance

of both professional and family obligations, further enabling universities to recruit and retain quality faculty and professional staff.

Yet adopting a work/family policy is just a first step. Policies also need to be well-publicized and supported by organizational cultural norms. Formalizing work/family policies, as Sullivan, Hollenshead, and Smith (2004) note “raises the visibility of policies so that both faculty members and administrators have a clearer understanding of the rules for using them”. Without a formal, well-publicized policy, faculty and staff are left to negotiate idiosyncratic deals—deals that ranged considerably in our sample (from 0 to 52 weeks). These idiosyncratic deals were often made behind closed doors, leaving untenured faculty and staff without a permanent appointment at a distinct disadvantage. As our data show, individuals without tenure or permanent appointments, a common position for women in their prime childbearing years, felt their status affected their ability to negotiate a desired leave. Further, “making policies official increases goodwill among faculty, because their formal nature implies an equitable application of policy and demonstrates university support for families ... Such openness leads to a more trusting relationship between faculty and administrators” (Sullivan, Hollenshead, & Smith, 2004, p. 26). Indeed, research outside of academia has found that idiosyncratic deals (“i-deals”), personal arrangements negotiated between individual workers and their employers, raise feelings of injustice among co-workers and create a lack of trust of supervisors (Greenberg et al., 2004; Rousseau, 2001).

Sullivan, Hollenshead, and Smith (2004) identified five key strategies universities and colleges should use when implementing successful work-family leave policies: “(1) formalize their policies and make them entitlements; (2) continually educate faculty and administrators about the policies; (3) address issues that discourage faculty from using work-family benefits; (4) use data to promote programs that support balance between work and family; and (5) foster collaboration between champions of individual policies and relevant institutional committees” (p. 26). Thus, there are good models and strategies for implementing clear and formalized family-friendly policies in an academic setting. Our data clearly reveal the immediate and urgent need for such supports.

Figure 1. *Amount of parental leave taken by female academic faculty and professional faculty.*

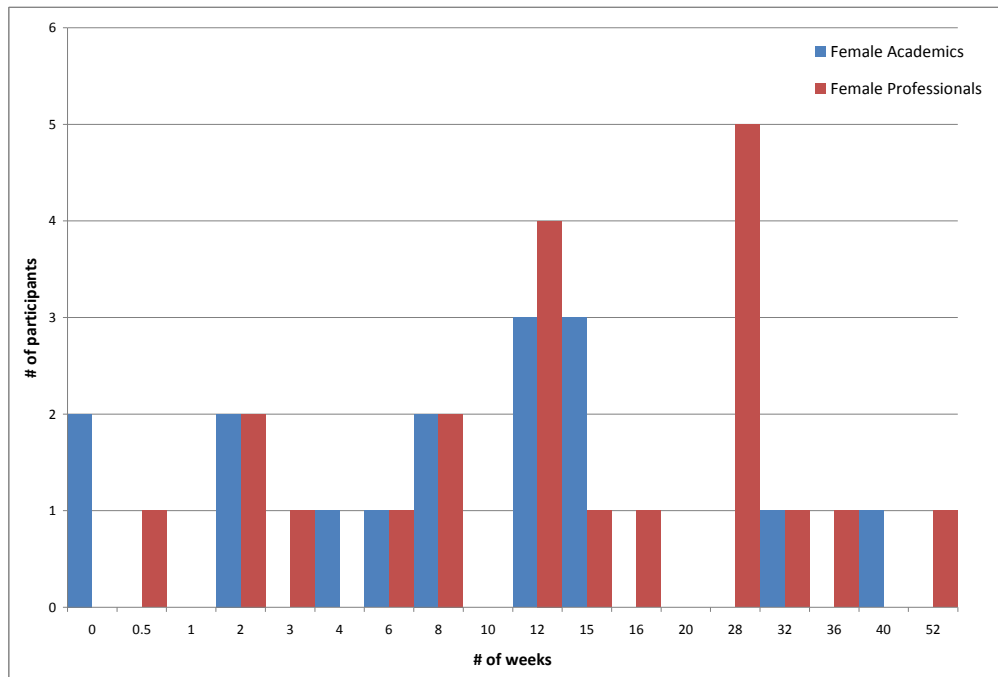


Figure 2. *Amount of parental leave taken by male academic faculty and professional faculty.*

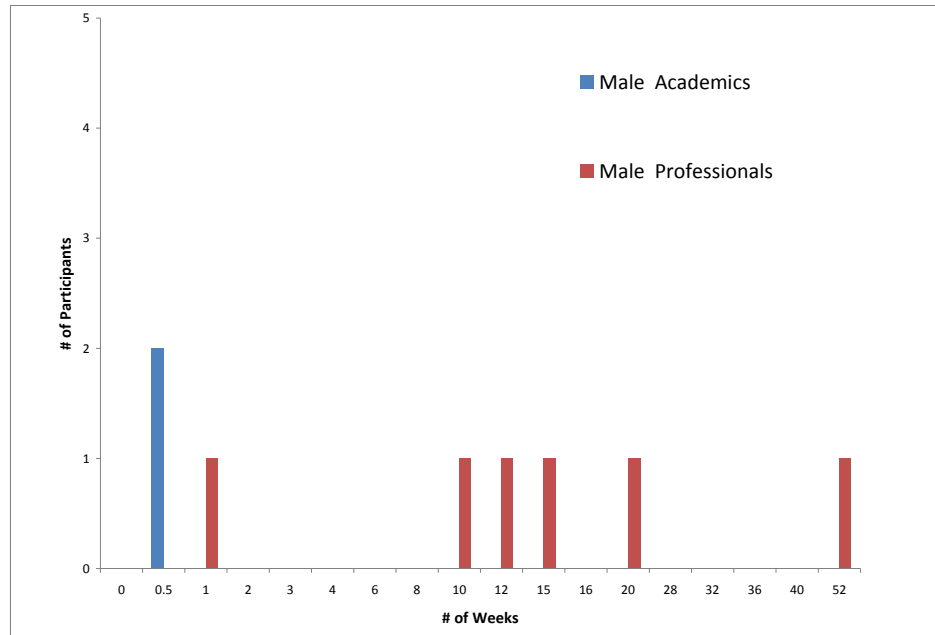
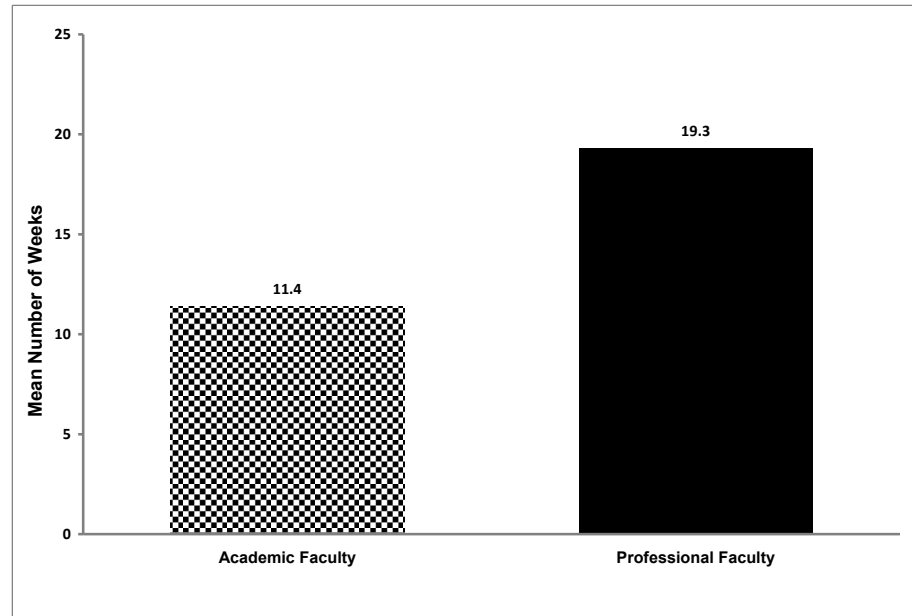


Figure 3. *Amount of parental leave taken by academic faculty and professional faculty.*



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