Graduate and Professional Students' Opinions on Work and Family Balance in Academic Careers

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> **Abstract:** *This study explored graduate and professional students' opinions on the appropriateness of work-family balance in academic careers. A web-based survey instrument was designed to collect information about individual characteristics, career aspiration, and opinions on the appropriateness of work-family flexibility and family-friendly policies for faculty. Three dependent "work-family opinion measures" are based on two broad work-family theories: that the roles of "work" and "family" are, and should be, separate and conflicting; and, conversely, that there are benefits to balancing multiple roles through flexible options. Analysis of the 1,190 responses included chi-square tests of independence and Pearson's correlations. While the majority of respondents indicate support for work-family flexibility in faculty careers, women are considerably more supportive of flexibility than are men.*

Institutions of higher education are attempting to increase the work-family flexibility of faculty careers by implementing family-friendly policies (American Council on Education, 2007). However, research suggests that these policies are currently underutilized and will continue to be so unless the climate and culture of higher education transforms to be supportive of work and family balance (Drago et al., 2005; Gappa & MacDermid, 1997). Cultural change theory suggests that increasing the percentage of group members desiring cultural change accelerates the rate of change (Keup, Walker, Astin, & Lindholm, 2001). In other words, if the next generation of faculty members is supportive of work-family flexibility in academic careers, the rate of work-family cultural change in higher education should increase.

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But, what opinions do graduate students, from whose ranks come potential future faculty, have about the appropriateness of work-family flexibility in faculty careers?

Prior studies of graduate students that include elements of work and family in higher education tend to focus on the inability to balance work and family roles (Golde, 1998; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000; Sears, 2003), not student opinions of the appropriateness of work-family flexibility in faculty careers. Golde (1998) explored graduate student attrition and found that a common reason for leaving was the realization that higher education is not conducive to work-family balance. In a study of junior faculty socialization, Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin (2000) identified three key concerns of early career faculty and advanced graduate students, including one about work-family balance. Sears (2003) investigated whether a higher proportion of women than men graduate students in math and science turn away from prestigious academic careers, finding that women tend to "downgrade" their academic career aspirations and express concern about work-family issues more frequently than men do. Each of these prior studies indicates that graduate students perceive that academic careers are not compatible with what they consider to be satisfying family or personal lives and that, consequently, potential future faculty are turning away from academic careers. But do graduate students believe that academic careers *should be* flexible regarding work-family? Is the next generation of faculty supportive of work-family balance in academic careers?

The purpose of this paper is to explore the opinions of graduate and professional students on the appropriateness of work-family flexibility in faculty careers. If the next generation of faculty is supportive of work-family balance, it may accelerate work-family cultural change and facilitate efforts to increase the flexibility of faculty careers (Keup, Walker, Astin, & Lindholm, 2001). Creating a supportive climate for faculty with care-giving responsibilities might foster utilization of various flexible work-life options (Drago, Crouter, Wardell, & Willits, 2001; Quinn, Lange, Riskin, & Yen, 2004), thereby increasing the frequency with which graduate students are exposed to positive role models for the kinds of balanced lives many desire as faculty members (Austin, 2002; Golde & Dore, 2001). Currently, graduate students do not witness their faculty benefiting from these flexible policy options; they

only see faculty struggling to juggle their multiple roles (Austin, 2002; Golde & Dore, 2001).

Unless faculty careers permit work-family flexibility, many potential faculty members may choose careers outside of academe, resulting in a loss of talent, particularly among women (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; Committee on Maximizing the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering, 2006). While women have been disproportionately affected by work-family concerns (Mason & Goulden, 2002), balance is not only desired by women; both men and women from "Generation X" and "Generation Y" have been shown to value and expect balance between career and family (Bickel & Brown, 2005; Malernee, 2006). In fact, an alarming number of potential future faculty are turning away from their academic career aspirations during their graduate programs, apparently as a result of exposure to aspects of faculty careers that they perceive to be incompatible with satisfying family lives (Austin, 2002; Austin & Rice, 1998; Golde, 1998; Golde & Dore, 2001; Nyquist et al., 1999; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000).

For clarity, several terms used throughout this paper are defined here. The term *balance* describes the situation where an individual is satisfied with the equilibrium between the various roles in his or her life (Drago, 2007). The term does not represent a static state, but one in constant flux, as the time commitment to various roles is both fluid and dynamic (Drago, 2007). I use the term *family* broadly; it represents the myriad relationships individuals have with loved ones regardless of biological or legal ties. Lastly, I use the terms *flexibility* and *flexible* in recognition that "balance" will differ for each individual. For instance, one person may desire an extended period of part-time employment and another may prefer the availability of extended-hours childcare. Therefore, I believe that policies designed to facilitate work-family balance need to be flexible and recognize this range of individual needs and preferences if they are to be successful.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three theoretical areas: the intersection of work and family, socialization, and cultural change. Work and family theories fall into two broad categories, one that views the roles of "work" and "family" as separate and conflicting, and one that views the roles of

"work" and "family" as complementary and appropriate to balance. These broad categories of work-family theory provide the basis for the survey items used in the three work-family opinion measures. Within the first category are the theories of role conflict and the Ideal Worker. The second category includes the "expansionist" theory of work and family, with such ideas as "coherency," and "buffering." The theory of graduate student socialization (Antony, 2002; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001) provides the basis for the survey questions about student experiences in graduate school as they relate to the development of opinions on work-family flexibility in academic careers. Cultural change theory, as discussed by Keup, Walker, Astin, and Lindholm (2001), is used to interpret findings of graduate student opinions about the appropriateness of work-family balance in academic careers.

Role conflict theory is based on traditional gender roles and separate spheres of activities for men and women (i.e., "breadwinner" and "housewife"). This theory includes the concept of negative "spillover," when requirements of one role literally spill over into another role, such as family care requirements spilling over into work hours or work spilling over into family time. In higher education, the definition of "work time" is not clearly defined beyond class and office hours, increasing the potential for blurred boundaries and for conflict between roles, especially for pre-tenure faculty (Desrochers, 2001; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Sorcinelli & Near, 1989). Building on role conflict theory, the Ideal Worker theory posits that the breadwinner role is played by an "ideal worker" who is committed above all else to career (Williams, 2000b). This perspective explains structures that reward absolute commitment to career. It has been argued that the current tenure structure in American higher education is built upon such a model (Finkel & Olswang, 1996Hochschild, 2003; Williams, 2000a). This broad category was used to create the survey items about whether students believe that academic careers require absolute commitment and should not be flexible regarding work-family.

The second broad category of work-family theory is the "expansionist theory" that addresses the "positive psychological and material benefits" of combining work and family rather than merely focusing on the conflicts between these spheres (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 238). Multiple roles can be "reinforcing and beneficial" as a result of the establishing for individuals "a broadened perspective on work and

family, greater social support, and increased self-esteem" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 238). This expansionist theory includes the ideas of "coherency," when multiple roles fit together and support each other in a productive way (Ropers-Huilman, 2000), and of "buffering," such as using family as a buffer from the stresses of an academic career and using the intellectual stimulation of an academic career to buffer the stresses of family (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). This broad category was used to create survey items about whether students believe it is appropriate to balance academic careers and a personal life or family.

Graduate student socialization refers to the process through which graduate students learn the "norms" of their academic fields through interaction with faculty members (Antony, 2002; Weidman et al., 2001). Students enter graduate programs with various attitudes and these attitudes and individual demographics influence graduate school experiences. In turn, students' attitudes, demographics, and experiences in graduate school influence the development of new attitudes about their academic field. While "assimilating" and adopting existing norms may help graduate students be accepted in their academic fields, graduate students are capable of influencing the norms (Antony, 2002). Specific to work-family norms and this study, graduate students perceive the norms of work and family balance in their departments and academic fields and develop opinions about whether work-family balance is appropriate for faculty. Socialization theory provided the impetus to include survey items related to advisor gender and academic program to explore the role of these experiences in graduate school on the development of opinions related to work-family flexibility in academic careers.

The review of organizational cultural change literature by Keup et al. (2001) provides a lens through which to interpret study findings. Organizational culture influences how transformation efforts are viewed and responded to by group members and can, therefore, help or hinder cultural transformation efforts (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Keup et al., 2001). Similar to a positive organizational culture, reaching the threshold for "critical mass" can facilitate and accelerate change efforts (Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, Neuschatz, Uzzi, & Alonzo, 1994; Kanter, 1977; Nelson, 2007). Critical mass, or the point where "the presence of a sufficient number brings about qualitative improvement in conditions and accelerates the dynamics of change" (Etzkowitz et al., 1994, p. 51.), has been defined as 15% of a population (Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, & Uzzi,

2000; Etzkowitz et al., 1994; Kanter, 1977). In analyzing the findings of this study, if more than 15% of potential future faculty are supportive of work-family flexibility in faculty careers, it may accelerate the rate of work-family cultural change in academe.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore graduate student opinions on the appropriateness of work-family flexibility in faculty careers. To accomplish this, the following research questions guided the study:

What are graduate students' opinions about the appropriateness of work-family flexibility in faculty careers?

What are their opinions on the appropriateness of various family-friendly policies for faculty?

What student characteristics relate to these opinions?

Methods

Sample

The sample of 1,190 graduate and professional students comes from a large, public, research extensive institution that is a member of the American Association of Universities (AAU) and shares many characteristics in both faculty and graduate student body with other AAU universities of comparable size and ranking. At the time of the study, there were 10,635 graduate and professional students in the population and 1,190 students responded to the survey for an 11.2% response rate. While this response rate was lower than desired, the sample size is large enough to permit statistical analyses and the characteristics of the sample differ little from those of the population. Respondent characteristics were compared to the population based on the institutional data available, namely, college, gender, and age, and differed only by gender. The colleges were categorized into four "program types" to protect student confidentiality. The proportion of respondents by program type is not significantly different from that of the population, $\chi^2(3, N = 1142) = 5.94$, $p > .01$. Women graduate and professional students are over-represented among respondents, while men are under-represented, $\chi^2(1, N = 1187) = 78.84$, $p < .01$. The proportion of respondents by age bracket is not

significantly different from that of the population, $\chi^2(7, N = 1189) = 16.51, p > .01$.

Procedures

Data for this paper are derived from a larger study of graduate and professional student socialization regarding work and family in higher education. Data were gathered June 2005 through a web-based survey designed for the study. The entire population of students matriculated in a graduate or professional program at the selected University received an emailed invitation to participate, which included the endorsement of the graduate student senate and the dean of the graduate school, as well as the URL to the consent form. Consenting subjects continued to the online questionnaire. Non-respondents received one reminder email message two weeks after the initial invitation to participate. Data analysis included chi-square tests of independence and Pearson's correlation. The alpha level of .01 was utilized for all statistical tests.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed to collect information about individual characteristics, experiences in graduate school, career aspiration, perceptions of the family-friendliness of academic careers, and opinions on the appropriateness of work-family flexibility for faculty. This paper focuses on the opinions regarding work-family flexibility. Three dependent variables, labeled "work-family opinion measures," measure student opinion on balancing work and family through flexible policy options: (a) "supports balance," (b) "merit and legitimacy," and (c) "part-time tenure okay." Additionally, several independent variables measure student characteristics: "gender," "age," "marital status," "parental status," "ethnicity," "advisor gender," "academic field," and "pursuing academic career." The measures are explained in detail in the following subsections.

Supports balance. The measure "supports balance" is a scale comprised of nine statements designed to measure opinion about whether academic work and family roles should be balanced or kept separate. Five items are based on theories that work and family are separate and conflicting roles: (a) Accommodations for parents and other caregivers should not be made with regard to tenure; (b) Allowances should not be made in tenure decisions for time spent on care-giving; (c) Academic

careers are already flexible, I do not believe they need to be made more "family-friendly;" (d) If I were a faculty member and reviewing tenure portfolios, I would pay close attention to the time since degree, regardless of whether a "family-friendly" policy such as tenure extension has been used; and (e) "Family-friendly" policies offer an unfair advantage to some faculty. Additionally, four items are based on the theory that there are benefits to balancing multiple roles informs: (a) Faculty who utilize family leave are equally committed to their careers as faculty who do not; (b) Tenure extended portfolios are just as meritorious as standard ones; (c) Part-time faculty are equally committed to their careers as full-time faculty are; and (d) Flexible career options for faculty would help improve gender equity in academe. Four of the nine statements address aspects of the tenure process explicitly and five focus on faculty careers broadly. The responses were scored with a five-point Likert scale with 1=Disagree Strongly and 5=Agree Strongly. The negatively worded statements (i.e., those indicating work and family are separate and should not be balanced) were reverse coded for the scale. The scale was calculated by averaging the scores across the nine statements and rounding the means so that 1=Disagree Strongly and 5=Agree Strongly with work-family balance through flexibility in faculty careers. The measure "supports balance" has an internal reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .7995$.

Merit and legitimacy. The measure "merit and legitimacy" is a scale comprised of responses about the merit and legitimacy of five different family-friendly policies, including: (a) part-time tenure track, (b) family or medical leave, (c) tenure clock extension for care-giving responsibilities, (d) transitional support program for personal or care-related emergencies, and (e) department granted teaching release for family reasons. The questions were scored 0=Not Selected (i.e., the respondent did not indicate seeing the merit and legitimacy of the policy) and 1=Selected (i.e., the respondent indicated seeing the merit and legitimacy of the policy). The measure was calculated by averaging the scores across the five questions and rounding the means such that scores less than or equal to .50 are scored 0=No and scores greater than .50 are scored 1=Yes. The measure "merit and legitimacy" has an internal reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .9338$.

Part-time tenure okay. The measure "part-time tenure okay" is a scale comprised of five questions regarding conditions under which it

is "okay" for faculty to use part-time options, including: (a) late career as a prelude to retirement; (b) post-tenure, if it is to balance professional obligations outside of academe; (c) post-tenure, if it is to balance work and family obligations; (d) pre-tenure, if it is to balance professional obligations outside of academe; and (e) pre-tenure, if it is to balance work and family obligations. Similar to "merit and legitimacy," these questions were scored 0=Not Selected and 1=Selected and the measure was calculated by averaging the scores across the five questions and rounding the means such that scores less than or equal to .50 are scored 0=No and scores greater than .50 are scored 1=Yes. The measure "part-time tenure okay" has an internal reliability coefficient of α = .8519.

Student characteristics. The characteristics "gender," "age," "marital status," "parental status," and "advisor gender" required no recoding. The demographic "ethnicity" was recoded into White and Of Color due to the small number of respondents within the categories "African-American," "Asian," "Hispanic," "Native American," and "Multiple Ethnicities," between which analysis of variance found no statistically significant differences in responses on the opinion measures. The demographic "pursuing academic career" is derived from a question on "current career aspiration" that included nine career options. Two of the options were academic careers and respondents also wrote-in academic career options that were coded as a third academic career option. Respondents who did not select one of the three academic career options are coded 0=No and respondents who did are coded 1=Yes for "academic career aspiration." The demographic "academic field" is derived from questions about the college and department in which the respondent is a student, recoded to four broad fields: (a) STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), (b) professional, (c) medical, and (d) arts, humanities, and social sciences.

Results

Respondent Characteristics

Of the 1,190 students who responded to the questionnaire, 410 are men, 777 are women, and 3 are unreported (34.5%, 65.3%, and 0.3%, respectively). Respondents tend to be 26 to 30 years of age (36.3%), White (81.5%), married (45.2%), childless (74.7%), and pursuing academic careers (59.8%). A higher percentage of men (31.2%) than women respondents (22.2%) have children, $\chi^2(1, N = 1143) = 10.73$, $p =$

.001. Respondents tend to have advisors of their own gender (57.7%), although a higher percentage of men respondents (69.8%) have men for advisors than women respondents (51.3%) have women for advisors, $\chi^2(1, N = 1109) = 45.37$, $p = .000$. Men and women differ by academic field (Table 1), with the highest percentages of men in STEM (35.4%) and professional (30.3%) fields and the highest percentages of women in professional (34.6%) and medical (28.2%) fields, $\chi^2(3, N = 1139) = 21.49$, $p = .000$. Likewise, men and women differ by marital status (Table 2), $\chi^2(3, N = 1183) = 13.36$, $p = .004$.

Table 1
Percentages within Academic Field by Respondent Gender

Academic Field	Men (n=393)	Women (n=746)	Total
STEM	35%	24%	n=315
Professional	30%	35%	n=377
Medical	20%	28%	n=288
Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences	15%	14%	n=159

Table 2
Percentages within Marital Status by Respondent Gender

Marital Status	Men (n=407)	Women (n=776)	Total
Single, Never Married	25%	28%	n=318
Married	52%	42%	n=535
Committed Relationship	20%	26%	n=278
Single, Divorced	3%	5%	n= 52

Work-Family Opinion Measures by Respondent Characteristics

Responses on the three work-family opinion measures were analyzed for each respondent characteristic using chi-square tests of independence. Data tables are provided only for the measure "supports balance" and only when statistical differences are present.

  Gender. Responses on all three work-family opinion measures differ by respondent gender. The responses to the measure "supports balance" differ significantly by respondent gender (Table 3), $\chi^2(4, N = 1125) = 62.77$, $p = .000$. Half of men (50.8%) agree strongly or agree that work and family roles are complementary and should be balanced

through flexible policy options, compared to almost three quarters of women (73.5%). Almost half of men (47.6%) and a quarter of women (25.8%) are neutral or have no opinion, indicating that many respondents do not have an opinion for or against work-family balance in higher education, particularly with regard to the tenure review process. Only 1.6% of men and 0.6% of women disagree or disagree strongly, indicating that few believe that "work" and "family" should be separate roles that are not balanced through flexible policy options. On the measure "merit and legitimacy," 62.4% of men and 73.0% of women indicate that they see the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies, $\chi^2(1, N = 1187) = 13.52, p = .000$. Finally, on the measure "part-time tenure okay," 65.4% of men and 72.8% of women indicate that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $\chi^2(1, N = 1187) = 6.83, p = .009$.

Table 3
Percentages of Responses to "Supports Balance" by Respondent Gender

Response	Men (n=382)	Women (n=743)	Total
Strongly Agree	6%	15%	n=133
Agree	45%	59%	n=607
Neutral/ No opinion	48%	26%	n=374
Disagree	1%	1%	n=9
Strongly Disagree	<1%	<1%	n=2

Academic career aspiration. Similar to gender, responses on all three work-family opinion measures differ by academic career aspiration. The responses to the measure "supports balance" differ significantly by academic career aspiration (Table 4), $\chi^2(4, N = 1128) = 14.75, p = .005$. A higher percentage of respondents who are pursuing an academic career (72.0%) than of respondents who are not pursuing academic careers (61.4%) agree strongly or agree with work and family balance through flexible policy options for faculty. Similarly, a higher percentage of respondents who are not pursuing academic careers indicate neutrality (37.4%) or disagreement (1.2%) than do respondents pursuing academic careers (27.4% neutral and 0.6% disagree or disagree strongly). Likewise, a higher percentage of respondents pursuing academic careers (80.2%) than of respondents who are not pursuing academic careers (62.0%) indicate seeing the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies, $\chi^2(1, N = 1190) = 43.94, p = .000$, and indicate that part-time

tenure is appropriate for faculty (74.8% versus 67.3%), $\chi^2(1, N = 1190) = 7.30, p = .007$.

Table 4
Percentages of Responses to "Supports Balance" by Academic Career Aspiration

Response	Academic (n=468)	Non-academic (n=660)	Total
Strongly Agree	13%	11%	n=133
Agree	59%	50%	n=607
Neutral/ No opinion	27%	37%	n=374
Disagree	1%	1%	n=9
Strongly Disagree	0%	<1%	n=2

Ethnicity. The majority of respondents (65.7%), regardless of ethnicity, indicate support for balance through flexible options, $\chi^2(4, N = 1111) = 4.39, p = .356$, but there are differences in the responses on the two policy measures by ethnicity. A higher percentage of White respondents (71.4%) than respondents of color (60.2%) indicate seeing the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies, a significant difference by ethnicity, $\chi^2(1, N = 1170) = 9.87, p = .002$. Similarly, a higher percentage of White respondents (72.9%) than of respondents of color (61.6%) indicate that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $\chi^2(1, N = 1170) = 10.29, p = .001$.

Parental status. Responses on the three work-family opinions measures do not differ significantly by parental status. Regardless of parental status, 66.3% of all respondents agree strongly or agree with work-family balance through flexible options, $\chi^2(4, N = 1086) = 10.24, p = .037$; 69.3% see the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies, $\chi^2(1, N = 1146) = 3.35, p = .067$; and, 70.8% indicate that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $\chi^2(1, N = 1146) = 2.57, p = .109$.

Advisor gender. There are no differences in the responses on the three work-family opinion measures by advisor gender. Regardless of advisor gender, 67.0% or respondents agree strongly or agree with work-family balance through flexibility, 32.2% are neutral or have no opinion, and only 0.9% disagree strongly or disagree, $\chi^2(4, N = 1066) = 5.16, p = .272$. Likewise, 70.6% of respondents see the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies, $\chi^2(1, N = 1112) = 0.39, p = .533$, and 71.7%

indicate that part-time tenure is appropriate, $\chi^2(1, N = 1112) = 0.00, p = .998$.

Marital status. Responses on only one of the three work-family opinions measures differ by marital status. Responses on the measure "supports balance" differ significantly by marital status (Table 5), $\chi^2(12, N = 1125) = 34.27, p = .001$. A higher percentage of respondents in committed relationships (73.1%) than of single respondents who were never married (60.0%) or who are divorced (50.0%) agree strongly or agree with work-family balance. Likewise, a smaller percentage of respondents in committed relationships (25.5%) than of single respondents who were never married (38.0%) or who are divorced (50.0%) are neutral or have no opinion. Regardless of marital status, 69.4% of respondents see the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies for faculty, $\chi^2(3, N = 1186) = 9.38, p = .025$, and 70.4% indicate that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $\chi^2(3, N = 1186) = 0.31, p = .958$.

Table 5
Percentages of Responses on "Supports Balance" by Marital Status

Response	Marital Status				
	Single, NM (n=300)	Married (n=506)	Com Rel (n=267)	Single, D (n=52)	Total
Strongly Agree	9%	12%	14%	15%	n=133
Agree	51%	55%	59%	35%	n=607
Neutral/ No opinion	38%	33%	26%	50%	n=374
Disagree	2%	<1%	<1%	--	n=9
Strongly Disagree	--	--	1%	--	n=2

Academic field. Responses on only one of the three work-family opinions measures differ by academic field. On the measure of merit and legitimacy, higher percentages of respondents in both the STEM fields (77.8%) and the arts, humanities, and social sciences fields (77.0%) than of respondents in professional fields (63.1%) see the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies for faculty, $\chi^2(3, N = 1142) = 21.70, p = .000$. Regardless of academic field, 66.0% of respondents agree strongly or agree with work-family balance in academic careers,

$\chi^2(12, N = 1103) = 14.50, p = .270$, and 71.9% indicate that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $\chi^2(3, N = 1142) = 5.76, p = .124$.

Age. Finally, responses on the three work-family opinions measures do not differ significantly by age. Across all age categories, 65.7% of respondents agree strongly or agree with work-family balance in academic careers, 1.0% disagree or disagree strongly, and 33.3% are neutral or have no opinion, $\chi^2(28, N = 1127) = 27.31, p = .501$; 69.3% see the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies, $\chi^2(7, N = 1189) = 5.45, p = .605$; and, 70.3% indicate that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $\chi^2(7, N = 1189) = 8.29, p = .307$.

Relationships between Work-Family Opinion Measures

Relationships between the three work-family opinion measures were analyzed using Pearson's correlation (Table 6). Respondents who score highly in agreement with support for work-family balance through flexible policy options also tend to indicate both (a) seeing the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies, $r(1126) = .29, p < .01$, and (b) that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $r(1126) = .23, p < .01$. Similarly, respondents who see the merit and legitimacy of flexible policy options tend to agree that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty, $r(1126) = .31, p < .01$.

Table 6
Relationships between Work-Family Opinion Measures

Work-Family Opinion Measure	1	2	3
1. Supports Balance	--	.29**	.23**
2. Merit and Legitimacy		--	.31**
3. Part-Time Tenure Okay			--

Note. Listwise n = 1128
** $p < .01$, two-tailed

Discussion

Based on the data, few graduate and professional student respondents believe that work and family are separate roles that should not be balanced through flexible options for faculty. In fact, the majority of respondents indicate support for work-family balance in faculty careers. Surprisingly, for many of the characteristics predicted to relate to the work-family opinion measures, responses did not differ significantly. It

appears that the majority of respondents agree with the expansionist theory of work-family, which posits that there are benefits to balancing multiple roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), rather than the theories (such as the Ideal Worker) that suggest that work and family roles are incompatible and should be kept separate (Drago et al., 2004; Williams, 2000b).

It is not surprising that women respondents would be more supportive of work and family balance, and less likely to be neutral, than are men respondents, given traditional gendered assumptions about women and academic careers (Hensel, 1991) and the disproportionate challenges faced by faculty women with care-giving responsibilities (Finkel & Olswang, 1996; Hensel, 1991; Menges & Exum, 1983). Similarly, it is not surprising that this study found that a higher percentage of women respondents than men respondents indicate both (a) seeing the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies that facilitate work-family balance in academic careers, and (b) that part-time tenure is appropriate for faculty desiring work-family balance.

It is surprising that substantial proportions of both men and women respondents have no opinion or are neutral on the measure of support for work-family balance in academic careers. This measure, "supports balance," includes four questions specific to flexibility in the tenure review process, so it is possible that graduate and professional students are not being exposed to details of the tenure process during their academic programs. While not every student pursuing an advanced degree is also pursuing a faculty career, the lack of opinion on the tenure process and flexibility is surprising given that all respondents are within academic departments with faculty on the tenure track. However, this finding is in line with other studies of graduate students and early career faculty that found that individuals' understanding of the tenure process is not always accurate or fully developed among these populations (Austin & Rice, 1998; Golde & Dore, 2001;).

Respondents who are pursuing academic careers (i.e., future faculty) tend to support work-family balance in academic careers, to see the merit and legitimacy of family-friendly policies in higher education, and to see part-time tenure as appropriate for faculty. While causality cannot be inferred, these relationships could be indicative of a couple of different scenarios: (a) respondents who want to be academics see work and

family as compatible roles that should be balanced, or (b) respondents who see the benefits of work-family balance also lean toward academic careers. Either way, there seems to be a self-selection process resulting in a population of future academics who support work-family balance in higher education, rather than supporting the idea that work and family roles should be kept separate.

Because women faculty are disproportionately affected by work-family balance concerns (Hensel, 1991), I suspected that women advisors might be more supportive of work-family balance than men advisors are, and that advisor gender would, therefore, relate to respondent opinions on work-family balance, based on the theory of graduate student socialization (Weidman et al., 2001). Again, there were no significant differences in responses on the three work-family opinion measures by advisor gender. It is impossible to determine from the data whether this is because advisors of both genders share similar opinions on work-family balance in academic careers, are conscientious about not expressing their opinions for or against work-family balance to their students, or because students' opinions are not directly influenced by the opinions of their advisors.

Implications

The finding that both men and women respondents, particularly those pursuing academic careers, are supportive of work-family balance in academic careers is good news for American institutions of higher education because it might make it easier to achieve the cultural change necessary for faculty to utilize the flexible options available to them (Keup et al., 2001). Potential future faculty who are supportive of work-family balance in faculty careers can assist with efforts to increase the flexibility in faculty careers, such as the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's *Flexible Faculty Careers Award* (co-sponsored by the American Council on Education, http://acenet.edu/programs/Sloan), as well as efforts to decrease obstacles to women's academic careers, such as the NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation grants (http://www.portal.advance.vt.edu).

Models for flexible faculty careers exist, including recommendations for crafting and implementing a part-time tenure track (See Drago & Williams, 2000; Quinn, Lange, & Olswang, 2004 for examples), but

cultural change at the institutional level is slow (Drago & Colbeck, 2003; Eckel, Green, & Hill, 2001; Eckel, Hill, Green, & Mallon, 1999). Increasing the number of supportive faculty members on department, college, or institutional committees may accelerate the shift in cultural norms regarding work and family in higher education (Etzkowitz et al., 1994; Keup et al., 2001;). As the number of faculty utilizing flexible options increases, policy use will gain visibility and acceptance as "normal," assisting national efforts to make faculty careers more flexible (Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Nelson, 2007). The finding that such high percentages of respondents see the merit of family-friendly policies and support work-family flexibility in academic careers offers an encouraging sign that this cultural change in higher education is on the horizon.

Limitations

The response rate was lower than desired and may have been due to timing; the email inviting students to participate was sent two days prior to the end of the academic year. Graduate students performing teaching assistant duties may have been busy grading final exams and papers. Others may have been occupied completing their own projects and some may have already left for summer break. Additionally, the study is limited by its focus on graduate and professional students from only one institution. Likewise, by restricting the majority of the analyses to chi-square tests, it was not possible to analyze whether multiple characteristics interact as they influence students' opinions regarding work-life flexibility in faculty careers. Regardless of these limitations, this study is an important first step toward understanding graduate and professional student opinions on work-life balance in faculty careers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Duplicating this study with a nationally representative sample of graduate and professional students would permit greater generalizability of findings than can be achieved by a single-institution sample. This would facilitate understanding whether the threshold for "critical mass" has been achieved across the population of future faculty, thereby helping to predict accelerated rates of work-family cultural change in academic institutions. Similarly, focusing on race/ethnicity would shed light on differences in opinions between White students and students of

color, as little research has investigated the intersection of ethnicity and work-family (see for example, Rankin, 2004) and no studies could be found within higher education. Multivariate analysis could identify the inter-relationships and the unique contributions of various student demographics and graduate school experiences in predicting student opinions regarding work-life balance in faculty careers. A longitudinal study of work-family cultural change at a few institutions would permit analysis of the actual impact, if any, of junior faculty who are supportive of work-family flexibility in faculty careers. Likewise, a qualitative study of observed behaviors, rather than opinion measures self-reported in a quantitative study, would shed light on individuals' use of flexible policy options and their evaluation of faculty colleagues who may have utilized these options.

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