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KerryAnn O’Meara and Corbin M. Campbell

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, many research universities have put new policies and support mechanisms in place to help academic parents balance work and family. For example, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Michigan, Stanford University, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and MIT offer some combination of “stop the tenure clock” policies, parental leave, reduced teaching policies, subsidies for child-care, and part-time options. However, a major theme in research to date on the implementation of these policies is that they are underused. Women faculty fear that their careers will be “mommy-tracked” if they take advantage of these policies, and both men and women experience bias against time off for care-giving in their departments and colleges (Armenti, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Colbeck & Drago, 2005; Drago, Colbeck, et al., 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2007).

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Additionally, structural issues in how these policies are crafted can limit participation. For example, some require that the faculty member provide at least 50% of the child-care to be eligible or allow only women to take parental leave. Other policies provide only for unpaid leaves, making it untenable for faculty who are the family's major breadwinner to engage the leave policy. Also, some family circumstances influence decisions and leave experiences, such as the timing of pregnancies and adoptions, availability of partners for child-care, and whether a faculty member has other children.

Underuse of work family policies might also be explained by faculty sense of agency. In brief, agency is having a sense of power, will, and desire to create work contexts that meet the individual's goals over time (Elder, 1997, pp. 964–965). In the case of work/family decisions, it means feeling that the individual has the power to make decisions that are the best for his or her balance of personal and professional lives. Guided by the sociological concept of agency, and building on previous research on women in research universities and work/family balance, this study sought to understand the scaffolding around the sense of agency that faculty felt in making decisions about work and family and, in most cases, making a decision regarding parental leave. The study sought to make a unique contribution to the literature by exploring agency among academic parents in a temporal context, focusing on women and men and comparing their experiences, and understanding parental choices in a context that was not constrained by either gender in the policy or by being unpaid.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the sociological study of agency as well as research on faculty careers in research universities and work/family balance. Extending the earlier definition of agency by Elder (1997) as something that gives one a sense of power over her or his work, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) further theorize agency as “the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relationship contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (p. 970). A key component of this view of agency that is particularly relevant to faculty decisions balancing work and family/parental leave, is the conception of human action within the flow of time.

Several comprehensive literature reviews have observed the complex nature of faculty behavior which is influenced, at a minimum, by factors of discipline, department and institutional reward system, career stage, individual demographics, and institutional type (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; O'Meara, Terosky, & Neumann,

2008; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Likewise, studies have examined how faculty behavior is influenced by socialization in graduate school and as early career faculty in new academic cultures (Austin, 2002; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). However, rarely have studies explicitly looked at faculty decision-making as temporal as well—that is, as influenced simultaneously by a sense of past experiences, current circumstances, and projections of future.

This is the point at which Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and the study of agency is helpful. Their analysis concludes that, without awareness of the flow of time and its influence on us, we cannot really understand agentic processes. Thus, when we look at faculty decision-making at any one given time, we must also consider how that decision is being affected by who and where the individual faculty member has been and who and where she or he wants to be.

At the same time, the study of agency reminds us that people make decisions in specific social spaces. Agency is not something that simply arises within a person; rather, it is constructed in a social and political context (Elder, 1994, 1997; Marshall, 2000). Faculty members' abilities to activate agency, garner power, and exert agency relates to the resources available for their so doing (Marshall, 2000). Social stratification, for example, has been found to influence individuals' access to context-embedded resources and privileges (Elder, 1994; Neumann, Terosky, & Schell, 2006). A faculty member's status in a research university as untenured or new to a department for example, may influence his or her sense of entitlement to certain work resources or feelings of agency in taking advantage of them.

The application of the concept of agency to the study of faculty work and family decisions in research universities is timely because (a) so many research universities have put these policies in place over the last decade (Yost, 2004) and (b) research on work/family and faculty careers consistently shows that they are underused. Two examples are illustrative. A study at Penn State University found that, between 1992 and 1999, more than 500 faculty members at Penn State became new parents but only seven parental leaves were reported, none of them by men (Drago, Crouter, Wardell, & Willits, 2004). The Ohio State University (OSU, 2003) completed a study of faculty work environment and found that three fifths of associate and full professors did not take professional leaves for which they were eligible (parental and others) citing loss of income, workload, and spousal employment as reasons (p. 6). In this same study, women assistant professors were among the groups most dissatisfied with their ability to integrate work and personal/family roles (p. 9).

Research on work and family has thus far examined several major contributors to the underuse of work/family policies: ideal worker norms, assessment of personal capital, and fear of bias against care-giving. Most of the research

has focused on how these two areas influence women faculty. The sociological construct commonly applied by higher education scholars of the American “ideal worker” (Bailyn, 1993; Whyte, 1956; Williams, 2000) considers how expectations about ideal workers in given departments construct expectations for the divide between workplace and home. Unfortunately, research suggests that “ideal worker norms” of working 24/7 dominate many faculty departmental cultures and do not include taking leave for family care-giving (Colbeck & Drago, 2005; Drago, Colbeck, et al., 2005; Erskine & Spalter-Roth, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2007; Williams, 2000). Given that departments are a major source of socialization, identity, and rewards for research university faculty (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996), it is not surprising that faculty would look to their department’s ideal worker norms as a primary reference point for work/family decisions.

In addition to perception of “ideal worker norms,” faculty also seem to take stock of their own professional capital in relationship to the risk of potential bias. Several studies suggest that women parents are less likely to take advantage of parental leave policies if they have not acquired certain career accomplishments, such as publications, grants, and prestigious fellowships. For example, Erskine and Spalter-Roth (2005) examined the use of family-work policies in higher education, with a focus on female faculty use of flexible work life policies. They gathered a cohort study of new Ph.D.’s in 1996 and surveyed the same cohort in 2003. They found that the policies were rarely utilized by women faculty who were junior and unpublished—in fact, that these women were afraid to use the policies, despite the fact that they were encouraged during training to use them. Women believed that their career progression and chances for promotion would be negatively affected by taking time off for child-bearing. Interestingly, each published, peer-reviewed article completed by a woman increased her likelihood of using the policies by 9% (Erskine & Spalter-Roth, 2005). By contrast, the more courses the professor taught, the less likely she was to utilize family-friendly policies (Erskine & Spalter-Roth, 2005). This pattern suggests that the nature of the work that faculty emphasize will also influence work/family decisions and experiences, a point explored in literature on disciplinary and institutional type differences in studies of work and family (Xie & Shauman, 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2007).

A consistent narrative in studies of work/family balance has also been the stress and negative consequences of both taking advantage of policies and feeling that one cannot. Armenti (2004a, 2004b) conducted qualitative interviews with 19 female faculty members in different stages of tenure realization in different disciplines at a Canadian institute of higher education. Using Bensimon and Marshall’s (1997) Female Critical Policy Analysis Model to analyze her interviews, she found that, when her subjects took advantage of

the “stop the tenure clock” option, they felt enormous pressure from backlogged work, felt that they lost research grant opportunities, and felt that they were stigmatized by co-workers. Women in Armenti’s (2004a) study without children reported their desire to have children in early summer/late spring to avoid engaging in maternity leave. Older, tenured women professors often advised younger, untenured professors to wait to have children until after tenure was secure, often compromising the woman’s ability to bear children altogether. As a result, women experienced a career time crunch—feeling that they must achieve tenure and a solid research reputation before having children. Women in Armenti’s (2004a, 2004b) study felt that having children and completing research were incompatible and that their gender as women interfered with their academic success. Policies put in place specifically to support women faculty (i.e., maternity policies and tenure clock-stop) had to be put aside to fall in line with the expressed values of male-dominated departments. Armenti asserted that these obstacles resulted in mothers feeling torn and stressed, settling into less prestigious placements, sacrificing a balanced family/work life, and even readjusting their expectations for research/tenure goals. Likewise, Colbeck and Drago’s (2005) research uncovered faculty strategies of accommodating, avoiding, and resisting bias against care-giving in their research on academic parents.

Consistently, from each of these studies emerges a narrative common to academic parents—particularly to those who are women—of feeling a lack of sufficient agency to make satisfactory decisions regarding a balance of work and family. Agency has been cited in the higher education literature as a characteristic that enables typically marginalized faculty to successfully navigate academic culture (Baez, 2000). Academic parents will make different decisions in their careers and personal lives to find a balance that works for them and their values. These decisions will be highly individual. Also, across workplaces in and outside of academe, no person would call balancing work and family easy, uncomplicated, or completely satisfactory since sacrifices are often inherent in any work/family decision. As such, the issue is not whether faculty feel agency to make a specific decision (e.g., take parental leave; leave the office at 5:00 P.M. and miss a meeting) as much as to make decisions that they feel are necessary to balance work and family in the ways best for them, their families, and their professional lives.

Three research questions guided this inquiry:

1. What factors influenced faculty members’ sense of agency about taking parental leave and making other decisions to balance work and family?
2. Did these factors differ for women and men?
3. How, if at all, was the faculty member’s sense of agency in decision-making influenced by an awareness of past, present, or future circumstances?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design (Merriam, 2001). We conducted 20 interviews with 5 men and 15 women at one research university that had initiated a parental leave policy for academic parents five years prior to the study. Ten were assistant professors, seven were associate professors, two were lecturers, and one was a full professor. All but two were tenured or tenure track.

We invited faculty to participate in the study through an email invitation from the first author and from representatives from the faculty union. Union representatives encouraged faculty to share their experiences with the parental leave policy and with balancing work and family as they had advocated to get parental leave in place and to encourage the institution to be progressive on work/family balance issues. Faculty were encouraged to participate whether they had decided to take parental leave or not; and the invitation, like the parental leave policy, was open to both men and women.

After an initial group of 12 faculty responded to the original invitation, the remaining eight were found through snowball sampling. While the primary focus of this study was tenure-track faculty, we decided to include two non-tenure-track faculty who responded to the email because their interviews revealed the important structural role that the parental leave policy played in enhancing a sense of agency on the issue of work/family balance. These two faculty were not eligible for parental leave, and its absence was a significant barrier for them. Of our 20 interviewees, 15 took parental leave and five did not—these two and three who were eligible. Although parental leave was available for adopting a child, all of our interviewees were birth parents. In our sample of 20, eight had one child, nine had two children, and three had three children.

Because we assured anonymity for the faculty, we present our findings only in the aggregate. While we omitted discipline from the faculty descriptors for this reason, the research questions required that we consider gender, and we felt we could protect anonymity while attributing gender to faculty quotations. (See Tables 1 and 2).

Interview questions were semi-structured and focused on factors that might contribute to each faculty member's decision of whether to take parental leave (if eligible) and other work/family balance decisions. Interviews lasted approximately 50–60 minutes and were tape-recorded and transcribed. In a few cases, a participant did not wish to be taped; instead, we took notes, which we transcribed.

Data analysis employed a “constant comparative” method (Merriam, 1998) to yield key themes and concepts. We analyzed each interview for themes related to how that individual's individual circumstances and social context (place in career, gender, department, etc.) influenced her or his sense of agency

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANT'S FIELD

<i>Field</i>	<i>No. of Participants</i>
Humanities	2
Social sciences	7
Health sciences	1
Business	1
Education	4
Engineering	1
Communication	1
Interdisciplinary	1
Natural and physical sciences	2

TABLE 2
PARTICIPANT'S CAREER STAGE AT TIME OF PREGNANCY

<i>Career Stage</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Early	9
Mid	7
Late	1
Early and mid	3

in making these decisions. Second, we conducted cross-case analysis to build theory (Eisenhardt, 2002). Cross-case analysis built on the coding and categorizing of individual interview data, but then looked across interviews for similarities and differences in experiences. This process allowed us to glean the common factors most important to our interviewees' sense of agency, to see differences by gender, and to consider similarities and differences in how past, current, and future projections influenced work/family decisions.

We strengthened the internal validity of our analysis in three ways. First, we each analyzed the transcripts separately, developed themes, and then came together to compare conclusions. This was done through the creation of "thematic memoing" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, pp. 291–292) and then joint conceptualization of final themes and findings. Second, we identified an initial set of themes which we reported to the subcommittee on work and family of "University Can I" (name assigned to the research university under study), many of whom had participated in interviews, as a form of member-checking. We then integrated the feedback we received into the findings.

We additionally recognize the possibility of researcher bias. As two academic women with children, we are both interested in the issue of work/family balance and in gender equity. However, recognizing this possibility, we tried to be attentive to assumptions or bias, checking each other throughout analysis to provide a rigorous examination of the data.

FINDINGS

University Can I (UCI) Context

In July 2001, UCI initiated a parental leave policy that allows full-time tenure-track faculty who have a new child join their family to take a leave with pay for one semester. The benefit covers men and women and the child may either be born to the faculty member's family or adopted. There is no requirement that the faculty member be the primary child-care provider. This policy came with a recognition by UCI leaders and union representatives that the institution was recruiting an increasing number of women to faculty positions, that the number of dual-career households in which men and women share child-care responsibilities was likewise increasing, and that the tenure track often coincides with the period in which junior faculty are becoming parents. It is important to observe the context under which faculty in this study made decisions about parental leave. All tenure-track and tenured professors decided whether to take parental leave under a policy in which 100% of their salary would be paid while they were on leave, making it available as an actual choice to faculty who are the primary breadwinners in their families.

Overview of Findings

Consistent with previous research, we found that the following factors enabled or inhibited a sense of faculty agency in making parental-leave decisions and in other work/family balance decisions: the presence or lack of role models, department norms and culture for or against care-giving, and temporally related perceptions of personal and professional capital at the time of decision-making. (See Table 3.) We also found a factor less often explored in relationship to agency and balance of work/family issues in academe: the faculty member's flexibility or rigidity in personal and professional expectations. With each factor, we found faculty members' sense of agency in decision-making highly influenced by their past (e.g., stories of department norms about work and family since their arrival years ago, their sense of role models or lack thereof in graduate school, and where they were in their career at the time of the decision as opposed to where they wanted to be). In this section we provide detail on how each factor influenced sense of agency and how the flow of time seemed to influence sense of agency as well.

TABLE 3
FACTORS INFLUENCING A SENSE OF AGENCY

<i>Facilitating Factors</i>	<i>Hampering Factors</i>
Role models in graduate school who provided advice and successful examples of work/family balance	Lack of role models, silence of role models, and role models who left the institution while trying to balance work and family
Department chairs, colleagues, and norms that were supportive, had a "yes, you can" attitude toward parental leave, scheduled meetings at family-friendly meeting times, and set limits	Department chairs, colleagues, and norms that ask faculty to not take parental leaves or stop the tenure clock and/or act in hostile ways to faculty with children
Flexible academic/research university standards that allow working from home, not being in the office at all times	Research university, academic, and/or department expectations of more, more, more; unrealistic expectations for 110% in every area of faculty work
A flexible sense of self-expectations after children—one that sets limits	Inflexible sense of work-self and expectations for one's performance after children—stretching oneself to meet pre-child expectations
Temporal assessment of capital—e.g., I have tenure, I have other options, I have banked or earned the right to balance	Temporal assessment of capital: I am junior, untenured, not as accomplished as I want to be, vulnerable
Policies that grant parental leave and tenure clock-stopping	Department colleagues and norms discourage use of these policies

Additionally, we found women faculty's sense of agency closely tied to gender in relationship to: (a) the realities of pregnancy in terms of timing, health of child and mother, and the physical nature and immediacy of the experience, and (b) perceptions of being "mommy tracked" by colleagues.

Academic parents also made decisions that were influenced by other factors such as the nature of their research (the need to be in the lab for ongoing projects), challenges related to having more than one child, the constraints of being part of a dual-career couple or having a stay-at-home spouse, and other factors specific to their individual work-lives. Interestingly, these factors acted somewhat as fixed constructs, impacting their work/family decisions, while the more fluid factors we discuss here (department norms, role models, expectations) were more frequently brought to the forefront in explanations of why specific decisions were made at certain times.

The next six sections examine what we consider to be the major themes regarding factors that inhibited or sustained faculty agency in ICU's con-

text: role models, department cultures, faculty flexibility of “work-self,” the temporal assessment of current status and currency, gender-specific factors and the benefits of the parental policies themselves.

Role Models: Bad, Few, or Non-Existent

A major finding from our interviews with faculty was that very few had academic mentors who role modeled or discussed with them balance of work and family or issues related to parental leave. Specifically, 7 (35%) mentioned not having any role models at all, and 5 (20%) described having negative role models or experiences with mentors. Only 6 (30%) recalled positive discussions and experiences. Two interviews did not include a discussion of role models. We and the participants found the silences within important mentoring relationships about issues of work/family balance as instructive as the advice that was occasionally given. Silences seemed to send messages about the separation of the personal and professional in the professional lives of graduate students and faculty.

Two quotations illustrate the lack of role models regarding how to balance work and family in academic careers:

I'll start with the mentor side of the question because it's really easy. No, in fact. I mean my committee was all men; and I was aware that they had kids and that they and their wives were, you know, juggling child-care in various ways, but it was something we never really talked about.

I came from a large state university, a research university and the mentors I had in graduate school were all about work. It never was about—and it was interesting both of them were men and they never talked about personal things—it was always about the dissertation, the conferences I was going to, you know, about that. And they never talked about personal stuff.

In these responses and in others, participants provided three explanations about why they had not had role models for balancing work and family. Each of these explanations had embedded assumptions. First, participants explained, they had few role models because most of their mentors were men. Another women faculty member answered this question simply as, “There were no role models; the men had wives.” This was a common assumption throughout the data—that male mentors are not likely to be role models for work/family balance. All faculty responded to this question by noting the gender of their mentors despite our not having specifically asked for it. Second, they had no role models because the faculty never opened up or encouraged them to talk about this issue. Instead sharp lines were drawn between the personal and the professional, and our interviewees had been socialized to not discuss it. Clearly there were also power assumptions in this explanation, since they obviously did not feel free to initiate such conversa-

tions. They clearly assumed that, if their mentor did not bring up the topic, there was no conversation on that topic. Third, they had no role models because they were in a large research university context. Underlying their explanation was the assumption that research universities were not good environments in which to find work/family balance.

Other faculty had had explicit conversations or advice from their mentors that they felt negatively influenced their sense of agency in work/family decisions. Some faculty observed advisers and mentors struggling with the balance, not making tenure, and leaving the institution. For example, one woman faculty member in a field with one of the lowest percentages of women noted that, as a graduate student, she had one female faculty member role model who had a child before achieving tenure, was subsequently denied tenure, and left the next year.

In another example of this phenomenon, the faculty member recalls having no real role models for balancing work and family but of being "beautifully mentored" in most other ways. While she describes a male faculty member who seemed to advocate for balancing work with child-care, the rest of her story was largely negative:

I had no role models whatsoever. [Because of] the role models that I had . . . I was beautifully mentored. I had people helping out at every step along the way. My female role models were women who were usually full professors who had been through four or five marriages, who had no children. Or men who were—the men were not as eager about mentoring, but we had a really kind of sexist structure. And the men who achieved full professors typically had their wife stay home with their children. There was one professor I had who was very adamant about child-care needs, and I thought that was great. But, no, I had very few, if any, role models; and I had people telling me that I could not have a career in academia and have a marriage and children.

This woman went on to note that most of her colleagues were men. Much like the interviewees who had no mentoring, she assumed that her lack of mentoring/role modeling regarding work/family balance was because her mentors were mostly men. Her assumption seemed to be that, if she had had more young women colleagues, there would have been more role modeling and conversations.

Another female faculty member, in describing her doctoral university, said, "The two women I knew who were my age who were assistant professors were both hot shots, published in top journals. They had children and they just flipped. . . . [They were] junior people, and they bombed because they said they couldn't do family and work. And there was no maternity leave." Another woman faculty member recalled the available role modeling during her socialization to the professoriate:

There were very few women [at my research university] which is something we talked about a lot—the graduate students talked about a lot. There were very few women graduate students also. And I didn't have—well, I had one professor, a women with kids. And we talked about it a little bit—she really struggled having a baby while she was up for tenure and she ultimately did not get tenure. So, I knew her story; and then there was another woman who was in a different subfield, so I didn't really deal with her, but she—the graduate students kind of made fun of her because she had two kids before she got tenure and never took any time [off]. We did a skit—we used to do skits to make fun of the faculty at the end of the year—and we did a skit of her in the middle of teaching, saying, “Excuse me,” then going and having her baby and coming back to class. Basically like that. It was definitely understood that this was a hard thing to do, or impossible thing to do, and she ended up leaving also.

In this example we see the lasting impression that watching female scholars struggle with raising families can have on one's mindset. This same faculty member later in the interview discussed how observing these struggles close-up discouraged her from stopping the tenure clock when she had her first child and pressured her to continue her research and teaching. This faculty member had two more children and took parental leave when it was available for the third child. Yet she did not stop the tenure clock or take any leave for the first two children. She discussed how the experience of watching role models struggle and then leave their institution put pressure on her in her early career, causing her to feel pulled in multiple directions: “I had to teach these three-hour classes. . . . I would be digging my fingernails into my [arm] to keep myself awake.” While these negative experiences with role models did not affect her decision to have a family, they did affect her feelings of agency around creating a manageable work/family balance.

At the same time, not all faculty assumed that the role models whom they saw struggling to balance family with getting tenure described their options, nor did they all assume that it was good advice to avoid having children. One female interviewee explicitly critiqued the “bad advice” she felt that she received:

My mentors were like 65 year old guys. . . . I went to X University, which is one of the top [discipline name] programs in the country, and if anything—if anything, they would dissuade you from doing it. People in my graduate program—the few women faculty that ever had kids—didn't do it, as far as I could tell, until after tenure. So, that was kind of the message: You don't do this until after you're tenured. And, my feeling was, since I've always valued family, that if I found someone to marry and have kids with I would have just done it. I mean, my timing is really just a product of my personal life and not anything having to do with my career. I just thought, “I can't believe these people are waiting until they are like 36 to have their first child.” It's fine if that's how life ends up being, but I'm not going to sit around waiting for five

years to have a child. So, if anything, those people, like, turned me off to their particular strategy because it just wasn't my life goal at all.

A few faculty, however, had had positive experiences with their mentors regarding work-family balance, through helpful conversations or in observing positive role modeling. For example, one woman faculty member had talked with a woman faculty member advisor about her children and how she scheduled her time carefully because of them. She noted she was very productive and won awards, so she "saw a model of how you could do it." Interestingly, this faculty member achieved success in both arenas; she was a good example at both work and family. A male faculty member who described generally having a "50/50 relationship" with his partner where child-care was concerned, commented that, as an undergraduate, he had observed faculty mentors who balanced work and family in ways that were "fairly normal":

Not my direct mentor, my chair, who is a little bit older. But when I was at [undergraduate institution], there were three faculty in the program. One, in the four years that I was there, had two daughters, so she was not actually around that much, you know; she took maternity leave both times. Certainly the head of the program was extremely family centered, you know. He had older kids and definitely made changes for schedules and things like that. And then [name] also had two sons. They were young. His youngest was probably six or seven months old. We definitely saw how he was balancing all that—or not, at times.

While not part of this interviewee's graduate socialization, these role models whom he observed as an undergraduate made a lasting impression. While he recalled few specific conversations on the topic, just the image and his observations of these faculty managing work/family issues in "real time" seemed to facilitate his own later sense of agency that it was possible. Unfortunately, though, such positive experiences were rare in our study.

Overall, we found faculty telling us that the silence or negative experiences with role models for work/family balance worked against their sense of agency that they could achieve a successful balance. It did not mean that they did not try to create a balance; it just meant that they knew going in that it was going to be really hard and might not work. Those faculty who watched junior women or men balance parenthood successfully seemed, on the other hand, buoyed by the experience. Either way, most were aware that they were the role models now.

Department Norms: A Continuum of Support

One of the major factors that seemed to influence faculty sense of agency regarding work/family balance overall—and specifically with decisions about parental leave—was a supportive faculty climate, both when a faculty member had a child join his or her family and afterward. Faculty described

a continuum of support in their departments from “very supportive” to “supportive, but . . .” to “outright hostile.” We observe that even in environments where faculty seemed to feel support, they also described conflicting messages regarding the need to maintain high productivity that seemed to undercut decisions that balanced the family/work demands. The department chair, as well as colleagues in the departments, were the central players in how these norms were described and played out. Faculty agency also seemed to be facilitated when their department colleagues also had young children. One faculty member who felt she had a supportive environment said:

So I was terrified of what that would mean because I knew I would have a baby in March of my first year, and I went and I was mortified to tell [my department chair] and I didn't know what to say and I went and told her I just found out that I'm pregnant. She gave me this big hug and said, “Oh, we're so happy! It will be our baby.” It was just wonderful: “Let me know what you need, and here's how to file the papers, and make sure you ask for delayed tenure decision here. Make sure you do this, make sure you do that, and talk to this person and talk to this person.”

Another woman faculty member observed:

I think that I am in a very supportive environment. In general, people in this department have a nice balance between family and work. It was actually one of the things that attracted me to this department when I interviewed. The department chair at the time, when we were chatting over lunch when I was here for my interview, made a point of actually saying, “You know, in our department we expect you to work hard and be productive, but almost everyone—everyone who chooses to have a family—has a family.”

These two examples highlight two characteristics of supportive departments. First, there is a sense in these departments that it is normal and good for faculty to have families. Second, in supportive departments, colleagues, especially department chairs, help faculty navigate the process around managing workload and family.

Then there were the faculty who described “supportive, but . . .” departments, as captured by these two quotations:

He [the department chair] was very supportive. He was always asking, you know, “Is there anything we can do? How can we help?” He did not want to do anything official like cancel a class or, um . . . He was happy to do anything behind the scenes to help out. I think it was really important to him, because we are a small department, and I had just been hired, and it was important to him to show we are as strong and productive as any department on campus, so he really wanted me to get my research done and get grants and [do] all that stuff at the same time. So he was very supportive but very conscious that we need to prove ourselves.

I think, in the department there is a lot of support for it, actually. Well, [my] division has really been super supportive. It's mostly women now, since a lot of the guys retired; and you know—in fact, I bring my son to school, and they like it and they've been perfectly happy with it. The department seems to be supportive of it also. At least that's the way it feels. And that's the sense that I get when I'm walking around the halls with my son. People are totally supportive, which I really appreciate because otherwise I just couldn't come in. I mean, that's pretty much the choice I have: I come like this or I don't come at all. At the same time, you know, so there's sort of, like, the way they act, but I also feel like—when the time comes and I hand in my annual faculty report and I say I was on maternity leave, you know, I will be evaluated more negatively, or less favorably, because I was not productive this year, and I don't know what to make of that.

This last quotation shows a direct connection between a supportive department and this faculty member's agency to come in to the office: "People are totally supportive, which I really appreciate because otherwise I couldn't come in." We also see in these quotations a place where colleagues are offering to help out and the atmosphere is friendly to children. On the other hand, we see places that have not changed their expectations for faculty work or faculty behavior as workers; being highly productive seems to trump everything else. In these environments, faculty felt supported but also realized that there were expectations or requirements for that support—expectations and requirements that made it difficult to have the balance they wanted.

At the other end of the spectrum were environments that faculty described as downright hostile or unfriendly either to their decisions to take parental leave, to stop the tenure clock, or to make other smaller decisions that nonetheless balanced work demands and family needs. Three characteristics of hostile and unsupportive work environments stood out. Having children and including them in work-life considerations was not the norm in these departments. Department colleagues and senior colleagues refused to make family-friendly accommodations (e.g., for meeting times), and certain colleagues actively disparaged and discriminated against faculty for having had children while on the tenure track. Examples of these themes are present in the quotations below:

I've inherited numerous doctoral students, all of them from other faculty, who have told me—and I quote—that they were at a party at a certain male faculty member's house and he said, "Well, this young junior faculty member [meaning me] and this [other] young junior faculty member haven't done anything since they've gotten here but have a bunch of kids. And one of my doctoral students who was very promising was going to quit. She said that she got up and left the party in tears because she could not believe that that was the attitude.

One person who is my senior colleague is a childless woman and has punished me for taking time off to give birth. She has scheduled meetings at terrible times for me, particularly when I was breastfeeding and made it clear I couldn't miss them. She used veiled threats about tenure to ensure that I came to these meetings. She is not the unit director now but has the potential for being the personnel committee chair. I took the leave but feel that there have been repercussions.

My chair told me that the one year added to my tenure clock as the result of the birth of my [child] was unfair to the other assistant professors. This was because he viewed the parental leave as synonymous with a sabbatical.

Such stories were unfortunately common. Two women who took parental leave after childbirth mentioned actions taken by colleagues that made leave difficult. For example one senior colleague emailed during the fourth week of leave asking when she would be back, asked her to serve on committees while on leave, made comments to students about her lack of productivity, and asked her to come to the office two days a week. One faculty member glibly said to another faculty participant at a party, "Tenure is a very stressful time for anyone," as if having two young children at home did not add stress in and of itself to the tenure track. He did not want to hear about her family-related stress. She also said that her department meetings were not family friendly and conflicted with the pick-up time for her children in child-care. Often faculty associated these comments with the faculty member's gender, lack of children, age, or, interestingly, ambition.

There was one person in particular that was a single woman who was really, really driven—who doesn't understand why anyone would want kids anyways, so she feels like, "Obviously this is going to hurt my career." But I take it from the source. It's like, okay, You don't really have any basis from which to speak. Well, she did say to me once . . . that she needs to have a maternity leave so that she can get all her stuff done. I was like, "Oh God, I don't even want to talk to you." So, that's just a real lack of understanding and no experience. That doesn't affect me one way or the other.

Likewise, it was instructive to see the potential negative influence of perceptions regarding department culture around work/family balance of one male faculty member who was eligible for parental leave but who did not take it. When asked if he approached his department chair, he said:

I used my perceptions of the department to guide my decision. One of the bigger [reasons] was within my department. My perception is that many of the senior faculty don't have children, but I was concerned about how it would be perceived. Now I could have just talked to people rather than assume, and so I was concerned. If I talk to them and find out that they are not in favor of it [taking parental leave], then . . . my assumption is [that] they haven't gone

through [parenthood] so they just don't understand. If I talk to them, and I find out that they are not in favor of it, but they sort of say, "Well, but it's your choice"—if I hear that feedback and I end up taking the leave, then in a sense I am going against what they had said.

This male faculty member makes a direct connection between his perceptions of departmental norms and the lack of agency he felt to take the leave. He added:

Yeah, I mean, I would have liked to have taken it. You know, I would also like for my wife—my wife and I would like for her not to be working right now and [be] at home with [our child] but financially we can't afford to do that. I would have liked to have done it, but—I just don't know—because of the job, I just don't know. So I wasn't completely sure what the leave really means. So, let's say I take the leave and then me, myself, I still come into the office you know, a couple days a week or a few days a week or something, then is it viewed by the other faculty as, "Oh, he's just using this time so that he can get out of teaching. He can still do his research."

In this example, the faculty member imagines how his taking the leave would affect his interactions with his colleagues in the future and finds the prospect discouraging. In sum, department norms varied considerably around parental leave, stopping the tenure clock, and other decisions about work/family balance. The faculty in this study were genuinely affected by them, whether in ways as monumental as not taking a parental leave because of negative collegial perceptions or not being able to take part in shared governance because meetings were scheduled during child-care pick-up times. Faculty seemed either buoyed personally and professionally by supportive department chairs, colleagues, and norms, or weighed down, stressed, disappointed, resentful, and constrained by environments that were not supportive. Perhaps of most concern was the faculty member who said she felt "forced" to bring her child to a conference with poor child-care. This was a case where the department culture did not act as scaffolding to her sense of agency to say no but made her feel unable to act in the way she felt was best for her and her child.

Standards at Research Universities

In addition to departmental norms, certain aspects of academic culture could either facilitate or hinder faculty members' sense of agency in balancing work and family. Many faculty in our sample observed that the overall flexibility of academic life in a research university facilitated their sense of agency in making decisions that supported work/family balance. For example, the following quotation illustrates the sense of faculty at research universities that the norms of working outside the office facilitated their sense of agency in achieving balance in work/family commitments:

People leave around four or five every day and . . . that normative peer behavior around me makes a huge difference so that I don't feel like I have to stay. I actually used to stay pretty late. Now I want to be home. My child goes to bed at 7:00 and I want to come home so I can spend at least a couple of hours with him, you know? So now I'm leaving around 4:30 or 5:00 and I don't feel guilty about it at all. . . . Just having that sort of openness about knowing that people are confident that I am getting my work done even if I'm not necessarily, conventionally there, is huge.

On the other hand, faculty also observed a "more, more, more" attitude or a greedy institution that detracted from their ability to balance work demands and family needs. One women faculty member said:

I don't necessarily publish in the absolute top journals. I still don't have, I mean, I have occasionally, but I mean they're like 97% rejection rate. . . . I got some federal funding, but they wanted more. But there are no, sort of, laid-out criteria. They're not looking for X number of publications or so many grants. It's just—everything is just more, more, more. And you know, I don't know when it's good enough. So, I think a lot of it was having to deal with coming from such a top research institution where the expectations were so high that I was going to become somebody famous and well known for everything, but, oh well.

Other faculty expressed how the norms of working in research universities made "slowing down" in any area, whether research or teaching, difficult. Another woman faculty member noted that she felt pressure to stay until 6:00 P.M. every night, work on weekends, produce several publications quickly, and excel in every aspect of faculty life. She said that the constant message about productivity hurt her ability to balance work and family because anything that took away from her "productive department" was not considered well by colleagues. When asked about the potential of part-time work, one female faculty member said:

[The faculty member] would either get taken advantage of or it wouldn't be taken seriously. . . . I just can't imagine. You can't do research half time. You're not going to be taken seriously. You're not going to be keeping up with the field. I just I don't know how it would work. And I don't think it's just a university problem. I think it's a problem within our disciplines as well. It's a nice idea, though.

In several examples, faculty were encouraged not to take advantage of parental leave or stop the tenure clock because it could hurt the image of the department with the university.

And they [a senior colleague and the department chair] both said, "Don't do it. Don't stop your tenure clock because it would look bad for the depart-

ment. It would look like you can't get your research done. It is not necessary." They were very clear that this would not be a good thing for my career—to stop the tenure clock.

In sum, we found the research university culture as enacted in faculty departments provided flexibility in terms of expectations for face time in the office that facilitated balancing work and family needs (such as working from home when children were sick). Yet the same culture worked against work/family balance in that the demands were there to be working all of the time.

Flexibility of Work-Self Expectations: Pre- and Post-Parenting

An equally important factor facilitating or hindering faculty sense of agency were faculty expectations about their own performance. Some faculty were able to accept their new responsibilities as parents and integrate those duties into a new set of expectations for self, thereby achieving a more flexible set of expectations regarding their own performance. These same faculty seemed to have “relieved” themselves of the expectation that they continue to achieve 110% in every area of their professional life or be in the office 24/7. Yet others were still struggling with their pre-children expectations. Being flexible or rigid in one's self-expectations seemed to be a strong influence on our interviewees' sense of agency. For example, one male faculty member explained that one reason he did not take parental leave was because of his rigid expectations for his work performance:

One of my biggest reasons—I had a few main reasons and then a few other minor reasons—[but my] main ones [were] my neuroses of not being productive at work. So I personally was afraid of being away from my work too much. I just know there is always more work I could be doing, especially as a non-tenured assistant professor. Always something I needed to be doing, and I didn't know how much an academic could handle being away from the work. That was one of the bigger ones. . . . I couldn't see myself being away from the office, you know, for a semester or just popping in. That would just be difficult for me to do. The other thing, too, is that, with my wife and I, we decided that I wasn't going to take the leave. If we would have decided for me to take the leave, then I think her expectation of me is that I am taking a leave from work—that I am putting work aside for us, and I can't do that. I just can't do that. I know that would be her expectation, and I just can't be away from work for that long. I think it is unfortunate, too, because I think it would be best, honestly, I think it would be best for our family, for, you know, raising our daughter—that we are spending the majority of our time with her as opposed to a daycare provider.

Perhaps most interesting in this interview is the faculty member's admission that he cannot change his sense of his work-self from what it was before his child's birth, despite knowing it would probably be good for him and

his child to do so. He also does not want extra expectations put on him by his wife. Likewise, one participant observed that she has tended to “stretch herself out” to meet everyone’s expectations rather than change them, especially while on the tenure track.

Alternatively, agency was facilitated when faculty members chose to intentionally prioritize family over work no matter the cost, by changing work-self expectations. In the following two examples, the interviewees seem to have adjusted their sense of work-self in liberating ways. At a minimum, these adjustments fuel a sense of agency about work and family decisions. The first is a woman, the second a man.

I definitely try more now than ever before to work a normal day. You know, like a 9-5 sort of deal, 9:30-4:45 or whatever it is. Whereas, I think before I had kids, especially before I got married, I worked whenever I felt like it. I worked any 20 hours a day I wanted. I think I’ve just decided that, you know, this is a long career that I’m hopefully going to have. You know, when you’re in grad school and you think, “When I finish this . . .” or “I finish my master’s” or “my dissertation, then things will be different.” Then, I came here. I thought, “When I get through my first year, when I get through tenure, things will be different.” And things are never really going to be that different. And so, I think, at least for me, I had to find a way to manage my life, at least in general even before I had kids, once I was dating this person I married. [He] doesn’t understand the academic world at all, which is both good and bad. You know, it’s a life. It’s a lifestyle you have to figure out. You can’t just be working 16-hour days. So I’ve just really tried to work it like a regular job, and it doesn’t work out half the time. Half the time I’m doing email and my computer’s on my kitchen counter and I’m doing email in between cooking or something. So, it’s not perfect, but it works. At least more or less. I may think I need more time, but I think we all do.

Actually I’m probably more productive since I’ve had children. You know, . . . I tend to be somewhat productive anyway, but I think because they have really made me focus my energy, my time, you know, especially when my third came around. You know my work schedule, prior to having children my work schedule was mostly at work—I do my manuscript reviews, I do my writing—everything was pretty much contained at work. I didn’t bring too much home. Now when I think about my weekly work schedule, it’s just when can I fit things in, including weekends, Saturday and Sunday. So it’s not uncommon for me, in fact very rare [to do editorial work in the office]. I don’t think I’ve done any of it here. It’s all done at home, at night.

One faculty member observed that she has had to “learn to be better at saying no” in that “more, more, more” environment:

I feel like I always have to give excuses if I’m not available. There always has to be some reason and the expectation is that we’re always just available, like,

all the time. And there are only three of us, and my other two colleagues are just working all the time. So it's just what they expect. I think I've become a lot better . . . at feeling, like, you know, I get some time off. Since I've got tenure, I just feel differently. I don't feel like I have to prove myself as much. So you know, this summer I really took off a lot of times to be with my family.

Throughout the interviews, we heard faculty maintaining their pre-children work expectations, negotiating with them, and changing them. Those who felt the greatest agency seemed to have internally negotiated with and/or changed their expectations of their work-selves.

Temporal Assessment of Professional Capital

We also found that faculty members' sense of agency was influenced by a temporal sense of their own personal capital at different points in their career as well as a temporal sense of where they were, are, and want to be in their family life. We found this awareness more common among women than among the men in our study. In fact, women faculty were constantly taking stock of their past, current, and future professional capital when weighing options for creating a satisfactory work/family balance. The interviews were replete with examples of faculty moving backward in time, forward in time, and returning to the present in their reflections on work/family balance. One woman stated, "Well, I didn't even think about asking [for time off] . . . because of my status as a lecturer." Another woman, whose due date was simultaneous with her tenure review, described herself as not having "the strongest case." Her committee asked her to consider waiting a year before applying for tenure, and she agreed:

I waited the year. I didn't feel like I had a choice. I mean, obviously I had a choice, I could have done what I wanted, but I felt like, if I didn't get tenure at that point, they would have easily just said, "Well, we told you to wait a year, and so . . ." And I felt also that if I didn't get tenure, I'd rather not get tenure a year later and at least have that extra year and the maternity leave and not have to be searching for a job right away. So I did wait the year, and then I did get tenure the following year.

In this quotation, she reflects on how her lack of professional capital for her tenure case affected her agency to make current and future decisions about her job and her leave. As a result, she spent much of her parental leave working. In the next example of temporal context, one woman faculty member drew a direct connection between her future desire for children and her current lack of sufficient professional capital. She mused about strategies for gaining additional professional capital in the future to give her the agency to make satisfactory decisions for her work/family balance:

Knowing that I was probably going to want to have another child and take a leave probably did affect some choices that I made in those first couple of years—that I felt like I needed to bank a lot of political capital and get a reputation for saying yes to things so that I could disappear later.

Thinking back in time this same woman faculty member's desire to have children also influenced her job search:

So I went on the job market and also started trying to conceive at that same point, so that whichever one panned out first I would pursue, and they actually kind of panned out simultaneously because I was throwing up on a job interview. I decided not to pursue the search any further that year, so I had actually two whole academic years between finishing my Ph.D. and starting here. One of those years, I was adjunct lecturer at X University and was doing some research for a non-profit. Then my daughter was born in August of the year after I got my Ph.D., so I was just doing child-care that fall; and then in the spring, I was again doing some part-time research.

Particularly for women faculty, agency was also facilitated when the faculty member had a history of strong personal support systems and knew that, even if she quit or did not get tenure, the support system would be present to support those directions in the future. Agency was facilitated when a faculty member perceived herself as having other career options:

I do not have to be here, and the day that they [annoy me] enough that I walk, I walk. . . . There's a thousand jobs out there. I have a Ph.D. from the University of X. I can do something else. I don't want to do something else. This is what I want to do, but . . .

Faculty agency, particularly for women, related to their contemporary assessments of their professional capital given their current work situation. It was also influenced by their reflections of where they had been and where they wanted to go professionally (e.g., advancement) and personally (e.g., having more children and spending more time with their children).

Gender-Specific Factors

Not surprisingly, gender was a major factor influencing the scaffolding that supported faculty members' sense of agency in balancing work and family in ways that felt satisfying. We highlight two major ways in which gender influenced agency: (a) the physical immediacy of the pregnancy, birth, and parenting process for women, and (b) faculty's perceptions of being "mommy tracked" by colleagues.

We found particularly striking the description by women faculty of the immediacy of challenges and joys in trying to conceive, being pregnant, recovering from child-birth, and breastfeeding. These intimate and physical

experiences influenced the degree to which women felt in control of their work choices, made them feel exposed and at times vulnerable and made them feel pressure in some of the most intense work experiences such as on a job interview, during a peak period of the tenure track, etc. For example, the woman who threw up during a job interview decided that being on the job market during pregnancy probably would not work. She also worried about being pregnant, giving birth, and dealing with the pressures of being the primary bread-winner if a parental leave was not in effect.

I was pregnant when the parental leave policy went into effect. But leave was something that I had been worrying about for about a year since I'm the bread-winner in the family, so an unpaid leave would have been a challenge financially. Um, I think I had originally assumed that I could just time it so that I'd have the baby in the summer. But given that that didn't work out, I'm glad that the leave came through when it did.

In the two following quotations, the women interviewees communicate the immediacy of their physical experience and its effect on their sense of agency:

You know I have this review, and I can't figure out when I'm supposed to do it because my two kids never seem to sleep at the same time. And when I'm here sometimes I'm free, but then I have meetings and I'm breastfeeding ...

But I remember there were times during my pregnancy where walking 15 minutes was fine, but there were times where I was having various aches and pains and so walking would really aggravate them.

The physical aspect of pregnancy for women faculty often exacerbated the effects of the departmental norms. For example, although one woman faculty member took her parental leave, it was the stress of the "side comments" that bothered her most. "Side comments from people you admire to say, 'You're not going to have another one are you?'" She noted that she had male colleagues who had children and didn't take parental leave but the issue went completely unremarked. "When the woman is pregnant and teaching, everyone knows it. There is a lot of sympathy when [you're] pregnant. No one gets what it's like the year after." She observed that secretaries expressed animosity ("Aren't *you* lucky!") when she returned from paid leave. What was particularly striking in this interview is that this female faculty member most wanted *not* to be noticed. Being pregnant visually "screamed" that she was female every day in an environment where there were very few females. She wanted more privacy and invisibility than her body gave her. She also had a "sense that women have to prove themselves to be taken seriously," but looking and being pregnant did not help her prove herself.

In contrast, we were struck by a male faculty member's reflection that he never even knew about parental leave before his wife became pregnant:

And I was actually talking to another faculty member about it, and, like, he said, "I am sure we got information about this sometime when we started." But we get so much information, and at the time it wasn't relevant. So you focus on the stuff that does pertain to you at that moment. . . . However, a colleague in the department told me that . . . was one of the selling points of her coming here. Maybe because I am male it wasn't as much.

In most cases, the physical aspects of pregnancy, child-birth, and breastfeeding made women feel that they had fewer choices in achieving work/family balance.

Another aspect of gender that influenced faculty agency was women faculty's feeling that their colleagues either had or would "mommy track" them. The two following quotations represent many more with this theme:

My department has changed some since I had my [children] but there is still an assumption that as a woman I am less committed to my career. But this is not the case for my male colleagues with children. They are heralded as super scholar dads!

As a *female* faculty member and the primary caregiver for my child, I have been on the receiving end of remarks from my department chair indicating that I am considered less committed to my career [than faculty without children]. My *male* colleague, who has had two children within four years, pre-tenure, and is not the primary caregiver, is still considered strongly committed to his career by my chair.

These comments suggest a sort of gender war—a sense among women faculty that being male facilitates agency in seeking work/family balance while being female denies women the same sense of agency. They also felt that department assessments of "seriousness as a scholar" before and after children were perceived differently for men and women.

Parental Leave and Stop-the-Clock Policies

UCI's parental leaves and tenure clock-stopping policies, in and of themselves, facilitated faculty members' sense of agency. In the interviews, women faculty who took advantage of the policies especially felt that these policies provided the space they needed to continue to pursue their career goals while attending to their family. For example, interviewees explained that the release from teaching allowed them to attend to their family while, at some point in their leave, continuing research goals part-time. Several faculty hypothesized that, without their leave, they would not have been able to do both. As a result, they would either have had to quit, request a leave of absence, or fail to receive tenure and promotion.

For a mother to care for a newborn is not just a matter of being unable to afford child-care. I'm convinced that newborns really need focused attention from their parents in order to feel secure as they grow. Having a parental leave made what would have been an unbearable situation actually tolerable, so I am deeply, deeply grateful.

I am a woman who took parental leave when my second son was born. My husband, who also works at UCI, took a leave immediately following mine, enabling me to focus on conducting research when my son was a baby. With both of us working full-time as academics, it might have been difficult for me to get back on the research track otherwise.

Professionally being able to stop the clock the first time, I think, is what made my tenure case successful. I mean it certainly helped, having that extra time. Even though I didn't get much done that semester, it was a year later, and I was a more seasoned researcher.

In sum, the parental leave policies provided choices to men and women, choices that enhanced their sense of agency, even in cases where they decided not to take it.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this section, we highlight three key findings and their implications for supporting faculty in their search for a satisfactory work/family balance. We also suggest directions for future research.

1. *Supportive work/family policies, department chairs, role models, and norms are critical scaffolding for agency in work/family balance.* This study affirms the critical role that work/family policies, department chairs, senior colleagues, and department norms play in faculty work-life satisfaction and experience (Colbeck & Drago, 2005; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007). Each faculty member in the study was genuinely affected by department norms regarding work/family balance, and the words and actions of senior colleagues made a big difference in their decision-making.

Research on faculty work-life consistently shows the department in research universities as the key unit of production, satisfaction, socialization, and identity. Therefore, it is within departments that the transformation of "ideal worker norms" needs to happen. Given the high cost to institutions when faculty are not retained, it is in their best interest to make departments better places for work/family balance. Practically speaking, the findings suggest that the offices of faculty affairs, provosts, deans, and department chairs monitor the climate for work/family balance in departments and seek suggestions for improvement (such as changing meeting times, changing biases against care-giving, and encouraging the use of policies put in place to support faculty).

2. *Agency to make satisfactory work and family decisions is enhanced by flexible institutional and individual work expectations.* Faculty sense of agency was also greatly enhanced or extremely limited by flexibility or rigidity in the faculty member's expectations for work performance before and after parenting. We know from previous research that excessively high expectations are a major source of stress among all faculty and particularly among research university faculty (Gmelch, Lovrich, & Wilke, 1984). Such stress is further exacerbated by an overall increase in faculty work hours. The number of faculty working 50 hours a week or more, a group that Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) refer to as "driven" or "committed," doubled between 1972 and 1998; now nearly two-fifths of the faculty are in that category (p. 81). Further, they found that one in four faculty work more than 55 hours per week. While an increase in work hours has increased across institutional types, research university faculty have faced the most dramatic work-hour increases because of increased pressure to publish, be entrepreneurial, and improve instructional practices.

Additionally, many research university academic programs, departments, and colleges, as well as institutions as a whole are actively striving for greater prestige in the academic hierarchy, as determined by rankings such as that of *U.S. News and World Report*. There is pressure on faculty and administrators in such environments to bring in more external funding, publish more articles and books, attract more talented students, and achieve greater national and international recognition (O'Meara, 2007). Research on "striving environments" has shown that academic environments that are actively striving often become more competitive and less work/family friendly; they are often "greedy" of faculty time and energy (O'Meara, 2007; O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2010; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2007).

Not only will the mantra of "more, more, more" not work for academic parents, but it is also not a productive environment for other faculty who also need to balance their work and personal lives. Just as this study suggests that faculty who are flexible with their pre- and post-parenting expectations will have a better work/family balance, leading research universities need to reconsider how they perpetuate norms and expectations that encourage 100%, almost monastic commitment to careers, and whether work-intensive norms are in the best interests of institutions in the long-term retention of their faculty.

3. *Agency to make satisfactory decisions about work/family balance for women is constructed in a temporal context, includes current assessment of human capital, and is influenced by physical aspects of care-giving.* Gender played a role in faculty members' sense of agency in creating a satisfactory balance of work and family. The parental leave policy at UCI progressively extended parental leave policies to both women and men faculty. It took this action to create less stigma for women faculty in taking advantage of the policy and

to recognize more equitable gender roles and desires on the part of male partners to be involved in care-giving.

However, that does not mean that these “decisions” were the same for women and men. Women faculty were more often primary caregivers whether they were in dual-career households or not. Women faculty felt that their sense of agency in balancing work and family and taking parental leave was very much influenced by the physical immediacy of family care-giving demands. That is, actually being visibly pregnant in their departments and the physical experiences of being pregnant, giving birth, recovering, and breast-feeding all interacted with their sense of choice in ways distinctly different than for male faculty. While parental leave policies that are gender neutral are critical in decreasing discrimination and bias against family care-giving, it is important in practical terms that colleagues and department chairs recognize these experiences as qualitatively different, with different reentry needs and/or realities that last long after the child's actual birth.

The majority of women who have high expectations about their professional status and who are of child-bearing age will not have achieved all of the status they desire within their field or institution by the time they want to have children. Accordingly, it is problematic that this study confirmed previous findings (Erskine & Spalter-Roth, 2005) that their sense of personal and professional capital is linked to their agency in utilizing parental leave and making satisfying work/family balance decisions. Since research has shown that women on the tenure track with children can be and often are as productive as women faculty without children (Stack, 2004), it is important for both research and practice to change the national narrative about having children as something that only constrains women's careers. Institutions could help disentangle the assessment of capital from decisions about parental leave by encouraging greater use of the policies for all faculty—and particularly for male faculty—to avoid gender bias.

Additionally, the findings revealed cultural assumptions by men and women about who can and cannot effectively mentor good work/family balance, experiences of mommy-tracking, and different sets of self-expectations post-tenure and post-children. Future research might examine these issues through the lens of organizational culture. Finally, the concept of agency as temporal proved useful in considering faculty decision-making about work and family. It should be considered a useful construct in studies of other complex faculty decision-making processes.

In sum, a sense of agency to make satisfying work and family decisions is constructed in context. This study made many of these contexts visible. While we know there will always be factors influencing work/family decisions that are out of an individual's control or out of the university's influence (e.g., gender, supportive partner, partner's job flexibility, number of children, health), many factors influencing faculty sense of agency can be addressed

through culture change, faculty development, and support networks. Institutions need to consider the benefits to their own intellectual and social capital of not only putting policies in place but also in changing cultures so that faculty feel the agency to use them without penalty.

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