The Perceived Impact of Parenthood on Faculty Career Trajectory

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ABSTRACT

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The Perceived Impact of Parenthood on Faculty Career Trajectory

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This research explored the perceived career impact of parenthood status of faculty members. Utilizing survey methods, the project assesses the participant reported timing decisions of when to have children, work-home balance, and department and university cultures. Statistical analyses were used to analyze the collected survey data. The findings of this project support previous findings in the literature regarding the influence of academic career milestones on female faculty members’ decisions regarding when to introduce children into the home. The level of work-home balance after the introduction of children focuses on the level of career commitment experienced by both male and female faculty members after becoming parents. The findings expand the current literature by examining the overall implications of parenthood on career trajectory. Finally, the role of departmental and university cultures in the career trajectories of faculty members addresses the perceptions of the implications of becoming parents within departmental and university-wide academic structures.

Approved: _________________________________________________

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“To maintain satisfaction in my work productivity, I have to [work] more than 50 hrs/wk. To be a good mom, I need another 20-30 hrs/week. I have to make compromises in both, which can be frustrating” (Respondent, age 35).

When asked about the most difficult aspect of balancing work-family responsibilities, the above response reflects the current image of the overworked professional mother—working beyond the 40-hour workweek to achieve career success while engaging intensive parenting, and feeling exacerbated by both. The cultural standards encompassing what it means to be a good employee and what it means to be a good mother have created a cultural gridlock for professionals who are also mothers.

For many years, professional women have sacrificed families—spouses and children—in the pursuit of occupational success. Institutions, such as higher education, were developed to compliment the structural privilege of the male life—allowing for full dedication to career with a spouse to manage any domestic duties. Despite the significant cultural shifts enabling women to move into the labor force, academia has not altered its structure to accommodate the influx of women into the academic ranks. The continued maintenance of this male-based structure is found outside of academia as well with women in the male-dominated professional fields of medicine and law experiencing the same structural rigidity.

While exploring the structural characteristics of academia is crucial to understanding the lives of female professionals who are also mothers, it is not sufficient. These professional women are not simply professionals, they are mothers as well, and the cultural characteristics of “good” mothers have not changed as significantly as the
demographics in the labor market. Increased participation in the labor force did not lead
to a decreased role in mothering. Instead, as more women entered the workforce, the
cultural standard of mothering shifted to intensive mothering.

According to O’Reilly (2004), the concept of intensive mothering was coined by
sociologist Sharon Hayes, and “is defined by three themes: ‘first, the mother is the central
caregiver’; second, such mothering requires ‘lavishing copious amounts time, energy, and
material resources on the child’; and finally, ‘the mother regards mothering as more
important than her paid work’”(p. 5). She goes on to sat that these cultural expectations
of mothering are in direct conflict with the cultural expectations of an ideal worker.
Mothers who are employed full-time in the workforce are unable to be the central
caregiver—especially when children are younger than school-aged. Instead, working
mothers must rely on outside caregivers to watch their children during the workday.
Additionally, working mothers in professional fields often work more than 50 hours per
week; thus reducing the amount of time and energy these mothers are able to give to their
children. The final component of Hayes’ intensive mothering is the belief that mothering
is more significant or has more worth than paid employment. For mothers who do value
their careers, this component could contribute to the oft-discussed guilt working mothers
experience.

It is not just mothers who experience work-family conflict. With occupational
shifts—increased number of women in the workforce—and cultural shifts—increased
focus on coparenting and new fatherhood—the effects of fatherhood on men with
professional careers represent an area in need of further exploration. Some studies
(Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Palkovitz, Copes, and Woolfolk 2001; Wall and Arnold 2007) have indicated that most of the rhetoric regarding the change in fathering reflects just that—a change in the rhetoric and not change in the actual practice of fathering. However, there has been little research on the impact of fatherhood on men and their careers, and even less research integrating both mothers and fathers. These gaps in the literature reinforce the importance of this study.

The objective of this research is to explore how men and women’s career trajectories differ after becoming parents. Three specific elements of the family-work mesosystem will be addressed by the survey instrument: 1) Timing of Decisions to Have Children 2) Work-Home Balance 3) Department and University Cultures. To explore the relationship between the preceding categories and the gender of faculty members, the following research questions will be addressed: 1) Are women still utilizing traditional career milestones in academia to determine the timing of decisions to have children? 2) Are men more committed to the workforce after becoming parents than their female counterparts? 3) Do women struggle more than men in balancing work and home? 4) Do men and women experience parenthood within his or her department in the same way? 5) Do faculty members perceive the university as being family friendly? These research questions will be addressed through the survey questions detailed in the methodology section.

This study also attempts to close these gaps in the literature by surveying male and female faculty members who are parents in order to determine influences on the timing of decisions to have children, work-home balance, and perceptions of department
or university family cultures. The current literature regarding the relationship between parenthood effects on career is outlined in following chapter. The relationship is complex, and is thus, explored through literature reviewing the three survey components. First, the timing of the introduction of children into the home is a crucial element in career impact—especially for women. Second, literature examining the gender-specific career effects for men and women is explored. Finally, the literature on the impact of department and university cultures’ influence on the development and use of family policies is reviewed.

Following the literature review, the methodology utilized during the design and implementation of the survey is detailed. The survey developed for the study incorporates significant findings from the research literature described in the literature review—including influences of career milestones on the decisions of women to have children, parental beliefs about career commitment, work-family balance, and perceptions of departmental and university family policies. Additionally, this chapter details the recruitment and sampling process for participants. Participants—male and female faculty members with children—were contacted via email messages according to the Tailored Designed Method (Dillman 2007).

The findings of the survey are presented in the chapter following the description of the methodology. These findings are classified into the three areas explored by the research questions: Timing of the Decisions to Have Children, Work-Home Balance, and Department and University Cultures. The results confirm findings in the literature (Mason and Goulden 2002; Moen and Roehling 2005; Wilson 2003; Ward and Wolf-
Wendel 2004) about the role of career milestones in the timing of decisions to have children. Additionally, the findings expand the literature (Coltrane 1995; Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Radin and Russell 1983; Snarey 1993) on work-home balance by dictating the level of commitment to career by male and female faculty members. Finally, the findings from the perceptions of departmental and university cultures support the findings of gender differences. After the presentation of the findings, there is a chapter containing a discussion of the results including implications, limitations, and future directions of the current study. This is followed by a brief conclusion summarizing the entire project.
CHAPTER 2: EVIDENTIARY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-family conflict has long been perceived as a zero-sum game. That is, time spent focused on career reduces the amount of time spent with the family. While time spent with the family reduces the amount of time available to dedicate to one’s career. While this perspective is certainly crucial to understanding the impact of family on career trajectory, it is not sufficient. The cultural beliefs dictating workplace structures and gender roles also significantly influence the relationship between family and occupation. The connection between family and work is complex and is influenced by timing, gender, and department and university culture. The following section details both cultural evidence and academic research within the area of work-family conflict.

**Childbearing Decisions and Career Impact**

In response to the perceived slow reaction by higher education to the recent literature on the lack of accommodations for parents—specifically mothers—within academia, the American Sociological Association’s Department of Research and Development (2004) issued a research brief that sought to address the question “When is the best time to have a baby?” (p. 1). Researchers have indirectly addressed this question by reporting characteristics of faculty members’ tenure statuses and the types of positions held by faculty members with family demographic information (Mason and Goulden 2002, 2004a, 2004b; Wilson 2003). This research has demonstrated clear patterns in the timing of children and the level of occupational success obtained.

Mason and Goulden (2002) indicate a significant gap between the effects of various timings of children on the overall career trajectory of men and women. Early
babies—children who enter the household within 5 years of Ph.D. completion—seem to have the most significant impact on the careers of women. Interestingly, this early baby gap is consistent across disciplines and types of institutions. For women, having an early baby has devastating consequences on overall levels of achievement within the academy. Wilson (2003) goes even further dictating that having an early baby is the worst time for female faculty members to give birth given the impact on career trajectory. Typically, women with early babies find themselves in second tier part-time or adjunct faculty positions (Mason and Goulden 2002).

The consequences of early childbirth are so significant because it coincides with the tenure clock. Mason and Goulden (2002) characterize this as a time in the life of faculty members in which there is high job insecurity and high job demands. With the tenure process requiring considerable time dedication to research, publications, service activities, and teaching, this period does not allow for the time-consuming responsibilities of new parenthood. Most troubling for female faculty members who want to have children is the coinciding time frame of the tenure clock and ideal reproductive years (Mason and Goulden 2004a).

Twelve to fourteen years after completion of the Ph.D., the discrepancy between the decisions to have children for male and female faculty members is even more apparent. In the humanities and social sciences fields, 62% of women and 39% of men remain childless; while, 50% of women and 30% of men are childless in the science fields (Mason and Goulden 2002). When comparing the percentages of women and men with children, it is clear following traditional recommendations of having children after
securing a tenured faculty position is not representative of the behavior of faculty members as acquiring a faculty position and tenure do not lead to equal childbearing rates for male and female faculty members.

Given the lack of research identifying the decision-making process faculty members utilize to determine the timing of when to have children, researchers speculate about the possible explanations of the baby gap between men and women (Jacobs and Winslow 2004; Mason and Goulden 2002; Wilson 2003). The first explanation is biological. While women have often been encouraged to wait until after tenure to have a baby, this is not always possible due to fertility issues (Jacobs and Winslow 2004). Wilson (2003) suggests the traditional gender roles for men and women contribute to the differential as well. Male professionals are more likely to have a spouse at home full-time which enables men to have children without the burden of intensive parenting. Additionally, men do not have possible physical constraints of giving birth—bed rest, surgical interventions, complications—some women may experience.

While much smaller in number, there are female faculty members with children. In fact, women with late babies, babies born after tenure, have the same rate of obtaining tenure as men and childless women (Mason and Goulden 2002). However, women who have late babies typically have only one child due to the age of tenure acquisition, while men are able to have several children. Wilson (2003) argues that women interested in having a child or multiple children should consider having children very early in their graduate careers so that the child or children would be school age by the time women would be applying for tenure track faculty positions.
This research indicates the interrelated nature of work-life and family-life for faculty members. The relationship between the timing of having children and career impact is particularly complex for women. Perhaps the best framework utilized to understand the work-family relationship is from Hill who argues this relationship can be described as the work microsystem and family microsystem influencing “one another through permeable boundaries to create the work-family mesosystem “which is “bidirectional where work affects family and family affects work” (2005:795).

In conjunction with the mesosystem theory, a role conflict theory is also being utilized to understand the related nature—and inherent conflict—of work roles and family roles. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argue that work-family role conflict can be time based, strain based, or behavior based. Time based conflict is experienced when 2 different roles compete for the same, limited amount of time. Strain based conflict occurs when stressors from one role negatively influence performance of another role. Finally, behavior based strain is conflict present when the behaviors needed for one role—for example, aggressiveness in business—is not compatible with the behaviors needed for another—patience in parenting. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) state the most common source of role conflict is time based, and this framework will be utilized to examine the time based strains—the lack of time needed to be both ideal parent and ideal employee—experienced by faculty members post parenthood.

**Motherhood and Work**

The number of women pursuing doctoral degrees has increased significantly over the past few decades. Mason and Goulden (2002) found women earned 42% of all
doctorates—up from 12% in 1966. While the increase in access to graduate level programs demonstrates an increase in educational opportunities for women, the male-focused workplace structures and norms and the continued gendered division of labor at home have impacted the decisions and decision making strategies female faculty members utilize when determining whether and when to have children.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel state that “historically [female faculty members] opted to forgo children (and many times marriage or romantic partnerships) in the interest in their academic careers” (2004:3). Ward and Wolf-Wendel argue this is likely related to the inability to maintain multiple high-commitment level activities—the amount of commitment to the department required to obtain tenure is incompatible with the amount of work required to sustain and foster relationships, care for children, and complete a significant majority of gendered labor. As a result, there is very little information regarding the type and amount of consideration female tenure-track faculty members give to the decision to have children.

Despite the increase in the number of women obtaining higher educational degrees and faculty positions, the realm of domestic work has not shifted at the same rate as advancement in the paid labor market. Craig and Sawrikar found that “the division of labor is at its most extreme in households in which there are very young children” (2009:687). Therefore, this trend contributes strongly to the inability of women to manage careers in academia with children. That is, given that the typical age of faculty members’ tenure decisions and the age of decline of fertility coincide, female faculty
members who would be most likely to become pregnant would be the same women putting in a significant amount of time to acquire tenure.

Additionally, “even though young, childless couples might share household chores rather equally and work a similar number of hours in the labor market before the arrival of the first child, parenthood is likely to create a change” by shifting the majority of the domestic workload on to the women (Dribe and Stanfors 2009:41). The increase of domestic work for women provides additional strains on time and energy. Women who are remaining in the paid labor market are not only experiencing time demands due to the presence of a new child, but they are also experiencing the time restrictions of having more required domestic tasks.

The structure of the overall labor market—including university departments—has not kept up with the changes of the labor market participants. For example, Moen and Roehling (2005) explain that there has been a shift from a traditionally male-based workforce to a workforce that contains: “(1) men whose partners are in the labor force, (2) women whose partners are in the labor force, and (3) men and women without partners but with family obligations or other interests beyond their jobs” (p. 16). However, Moen and Roehling (2005) argue there have been no significant accommodations within the labor market to even begin to address the shift in the labor force demographics. As a result, traditional beliefs regarding how to achieve a successful career persist, and prohibit individuals with families or external interests from achieving the same levels of success as one who sacrifices wholly for the job.
Wilson reiterates the depth of this struggle by illustrating that the tenure academic path is ‘very rigid, up or out, and you have to get on and stay on or you’re penalized if you deviate’ (2003:20). This understanding of the tenure-track process as a whole is likely to have strong effects on women’s perceptions of how their behavior is analyzed within their respective departments. This reality implies that women are free to choose to have children, but this choice has grave consequences for their career. Since women must take time off surrounding the time of delivery and are then typically responsible as the primary caregiver of the child, women must take off significantly more time than males who may also take time off to support a partner immediately following a birth. Therefore, the tenure-process system creates an environment for women where it is nearly impossible to be a mother with a successful academic career.

Hochschild argues that the incorporation of the market culture—“cluster of beliefs or practices that are based on the premise that the acts of buying and selling constitute an important source of identity”—into the family life is altering how an individual perceives his or her family and makes decisions regarding how time is allocated (2005:339-340). This concept can be a perspective informing the decision-making process of some female faculty members who choose to postpone or to not have children. According to this theory, an individual uses concepts from the market—cost-benefit analysis, the bottom line—to determine life choice decisions. An example of this concept utilized by female faculty members could be the option to refrain from having children as having a child might constrain career achievement.
This imbalance impacts women specifically because many women “are trying to do it all—the good wife, the good mother, and the good employee” (Moen and Roehling 2005:8). The false reality that this type of lifestyle is both ideal and possible is a key component of the perpetuation of the current American dream for women. Under the guise of utilizing the recently expanded occupational opportunities, women have internalized the assumptions that engaging in hard-work, long hours, and consistent employment across time will lead them to experience occupational success.

Serious consequences are likely to emerge from such stringent gendered inequalities both in employment settings and in domestic divisions of labor. Brighouse and Wright (2008) speculate these inequalities will lead to unequal opportunities within the labor market caused by time restraints due to unequal distributions of domestic labor, continued female-based stereotypes of females as domestic laborers, and increased opportunities and acceptance of gendered injustice. One of the most crucial tasks of this project is to identify how women make decisions regarding participation in the academic paid labor market and motherhood.

Fatherhood and Work

Unlike the influence of motherhood on women’s careers, the literature has essentially ignored the impact of fatherhood on the lives of men (Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Ranson 2001). As detailed below, the increased fluidity between home and work challenges the prevailing assumption that the process of becoming a father does not influence the lives of men. However, there is very little research describing how men integrate fatherhood into their personal and professional lives.
The traditional male breadwinner model dictates that fathers are to be career focused and the ultimate financial provider for the family. These fathers would be aloof—often placing occupational duties over family and parental responsibilities. However, the concept of new fatherhood features fathers engaged in intensive coparenting with mothers. The literature contains the same general description of involved fathering as intensive mothering that includes: active role in childcare, the placement of importance of fathering above work, and a rejection of the hegemonic ideals that surrounding the traditional breadwinner father ideal (Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Palkovitz, Copes, and Woolfolk 2001; Wall and Arnold 2007).

While the reality of this shift in fatherhood is somewhat questionable, there are significant cultural changes that have facilitated the shift: the 1980s movement of women into the labor force (Wall and Arnold 2007) and the blurring boundaries between work and home (Halford 2006). The movement of women into the labor force has created a scenario in which men are forced to increase parenting contributions due to the lack of a full-time spouse at home to manage caregiving responsibilities. However, for men interested in sharing in domestic tasks, technological advances have enabled work from home opportunities that create flexible schedules ideal for coparenting.

The increased number of women entering the workforce in the 1980s generated a need for coparenting within the family. Prior to this time, it was assumed that wives and mothers would take care of children and household responsibilities. However, the shift to women working full time has not generated a true coparenting effect between most mothers and fathers. Instead, as an updated version of Hochschild’s work indicates in The
Second Shift (2003), mothers take on the majority of the reproductive labor by working what is essentially another full time job at home following a full time workday outside of the home.

A different approach to the development of the new father is the assertion that blurring lines between work and home and public and private are likely leading to breakdown of previously rigid boundaries of work-time and home-time (Halford 2006). However, structural changes within occupations allowing men to work from home may enable men to spend more time at home, but this additional time at home does not directly translate to an increase in domestic responsibilities.

While the frequency of men engaged in the practice of new fatherhood is unknown, the effects of fatherhood on men do not appear to be limited to this parenting type. Interestingly, the status change from childless man to father may trigger an increase in both family and work commitments. In the shift from pre parenthood to post parenthood, men may demonstrate an increased commitment to the labor market to fulfill the role as the family provider while involved fathering moderates this commitment to career. Therefore, the presence of these competing roles—involving father and ideal employee—indicates that becoming a father does influence the lives of men. (Crouter, Bumpus, Head, and McHale 2001; Dribe and Stanfors 2009; Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Fox and Bruce 2001; Halford 2006; Wall and Arnold 2007).

Within most occupations, men who become fathers benefit from this status shift. The perception of men with children in the workforce is often that these men are more serious and, therefore, more deserving of career advancements than their male, childless
peers (Coltrane 2004). However, women often receive criticisms of being less serious and devoted to career following the shift into motherhood. This differential is an indicator of the structural inequalities faced by mothers and fathers in the workforce.

Despite the increased fluidity of public and private life for men, flexible work options still cater to the traditional, male breadwinner model. The flexibility of careers through technology—work from home options, decreased travel time—have not leveled the occupational playing field for men and women (Halford 2006). Instead, the company structures continue recreate and reproduce traditional gender roles.

One of the most significant indicators of the labor market’s maintenance of traditional gender roles is the lack of family policies in place for men at work. There has been a work-culture that expects fathers to use vacation time to cover any family leave following the birth of a child. Additionally, there are no provisions made for the day-to-day issues that are more likely to arise—needing to pick-up a sick child from school, for example. These policies are seemingly not in place, because the labor market within the United States operates in a structure where male employees with children have a wife or significant other to take on primary childcare responsibilities.

Additionally, the literature speaks directly to how men feel about being fathers, rather than the impact of fatherhood on career or their perceived impact of fatherhood on career. It is possible that this distinction is directly related to characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Specifically, the notion that men’s careers are not affected by parenthood because men are not the primary caregivers is a part of hegemonic masculinity. However, the majority of literature on women, career, and family are focused on the impact of
children on career; this literature indicates that for women, the impact of children on career is much more visible and has more significant, negative consequences regarding career advancement than the impact on the careers of men.

**Workplace Culture**

The most discussed topic surrounding the issue of work-family balance in the university system is departmental and university family policies. Ward and Wolf-Wendel argue this focus on family policies is due to “Academeme’s baby boom” (2004:3). This baby boom describes the current university climate where more faculty members are having babies and getting married in spite of the academy’s traditional encouragement to forego these life choices. However, the presence of family policies is simply not enough to generate equality in the workplace.

Researchers have speculated a culture of fear is driving family policy creation and utilization. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) argue administrators are concerned about faculty members with children being perceived as having privilege over childless faculty members or faculty members who were parenting prior to the implementation of family policies by reducing the rigors of the tenure process. Additionally, women tend to under use policies out of fear of being perceived as less serious or less committed scholar (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004). Women expressed this fear both directly, voicing concerns about the perceived lack of dedication to the field by colleagues, and indirectly, hiding pregnancies or strategically planning childbirths during academic breaks.

Fear, however, is not the only issue mediating family policy use. Craig and Sawrikar indicate the “attitudes in the workplace to employees who take up family
friendly measures may encourage or inhibit them from doing so” (2009:701). That is, the attitudes and beliefs reflected in the university or department culture dictate employee usage of family leave policies. This evidence supports the argument that altering or enhancing family policies alone may not generate any change in how faculty members navigate the academic world as parents.

Additionally, emphasis is placed on the structure of the American workplace system as a major contributor to the hidden discrimination of women in professional occupations by forcing women to choose between family and career. Mason and Goulden explain that “the workplace structures are configured for the typical male career of the nineteenth century in which the man in the household was the single breadwinner and the woman was responsible for raising children” (2004b:88). This structure has not shifted to accommodate the increase of women in the workforce.

This influx of women into professional careers has contributed to the increase in work-family conflict in recent decades. The rigidity of the occupational structure—especially within academia—has not accommodated the changing workforce. Additionally, the increasing number of overworked couples—couples who work “combined hours of over 100 hours per week”—has also contributed to the work-family conflict (Nomaguchi, Milkie, and Bianchi 2005:756). With faculty workloads averaging over 50 hours per week for all faculty members regardless or rank or institution type to over 60 hours per week for faculty members who are prolific publishers, it is clear that faculty members with children who are in dual earner relationships are likely experiencing significant levels of work-family conflict (Jacobs and Winslow 2004).
Overall, the relationship between parental status and career trajectory is extremely complicated for female faculty members. Women are forced to interact with workplace structures influenced by the traditional gender roles. The ideal worker is one whose primary focus is the chosen occupation without the distractions of domestic duties. That is, in professional occupations, the most desired and successful employee is male with a stay at home spouse. This occupational structure has continued in spite of the influx of women into professional occupations. Researchers have neglected the influence of parental status on faculty career trajectories. This project seeks to reconcile the outside forces influencing childbearing decisions and work-family conflict with the perceived influence these factors have on the career trajectory of faculty members.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research objective of this project is to identify the perceived influences on and effects of parenthood status on faculty career trajectory by surveying faculty members at a large Midwest public university. This research is designed to identify the planning, timing, and university-based influences on decisions about having children. Additionally, the complexities of work-family balance and the influence of department and university cultures were examined.

Design

To explore the overall perception of the effects of parenthood on career at the university, an electronic survey incorporating quantitative and qualitative questions was developed (See Appendix A). However, before being able to access the survey, participants were presented with an electronic informed consent that included a forced response option. That is, participants were not able to move forward with the survey without selecting to agree or disagree to the consent form. If participants selected to agree to the informed consent, they were agreeing to participate in the study and were then able to proceed to the rest of the survey. However, if individuals opted to disagree to the consent form, he or she would not be included in the study and, thus, unable to access the survey.

The survey collected of 3 sets of demographic data: personal, relationship, and occupational. The personal demographic information consisted of the sex and age of the participant. Relationship demographics sought to identify if the participant was currently in a relationship with either a spouse or partner. If the participant responded that he or she
did have a spouse or partner, the participant was then asked if the spouse or partner was also employed at a college or university. Finally, participants were asked to identify her or his occupational information such as college in which she or he works, current academic rank, and current tenure status.

The next section of the survey asked participants about childbearing decisions and work-family balance. In addition to asking about the number and age of children each participant was parenting, the planning of pregnancy—planned or unplanned—and timing of children introduced into the home—earlier than planned, when planned or later than planned—were also explored. Participants were also asked to indicate whether children were born before or after obtaining tenure.

Researchers (American Sociological Association Taskforce 2004; Goldin 2004; Mason and Goulden 2002, 2004a, 2004b; Noonan and Corcoran 2004; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004; Wax 2004; Wilson 2003; Zappert, Rauner, and Jones 2007) have chronicled career milestones—degree completion and obtaining tenure—and university characteristics—family leave policies and scheduled breaks—as significant influences in childbearing decisions for faculty members. Therefore, participants were asked to rate the level of significance, ranging from No Significance to Much Significance, each of these milestones and characteristics had on his or her childbearing decisions.

The questions examining the impact of parenthood on beliefs about career and the work-family balance were based on findings from related studies (Coltrane 1995; Radin and Russell 1983; Snarey 1993). These studies found the relationship parents had with her or his career was complicated. That is, once children were born, parents increased
dedication to steady, regular employment in the labor market to support their family, while family responsibilities reduced his or her career as the primary focus.

Finally, participants were asked about the cultures of their departments and the university, respectively. Questions regarding faculty perceptions of departmental culture were excised from the Faculty Work-Life Survey (2005) administered by The Virginia Tech Center for Survey Research as a component of an Advance Institutional Transformation Grant funded by the National Science Foundation. The questions concerning university culture were developed to assess faculty beliefs about the status of university-wide policies such as additional family leave and child-care options based upon findings in the literature (Craig and Sawrikar 2009, Jacobs and Winslow 2004, Mason and Goulden 2004b, Nomaguchi, Milkie, and Bianchi 2005, Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004).

**Recruitment and Sampling**

Since the parenthood status of faculty members is not public information, all faculty members were recruited via email. A comprehensive list of all faculty members teaching on the main campus of the university was obtained from the university and used to contact potential participants. This list consisted of 1,182 faculty members. Following Institutional Review Board approval, all 1,182 faculty members were contacted via an e-mail message containing a letter explaining the purpose of the study and a link to the online survey. Following the initial e-mail contact, faculty members were contacted three additional times with an e-mail containing an explanation of the study and a link to the survey following the framework of Dillman’s (2007) Tailored Design Method (TDM).
That is, faculty members were initially contacted in week 1 of the study and were contacted again in weeks 3, 5, and 7, respectively. In addition to dictating the timing of participant contacts, the TDM utilizes the principles of exchange theory by developing surveys that “increase perceived rewards for responding, decrease perceived costs, and promote trust in beneficial outcomes of the survey” (p. 5). Therefore, all of the e-mails stressed researcher gratitude for participants who completed the survey and encouraged potential participants to complete the survey if they had not done so. Dillman’s survey design method was utilized in this study to maximize the overall response rate, which tends to be very low for electronic surveys. A feature of the online survey hosting site—Survey Monkey—prohibits participants from completing the survey multiple times as the website saves the IP address of each respondent.

For the purposes of the study, potential participants must fulfill two requirements. He or she must 1) be a faculty member on the main campus of the university and 2) considered himself or herself to be a parent. The participant requirements were listed in the informed consent portion of the survey. Comprehensive research projects (Jacobs and Winslow 2004; Mason and Goulden 2002, 2004a, 2004b; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004) often focus on large universities to ensure that the faculty position is the primary occupation of the subjects, and the sampling frames used in these similar studies were replicated in the sampling frame formation for the current study.

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1 Survey responses from faculty members who indicated she or he was in fact childless were removed from the dataset prior to analysis.
Participants

Of the 274 completed surveys, 249 surveys were used in the study. Given the nature of the inclusion criteria—parenthood status and occupation—it is impossible to determine the true sample size of the population. While the number of faculty members on the main campus of the university can be determined, the number of faculty members who are also parents cannot be determined. Therefore, the response rate cannot be calculated using the total number of surveys received with the total number of surveys sent out.

The sample consisted of 53% males (n=132) and 46% females (n=114) (Table 1). Seventy percent of respondents were between the ages of 35-59 (n=191). Seven percent of respondents were below the age of 35 (n=20) with fourteen percent of respondents above the age of 59 (n=37). The most recent staff statistics provided by the university indicate the gender demographics of participants are comparable to the overall gender demographics of the university—61% male (n=789) and 39% female (n=501).

Slightly more than half of participants were tenured (n=137), while non-tenured faculty members—both tenure track (n=57) and non-tenure track (n=53)—made up just over forty percent (Table 2). Thirty-seven percent of respondents were Associate Professors (n=93), thirty percent were Assistant Professors (n=75), nineteen percent were Full Professors (n=49), and twelve percent were lecturers or adjunct faculty members (n=30). It is crucial to include tenured and non-tenure faculty members as female faculty members with children are overrepresented within non-tenured, second tier faculty

\(^2\) In addition to surveys removed due to parental status, surveys with significant missing responses were also removed prior to analysis.
positions. There were a significant number of respondents from the College of Arts and Sciences with faculty members from this college representing forty-two percent of respondents (n=105). The number of respondents from the College of Arts and Sciences is comparable to the overall number of faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences at the university who represent 42% (n= 550) of full-time and part-time faculty members. The remaining colleges ranged from seven to ten percent of respondents as follows: College of Medicine 6.8 % (n=17), College of Fine Arts 7.2% (n=18), College of Engineering 7.2% (n=18); College of Health and Consumer Sciences 7.6% (n=19), College of Business 8.0% (n=20), College of Communication 8.4% (n=21), and College of Education 9.6% (n=24). No respondents indicated primary occupational responsibilities within the Honors College or University College. The percentages of participants from the preceding colleges are comparable to the overall percentages of faculty members in each of the colleges which are as follows: College of Medicine 8.6% (n=112), College of Fine Arts 9.8%% (n=121), College of Engineering 8.3% (n=107); College of Health and Human Sciences 9.5% (n=123), College of Business 6.7% (n=86), College of Communication 8.2% (n=106), and College of Education 6.4% (n=83) (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1.2</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table 2 Tenure Status of Respondents

<table>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>137</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Table 3 Percentage of Faculty by College for Sample and University

<table>
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<td>College of Medicine</td>
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<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Business</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Fine Arts</td>
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<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Health</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Engineering</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Communication</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The following findings are the result of statistical analysis of the survey described in the preceding section. The findings are categorized according to the three family-work categories explored by the research questions: Timing of Children, Work-Home Balance, and Department and University Cultures.

Timing of Decisions to Have Children

The first component of the family-work mesosystem to be explored is the timing of the introduction of children into the home. Researchers (Mason and Goulden 2002; Moen and Roehling 2005; Wilson 2003; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004) argue that women are still utilizing traditional career milestones in academia as indicators of ideal times to have children. In order to determine if these milestones were still influential for women, participants were asked to rate the level of significance—ranging from No Significance (1) to Much Significance (5)—each of the following career milestones had on his/her decision to have children: completing degree, obtaining tenure, university family leave policies, and university breaks.

Table 1 illustrates the difference between male and female participants’ indicators. Each of the following career milestones were statistically significant thus indicating women are still utilizing degree completion \( t(230.59) = -2.48, p < .01; \) obtaining tenure \( t(211.22) = -2.65, p < .01; \) university family policies \( t(200.89) = -2.49, p < .01; \) and scheduled university breaks \( t(209.97) = -3.82, p < .01 \) to dictate the timing of when to have children in their careers. This is significant in that it supports some of the
influences on the decisions to have children that is present in previous and current literature.

Table 4 Effects of Career Milestones on Decisions to Have Children by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (1-tailed)</th>
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<td>Complete Degree</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.67</td>
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<td>230.59</td>
<td>.007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>-2.65</td>
<td>211.22</td>
<td>.005</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.70</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>University Policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
<td>200.89</td>
<td>.007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Breaks</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>-3.82</td>
<td>209.97</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.74</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Work-Home Balance

Two different question sets were utilized to quantify the work-home balance. The first component asked participants to rate his or her current feelings and beliefs about career. As explained in the methodology section, these questions were designed to determine how committed one is to career after becoming a parent. Participants were asked to rate their levels of agreement—ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly
Agree (5)—with statements reflecting level of career commitment. The second component simply asked participants to indicate whether balancing work and family after becoming a parent was more difficult than expected, about as difficult as expected, or easier than expected.

A T-test was conducted to determine the relationship between level of work commitment and gender. None of the 4 variables used to identify level of work commitment were significant. Therefore, there is no significant difference between males and females regarding level of commitment to career. As one of the most significant findings in the study, this table depicts equal levels of career commitment among male and female faculty members. Within this sample, it is clear motherhood did not alter the career commitment of female faculty members which counters the “mommy first, scholar second” reputation that female faculty members often receive after having children.
Table 5 Level of Career Commitment by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Family Responsibility</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>.121</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.17</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Involved Parenting</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>.911</td>
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<td>113</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Overcommitment</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-1.57</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fewer Hrs Per Week</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>-.66</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to determine the significance between gender and reported perceptions of work-family balance difficulty, a Chi-Square was performed. As evident in the table below, there was no significant difference between male and female perceptions of work-family balance difficulty $\chi^2(6, N = 247) = 11, p = .09$. This is somewhat unsurprising as it is likely that both male and female faculty members anticipated the role shift to parent as being a difficult transition.
Table 6 Chi-Square Test of Work-Family Balance

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>11.000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>7.842</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>2.418</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>247</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department and University Cultures

Researchers (Sahibzada, Hammer, Neal, Kuang 2005) have indicated the importance of faculty members’ perceptions of department and university cultures in the use of family policies. That is, faculty members in departments and universities with family friendly cultures are more likely to take advantage of family policies than faculty members in departments or universities that are not perceived as being pro-family. Again, perceptions of department culture and university culture are analyzed according to gender in order to determine if male faculty members and female faculty members have the same experiences and perceptions. This was assessed by asking participants to rate statements about their perceptions of department and university cultures from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4) with an option to indicate that he or she did not know (5).

Table 4 reflects participant responses about department culture. There is no difference between men and women’s perceptions of whether their departments care about their families $t(239) = .89, p > .05$. Additionally, both men and women indicate that they have not made modifications to their career aspirations to accommodate the interests or needs of a family or spouse/partner $t(239) = -.65, p > .05$. 
However, there are significant differences between male and female faculty members regarding perceptions and experiences of slowed advancement within the department as a result of family responsibilities $t(239) = -2.52, p < .05$ and of meetings being regularly scheduled during hours that conflict with family responsibilities $t(214.22) = -2.83, p < .01$. Additionally, men and women differed significantly in their perceptions of regularly compromising family or personal time due to job demands $t(239) = -2.11, p < .05$.

These findings are most surprising in that the perception of departmental care about family is not significantly different between men and women while female faculty members indicate that they are experiencing slowed advancement, meeting times scheduled during parenting responsibilities, and compromised family time due to career demands. However, men and women did not differ on their dedications to career—as indicated by the questions about modified career. This set of findings further supports the equal career commitment reported by male and female faculty members post parenthood.
Table 7 Perceptions of Department Culture by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department Cares</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.09</td>
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<td>.89</td>
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<td>.373</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slowed Advancement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>.012</td>
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<td>1.06</td>
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<td>1.24</td>
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<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.06</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 indicates respondents’ feelings and perceptions of the university culture regarding family policies. There is no statistical difference between male and female faculty members’ perceptions of the university’s current family policies $t(217.27) = 1.47$, $p > .05$. However, men and women did differ in their perceptions of faculty members being able to take additional leave without penalty $t(214.36) = 2.72$, $p < .01$; childcare options provided by the university $t(237) = 3.81$, $p < .01$; and whether the university should implement additional family policies $t(226.01) = -2.65$, $p < .01$. 
While there is no significant difference between male and female faculty members’ perceptions of the overall family friendly culture of the university, men and women do differ on their perceptions of family policies and services such as additional leave, child care, or the need for more policies. Female faculty members report the need for more policies and perceive the use of policies—in this case, additional leave—and the amount of quality child care options to be lacking.

Table 8 Perceptions of University Culture by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Leave</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Quality Child Care</strong></td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desire More Policies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>-2.65</td>
<td>226.01</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While some of the findings from this analysis were not surprising—female academics still utilizing traditional career milestones to dictate the timing decisions of
when to have children, women’s perceptions of university childcare options to be lacking, or that women have experienced slowed advancement within the department following the birth of children—other findings have been quite surprising and contrary to accepted literature—the lack of statistical differences between male and female faculty members’ commitment to career after the arrival of children. An in depth discussion of these findings will occur in the next section.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The research questions for this project are located within three categories—timing of children, work-home balance, and department and university cultures. The project was designed to explore the complex relationship between parenthood status and career implications. The findings discussed in the previous chapter confirm the complexities of integrated parenthood into the careers of professionals—specifically academics.

Beginning with the influences on the timing of children, the findings confirmed previous research on female faculty members’ integration of parenthood into their careers (Mason and Goulden 2002; Moen and Roehling 2005; Wilson 2003; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004). The four career milestones described in the literature as being the most important influences on the planning of children—completing degree, obtaining tenure, university family policies, and scheduled university breaks—were statistically significant. Therefore, this study confirms the findings regarding the importance of career milestones found within the literature.

While these findings are not surprising given the unchanging structure of academic jobs even after the emergence of women in the profession, it is interesting to note that these findings persist in spite of the introduction of additional family policies and of shifting cultural parenting ideals. With the introduction of Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in 1993, eligible employees were allotted unpaid, job-protected leave for 12 work weeks during a 12-month period for the birth and care of a biological child or the placement and care of an adopted child (U.S. Department of Labor 2010). In addition to utilizing FMLA during the introduction of a child into the household, eligible
employees are able to take the same amount of leave due to serious, personal health issues or to care for a seriously ill family member (U.S. Department of Labor 2010). Despite the job protection afforded to both men and women by FMLA, family policies are consistently underutilized. Sahibzada, Hammer, Neal, Kuang (2005) stressed the importance of a supportive work-family culture. Without this workplace support, family policies going beyond the FMLA minimum requirements will not be utilized by parents in the workforce. The implications and limitations of the importance of family policies and the influence of these policies on parents will be discussed further in the section on university and department culture below.

Researchers (Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Palkovitz, Copes, and Woolfolk 2001; Wall and Arnold 2007) have often discussed the shift from a traditional parenting model—stay at home mother engaging in intensive mothering with an aloof breadwinner father—to a shared parenting style—with men taking on active parenting roles in new fatherhood. This literature indicates that new fatherhood is likely more apparent in theory rather than actual parenting practice. The findings in this study support this skepticism toward a significant increase in the actual number of fathers participating in the new fatherhood-parenting trend. If parenting practices were truly egalitarian, there should not be significant gender differences regarding the influence of career milestones in their decision making process to have children.

Once children have been introduced into the home, parents must work to balance home and professional responsibilities. In order to examine the perception of work-home balance, the degree of career commitment and difficulty of parenthood were measured.
Career commitment was composed of four statements—“I experience greater commitment to my career out of a sense of responsibility to care and provide for my children”, “My desire to be an involved parent has decreased my intensity of work involvement”, “I am committed to regular, responsible employment without the desire to become over committed to my career”, and “I spend fewer hours engaged in work activities per week than I did prior to having children”. The statements reflect an increased commitment to occupation due to family responsibilities while refraining from becoming overcommitted to one’s occupation. The findings indicated there was no difference between the responses of men and women regarding degree of career commitment. That is, men and women reported being equally committed to their careers as faculty members.

The literature regarding the impact of fatherhood on men’s careers (Coltrane 1995; Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Radin and Russell 1983; Snarey 1993) argues that the aforementioned statements reflect men’s integration of the roles of father and professional. However, researchers have ignored women’s levels of career commitment. Instead, most studies focus solely on the tension between work and home responsibilities. Finding no significant gender difference when examining levels of career commitment indicates similar levels of career commitment within the sample. That is, among respondents, female faculty members are as committed to their jobs as their male counterparts. Additionally, the overall responses reflect a resistance to the notion of sacrificing work for family. Participants’ responses concentrated on the low to middle
portion of the scale demonstrates a commitment to family but not at the expense of career.

This finding was unexpected. One possible explanation could be a cultural shift regarding feelings about career commitment. As mentioned above, very little research has been conducted examining levels of career commitment for women post parenthood. Additionally, the literature used to develop the career commitment component is dated with seminal studies published in 1993, 2001, 1995, and 1983, respectively. Considering the lack of research on women and dated research on men, it is plausible that the cultural beliefs surrounding career commitment has shifted to reflect similar levels of career commitment among men and women presently.

Another possible explanation could be characteristics specific to the sample population. This finding could reflect high levels of occupational commitment—even at the expense of family time—among the particular participants who selected to complete the survey. Moreover, the female participants who responded to the survey could have responded because they perceive themselves as being more committed to their careers in spite of their roles as mothers.

An additional component devised to assess work-home balance was the perceived level of difficulty of balancing parenthood and work relative to the level of difficulty expected. Again, these findings were not statistically significant. With the majority of both men and women responding that balancing work and parenthood was more difficult than expected or as difficult as expected, it is not surprising that there is no significance difference.
Finally, the third component of the analysis was the perception of department and university cultures. Regarding the department culture, significant gender differences occurred with women experiencing slowed career advancement within the department, compromised family time for career, and scheduled department meetings during times that conflicted with child care responsibilities. Regarding university culture, significant gender differences were found with men reporting that university members are able to take additional leave without penalty, while women reported the quality of childcare provided by the university was very low and that the university should enact more family friendly policies.

Some of the more recent studies (Mason and Goulden 2002; Moen and Roehling 2005; Wilson 2003; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004) focusing on the integration of parenthood into the lives of female faculty members have focused on the importance of family-friendly university policies. While such policies are important in supporting faculty members with families, policies alone are not sufficient. Other researchers (Sahibzada, Hammer, Neal, Kuang 2005) have argued that without departmental and university cultivation of pro-family cultures, faculty members will continue to underuse the policies and options available to them.

The issue seems particularly relevant when examining the findings presented above. It is clear women are experiencing more negative repercussions on career than men after having a child. Women are reporting sacrificing career advancement and family time due to work responsibilities. Additionally, women do not seem to experience the ability to take additional time off without occupational penalty as male respondents
are reporting. It is likely that women are calling for additional childcare options and family policies as they are experiencing such significant, detrimental effects on career.

In spite of the gender differences reported above, both men and women reported that they feel like their departments care about their families. This is interesting when considering the findings reporting negative influences on women’s careers. Even though women are reporting slowed career advancement, compromised family time, and conflicting meeting times, they are reporting that their departments care about their families at the same rate as male respondents. This is a clear discrepancy between female respondents’ perceptions of departmental culture and actual departmental culture characteristics.

Similarly, both men and women agreed the university has family friendly policies. However, the negative impact of parenthood on career for women indicates another discrepancy with a possible explanation. It could be that while the university has adequate family policies and female faculty members are aware of them, women may not be utilizing the policies completely as usage of these policies is perceived to negatively impact one’s career.

**Future Research**

The two areas of inconsistencies described above—career commitment and department culture—provide excellent opportunities for expanded research. First, this study calls into question the non-existent research examining the commitment of female faculty members with their careers and the outdated studies explaining career commitment for men. While this study found no difference between levels of
commitment between men and women, this finding is not found within the literature. Given the dated nature of the studies used to identify characteristics of male occupational commitment and the lack of research regarding female occupational commitment, further research is needed to determine if the finding from the study is representative of an ideological, cultural shift or if this finding is specific to the sample.

Secondly, women reporting they perceive their departments care about their families while also reporting the negative influence of parenthood on their careers represent an intriguing discrepancy. Further research could be utilized to determine if this is a finding representative of female faculty members overall, or if this is an issue specific to this university. Another important aspect of this finding is if female faculty members are aware of this discrepancy between departmental perception and reality. Additional research would enable a deeper understanding of how women perceive the department and university cultures in conjunction with the parenthood status influences on career.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations present within this research. The first limitation is the sample. Since the sample was selected from a public university in the Midwest, it may not be representative of the diversity present within the field of academia. Therefore, this study cannot be generalized to represent the responses of faculty members across the United States.

As there is no university record of which faculty members have children, it is not possible to calculate the survey response rate for the project. Not knowing the number or characteristics of faculty members with children at the university means there is no way
to determine if the respondents are representative of the population of parents present at the university. However, the respondents are proportionately comparable to the overall university on male to female ratios and the proportion of faculty members within each college.

Finally, as the survey focuses on faculty members who are parents and currently employed at the university, it excludes individuals who did not have children or who left academia due to the high demands of the occupation. Therefore, responses and outcomes of participants in the study may not be truly representative of the experience of being a parent in academia.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to address the influence of parenthood on career focusing on the gender differences of faculty members. The findings of this project successfully confirm and extend the research in area of parenthood and work. The career milestones—degree completion, tenure status, university family policies, and scheduled university breaks—have long been regarded in the literature as guidelines around which to plan pregnancies. These career milestones play a crucial role in the lives of female faculty members who also want to be mothers, while their male counterparts do not need to accommodate their desires to become fathers around occupational obligations. Despite the gender advances in higher education—both through completion of degrees and acquisition of faculty positions—women as mothers have not achieved the same amount of progress. The statistical significance of these findings is not surprising. In fact, they serve not only to confirm previous research (Mason and Goulden 2002; Moen and Roehling 2005; Wilson 2003; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004), but also demonstrate that these milestones are still utilized by mothers who have remained in professional careers.

The significant findings related to departmental and university cultures were expected—especially given the findings of the career milestones described above. When women must schedule pregnancies around these milestones, it is clear that the university system has not made extensive changes to the occupational structure to accommodate families. This is reinforced by female participants’ responses that they have experienced: slowed career advancement, meetings scheduled during primary childcare times, compromised family time for work, negative consequences for taking additional family
leave, lack of quality childcare opportunities, and a desire for more family policies at the university. These findings are all in line with the inequality women experience being a part of a male-dominated professional career. Interestingly, both men and women felt that their departments cared about their families. It is curious that women report this while also reporting all of the negative occupational consequences of having a child as a female faculty member. There is a clear discrepancy here that indicates an area for further research.

Perhaps the most noteworthy finding is in the analysis of level of work commitment. There are no significant differences between the responses of male and female faculty members. That is, male and female faculty members report the same level of commitment to their careers. Neither male nor female faculty members are reducing the number of hours engaged in work activities nor are they reducing commitment levels at work due to the introduction of children into the household. This finding extends the literature to incorporate women into an area where women have been previously ignored—commitment to career after becoming a parent. This finding could be incorporated into the current battle female faculty members with children are waging on the rigid, antiquated academic structure. Demonstrating that women maintain the same level of occupational commitment as their male colleagues, provides significant evidence against the “mommy first, scholar second” stereotype persistent in academia.

Collectively, the findings of this study indicate the importance of continued exploration of the impact of parenthood on career. The relationship between parental status and occupational effects is complicated—especially for women. While this study
reflects the continued use of common, informal advice typically provided to female graduate students and pre-tenured faculty members about the “best” time to have a baby, such as attempting to align births of children with summer break, simply identifying this finding as supporting the current literature is insufficient. By integrating this finding with the continued level of occupational commitment among female faculty members, I have demonstrated the continued gender inequality present within the academic system.

These findings fit into the work-family mesosystem framework developed by Hill (2005). By incorporating the previous research evaluating the impact of career on children with the present findings examining the influence of the parental role on career from this study, I am able to support Hill’s (2005) bidirectional theory “where work affects family and family affects work” (p. 795). In order to fully understand the connection between parenthood and career and to begin to dismantle the structural inequality present in academia—and other professional occupations—we must continue to research the complex impact of parenthood status on the personal, social, educational, and occupational aspects of the parent’s life.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Parenthood & Faculty Career

1. Informed Consent

* 1. Consent Form

Title of Research: Perceived Impact of Parenthood on Faculty Career Trajectories
Researchers: Della Winters

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. By selecting to complete the survey, you are implying consent. Selecting the choice of "Yes, I agree to the above consent" will allow your participation in this study.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to examine the impact parenthood has on the careers of faculty members. For this study, you will be asked a series of questions about you and your experience becoming a parent—specifically as it relates to a career in academia. This survey should take approximately 15 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

This study is important to science/society because the results could inform policy changes that would alter the family policies within academic institutions.

Confidentiality and Records

The information you provide will be stored completely anonymously with no identifying information linked to your responses.
Parenthood & Faculty Career

Compensation

I understand there will be no compensation for participation.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Della Winters or Dr. Christine Mattley. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance.

By participating in the survey, you are implying consent and you are agreeing that:
• you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
• you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
• you understand the university has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
• you are 18 years of age or older
• your participation in this research is completely voluntary
• you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Version Date: [10/8/2010]

☐ Yes, I agree to the above consent form

☐ No, I do not agree to the above consent form
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Personal Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your sex?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. As of your most recent birthday, what is your age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 20-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 25-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 30-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 35-39</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ 40-44</td>
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<td>☐ 45-49</td>
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<td>☐ 60-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 65-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 70-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 75-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 80 &amp; older</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parenthood & Faculty Career

3. Relationship Demographics

1. Are you currently in a relationship with a spouse/partner?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Is your spouse/partner also employed at a college or university?
   - Yes
   - No
Parenthood & Faculty Career

4. Occupational Information

1. Which college are you a part of?
   - College of Osteopathic Medicine
   - College of Arts and Sciences
   - College of Business
   - College of Fine Arts
   - College of Health Sciences and Professions
   - Honors Tutorial College
   - College of Education and Human Services
   - College of Engineering and Technology
   - College of Communication
   - University College

2. What is your current academic rank?
   - Lecturer/Adjunct
   - Assistant Professor
   - Associate Professor
   - Full Professor

3. What is your current tenure status?
   - Not Tenured, Non-tenure Track
   - Not Tenured, Tenure Track
   - Tenured
5. Children

1. How many children live in your household at least part of the time?
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5
   - [ ] 6 or more

2. What is the current age of your child/children?
   1
   2
   3
   4
   5
   6
Parenthood & Faculty Career

6. Influences on Timing of Childbirth

1. Was your/your partner’s pregnancy:
   - [ ] Unplanned
   - [ ] Planned
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7.

1. If planned, what influenced your decision the most?

2. Did you have children
   - Earlier than planned
   - When planned
   - Later than planned

3. Did you have children before or after obtaining tenure?
   - Before
   - After
   - Not Applicable

4. Please indicate the level of significance each of the following items has had on your/your partner's decision to have children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>No Significance</th>
<th>Almost no significance</th>
<th>Very Little Significance</th>
<th>Some Significance</th>
<th>Much Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completing Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Family Leave Policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Breaks (Winter, Summer)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Parenthood & Faculty Career

### 8. Family Impact

1. **What are your current feelings and beliefs about your career?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I experience greater commitment to my career out of a sense of responsibility to care and provide for my children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My desire to be an involved parent has decreased my intensity of work involvement.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am committed to regular, responsible employment without the desire to become overcommitted in my career.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I spend fewer hours engaged in work activities per week than I did prior to having children.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **After becoming a parent, did you find that balancing work and family was:**

- [ ] More difficult than expected.
- [ ] About as difficult as you had expected.
- [ ] Easier than expected.

3. **What is the most difficult aspect of balancing work and family for you?**

   [ ]

4. **What is your best balancing strategy?**

   [ ]
### Parenthood & Faculty Career

#### 9. Departmental Culture

1. **Answer the following questions based on your experiences within your department.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My department cares about the family/home life of its faculty.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My personal or family responsibilities have slowed my advancement in the department.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to make unreasonable compromises about personal or family responsibilities and interests due to job demands.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings in my department are often scheduled at times that conflict with my family responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have modified my career aspirations in order to accommodate the interests and needs of my spouse/partner or family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Parenthood & Faculty Career

#### 1. University Culture

1. Answer these questions based on your experiences at the university.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty members can take additional family leave without penalty.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The University provides high-quality child care options.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall, the university has family-friendly policies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like the university to enact additional family-friendly policies.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>