Adultspan Journal

Volume 13 | Issue 2 Article 4

10-1-2014

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Keywords

counselor educators, working mothers, mothers in academia, work–life balance, career

Received 12/30/12
Revised 05/01/13
Accepted 09/04/13
DOI: 10.1002/j.2161-0029.2014.00030.x

Motherhood and Counselor Education: Experiences With Work–Life Balance

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Female professors with children continue to experience institutional and cultural barriers in academia. This article situates the experiences of counselor educator mothers in the context of current trends in academia and research related to mothers in the workforce.

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Women have advocated for workplace equality for more than 50 years (Spar, 2012), yet they are still experiencing institutional and cultural barriers in academia (Hurtado, Eagan, Pryor, Whang, & Tran, 2012; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). A decade ago, Mason and Goulden (2002) found that although the number of women with doctoral degrees had increased significantly, the percentage of women among tenured faculty was approximately the same as it was in 1975. Mason and Goulden's findings also revealed that the gap in salary between men and women was larger than it was in the early 1970s. Williams and Segal (2003) determined that motherhood accounted for a significant portion of the wage gap between men and women, concluding that the "maternal wall" (p. 77) was more detrimental than the glass ceiling. Current research seems to indicate that not much has changed in the past decade and the existing culture in academia is creating additional challenges for working mothers. Research is also beginning to address how counselor educator mothers manage the challenges of academia (Hill, 2004; Trepal & Stinchfield, 2012). This article situates the experiences of counselor educator mothers in the context of current trends in academia and research related to mothers in the workforce.

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During the past few years, professors have experienced increased workloads as a result of budget cuts (Hurtado et al., 2012). Doing more work with fewer resources is a common experience for academics in the recovering economy. Simultaneously, scholarship expectations have increased (Hurtado et al., 2012; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). To be successful, women must meet these growing expectations while navigating discrimination (Hurtado et al., 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), the "second shift" (expectations for housework and childcare after completion of the first shift of work outside of the home; Halpern, 2008; Hochschild, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), the clash between the biological clock and the tenure clock (Philipsen & Bostic, 2010; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), and the competing interests of academia and motherhood (Halpern, 2008, Philipsen & Bostic, 2010, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Motherhood has a particularly detrimental effect on women in the academy (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Women with children do not progress into tenure-track positions at the same rate as men (Morrison, Rudd, & Nerad, 2011; Williams, 2005), and tenure-track women with young children do not earn tenure as often as do men (Mason & Goulden, 2004). Although academics of both genders have difficulties achieving a work–life balance, women with children struggle more with this balance against the backdrop of institutional and cultural inequities (Hurtado et al., 2012; Philipsen, 2008; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010).

As a preliminary investigation of counselor educator mothers' experiences, a panel discussion on counselor educator mothers' work–life balance was facilitated recently at a professional counseling conference. The five counselor educator mothers who participated in the panel identified as either assistant or associate professors and were employed at various universities. The women on the panel and the session attendees reiterated the many challenges of balancing family obligations with the demands of a career in counselor education. Themes from the panel discussion support findings from studies that have documented these challenges for women in academia (Halpern, 2008; Hill, 2004; Hurtado et al., 2012; Mason & Goulden, 2002, 2004; Philipsen, 2008; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010; Stinchfield & Trepal, 2010; Trepal & Stinchfield, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Williams, 2005).

INCREASING WORKLOADS

Professors of both genders experience stress and struggle with work–life balance because of increasing workloads and the resulting lack of personal and family time (Hurtado et al., 2012). The majority of female academics still report being largely responsible for childcare (Rhoads & Rhoads, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004) and the second shift (Stinchfield & Trepal, 2010; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004); thus, the increasing workload in the academy is exacerbating women's struggle as they attempt to balance work and life responsibilities. This challenge is not unique to working women in academia.

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Academia mirrors larger American workforce trends. Slaughter (2012) referred to the prevalence of an American work culture she termed *time macho*—a culture characterized by the constant quest to work harder and log more hours in the office (p. 94). Hewlett (2002) documented the same phenomenon for high-achieving professionals, including women in academia. From the mid-1990s to 2002, the women in Hewlett's study reported increasing their workweek by 10 to 20 hours. Four years later, Hewlett and Luce (2006) concluded that the 40-hour workweek was no longer the norm for many professions and the majority of workers in careers such as business, law, and academia worked at least 70 hours per week.

The panelists discussed the theme of extreme hours being necessary for success in academia. Participants also reiterated that the academic workload has increased in the last decade. Not only did they report the challenge of finding work–life balance in careers that demand extreme hours, they also identified a unique aspect of academic work: a second level of balancing as professors seek to meet teaching, scholarship, and service expectations. Given teaching and service responsibilities, panelists agreed that finding time for the scholarship component of the equation was difficult. Yet, scholarship weighs heavily in the tenure process, and scholarship expectations continue to increase.

INCREASING TENURE DEMANDS

Philipsen and Bostic (2010) addressed the increased tenure expectations with no corresponding increase in the time frame with which to achieve tenure. The lack of clear expectations related to achieving tenure intensifies this challenge (Hurtado et al., 2012; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). The ambiguity surrounding the requirements for promotion is a significant cause of stress among female professors (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Philipsen (2008) highlighted this common challenge for early career faculty through the comment of one participant: "The academy is remiss at providing clear expectations and as long as faculty don't know exactly what it takes to succeed, they are doomed to try to do as much as they possibly can" (p. 20).

The publish-or-perish environment in academia is particularly acute in the pretenure years (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004)—years that often overlap with prime childbearing years (Halpern, 2008; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). The necessity of avoiding gaps in scholarship during pretenure years is a challenge for women who want children (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Other activities involved in the pursuit of tenure also conflict with the consuming responsibilities involved in caring for children (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Accordingly, academic women face the unique struggle of simultaneously responding to their biological clock and their tenure clock (Philipsen, 2008, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

The tenure clock was built on a male model of having a wife at home while the husband works to make tenure (Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). The reality of

the higher education culture is that faculty members of both genders have substantial responsibilities in their personal lives but are still expected to function as if they have a stay-at-home partner who can provide childcare and household management (Halpern, 2008; Mason & Goulden, 2004; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). This negatively affects women, who are often responsible for the second shift (Halpern, 2008).

BALANCING FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Female faculty members are still performing more than 50% of household duties (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), and female tenure-track professors provide more childcare than their male counterparts (Rhoads & Rhoads, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). In one study, the majority of academic women reported that their husbands were supportive of their professional work but were of little assistance with the second shift (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Stinchfield and Trepal (2010) extended this finding to counselor educator mothers, who also reported being predominantly responsible for childcare and household management. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) described the implications of the second shift; they found that academic mothers "shoulder the primary responsibility for anticipating the needs of their children, a task which can be psychologically and physically consuming" (pp. 246–247). The expansive nature of parenting and household management can be a substantial source of female academics' personal and marital stress (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Academic mothers struggle with never having enough hours in the day as they face a workload that never ends (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Panelists echoed this challenge. Although the panelists enjoyed the flexible schedule that academia provides, the flexible schedule is often offset by the fact that academics can never truly leave the office behind. Panelists reiterated the finding in the literature that the nature of academic work is unending and inescapable (Philipsen & Bostic, 2010; Trepal & Stinchfield, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Many of the panelists had young children and expressed hope that balance would be easier to achieve when their children were older. The discussion with participants that emerged from these comments indicated that although maternal responsibilities changed as children grew older, motherhood is time intensive with older children also. These comments reflected Stinchfield and Trepal's (2010) finding that the age of counselor educator women's children did not significantly affect work–life balance.

In Philipsen's (2008) study of faculty women, one professor compared the early feminist writers' experiences with her current experiences and found that no cultural or institutional changes had been implemented to make balancing work and motherhood easier. Female faculty are left to find a balance that works for them (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). In their attempt to success-

fully balance work and family, female professors sacrifice hobbies, exercise, and relationships (Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). Panelists' comments supported these findings, and they discussed the challenge reported in the literature of not having time for the self-care activities that support mental and physical wellness (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Some participants noted that they did not get enough sleep. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) found that mothers in the academy often feel guilty about expressing the need for self-care activities, which complicates this issue.

The guilt theme is a prevalent feature in the literature; female professors report feeling guilty about spending time with their children when they feel they should be working and about working when they want to be spending time with their children (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Additionally, the sense that job performance and motherhood expectations are not being met satisfactorily is a significant source of stress (Culross, Choate, Erwin, & Yu, 2008; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). This stress can either be exacerbated or mediated by how much women buy into unrealistic standards in their lives, including what Hewlett and Luce (2006) described as "an increasingly extreme parenting model" (p. 59).

INCREASING SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS RELATED TO MOTHERHOOD

Panelists reflected on their ways of navigating current parenting practices. Cultural shifts since the 1980s have elevated the expectations related to motherhood in U.S. culture (Gillespie & Temple, 2011; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Gillespie and Temple (2011) surveyed 900 mothers and concluded that motherhood has somehow become a "competitive sport" (p. 4). The May 21, 2012, cover of *Time* magazine reflected this trend with its cover story of a woman breast-feeding her 3-year-old son with the caption "Are you mom enough?" How much women buy into cultural competitiveness seems to have a significant effect on working mothers' work–life balance (Warner, 2005).

Commenting on women's current cultural experiences, Spar (2012) described the "double whammy of impossible expectations—the old-fashioned ones (to be good mothers and wives, impeccable housekeepers, and blushing brides) and those wrought more recently (to be athletic, strong, sexually versatile, and wholly independent)" (para. 4). Spar expressed particular concern that women buy into these cultural expectations, attempt to meet these expectations without any assistance, and then regularly criticize themselves for not meeting these impossible standards. With ubiquitous images of superwomen and ideal mothers, working mothers believe that they, too, must do everything with exact perfection and not ask for help (Culross et al., 2008). It is common for working mothers to experience stress, guilt, and exhaustion, especially when they try to live up to unrealistic standards in the various areas of their lives (Culross et al., 2008).

Gillespie and Temple (2011) reported that perfectionism was the factor that most inhibited a comfortable work–life balance for working mothers. Perfectionism was found to be more detrimental than long work hours, inflexible bosses, and a lack of help with housework. Gillespie and Temple characterized their participants into two groups: the "never enoughs" and the "good enoughs" (p. 10). A constant desire to be the best at everything was a theme in the surveys of the never enoughs. Participants in the other group, who just wanted to be good enough and happy at home and at work, were more satisfied with all aspects of their lives.

Gillespie and Temple (2011) found that mothers are happier if they carefully identify life tasks that are worthy of a high standard of performance. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) echoed these sentiments and reported that female faculty members coped with their multiple roles by realizing that they were not going to be able to perform all tasks as well as they might have if they had fewer roles. These researchers described how women coped with time and energy constraints by recognizing that they were not going to be able "to be the best all the time" and learning to be "content with being 'good enough'" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 250).

Learning to accept being good enough can be difficult for academics who have been high achievers throughout their lives (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Some participants in the Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) study "described compromising on the types of venues in which they were going to publish, the overall level of scholarship they were going to produce, and ultimately the level of 'fame and fortune' that they were going to achieve" (p. 250). Other study participants spent less time and energy on teaching and service to achieve the levels of scholarship they needed for promotion. Similarly, Trepal and Stinchfield (2012) found that counselor educator women with children lowered the expectations they held for themselves in terms of superstardom. They noted that balancing motherhood and academia was not conducive to excelling in the profession.

Given institutional and cultural barriers, the concept of having it all—a full, healthy life with a career and children—remains an issue for women in academia. Slaughter (2012) concluded that women can have it all and can have it all at the same time, but not under the current structures in place in American society. In reality, the current structure of academia seems to inhibit women's quest to have it all, as evidenced by the finding that women on the tenure track are less likely to have children than are men (Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). Mason and Goulden (2002) reported that only 62% of tenured female faculty in the humanities and social sciences had children. And, although Morrison et al. (2011) found that parenting does not negatively affect women's pursuit of tenure once a woman is in a tenure track job, Mason and Goulden (2002) used a more complex analysis and determined that women who had babies early in their career (within 5 years of earning their doctorate) did not achieve tenure at the same rate as did men or other women. Women who had babies later in

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their career had approximately the same rate of tenure as women who did not have children. Yet, women who had babies later tended to have only one child.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Having only one child or opting to have no children seems to be related to structures in place in academia and may also be partially related to the discrimination that mothers in the academy experience. Hurtado et al. (2012) found that female professors reported experiencing discrimination twice as often as did men. An example of this discrimination documented in the literature is Williams's (2005) conclusion that women are assigned more service tasks in academia—tasks that take time away from the pursuit of a research agenda and are not viewed as favorably in the tenure process.

The discrimination theme emerged from the panelists also. Panelists provided examples including discriminatory comments by colleagues and bosses illuminating the different standard for men and women with children in academia. One panelist observed that her male counterpart was praised for bringing his child to the office, whereas a woman would be criticized for the same action. Other panelists talked about the uneasiness of being pregnant and not tenured. Participants on the panel also reported colleagues' and supervisors' negative views on parental leave. This experience is highlighted in the literature also. Even if policies such as parental leave are in place, stopping the tenure clock leads some promotion and tenure committees to assume that a woman has had an extra year to do scholarship and therefore judge a woman's portfolio accordingly (Philipsen & Bostic, 2010).

Not all panelists experienced discrimination, although feedback from the panel was somewhat mixed in terms of the level of support received from colleagues. Smaller academic units seemed to provide stable and more genuine support for the panel members, whereas panelists from larger academic units alluded to tones of gender-based discrimination. Only one panel member reported having a "family-friendly department." This varied experience is supported by the literature. The counselor educator participants in Trepal and Stinchfield's (2012) study reported experiences of discrimination, such as being offered less travel money and fewer paid overload opportunities compared with male colleagues. Yet other counselor educator mother participants in the study experienced support, including being able to bring their children to work and receiving mentoring from other mothers in the academy.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WOMEN

Panelists also shared their positive experiences related to having children and a career in academia. The panel members reiterated themes in the literature, such as the flexibility and autonomy in academic careers that assist mothers as they

seek to balance work and family (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Another theme in the literature that the panel discussed was that having children can be helpful in creating a work–life balance by encouraging female faculty to have a life outside of work and by providing an incentive to establish priorities (Philipsen, 2008). Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) reported that children bring perspective and objectivity to work issues. Similarly, the academic mothers in the Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) study expressed that motherhood provided perspective when they were attempting to meet copious and somewhat ambiguous tenure expectations. Ward and Wolf-Wendel surmised that "benefits manifest themselves for academic women in two ways: buffering and an expanded frame of reference" (p. 253). Being able to move between the domains of work and home can give women "a sense of 'time out' which provided a temporary respite from the stress and tension of one sphere" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 253).

Multiple roles can provide numerous benefits for women, and women who are both mothers and career women report a greater sense of well-being than women with only one central life component (Culross et al., 2008; Hewlett, 2002). In the Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) study, women enjoyed being parents and contributing to their academic field, despite the role conflict that inherently exists between motherhood and tenure-track positions. Ward and Wolf-Wendel concluded that working mothers are more efficient with their time and maintain more realistic expectations.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT WORK–LIFE BALANCE

Panelists identified strategies they used to support their work–life balance. These ideas provide a preliminary response to Trepal and Stinchfield's (2012) recommendation that future research on female counselor educators' work–life balance include strategies for female counselor educators with children. The panelists' strategies also complement the existing research on women's work–life balance (Gillespie & Temple, 2011; Philipsen & Bostic, 2010; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Participants' strategies included maintaining an internal locus of control, setting priorities, upholding boundaries, managing time, and engaging in supportive relationships. Panelists held different views on the boundary between parenting and working. Some panelists preferred family time and work time to be separate domains, whereas other panelists allowed for more role integration. Each panel member reflected on the importance of having a supportive partner who is an active participant in helping to maintain work–life balance. Panelists also reported being intentional about controlling both internal and external messages about their worth as a faculty member by reassessing perfectionistic goals and ignoring or placing in perspective judgmental comments from family, colleagues, or strangers. These activities support Gillespie and Temple's (2011) recommendation that mothers develop an internal locus of control and let go of

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unrelenting perfectionism, an inhibitor of work–life balance. One participant provided an example of her progress; although she would like to provide perfectly healthy meals each evening, she is learning to let go and allow for pizza night. Panelists also discussed the theme of decreasing superwoman tendencies by asking friends and family for help and hiring housekeepers and babysitters.

Panelists noted the importance of supportive relationships with university colleagues and social networks, such as women's and community groups. Panelists concluded that connecting with other women in the academy contributed to work–life balance by providing opportunities to observe women at different stages in their career and seeing the balance play out in diverse scenarios. Connecting to women across campus also increased networking opportunities, helped with the identification of resources (e.g., a good pediatrician), built social capital, increased feelings of confidence and power, and supported the navigation of the hurdles of promotion and tenure. Finally, networks of support in venues unassociated with academia, such as places of worship, moms' groups, community groups, and other friendships, also were discussed as instrumental in finding balance.

Members of the panel expressed the need to be role models and provide support for the next generation of female academics, counselor educators, and students. The panel members described the need for policies that promote rather than hinder work–life balance. Panelists reflected that changing and preferably ending archaic policies, such as tenure clocks, may be aspirational at their institutions; however, connecting with women across campus and through the counselor education field begins the process of creating a support system and identifiable network of those with shared needs and experiences. As an example, one panelist noted that childcare is often offered at "hard science" conferences so more women can remain engaged and successful in their careers. Panelists suggested that counselor educators can advocate for more childcare options at professional conferences to support women's scholarship and continuing education.

CONCLUSION

Gender equity in the academy has not been achieved. Regardless of rank, men seem to find a work–life balance that is elusive to many female faculty, except at the late career level (Philipsen & Bostic, 2010). More academic women than men report extensive stress from experiences such as lack of personal time, the promotion process, childcare, children's challenges, elderly parent care, being part of a dual career couple, and discrimination (Hurtado et al., 2012). Increasing workloads, enhanced scholarship expectations, and elevated societal expectations surrounding motherhood are creating additional barriers for female professors.

Panel members confirmed preliminary research indicating that female counselor educators are experiencing these institutional and cultural barriers.

Despite these barriers, counselor educator mothers are having some success in finding work–life balance. Strategies such as maintaining an internal locus of control, setting priorities, upholding boundaries, managing time, overcoming perfectionism, asking for help, engaging in supportive relationships, and connecting with other mothers within and outside of the academy resonated with all of the panelists. Individual preferences guided adherence to a work–life integration model or the clear demarcation of work and family activities. Faculty women can use the information presented in this article as they seek to find their unique strategies for capitalizing on the benefits of a career in academia and managing institutional and cultural barriers. Future research is needed to provide women with additional strategies for a successful work–life balance in academia.

Members of the panel concluded that there is a need to provide safe venues to discuss institutional and cultural barriers in academia and corresponding advocacy initiatives. Given their training to promote social justice and wellness and the influence they have through their students, clients, and colleagues, counselor educators are well positioned to help change university systems and modify cultural trends inhibiting women's success. Through these advocacy activities, counselor educators will promote gender equity and play an invaluable role in breaking down the maternal wall in academia and beyond.

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