

**Department Chairs and High Chairs:**

The importance of perceived department chair supportiveness on faculty parents' views of departmental and institutional kid-friendliness

BY

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Sociology and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Defended: April 19, 2011

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Date approved: April 19, 2011

## **Abstract**

Prior research shows pervasive inequalities in the ways that women and men faculty experience the competing demands of balancing an academic career with raising a family. Using survey data from parents who recently had or adopted a child while in a tenured or tenure-track position, this study explores issues related to how departmental culture is experienced by professors who become mothers or fathers, with particular emphasis on the role of the department chair. Findings indicate that the perceived supportiveness of the department chair is an important factor in how both men and women faculty perceive the departmental and institutional culture surrounding parenthood.

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## **Introduction**

Despite women gaining much ground in terms of participation in US higher education in the past fifty years, problems of gender equity still persist. According to statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, since the 2006-2007 school year, just over half of all doctoral recipients were women (Aud et al., 2010), but decades of increasing attainment of the doctoral degree for women have not translated into equality in the professoriate. Women are still underrepresented at the faculty level, particularly in the upper ranks, and most especially in the sciences (Mason & Goulden, 2002); women academics continue to earn less and advance more slowly than their male peers (Grey-Bowen, 2010; Mason & Goulden, 2002); and women academics disproportionately fill the ranks of “second tier” positions such as adjuncts or lecturers (Perna, 2001; N. Wolfinger & Mason, 2009). Women also face greater challenges than their male peers in combining parenthood with a successful academic career (Mason & Goulden, 2004b).

While tremendous benefits such as flexible scheduling, the ability to work from home, and summers off from teaching (though not research), would seem to make professorship and parenthood an ideal fit for women (or men), problems combining the two, particularly for mothers, have remained stubbornly intractable. Researchers concur that the model academic career path and tenure system often conflicts with the familial responsibilities of faculty members, particularly women faculty (Armenti, 2004a; Hollenshead, Sullivan, Smith, August, & Hamilton, 2005; Mason & Goulden, 2004a; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a). Or, as Wolfinger and Mason (2009) succinctly put it, "More than most vocations, academia does not really offer any good time to have children" (p. 1613).

Potential women faculty learn early and well, often in graduate school, that to become a mother, particularly before tenure, is a perilous career choice (Anders, 2004; Mason & Goulden, 2002, 2004b). Facing this reality, these women must make difficult choices about career and family. Though women are no more likely than men to want both a family and a career, women are more likely than men to “leak” out of the pipeline due to concerns about being able to successfully combine an academic career and a family (Anders, 2004; Grant & Kennedy, 2000). Additionally, women who do choose a career in academia are also more likely than their male colleagues to have fewer children than they want (Bassett, 2005; Drago, Colbeck, Stauffer, Piretti, & al, 2005; Mason & Goulden, 2004a).

The difficulties women academics face in combining parenthood with professorship are problematic not only for the individual women who struggle to be successful in both areas, but are also problematic for the academy itself. The current situation deters many highly talented women from entering the profession; it reifies and perpetuates gender inequality; and by excluding or marginalizing many women who are mothers, the knowledge produced by academia as one of its core functions may suffer. Many scholars have called for improvements in culture, climate, and policies regarding motherhood in higher education. The importance of the department chair on this issue has been noted in the literature, though not thoroughly explored (Sullivan, Hollenshead, & Smith, 2004; Thornton, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a, 2005). This study expands on the existing literature by using survey data to investigate the impact of the department chair on the climate encountered by recent faculty parents.

## Background

### *Challenges for Academic Mothers*

Career prospects for women in academia appear daunting and disillusioning: “women still disproportionately leave graduate school before earning the PhD, ... are slower to be tenured and promoted to full professor and earn less than comparable men even after controlling for measures of productivity and achievement,” (Krefting, 2003, p. 274). Women continue to trail behind men in academic rank and in attaining tenured or tenure-track positions as opposed to marginalized lecturer or adjunct positions (AAUP, 2001; Jacobs, 2004; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Thornton, 2005; N. H. Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008), and Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden found that "family and children account for the lower rate at which women obtain tenure-track jobs" (2008, p. 389).

Furthermore, similar to mothers in the general labor market who suffer a "motherhood penalty" in wages (Budig & England, 2001), women faculty experience not only increased work and family related stress (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005), but they also lose out compared to men in both tenure and pay (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Mason & Goulden, 2004a). "For women academics, deciding to have a baby is a career decision" (Mason & Goulden, 2002, p. 21). In their analysis of the Survey of Doctoral Recipients from 1973 to 1999, Mason and Goulden (2002) found that for pre-tenure faculty women, that decision alone dramatically decreases their likelihood of achieving tenure – by 20-25 percent. Conversely, Mason and Goulden actually found a *benefit* to fatherhood: “men with ‘early babies’ – those with a child entering their household within five years of their receiving the PhD – are 38 percent more likely than their women counterparts to achieve tenure” (Mason & Goulden, 2004a, p. 1). To make matters

worse, Perna (2005) finds that "[m]en, but not women, also appear to receive a salary *premium* from having children" (pp. 12, italics added).

Having children disproportionately disadvantages the careers of women, but research has shown that the inverse is also true. Women with academic careers pay a greater price in terms of family outcomes than their male counterparts. "Only one in three women who takes a fast-track university job before having a child ever becomes a mother," (Mason & Goulden, 2004a, p. 2), and "among professionals, female academics have the highest rate of childlessness: 43 percent" (Bassett, 2005, p. xiv). This is not because these women don't want to have children. According to survey data from the ladder-rank faculty of the University of California, Mason and Goulden (2004a) found that a full 38 percent of women faculty members indicated that they had fewer children than they had wanted – in contrast to only 18 percent of men. A nationwide survey of tenure-line English and chemistry faculty showed similar results: 36 percent of women compared to only 13 percent of men reported having fewer than the desired number of children in order to achieve career goals (Drago et al., 2005). Women in academia are also more likely than their male counterparts to experience negative family outcomes as evidenced by lower rates of marriage and higher rates of separation, divorce, and widowhood, regardless of institution type, employment or tenure status, or academic rank, with differences most pronounced for those in more desirable or "first tier" positions (Perna, 2005). In these often unmeasured ways, career success is more costly to women's personal lives than it is to men's. Achievement of gender equity in the upper ranks of faculty is an important goal, but gender inequality in the disparity in costs of this achievement for men and women must also be considered.

Given these difficulties, for ambitious academic women who also want a family there can be significant conflict about whether and when to have a baby. The rhythms of the academy and

the linear progression of academic careers contribute to the loud and insistent ticking of dueling “clocks” – the tenure clock and the biological clock (AAUP, 2001; Anders, 2004; Armenti, 2004a; Jacobs, 2004; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Perna, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b), and there is no good time for women academics to have children (Mason & Goulden, 2004b; N. Wolfinger & Mason, 2009). If women want to maximize their chances of receiving tenure, they should delay childbirth until after becoming tenured, but this is problematic because this pre-tenure time often coincides with women’s waning years of fertility. Because the average age of earning the PhD is 33, and many professors are forty or older before securing tenure (Mason & Goulden, 2004a), women who wait until after tenure to have a baby have likely passed their ideal childbearing years and now face increased problems with infertility and dramatically increased odds of having a baby with serious health problems.

For women faculty who do try to have a baby, planning and timing are crucial (Carver, 2005; Reich, 2003; Shope, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a; Wilson, 1999). Armenti (2004a) found that women either tried to plan for the baby to be born in the summer, preferably May, or they waited until post-tenure; women whose bodies were not on the same timetable faced difficulties with work, or in some cases were willing to forgo motherhood altogether. Having a baby during graduate school may appear to be a possible solution, but graduate school itself is often a stressful, hectic, and many times financially unstable time in women’s lives (Reich, 2003), conditions not conducive to accommodating pregnancy, the interruption of childbirth, and caring for a newborn.

The greater costs and scarcer rewards that await young female PhD recipients considering their career options contributes to one of the many “leaks” in the academic pipeline (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a). Women may “opt out,” or self-select away from academic careers

because they do not see them as compatible with having a family (Grant & Kennedy, 2000). One study in California suggested that perhaps 60% of faculty mothers considered leaving university teaching because of “problems balancing work and family expectations” (AAUP, 2008), and a survey of graduate students found that, “[p]arenting and mobility issues—but not research or teaching issues—were more negatively associated with entering the professoriate for women than for men. However, women were not more interested in having children than men were” (Anders, 2004, p. 511). These findings indicate that systemic barriers related to parenting cause women, but not men, to self-select away from academic careers. In the words of one respondent to a survey by Mason and Goulden: “female graduate students are telling us over and over again across the nation that they are not going to become faculty members because they do not see how they can combine work and family in a way that is reasonable” (2004a, p. 7). These perceptions of the difficulty of combining motherhood and professorship may mean that academia fails to attract and retain the highest quality faculty possible (Grant & Kennedy, 2000; Jacobs, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b).

### *Contributions to the Problem*

The difficulties and negative career and family outcomes are well documented, but what creates these issues? Two related concepts contribute to the problem: the gendered structure of higher education organizations (Acker, 1990), and the pervasive negative perceptions of women who are mothers (Correll et al., 2007).

Women professors who want to have children face dilemmas that their male colleagues do not. The “ideal worker” in academia is a male, particularly one with a wife to take care of the reproductive work and maintenance of house and family (Correll et al., 2007; Mason & Goulden,

2004b), and the academy is structured in a way that fits the male, but not the female, life course (Grant & Kennedy, 2000; Shope, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a; N. H. Wolfinger et al., 2008). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), in discussing the tenure system note that the pre-tenure probationary period was

based on the assumption that the scholar was male and that his work would not be interrupted by domestic responsibilities, such as raising children.... It was assumed that untenured faculty—whether men or women—were not the sole, primary, or even coequal caretakers of newborn or newly adopted children. (AAUP, 2001)

And though dual-income couples have become much more common, male academics are still significantly more likely than their female counterparts to benefit from a spouse who works less than full time (43.8% versus 11.5%) (Jacobs, 2004), and so are still more likely to fit the idealized conception of a “scholar” upon which the tenure system was based.

On the other hand, women in academia are disadvantaged because their life patterns, particularly in terms of reproduction, differ from men’s (Williams, 2009). "Having babies is an imposition on the rhythms of the academy," observes one academic (Wilson, 1999), and since it is women who are having the babies, it is women that are seen as imposing on the system – the system that works so well if only one has a wife to take care of the more time-consuming reproductive issues. This is especially difficult in a society where women still bear more than their fair share of childrearing responsibilities (Mason & Goulden, 2004a; Sullivan, Hollenshead, & Smith, 2004; Valian, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a), often working a “second shift” of caretaking at home (Hochschild, 2003). The institutional structure and culture of academia, based on the conception of a male “ideal worker,” continue to reflect a world with distinctly separate spheres for men and women, more negatively impact women than men (Anders, 2004;

Mason & Goulden, 2004a), and work as “coercive forces” (Gumport, 1991) to reify and reproduce gender inequality.

Directing our attention to systems of domination in higher education and exploring social predicaments of women professors (hooks, 1987) illuminates the ways that women “have not been part of the dialogues and processes that have produced the academy’s ‘shared’ values” (Bensimon, 1995, p. 601). The culture, climate, and organizational structure of academe, including attitudes and policies regarding childbearing and parenthood, have been shaped largely by (privileged, white) men. The resulting patriarchal system presents obstacles and challenges to women seeking to succeed in tenure-track faculty positions and in family life, and does little to combat still deeply ingrained gender stereotypes.

These deeply ingrained gender stereotypes as well as the difficulty of achieving career success and having a family are, of course, not confined to the realm of higher education. In fact, in a study of wage and perception differences based on parental status, the status of motherhood has been found to lead to bias in employment and wages across careers (Budig & England, 2001). Mothers are perceived as less competent and less committed to paid work than non-mothers, while the opposite is true for fathers. Correll, et al (2007) conducted a laboratory experiment as well as an audit study of actual employers to assess bias against parents and found that mothers were penalized on a number of measures over their childless female counterparts. Fathers, on the other hand, “were advantaged over childless men in several ways, being seen as more committed to paid work and being offered higher starting salaries” (Correll et al., 2007, p. 1332). As noted above, similar wage problems have been found in the realm of higher education (Mason & Goulden, 2004a). Wages, however, are not the only problem; perception issues are also problematic for academic women.

Regardless of how committed a woman is to excellent scholarship and teaching, negative perceptions and stereotypes of women and particularly mothers can impact the way she is evaluated by colleagues and students (Carver, 2005; Miller & Chamberlin, 2000; Sprague & Massoni, 2005; Valian, 2005). Stereotypes and conformity (or lack of conformity) to gendered roles influence the way individuals are perceived and evaluated. Williams (2002) discusses one of the most dramatic reports of the negative perception of women based on gender normative roles. In Fiske, et al's 2002 survey study, the researchers found that respondents viewed "business women" as similar in competence to "business men" and "millionaires," while "housewives" were rated as similar in competence to the "elderly," "blind," "retarded," and "disabled" (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Independent of personal virtue, ability, or ambition, the roles we occupy trigger perceptions that are largely outside of our control. This is certainly the case of women faculty who are mothers.

Women faculty with children frequently feel that colleagues viewed them differently after they had a child, and more negatively than men with children. Williams (2004) notes a complaint of changing perceptions and assumptions from colleagues. Prior to having children if a woman was out of the office, her colleagues would assume that she was writing or at a conference; after returning from maternity leave, however, absences from the office, even for research in the library, are assumed to be the result of taking care of children. Women suffer a loss of perceived competence and commitment when they become mothers. In general, women concerned with domestic or family affairs are viewed more negatively than more "professional" (often childless) women.

The pull between roles of "mother" and "professional" is certainly not limited to academe. Blair-Loy (2003), interviewed eighty-one women who were originally very career-

oriented and successful female executives, who either continued in or left promising careers with long work hours. Blair-Loy examines how the research subjects negotiated the tension between work life and motherhood. Her conceptualization of commitment to work or family schemas gives us good tools for thinking about the situation of academic mothers who are often perceived as failing one or both of their roles as “good” mother or “good” professor, as well pointing to the lack of (at least perceived) conflict between the roles of “good” father and “good” professor.

The culturally salient gender schemas assigned to “women” or “mothers” are in such direct conflict with the schemas for a good “professional” or “academic” (Maher & Tetreault, 2007), that it often appears to be a zero sum game in which success in one area precludes success in the other. In their discussion of role incongruity for academic mothers Williams, et al (2006) note that “‘Good’ mothers are home with their children, so female professors with children must be bad mothers; and ‘good’ professors focus solely on their work, so professors with children must be bad professors” (p. 84). Academic parents, like all working parents, will probably always experience the pull of different facets of their lives, but it should be no more wrenching for women than for men. The consequences of the conflicting schemas should not cost women more than men in terms of either career success or desired family formation.

### *Responses from the Academy*

So, what *are* colleges and universities doing to help faculty mothers? Policies vary widely. Few schools provide paid maternity leave (Hollenshead et al., 2005, p. 51), and many campuses offer nothing but the unpaid leave they are required to grant through the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), (and for many faculty, an extended unpaid leave is not a viable option (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005)). In addition to FMLA, the federal Pregnancy

Discrimination Act (PDA) requires that universities provide the same benefits for pregnancy disability as they do for other physical disabilities (AAUP, 2001).

One of the most common unmandated policies designed to address the needs of women who have children while on the tenure clock is the “stop-the-clock” provision, giving women “extra time” before coming up for tenure review, though, in some ways this keeps women at lower rank and pay for longer, and may increase time spent worrying about getting tenure (Toren, 1993). Also, there is fear among women faculty that utilizing “stop-the-clock” provisions will result in reprisal or negative perception that would be damaging to their careers. In their interview study of thirty women at nine research institutions, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2005) found that in relationship to stopping the tenure clock, the general perception was that “people writing letters nationally, which here is the biggest weight, don’t cut any slack for any reason” (p. 74). Further, in light of Thornton’s 2005 findings based on a survey with 76 colleges and universities responding to questions about their stop-the-clock policies, this perception seems warranted as “only one-third of the responding doctoral universities and one-quarter of responding baccalaureate colleges [were] instructing tenure reviewers to evaluate the probationary professor’s work output properly” (Thornton, 2005, p. 88).

Less often utilized than “stop-the-clock” provisions are parental leaves as described above or additional options available at some campuses. As Wilson (1999) puts it, women professors who get pregnant “risk annoying their colleagues,” with the result that many faculty engage in bias-avoidance behaviors such as not having children, timing children for summer or for after tenure, and taking minimal or no leave (Armenti, 2004a, 2004b; Shope, 2005; Sullivan et al., 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b, 2005). There is a perception that “a colleague’s family leave might be characterized as showing a lack of professionalism or a willingness to shift

burdens onto one's colleagues" (Hollenshead et al., 2005, p. 59), which is especially problematic for pre-tenure faculty. One respondent in Hollenshead's study characterized it this way: "untured faculty say 'I'm afraid how my colleagues will react to my taking leave.' Even the notion of getting pregnant makes many fear not getting tenure" (Hollenshead et al., 2005, p. 59). This was viewed as a "cultural belief" for both women and men. As a result, even when there are programs in place, many have extremely low use rates that can be attributed to a discouraging campus climate where many faculty members fear that their use of existing policies will be met with retribution or negative career outcomes (Mason & Goulden, 2002, 2004b).

There are numerous issues impacting the use of policies (such as paid or unpaid leave, modified instructional duties, stopping the clock, etc.) designed to help faculty balance career and family needs. To maximize the benefit of such policies, campuses must have policies in place, faculty and their supervisors must be aware of the policies, and the culture and climate of the institution and department must not act as a barrier to usage. If faculty and supervisors do not know about policies, or if the climate in their department is "chilly" toward women (or men) who take advantage of them, their use and effectiveness will be greatly diminished. Better communication about existing policies, making policies entitlements, and addressing other barriers to policy use are common themes in the literature (AAUP, 2001; Sullivan et al., 2004).

A number of scholars indicate that even colleges and universities with institutional policies supporting motherhood should be wary of a culture and climate of discrimination against mothers and motherhood (Wolfinger & Mason, 2009; Williams, 2002 and 2004; Euben, 2005), and recent litigation makes such considerations seem wise. Cases of alleged retaliation for utilizing "stop the clock" policies or for taking maternity leave, one with a memo from a chair who wrote that a female faculty member "knew as a mother of two infants, she had

responsibilities that were incompatible with those of a full-time academician" have cost universities large settlements (Williams, 2002, 2004). The courts have recently ruled that the use of motherhood stereotypes of female employees (e.g. "mothers are insufficiently devoted to work" or "work and motherhood are incompatible" (Williams, 2006)) constitutes gender discrimination (Euben, 2005).

### *The Role of the Department Chair*

Departments are the building blocks of the academy, and the impact of leadership in these loci of power should not be overlooked. A number of scholars (Thornton, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a, 2005) indicate the importance of the department chair in influencing the culture and climate surrounding parenthood, both motherhood and fatherhood, and leave-taking. There is a good deal of flexibility and variance in how individual department chairs communicate about and apply leave policies, and there have been calls, particularly from Sullivan, et al. (2004) to make family-friendliness part of the formalized assessment of chairs and deans. While there are undoubtedly some very supportive chairs, there are also reports of "department chairs who will sort of call in all the women [in the department] and say, 'Now if you're thinking of getting pregnant, try to time it so that it doesn't cut into the semester'" (Mason & Goulden, 2004a, p. 248). Such an experience is unlikely to make women faculty members who are unable (or unwilling) to coordinate conception to achieve the coveted "May baby" feel comfortable requesting maternity leave, even if they are entitled to it.

Similarly, there are reports that some academic departments actually systematically discourage or penalize those who wish to take FMLA leave. In describing the situation, Williams reports that one untenured faculty member stated that "All of the maternity benefits

were lumped under the same heading by the chair as ‘unfair advantage... I saw two other women with young children get punished on reviews for not getting enough published even though they ‘had time off and had more time to write.’ I wasn’t going to risk it” (2006, p. 91). While these are clear examples of the negative impact department chairs can have, the opposite is also possible. Presidents, provosts, deans, and especially chairs all occupy positions that can impact the culture and climate surrounding family-friendly policies. As Sullivan (2004) notes, "When chairs and deans make it clear to tenure and promotion committees that faculty must not be penalized for using university policies, attitudes about the academic value of colleagues with family responsibilities begin to change" (p. 4).

The current reality of gender inequality in higher education is that women receive fewer advantages and rewards at a higher cost than their male counterparts. The poor fit between the realities of women’s work experiences and the gendered expectations of a system built around a male “ideal” worker, as well as the negative perceptions women who become parents must face contribute to the work-life conflict that more negatively impacts women than men in academia. The literature points to department chairs as key leaders who can impact the culture and climate women encounter, and this study seeks to explore that impact in greater depth. How large an impact do department chairs have? Is the rating of department chair supportiveness related to characteristics of the chair such as age, gender, or parental status? How is perceived department chair supportiveness related to assessments of departmental and institutional climate?

## **Methods**

To explore the impact of department chairs on the climate faced by parents in academia, I needed to ask the faculty about their experiences and perceptions regarding such things as

department chair supportiveness, departmental and institutional kid-friendliness, and available policies. I sought to elicit feedback on how faculty parents experienced supportiveness or lack thereof in their departments and institutions following the birth or adoption of a child. To increase the likelihood that respondents would have clear recollections of experiences at their institutions and in their departments, as well as to help the results be as timely as possible, I limited responses to women and men who had become parents (through birth or adoption) from 2006 through 2010. I also limited the survey to those who had been in a tenured or tenure-track faculty position at the time of their child's birth or adoption.

### *Sample*

I used a variety of means to recruit respondents to participate in an online survey created and conducted using the Qualtrics web application for surveys. I posted a notice about the study and a link to the online survey on the listserv for Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) as well as other listservs where contacts of colleagues were kind enough to post, and the notice went out to the Section on Sex and Gender of the American Sociological Society. The notice also appeared on blogs such as Mama PhD ([http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/mama\\_phd](http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/mama_phd)) and the Female Science Professor (<http://science-professor.blogspot.com/>). In order to reach more faculty parents, I also contacted the campus child-care centers of 68 institutions, many of which emailed the notice to faculty parents or distributed fliers to parents at their centers. These institutions were selected on the basis of having a Research I designation (prior to the restructuring of the Carnegie classification system) and having an identifiable campus-affiliated child care center. Additionally, in an effort to recruit women faculty, I contacted organizations such as the Association of Women Geoscientists, the Association for Women in Mathematics,

the Women Chemists Committee, and the Association for Women Soil Scientists to inform the organizations of the research being conducted and to invite their members to participate.

The resulting sample (see Table 1) was comprised of 150 women and 53 men with an average age of approximately 38. The vast majority of women (and all of the men) were married. The modal value for number of children was 1 for women and 2 for men. The vast majority of respondents were still in the departments they had been in at the time of their child's birth or adoption. Being unable to recruit more faculty who left their departments may lead to an increased positive reports of department chair supportiveness, departmental kid-friendliness, and institutional kid-friendliness, as well as decreased negative reports of how detrimental a child had been or would be to an academic career. Those who held the most negative views may not be represented in this sample.

Respondents were predominantly Assistant Professors at the time of their child's birth or adoption, and were overwhelmingly white, with the next largest group being Asian/Pacific Islanders. The lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the sample is particularly important to note. The data for this analysis represent largely the experiences of white women faculty, and cannot explore differences in the way that women (or men) of different racial or ethnic backgrounds experience the culture and climate of academia. There is reason to believe that racial and ethnic stereotypes as well as cultural expectations may pose different and sometimes greater obstacles to combining motherhood with an academic career for women from different racial or ethnic backgrounds (see Jiron-King, 2005).

The department chairs that respondents rated were mostly male, had a mean age of approximately 54, and were very likely to be parents (see Table 1). Respondents were primarily from Research or Doctorate-granting institutions (over two thirds). I limited responses to those

from Research Universities (n=151), Master's Colleges and Universities (n=26), Baccalaureate Colleges (n=23) and Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges (n=8), according to the current Carnegie Classification system. The latter two categories were collapsed for the purposes of analysis (see Table 1). One response from a medical school was excluded from the analysis. In their work on socialization and culture in academe, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) find that "although the institutional and departmental contexts of one's work may vary, the cultural framework in which it is defined and performed is often quite similar across campuses and disciplines" (p. 4). This is not to say that the experiences of faculty mothers will be uniform. Research has found that the experiences of tenure-track faculty mothers do differ across institution types, with women experiencing perhaps the most stress at "striving comprehensive campuses" or campuses where increasing research expectations were being added to the very demanding extant teaching expectations (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). While experiences may differ with the varying emphasis different institutions place on the basic functions of faculty – research, teaching, and service, the cultural frameworks surrounding these duties and the competing pulls of what it means to be a "good professor" and a "good mother" are in many ways quite similar. This should not be surprising given that academics are generally trained and socialized into the profession at doctoral-granting institutions, and only after years of this indoctrination do they migrate to more varied institution types.

### *Measures*

The online survey included approximately 55 questions with some additional follow up questions as needed. Topics ranged from basic questions (e.g. Have you (or a partner) had a baby or adopted a child recently (2006 to present)?); to questions about department chair

supportiveness, departmental and institutional kid-friendliness, and policy availability and usage; to demographic information. It took users an average of approximately thirteen minutes to complete the survey.

The key measures in this study (see Table 2) were respondents' rankings of the supportiveness of their department chair, respondents' ranking of the "kid-friendliness" of their department, and respondents' ranking of the "kid-friendliness" of their institution. Respondents' understandings and definitions of "kid-friendliness" are undoubtedly varied, but in this analysis "kid-friendliness" is taken as an indicator of overall receptivity by the department or institution to faculty members' decision to become parents. Respondents indicated these rankings on scales of 0-10, for example: "Overall, how supportive would you say that your department chair is of faculty having or adopting children?" On this scale, "0" indicates extremely unsupportive, "10" indicates extremely supportive, and "5" is available as a neutral middle value, neither supportive nor unsupportive. Respondents were also asked to indicate how beneficial or detrimental it had been to their careers to have their child, as well as how beneficial or detrimental they thought it would be to have another child. In this analysis, a 10 indicates "Extremely Detrimental." Respondents' professional rank as well as institutional type (see Table 1) were treated as ordinal measures with ascending values from 1-3 ("1" indicating the lowest rank or place in the hierarchy and "3" the highest rank or place in the hierarchy).

Univariate analysis (see Table 2) indicates that overall, many respondents found their department chair fairly supportive. The mean supportiveness rating was 7.45, and the modal response was actually a 10. The average departmental kid-friendliness rating was 6.21 with a modal response of 7, and the institutional kid-friendliness rating was somewhat lower with an average of 5.35 and a mode of 5. Respondents reported that having or adopting their child had

been neutral or somewhat detrimental to their careers. The modal response was a 5 which was midway between Extremely Beneficial and Extremely Detrimental, and the mean rating was 6.81, leaning toward the detrimental side of the scale (see Figure 1). When respondents were asked what impact they thought having another child would have on their career, the responses were more negative with a modal response of 7 and an average rating of 6.86 (See Table 2). To test for gender differences, I performed two-tailed t-Tests for the five key measures. Women respondents were more likely than men to report a negative or detrimental effect on their career for both the impact their child has had or that they think another child would have, but no statistically significant gender differences were found on the other three key measures (department chair supportiveness, department kid-friendliness, and institution kid-friendliness).

In order to account for varying institutional “family friendly” policies and the impact they may have on perceptions of departmental and institutional kid-friendliness, I created a composite measure of how many “family friendly” policies (see Table 3 for list of policies) respondents reported as available at their institutions. Respondents’ awareness of the availability of institutional “family-friendly” policies as well as usage rates are outlined in Table 3. In accord with the literature, the most prevalent policies respondents reported awareness of were FMLA leave and stop-the-clock policies. The usage rates are interesting to note. Women (who were aware that the policies were available) were far more likely to use paid maternity leave, flexible scheduling, modified instructional duties and alternative to teaching duties than they were to use FMLA leave. Men were also much more likely to use such policies as flexible scheduling, paid paternity leave, and modified instructional duties, than to use FMLA leave. For men the highest usage rate (again, based on respondents who were aware it was available to them at their institution) was flexible scheduling policies while for women it was paid maternity leave.

## *Analysis*

Using STATA/SE 10.0, I analyzed the results of the online survey using multiple linear regression with ordinary least squares (OLS). With one exception, surveys that were missing information used in the regression analyses were excluded using listwise deletion, leaving 203 responses for analysis. I could detect no systematic variance in respondents who were missing values, but the possibility of the influence of some bias in this regard still remains. One respondent omitted the age of their department chair at the time of their child's birth or adoption, and I used mean imputation to supply the value for department chair age. Regressions using dummy tests for that respondent indicated that the respondent dummy variable was not statistically significant, so the dummy variable was left out of subsequent regressions.

I tested the data for common assumptions of OLS and found that two of the dependent variables (department chair supportiveness and departmental kid-friendliness) were negatively skewed. I considered transformations for skewed variables (squaring, cubing, and ordered logistic regression (OLR) with varying cut points), but the transformations did not improve the model fit or change substantive findings. While it may seem that many of the variables would be related, none of the variables were so closely aligned as to fail the variance inflation factor (VIF) test for multicollinearity. The assumption of homoskedasticity was met with the possible exception of responses for department chair supportiveness ratings. The residuals of the department chair supportiveness rating did not violate the homoskedasticity assumption using White's test for homoskedasticity. However, other more sensitive tests for heteroskedasticity did find that the homoskedasticity assumption was violated, so it is possible that this is an issue and the standard errors for that analysis may be biased. Departmental and institutional kid-

friendliness rankings are not so closely aligned that they fail the variance inflation factor (VIF) test for multicollinearity. In additional analyses (not shown) I tested for gender interactions in the department chair supportiveness regression (with various predictor variables such as department chair age and parental status) and found that the gender interactions were not significant.

Further limitations include the small sample size and the convenience sampling technique. While there is concern that the respondents may have been motivated to participate by negative experiences (or by extremely positive ones), it is important to keep in mind that the respondents in this sample did not hold such a negative view of the prospects of combining parenthood and professing that they were deterred from either goal. They were not so discouraged by the climate and culture so as to choose an alternate career, and they did not see the challenges as so insurmountable that they would forego having children. In this way the women respondents may have a more positive view of the situation than women who “leaked” out of the pipeline due to concerns about the feasibility of combining an academic career and motherhood or those who are among the 43 percent of childless women academics.

## **Results**

To explore the impact of the department chair on faculty parents’ views, I explored five research questions regarding: department chair supportiveness ratings, perceptions of departmental kid-friendliness, perceptions of institutional kid friendliness, and perceived impact on faculty careers of having or adopting their current child or a potential future child. I will examine each of these in turn.

### *Department Chair Supportiveness*

First, I analyzed the data to find out what factors influenced respondents' rating of their department chair's supportiveness (see Table 4). Would it be impacted by respondent, chair, or institutional characteristics? Model 1 used individual respondent characteristics only; Model 2 used respondent and chair characteristics together; and Model 3 used respondent, chair, and institutional characteristics combined. Three predictors were found to be statistically significant, but the adjusted R-squared for the best model was only 0.05, so very little of the variance in department chair supportiveness is explained in these models. Respondents who were still in the department indicated higher ratings of their department chair's supportiveness, which makes sense since those who had negative experiences in their departments may have been more likely to leave. Chairs who were parents were perceived as more supportive than chairs who were not parents. As respondents' available policy composite score (number of policies respondents knew to be available at their institution) rose, so did the rating of department chair supportiveness. These results are also logical in that chairs who are parents may be, or at least may be perceived to be, more understanding of parental issues than their non-parent peers, and chairs at institutions with more family-friendly policies have more to work with in terms of accommodating the needs of faculty parents. Neither the age nor the gender of the department chair were significant predictors of department chair supportiveness ranking. As noted above, gender interactions on department chair age and parental status were not found to be significant. In sum, a small portion (approximately 5%) of the supportiveness of the department chair was explained by whether the respondent was still in the department, the parental status of the chair, and awareness of the availability of family-friendly policies at respondents' institutions, but this leaves the vast

majority of the variance unexplained. The good news is that it seems that anyone can be a supportive chair.

### *Department kid-friendliness*

I suspected that the department chair supportiveness rating would be a significant predictor of faculty perceptions of departmental kid-friendliness, and this was indeed the case (see Table 5). Model 1 shows the regression of department kid-friendliness on only department chair supportiveness, and the model has an adjusted R-squared of 0.40, which only improves by 0.04 in the full model (Model 4) with individual, chair, and institutional characteristics. The predictors of department kid-friendliness ratings that were statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  or  $p < 0.01$  level were: respondent marital status, institution type hierarchy, available policy composite score, and department chair supportiveness. The adjusted R-squared for Model 4 was 0.44, indicating that the model predicts approximately 44% of the variance in ratings of departmental kid-friendliness. Married respondents reported less supportive departments than did their non-married peers. There are only ten non-married respondents, so it would be useful to see if this finding holds true with a larger sample, but why this is would be an interesting finding to explore through further study. As would be expected from the literature, as institution type hierarchy increased, respondents rated their departments as less kid-friendly (i.e. respondents from research institutions rated their departments least kid-friendly). Furthermore, an increase in the number of family-friendly policies available at a respondents' institution was correlated with increased levels of department kid-friendliness ratings. The predictor with the greatest potential impact, however, was department chair supportiveness rating. For every unit increase in department chair supportiveness rating, the predicted value of departmental kid-

friendliness rating goes up 0.61. This is an important finding in that department chair supportiveness makes a large difference in the way departments are perceived, even when controlling for things that are far outside department chair control, such as the availability of paid or unpaid leave for new parents. While chairs may feel frustrated at an institutional lack of supportive policies, chairs can make a difference in the way faculty parents feel about both the department and, as we will see, the institution.

### *Institution kid-friendliness*

Next I explored whether department chair supportiveness rating would be a significant predictor of faculty perceptions of institutional kid-friendliness. Similar to the department level findings, the analysis indicated that department chair supportiveness was positively correlated with institutional kid-friendliness rating (see table 6). In Model 1, regressing institution kid-friendliness rating on only department chair supportiveness resulted in a statistically significant correlation with an adjusted R-squared of 0.25. No additional predictors were significant in Models 2 or 3, but in Model 4 additional predictors became significant. Statistically significant predictors in Model 4 include respondents' race, department chair supportiveness rating, institution type hierarch, whether the department chair position rotates, and the available policy composite. The adjusted R-squared for Model 4 was 0.32. White respondents were more likely to rate their institution's kid-friendliness lower than their non-white peers, and those from research institutions were more likely to rank their institution's kid-friendliness lower than those from non-research institutions. A rotating department chair position, in which the chair position is filled by a faculty member for a specified time (e.g. three years) before the faculty member returns to their regular faculty position, was negatively associated with institutional kid-

friendliness. Perhaps chairs who have been in their positions longer have more experience with new faculty parents and are better able to inform or guide parents regarding institutional policies. Or, perhaps they have a larger stake in the long-term development and success of new faculty than a more transient chair would have. In terms of policy availability, again, it is not surprising that awareness of more available family-friendly institutional policies is correlated with increased ratings of institution kid-friendliness. Similar to findings at the department level, at the institution level, there is a good deal of potential for department chairs to make a difference in how kid-friendly an institution seems; for every one unit increase in department chair supportiveness, the predicted value of institutional kid-friendliness increases by 0.44. These results highlight the importance and influence of department chair supportiveness on how faculty parents perceive both departmental and institutional kid-friendliness.

#### *Perceived Impact of Child on Career*

I was also interested in exploring how faculty perceived the impact on their career of becoming a parent. Would the supportiveness of the department chair make a difference here? Model 1 in Table 7 shows that the answer is yes, but the impact is less dramatic than in the cases of department and institutional kid-friendliness, and the model with the highest adjusted R-squared, Model 4, still accounts for only about 17% of the variance. The statistically significant predictors of how detrimental to career a child had been were: the gender of the respondent, the gender of the department chair, department chair supportiveness, and department kid-friendliness rating (see Table 7). While the gender of the respondent was not correlated with the supportiveness ranking of department chairs (Table 4), or the “kid-friendliness” ranking of either the department (Table 5) or the institution (Table 6), it was a significant predictor in Models 2

and 3 (Table 7) when considering the perceived impact of parenthood on academic careers. As seen in the t-Tests in Table 2, women's responses for the perceived impact becoming a parent had on their career were different from men's responses; women were more likely than men to report that having had their current child had been detrimental to their careers. In the final model (Model 4), however, when controlling for a variety of different things including the department and institutional kid-friendliness ratings, respondents' gender was no longer statistically significant. Gender remained significant, however, in regards to the department chair. Having a female department chair was correlated with lowered perception of how detrimental having become a parent had been. Not surprisingly, increases in ratings of department chair supportiveness and department kid-friendliness both predicted a decreased perception of how detrimental to respondents' careers becoming a parent had been. Comparing the coefficients for department chair supportiveness across the models, it appears that some of the effect of the department chair supportiveness is being picked up by, or occurs through, the department kid-friendliness rating. Overall, the impact of the department chair supportiveness continued, with increasing department chair supportiveness correlated with decreased perceptions of how detrimental becoming a parent had been.

#### *Perceived Impact of a Possible FUTURE Child on Career*

Finally, I was interested to explore whether department chair supportiveness ratings would be correlated with how detrimental to their career faculty would think having or adopting *another* child would be (Table 8). Model 1 indicates that department chair supportiveness does have an impact, but in models 3 and 4, the effect of department chair supportiveness appears to be coming through the department kid-friendliness rating. The respondents' gender was

significant again (as expected from Table 2), this time through Models 2, 3, and 4, remaining highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) in Model 4. Women reported that having another child would be more detrimental to their careers than did their male counterparts. In this analysis the gender of the department chair is no longer a statistically significant predictor, with the only statistically significant predictors being: the gender of the respondent, department chair supportiveness rating, and department kid-friendliness rating. The adjusted R-squared for Model 4 was 0.16, which is slightly lower than the adjusted R-squared in Model 3 (0.17), which does not include the institutional characteristics. (The *unadjusted* R-squared did improve in the Model 4, but the addition of more predictor variables decreased the adjusted R-squared slightly.) Again, as department chair supportiveness increased, ratings of how detrimental having another child would be decreased. The gender differences here are more pronounced than in the other analyses (as shown on the t-Test in Table 2). The men in the sample had a modal response of 5, which was the neutral response, and a mean of 6.09. Women, on the other hand had a modal response of 7 and a mean of 7.13. Sixty-two percent of women versus 36% of men indicated a ranking of between 7 and 10 (10 = “Extremely Detrimental”). Clearly, the women held a more negative view of the impact on their career of having or adopting another child than did the men. It is important to note that department chair supportiveness and department kid-friendliness ratings were found to have a positive impact on the way respondents viewed the impact of their child (or a hypothetical future child) on their careers.

Overall, the findings of this research indicate that department chair supportiveness is positively correlated with more positive views of departmental kid-friendliness, institutional kid-friendliness, the impact becoming a parent has had on faculty’s careers, as well as the impact on career that a possible future child might have. It is important to note that there are a number of

limitations to this exploratory study, particularly the convenience sample, which was small and extremely racially and ethnically homogeneous. The findings are limited in terms of generalizability, but justify further exploration in more systematic large-scale research. A larger and randomly selected sample that included more racial and ethnic diversity in respondents would improve the study and help detect more nuanced effects, but such a sample was beyond the scope of this project. Additionally, neither the impact of interactions with colleagues, nor mechanisms of transmission of departmental culture and climate were addressed. A qualitative follow up may help to illuminate important aspects of cultural transmission within departments. However, even with these limitations, highlighting the impact department chairs have on the perceived climate and culture faculty parents face is an important contribution to the discussion of issues facing faculty parents and options for institutions to respond to those issues.

### **Discussion**

The results of this analysis demonstrate the importance of department chair supportiveness to the way that faculty parents perceive the kid-friendliness of their department and institutions, as well as the impact faculty feel that children have had or would have on their careers. This makes sense given the important leadership role of the department chair; chairs operate at the intersection of structure and culture. The position of department chair is integral to the functioning of the department, with “Nearly 80% of all administrative decisions in universities [taking] place at the department level” (Wolverton, Gmelch, & Sorenson, 1998, p. 210). In light of this, the department chair’s willingness and ability to provide purposeful leadership are of tremendous importance. One of the most important responsibilities of department chairs is what Gmelch and Miskin (1993) describe as the “Faculty Developer.” In

this role, department chairs participate in the recruitment, hiring, and evaluation of faculty, as well as providing departmental leadership, fostering faculty morale, and assisting with the professional development of faculty. Departments must always compete for resources, whether for students to fill their majors, faculty lines to maintain and grow the department, or candidates to fill those positions. As Tucker (1992) notes, “the working conditions must attract faculty members, or mediocrity and stagnation will result” (p. 75); helping to create and maintain working conditions that will assist in recruiting high quality faculty is one of the many important responsibilities of department chairs. One way in which department chairs do this is through their role as what Deetz (1992) calls the “cultural minister.... Responsible for upholding the highest standards of existing culture and managing culture change toward some future” (pp. 16-17). It is this last part, managing culture change, where department chairs can choose to have a positive impact on the culture of their departments. In their 2005 study, Ward and Wolf-Wendel found that when departmental discourse included work and family issues, women were more easily able to combine the two. The authors discuss “new generation departments” in which “helpful and open department chairs ... lead progressive departments where family and work seemed more easily combined” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005, p. 75). The results of the current study suggest that department chairs, with leadership roles in the base organizational unit of colleges and universities, matter greatly to the perceived climate regarding parenthood in academia. They are uniquely positioned to have a substantial impact on the climate that faculty parents and faculty who may wish to become parents face, and can work toward creating “new generation departments.”

### *Reasons For Department Chairs to Strive for Cultural Change*

Striving to foster a “warm” rather than “chilly” climate for faculty parents, particularly faculty women, should be an important goal for department chairs who wish to attract the most talented applicants, support gender equality, and contribute to producing the best knowledge possible in their fields. As discussed above, women, and particularly women who wish to become mothers, face great challenges in pursuing an academic career. These challenges deter many women from pursuing careers in academia in the first place, contributing to the “leaking” of promising talent from the pipeline. Fostering a departmental culture and climate where the needs of new parents are supported and viewed as legitimate, and not as demonstrating a lack of commitment to career or field, or as a willingness to shift undue burdens to colleagues, could help departments attract and retain promising women faculty who wish to have both a family and an academic career. Since the tension between academic life and family life is one of the three main reasons cited by women for leaving the academy (Armenti, 2004b), and as noted earlier, 60% of women faculty considered leaving their job due to the conflicts between work and family, this is a sizable issue that department chairs should consider. Faculty are an investment for the department and the institution, and fostering a supportive culture for new faculty parents can help departments attract and retain the best faculty.

In addition, facilitating and offering leadership for changes that enable a better balance of work and family, particularly for new mothers, is a step toward greater gender equity in the academy. The gendered nature of college and universities currently favors and benefits men, often at the expense of women. As discussed above, historically speaking, accommodations to faculty’s familial demands were seen as unnecessary in an era when most professors were men with stay-at-home wives (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). That colleges and universities were, at

their inception, structured to fit the lives and needs of faculty (who were also often the administration as well), is nothing to bemoan or lament; it was entirely reasonable (though unegalitarian) at the time, given the exclusively male faculty and the existing social constraints on women in society. The problem is that the structure of the academy no longer fits the lives of the faculty. As the composition of the faculty changed to include women whose life course in terms of reproduction differs immensely from that of men, the organizational structure has not changed to reflect the lives and needs of current faculty, both men and women. The culture and organization of higher education currently privileges men, and working toward a system in which the reproductive roles of both men and women would be equally supported would help to ameliorate some of the gender inequality present in the contemporary world of higher education.

Furthermore, beyond the important issues of recruitment and retention or gender equity is the issue of creating knowledge and understandings of the world that are less partial and distorted than those that are available through systems where women's voices are systematically silenced and devalued. As Harding (1987, 1991) points out, for both social justice reasons and epistemological reasons, women should have an equal say in the way universities – important sites of knowledge production – are organized and run. If women who are mothers are absent from or underrepresented in the centers of knowledge production – particularly research-oriented colleges and universities – they will continue to be excluded as “knowers” or agents of knowledge. As Tucker (1992) notes “Faculty culture is shaped by an overriding commitment to the advancement of knowledge” (p. 106). Facilitating the inclusion of women who are mothers rather than systematically discouraging them from academic careers will contribute to less distorted knowledge production, improving one of the core functions of the higher education system. For these reasons: attracting and keeping the best faculty, promoting gender equity, and

improving the knowledge produced by the higher education system, department chairs should, through their leadership, strive to cultivate departmental climates that are warm and receptive to the normal reproductive roles of both men and women faculty.

### *Potential Obstacles to Cultural Change*

The results of this study indicate that department chair supportiveness is extremely important to how faculty parents experience their departments and institutions, so it is worthwhile to explore why, despite compelling reasons to work toward developing a more family-friendly climate in academe, even well-intentioned department chairs may have reservations about implementing family-friendly policies. In a recent article, “The Year of the Newborns,” a department chair reflects on the challenges of a year in which four (!) faculty women in the department he chaired were pregnant at the same time, expecting in March, May, June, and August (Kramer, 2008). Familiar difficulties of unclear and unknown policies arose, which was frustrating to the chair who clearly wanted to facilitate access for all of the women to policies they were entitled to use. After detailing some of the difficulties he faced in communicating about and implementing existing policies, the chair went on to question the equity and advisability of such policies due to the burden such policies place on departments, institutions, and colleagues. It is this view that family-friendly policies such as maternity and parental leave, modified instructional duties policies, etc., are unfair and present an undue burden to the academy, benefiting only the individuals using the policies at the expense of everyone else, that must be countered.

First, one of the most obvious difficulties departments may face as the result of family-friendly leave or course reduction policies is the difficulty of covering courses that would

otherwise be taught by the new parent. There are both financial difficulties in terms of paying for an additional instructor as well as staffing difficulties in terms of finding a suitable temporary replacement instructor. This is indeed a difficulty, and institutions should do all they can to be more financially supportive. Failing the ability to secure adequate funds for replacement instructors, departments should work within their abilities to be flexible with scheduling, perhaps allowing faculty to “bank” an extra course prior to a leave or course reduction. Institutions and departments should be careful to consider the financial costs related to family-friendly policies as not just impacting the immediate fiscal year, but also as one small part of the long-term investment in a faculty member’s retention, as well as an investment in the recruitment of talented faculty who may value a family-friendly department.

Second, there is the charge that a benefit that pays a full-time salary to someone who is doing less than full-time work seems unfair. But no one seems to be arguing that sick leave, vacation leave, disability leave, or sabbatical leave for eligible faculty at institutions that offer them are inherently unfair. Sabbatical leave clearly is in line with the professional goals of institutions that offer them, but sick leave, and disability leave are much more personal, and are not in service of professional goals. Instead they are accepted, normal personal needs of faculty members as people. Sometimes people get sick; sometimes people need a break; sometimes people get injured. I would add that, a few times in a lifetime, some people have children. This normal part of the life process should be no less valued or legitimate than other occasional disruptions to the conventional, or in the academy, perhaps unconventional, rhythms of work. And far from lounging idly by while their peers continue toiling away, many academic mothers describe their time on maternity leave as a harried time of much stress, little sleep, and a feeling of non-stop work (Bassett, 2005; Evans & Grant, 2008). Time to physically recover from

childbirth and/or to transition a child into his or her new surroundings are legitimate needs that many faculty face during their careers, and helping faculty meet these needs does not constitute “preferential treatment,” so long as policies and support are equally available to all faculty who wish to become parents. Encouraging departmental discourse that includes open discussion about such issues is one way that department chairs, whose impact on the perceptions of faculty parents has been demonstrated in this study, can strive for a “new generation department” and positive cultural change.

In a similar vein, Kramer (2008) is concerned about a “slippery slope” of making accommodations for “nonwork issues” such as parenting and, oddly, home construction projects, as well as the inappropriateness of expecting organizations to be involved in and accommodating of family issues instead of relying on individuals’ own resources to manage these issues. The slippery slope argument that accommodating the reproductive needs of all faculty (not just men who are uninterested in involved parenting) will lead to inappropriate accommodations for other “nonwork” issues such as construction or renovation of housing is not particularly convincing. More interesting is the question about the appropriate role of colleges and universities in supporting their members. Here too, the issue of the gendered organization is in play (Acker, 1990), luring us into a seemingly gender-neutral division between what constitutes a work issue versus a non-work issue. In reality, that division is the result of the highly gendered structure of university organizations which was created around the “ideal” (male) worker who had few reproductive responsibilities because he was either single or had a wife at home shouldering the caretaking burden. It would be an interesting thought experiment to try to envision the structural differences there might be if the founding fathers of universities had also been the ones

to carry, bear, and nurse babies. I suspect that there would be much less conflict between the roles of parent and professor if the early professors were more bodily involved in parenting.

Another argument offered by Kramer is that family-friendly policies themselves are unfair and discriminatory because they benefit only some employees (parents) and not others (non-parents). There are a number of problems with this line of thinking, the largest being that it is based on the false assumption that the current structure of academia is “fair” and non-discriminatory, and that such policies represent aberrations that degrade some sort of existing equality. As discussed above, the structure and organization of the academy is biased in favor of those with few or no caretaking responsibilities, and in a society where the majority of caretaking responsibilities fall to women, this really means that it is biased toward men. Furthermore, because these policies are available to all eligible faculty who choose to use them, they don’t appear to be discriminatory. And, once again, benefits to the institution as a whole and to knowledge in general are being overlooked. Institutions and departments with supportive chairs who understand the benefits of family-friendly policies and climates have more and better tools with which to recruit excellent faculty with a divergence of perspectives and interests that can contribute to the value and prestige of their departments and institutions, and to the quality of knowledge available, thereby benefitting everyone involved.

Certainly with the financial crises faced by so many institutions, department chairs and administrators in general face daunting challenges to creating family-friendly policies for faculty members. For many institutions there is little or no money available to implement or expand programs for new parents such as course releases or paid maternity or parental leaves, but that doesn’t mean that nothing can be done to improve the climate and culture faculty parents face in their departments. Now is an excellent time to focus on working toward low-cost changes in

culture and climate. Clear communication of existing benefits and policies to all faculty, encouragement for faculty to use existing policies, flexibility and creativity in confronting challenges where existing policies do not meet the needs of faculty parents, as well as explicit departmental discussions of the benefits of a kid-friendly culture discussed above are all ways that department chairs could work toward improving the culture and climate of their departments, even in challenging economic times. In addition, when the financial situation for colleges and universities (hopefully) improves, positive changes in climate and culture regarding faculty parenthood could lead to less resistance to better policies down the road. Working toward such changes even in difficult economic times would demonstrate a commitment to improving a status quo that currently dissuades many talented individuals from pursuing academic careers, actively perpetuates and contributes to gender inequality by privileging the life course of men over that of women, and that limits the quality of knowledge created and legitimated by academia.

### **Conclusion**

The challenges faced by women in the academy are plentiful. Women continue to trail their male colleagues in securing tenure-track positions and advancing in academic rank, they pay a greater price in terms of family outcomes than their male counterparts, and they are disadvantaged by negative perceptions of mothers and an organizational structure that is based upon a male ideal worker. In this climate, even among those whose institutions offer policies intended to mitigate the tension between work and parenthood as a new child enters a family, many are fearful of using those policies. This is problematic because the existing culture and climate surrounding parenthood, and particularly motherhood, in academia deters talented

women from entering and remaining in the professoriate, depriving the disciplines of these women's potential intellectual contributions and the clearer view of the world that a variety of perspectives offers. Such a climate also supports the gendered nature of the organization of colleges and universities, which currently privileges men over women, while producing knowledge that may, in fact, be inferior to the knowledge and understanding that could result if a multitude and variety of minds and perspectives were included in the knowledge production enterprise.

The results of this study demonstrate the substantial impact department chairs have on the way departmental culture is perceived by new parents. And since, as Tucker (1992) notes, "changes in colleges and universities do not take place unless the faculty is convinced of the desirability of change" (p. 75), department chairs should actively work to counter the objections to benefits and policies supporting motherhood that are generally based upon the false and often unexamined assumption that the current structure and organization of higher education is equitable, fair, and unbiased, and that overlook the larger scale benefits for the department, the institution, and the disciplinary field that such benefits and policies may provide.

In summary, in order to recruit and retain the best candidates for faculty positions, in order to move toward more equitable organizations that are designed to work with the life cycles of both men and women, and in order to improve the knowledge produced by academia by pursuing questions and answers that may be overlooked if some perspectives are silenced, institutions of higher education, and department chairs in particular should work to reshape the culture and climate surrounding parenting to reduce the conflict between challenging, productive, successful academic careers and the normal life occurrence of childbearing and childrearing, particularly for women.

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## Appendix

**Table 1 - Characteristics of Respondents, Department Chairs, and Institutions**

Individual Respondent Characteristics	Women (n = 150)		Men (n = 53)	
Age	37.82	(4.20)	38.23	(4.77)
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic	2	(1.34%)	0	(0%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	11	(7.33%)	7	(13.21%)
Black/African American	2	(1.33%)	1	(1.89%)
Native Am/Alaska Native	2	(1.33%)	0	(0%)
White or Caucasian	137	(91.33%)	42	(79.25%)
Other race	2	(1.33%)	3	(5.66%)
Marital Status				
Single	8	(5.33%)	0	(0%)
Married/Civil Union	140	(93.33%)	53	(100%)
Separated or Divorced	2	(1.33%)	0	(0%)
Number of children				
Mean	1.59	(0.70)	1.77	(0.70)
Median	1.5		2	
Mode	1		2	
Professional Rank at birth/adoption				
Assistant Professor	119	(79.33%)	46	(86.79%)
Associate Professor	27	(18.00%)	7	(13.21)
Full Professor	4	(2.67%)	0	(0%)
Still In Department	141	(94.00%)	49	(92.45%)
Department Chair Characteristics				
Chair is Female	40	(26.67%)	16	(30.19%)
Age	54.45	(6.61)	53.62	(8.38)
Was a Parent	112	(74.67%)	42	(79.25%)
Institutional Characteristics				
Carnegie Classifications (Institution Type Hierarchy)				
Research/Doctorate	101	(67.33%)	44	(83.02%)
Master's	21	(14.00%)	5	(9.43%)
Baccalaureate/Associate's	28	(18.67%)	4	(7.55%)
Chair Position Rotates	92	(61.33%)	27	(50.94%)
Percent of Department Female	37.3%	(0.20)	28.4%	(0.20)

Note: Mean (s.d.) or n (%)

**Table 2 – Mean Values (and Standard Deviations) for Key Measures**

	Women (n = 150)		Men (n = 53)		T-Test (two-tailed) (201 df) p=	
Department Chair Supportiveness	7.51	(2.39)	7.30	(2.46)	0.53	0.5954
Departmental Kid-Friendliness	6.21	(2.47)	6.21	(2.46)	-0.00	0.9982
Institutional Kid-Friendliness	5.41	(2.37)	5.17	(2.17)	0.66	0.5116
Detriment of Current Child to Career	6.99	(1.50)	6.32	(2.08)	2.50	0.0133*
Detriment of Future Child to Career	7.13	(1.61)	6.09	(1.89)	3.82	0.0002**

Note: Scale of 0-10 where 10 = Extremely Supportive, Extremely Kid-Friendly, or Extremely Detrimental to Career

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 3 - Awareness that Institutional Support was Available**

	<u>Women</u>		<u>Men</u>	
	<u>Available</u>	<u>Used</u>	<u>Available</u>	<u>Used</u>
FMLA	129 (87.16%)	63 (48.83%)	35 (67.31%)	4 (11.43%)
Paid Maternity (not FMLA)	65 (43.62%)	57 (87.69%)	18 (33.96%)	NA
Paid Paternity (not FMLA)	34 (23.29%)	NA	11 (20.75%)	6 (54.55%)
Unpaid Maternity (not FMLA)	50 (34.48%)	10 (20.00%)	18 (35.29%)	NA
Unpaid Paternity (not FMLA)	20 (13.99%)	NA	14 (27.45%)	0 (0%)
Mod. Instructional Duties	75 (50.68%)	59 (78.67%)	19 (35.85%)	10 (52.63%)
Alternative to Teaching Duties	28 (19.18%)	22 (78.57%)	7 (13.46%)	3 (42.86%)
Flexible scheduling	76 (51.01%)	65 (85.53%)	24 (46.15%)	19 (79.17%)
Stop the Clock	119 (79.87%)	55 (46.23%)	33 (63.46%)	10 (30.30%)
Lactation Facilities	41 (27.70%)	22 (53.66%)	5 (9.62%)	NA
\$ for Adoption	6 (4.05%)	1 (16.67%)	2 (3.85%)	1 (50.00%)
\$ or help finding Childcare	24 (16.22%)	17 (70.83%)	5 (9.62%)	1 (20.00%)
Flexible Back-up Childcare	13 (8.78%)	5 (34.46%)	4 (7.69%)	1 (25.00%)

Note: Numbers and percentages for availability based on valid responses. Usage percentage based on respondents for whom the policy was available.

**Table 4: OLS Regression of Department Chair Supportiveness Rating on Respondent, Chair, and Institution Characteristics**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Respondent is Male	-0.039 (0.10)	-0.110 (0.28)	0.152 (0.37)
Respondent Age	0.054 (1.20)	0.047 (1.03)	0.045 (0.98)
Respondent is White	0.921 (1.72)	0.998 (1.88)	0.729 (1.37)
Professional Rank	0.401 (0.93)	0.314 (0.72)	0.257 (0.59)
Respondent is Married	0.142 (0.18)	0.188 (0.23)	0.115 (0.14)
Number of Children	0.120 (0.49)	0.107 (0.43)	0.089 (0.36)
Respondent Still In Dept	1.473* (2.15)	1.465* (2.15)	1.532* (2.23)
Department Chair Age		-0.010 (0.42)	-0.011 (0.44)
Department Chair is Female		0.473 (1.25)	0.262 (0.65)
Department Chair Has Children		0.914* (2.30)	0.888* (2.26)
Institution Type Hierarchy			-0.406 (1.70)
Department Chair Position Rotates			-0.011 (0.03)
Percent of Department that is Female			0.712 (0.79)
Available Policy Composite			0.173* (2.25)
_cons	-99.755 (1.11)	-85.092 (0.94)	-80.232 (0.89)
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.03	0.05
<i>N</i>	203	203	203

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 5: OLS Regression of Department Kid-Friendliness Rating on Department Chair Supportiveness Rating and Respondent, Chair, and Institution Characteristics**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Respondent is Male		0.212 (0.52)	0.218 (0.68)	0.407 (1.27)
Respondent Age		0.061 (1.30)	0.020 (0.54)	0.010 (0.29)
Respondent is White		0.314 (0.57)	-0.275 (0.64)	-0.530 (1.26)
Professional Rank		0.835 (1.89)	0.495 (1.40)	0.377 (1.10)
Respondent is Married		-1.190 (1.45)	-1.225 (1.89)	-1.258* (2.01)
Number of Children		0.212 (0.84)	0.137 (0.69)	0.062 (0.32)
Respondent Left Dept		-1.492 (2.12)*	-0.559 (1.01)	-0.910 (1.66)
Department Chair Age			-0.016 (0.83)	-0.020 (1.03)
Department Chair is Female			-0.344 (1.12)	-0.571 (1.80)
Department Chair Has Children			0.102 (0.31)	0.110 (0.35)
Department Chair Supportiveness Rating	0.650** (11.64)		0.648** (11.16)	0.607** (10.59)
Institution Type Hierarchy				-0.655** (3.46)
Department Chair Position Rotates				-0.486 (1.87)
Percent of Department that is Female				0.291 (0.41)
Available Policy Composite				0.143* (2.33)
_cons	1.359 (3.11)	-112.380 (1.22)	-35.520 (0.49)	-14.531 (0.20)
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.40	0.02	0.40	0.44
<i>N</i>	203	203	203	203

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 6: OLS Regression of Institution Kid-Friendliness Rating on Department Chair Supportiveness Rating and Respondent, Chair, and Institution Characteristics**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Respondent is Male		-0.153 (0.39)	-0.124 (0.37)	0.156 (0.47)
Respondent Age		0.029 (0.65)	0.004 (0.10)	-0.005 (0.14)
Respondent is White		-0.221 (0.42)	-0.686 (1.50)	-1.038* (2.38)
Professional Rank		0.643 (1.53)	0.471 (1.26)	0.331 (0.93)
Respondent is Married		-0.705 (0.90)	-0.796 (1.16)	-0.844 (1.30)
Number of Children		0.082 (0.34)	0.023 (0.11)	-0.073 (0.36)
Respondent is Still in Dept		0.537 (0.80)	-0.202 (0.34)	0.207 (0.37)
Department Chair Age			0.005 (0.25)	0.000 (0.02)
Department Chair is Female			0.073 (0.22)	-0.238 (0.72)
Department Chair Has Children			-0.087 (0.25)	-0.074 (0.23)
Department Chair Supportiveness Rating	0.48** (8.20)		0.498** (8.06)	0.440** (7.43)
Institution Type Hierarchy				-0.803** (4.10)
Department Chair Position Rotates				-0.628* (2.34)
Percent of Department that is Female				0.635 (0.87)
Available Policy Composite				0.224** (3.53)
_cons	1.759 (3.82)	-51.060 (0.58)	-5.813 (0.08)	15.055 (0.20)
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.25	-0.01	0.24	0.32
<i>N</i>	203	203	203	203

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 7: OLS Regression of Current Child Detriment to Career Rating on Department Chair Supportiveness Rating and Respondent, Chair, and Institution Characteristics**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Respondent is Male		-0.627*	-0.601*	-0.511
		(2.23)	(2.31)	(1.90)
Respondent Age		0.017	0.029	0.043
		(0.54)	(0.98)	(1.42)
Respondent is White		0.016	0.185	0.226
		(0.04)	(0.53)	(0.63)
Professional Rank		0.129	0.252	0.306
		(0.42)	(0.87)	(1.06)
Respondent is Married		-0.505	-0.574	-0.558
		(0.89)	(1.08)	(1.06)
Number of Children		0.094	0.136	0.147
		(0.54)	(0.84)	(0.90)
Respondent is Still in Dept		0.024	0.497	0.332
		(0.05)	(1.10)	(0.72)
Department Chair Age			-0.011	-0.014
			(0.71)	(0.87)
Department Chair is Female			-0.610*	-0.687*
			(2.44)	(2.57)
Department Chair Has Children			-0.031	-0.009
			(0.12)	(0.03)
Department Chair Supportiveness Rating	-0.233**		-0.142*	-0.159**
	(4.99)		(2.34)	(2.61)
Department Kid-Friendliness Rating			-0.156**	-0.197**
			(2.65)	(2.63)
Institution Type Hierarchy				0.283
				(1.71)
Department Chair Position Rotates				0.074
				(0.33)
Percent of Department that is Female				1.068
				(1.81)
Available Policy Composite				0.050
				(0.96)
Institution Kid-Friendliness Rating				0.080
				(1.11)
_cons	7.553	-27.275	-48.011	-75.997
	(20.63)	(0.43)	(0.81)	(1.28)
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.00	0.16	0.17
<i>N</i>	203	203	203	203

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 8: OLS Regression of Another Child Detriment to Career Rating on Department Chair Supportiveness Rating and Respondent, Chair, and Institution Characteristics**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Respondent is Male		-1.105** (3.94)	-1.121** (4.21)	-1.161** (4.13)
Respondent Age		-0.059 (1.85)	-0.056 (1.83)	-0.052 (1.64)
Respondent is White		-0.305 (0.81)	-0.153 (0.43)	-0.093 (0.25)
Professional Rank		-0.036 (0.12)	-0.019 (0.06)	0.005 (0.02)
Respondent is Married		-0.220 (0.39)	-0.322 (0.59)	-0.286 (0.52)
Number of Children		0.153 (0.88)	0.203 (1.23)	0.206 (1.22)
Respondent is Still in Dept		-0.257 (0.53)	-0.659 (1.42)	-0.546 (1.13)
Department Chair Age			-0.032 (1.96)	-0.033 (1.98)
Department Chair is Female			-0.468 (1.82)	-0.417 (1.50)
Department Chair Has Children			0.352 (1.30)	0.352 (1.29)
Department Chair Supportiveness Rating	-0.173** (3.47)		-0.071 (1.13)	-0.076 (1.19)
Department Kid-Friendliness Rating			-0.176** (2.92)	-0.174** (2.22)
Institution Type Hierarchy				0.222 (1.29)
Department Chair Position Rotates				-0.025 (0.11)
Percent of Department that is Female				0.119 (0.19)
Available Policy Composite				0.007 (0.13)
Institution Kid-Friendliness Rating				0.020 (0.26)
_cons	8.145** (20.90)	125.640* (1.98)	123.080* (2.03)	113.082 (1.82)
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.07	0.17	0.16
<i>N</i>	203	203	203	203

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$