

U.S. Academic Librarian Parents and Caregivers: An Exploration

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Academic Women & the Academy

- Why women? Women give birth and are still doing much of child-rearing, household duties, and elder care.
- The balancing of work and family is not just a woman's issue, but is often portrayed that way in politics and the media.
- Tenure system: designed when men could be highly devoted to research and teaching, and female spouses were at home
- "Ideal worker" norms: do whatever it takes for job; research, teaching, service, advising, often with no limits
- Men with children more often gain tenure than women with same, and more male professors are parents in general
- Women arrive on tenure-track at same time as optimal child-bearing years [female faculty librarians *may* be younger in general, as Ph.D. not required]
- May have no or one child(ren), and more likely to be single or divorced; women more likely to be in "second tier" part-time or adjunct jobs
- Different tenure requirements at different types of campuses
- Leaves for birth or care often have to be negotiated, which means each individual may get something different
- Even when policies are offered, parents may not utilize; department chairs may not know, nor may not offer options
- How to address?: AAUP (American Association of University Professors) *Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work*, 2001; tenure-clock extensions, reduced teaching with same pay

Academic Libraries & Museums

- Librarianship is heavily female
- Issues of concern to female (teaching) faculty members should be of concern to librarians (regarding work/family obligations)
- Tenured/tenure-track librarians receive best benefits; private more likely than public to offer leaves
- Benefits/leave policies may be less good for librarians than teaching faculty
- May be more challenging for librarians to balance tenure requirements with service and library management duties (eats into personal time more than teaching faculty?)
- Libraries are still *physical* spaces, to some extent, so may be more challenging for librarians to negotiate leaves, flexible scheduling, and/or reduced workloads
- One study of male and female tenure-track and tenured librarians showed that having children can impact women more than men
- Museum staff and visitors are mostly female, but museums offer less support for parents, salaries low, and men in most senior positions

[This panel contained several stock images from Encyclopaedia Britannica's ImageQuest database. They were unable to be used on the web.]

U.S. Government's Role & Federal Policies

- Many Americans want the government to do more for working families
- Policies seemingly beyond possibility in U.S. for financial or political reasons, are well-established and successful in many other countries around the world
- U.S. the only developed nation in the world that does not offer paid leave on a national level for care due to birth or illness
- Paid sick leave: beyond private employers, a few U.S. cities have paid sick-leave laws
- Only universal child care consists of *some* pre-K programs in several states. Some are free, but long-term financing a concern
- Federal policies governing workplace largely developed in 1930s, when a man was the breadwinner, and his wife stayed home
- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), 1938: weekly work limit; set a minimum wage; overtime pay for some; gaps for those unable to control work schedule
- Comprehensive Child Development Act, 1971: nationwide system to provide care for all young children; vetoed by President Nixon; nothing on this scale since
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), 1993: for birth, adoption, sick family member; employer with 50 or more employees; unpaid leave, job held up to 12 weeks; must have been at job for 1 year
- FAMILY (Family and Medical Insurance Leave) Act has been introduced: partial pay up to 12 weeks after a birth or care of sick family member [only CA, NJ, RI have paid leave like this]
- Healthy Families Act: provide paid sick leave on a national level (up to 7 days); in committee

Work/Life

- Benefits and related policies may be codified or ad hoc, and may only apply to some employees
- Having a policy may not be enough: how do employees *talk* about policies, how do department chairs *present* policies, and how are those who utilize them perceived?
- Having a baby should not be the only concern of employer; there are mid-career concerns too, e.g. older children, elder care
- Most common benefits offered by colleges and universities: FMLA, sick leave, modified duty, and tenure stop-clock
- FMLA may not be sufficient, if semester longer than 12 weeks, and many cannot afford to take unpaid leave
- Using paid sick/vacation time for maternity leave okay, but may eat up sick time; pregnancy is not a sickness
- ALA offers \$25/per day for childcare costs at the annual conference, up to a max of \$50 per family, per day
- Librarian parents: ASK for what you want; utilize support available; know legal rights; no perfect time to have kids; seek out faculty-parent-mentor; create support group for other librarian parents; seek out a family-friendly library/institution
- Surveys show that a supportive partner may be more important than employer policies/benefits

STATISTICS

ARLIS/NA, 2004

almost 70% in U.S. work in academic libraries (39% in Canada)
86% are female (U.S.); 79% female (Canada)

Children & Elders

More than 15.3 million children under 6
9 million elders over 65 (12 million projected by 2020) need
long-term care
70% of elder care is by family and friends

Comprehensive Leave and Childcare

Would cost c. 1/2 of what U.S. now spends on
primary and secondary education
Lower-income population spends more on care than higher income
(should not be more than 10% of income)

Eldercare, 2008

42% of all surveyed report having cared for an
elderly individual in past five years

FMLA & Paid Leave

c. 40% of all workers are not covered by FMLA
88% of all workers do not have paid family leave via employer
60% do not have paid medical leave
almost 40% do not have ONE paid sick day available

Mothers

In 40% of U.S. households, women are the main breadwinner

Paternity Leave

c. 1 in 20 fathers take more than 2 weeks off after birth of child;
1 in 100 take more than 4 weeks off

Professional Staff in Libraries, 2009-13

216,000 librarians in U.S., 2010 (all libraries); most in school and acad. libraries
[148,400 "total jobs" for librarians, and 17% in colleges, univs., prof. schools, 2012]
82.8% of all librarians are female
ACRL: 15,078 FTE, professional staff total of 307 libraries reporting
ARL: 11,412 professional staff total in 115 of 125 libraries reporting
ARL only: U.S.: 62.8% women 37.2% men
ARL only: Canada: 70.5% women 29.5% men
ARL: 60% of directors are female
Unions: c. 1/4 of all librarians are members of a union

U.S. Workforce, 2006-13

47% of workforce is female (24% work PT; 60% *want* to work PT, but work FT)

[2013: 58.1% of workforce is female]

71% of women w/children under 18 are working (65% w/children under 5)

79% w/older kids employed at least PT

c. 3 out of 5 married families w/children include 2 working parents

unions: less than 1 in 10 of all workers in the private sector are in unions

Working Parents, 2013

51% of women vs. 16% of men say harder to advance in one's career (w/children)

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Families That Work, p. 20

Moms and Jobs, p. 381

National Partnership for Women & Families website

Sharon Lerner

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Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 and 2014-15

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White House Summit on Working Families website

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