Gendered roles, gendered jobs:
Challenges Facing Parents With/in Academia
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Abstract
The scholarly literature on work-family and family-work balance suggests that parents within academia still face significant challenges in achieving an agreeable balance between both spheres. Although all academic parents deal with work-life and work-family challenges, mothers continue to pay a larger penalty for combining an academic career with parenting. The combination of a job that never really stops and the increasing expectations for parents, especially mothers, to be actively involved in every aspect of their child’s/children’s life/lives arguably contributes to difficulties in effectively negotiating both roles. In order to further explore those factors impinging upon work-family and family-work balance, semi-structured interviews were conducted with male and female faculty (N=21) all of whom were parents and working at a small liberal arts university campus in Canada. The primary focus of our analysis and discussion is on the impact of the persistence of women’s role as primary caregiver and the gendered nature of the academic culture on work-family and family-work balance.

Introduction
Changes in the social, political and cultural landscapes from the nineteenth century onward led to a dramatic evolution in women’s roles. Women, who were once considered primarily as housekeepers and full-time child carers, are now equal participants in both higher education and in the paid workforce. At the same time, a shift towards full gender equality in the academic sphere remains complicated by the roles constructed for and assigned to women; roles reinforced by biology and associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. The pressures confronting universities globally, stemming from neo-liberalism and the ‘new managerialism,’ have further complicated discussions of gender equality in academia.

Today, in Canada, as in many other countries, close to half of all doctoral level graduates are women (CAUT, 2013; Turcotte, 2011; Uppal & LaRochelle-Côté, 2014); yet, women represent less than one third of employed faculty in Canadian and universities elsewhere in the world (e.g., Haas, Koeszegi, & Zedlacher, 2016; Holm, Prosek, & Weisberger, 2015). Similar to
other countries, in Canada, “horizontal gender segregation” (Kreissl, Streidinger, Sauer, & Hofbauer, 2015, p. 222) still exists with women over-represented in some disciplines (e.g., education, health sciences, humanities, visual and performing arts, communication technologies, social and behavioural sciences) and under-represented in others (e.g., architecture, engineering, mathematics, computing and information science, sciences) (The Expert Panel on Women in University Research, 2012). As well, “vertical differences” suggesting gender inequalities are shown by the fact that in universities fewer women occupy top decision making positions, fewer rise to higher level academic ranks, and larger numbers occupy positions of precarious employment, compared to their male counterparts (Winchester & Browning, 2015, p. 274).

A number of reasons have been used to explain both the horizontal and vertical segregation evident in universities today. Certainly, it might be claimed that women’s interests in different areas of study compared to men’s and the still existing ‘chilly climate’ in some disciplinary fields play roles in horizontal segregation. Segregation is also affected by the realities women face in attempting to balance work and family life (Legault & Chasserio, 2003). Interestingly, tenured women academics are more likely to be single and have no children compared to men in the same positions (Goulden, Mason & Frasch, 2011). As such, decisions about starting a family influence women’s choices to abandon goals of working in academic positions, particularly those with a heavy research emphasis (NSERC, 2010 in Adamo, 2013; Haas, Koszegi, & Zedlacher, 2016). Academic workloads, including teaching, research and service, can at times be overwhelming especially for academic mothers who have to allocate time and energy not only across competing work demands, but also to family commitments. Research is the ‘benchmark’ of academic productivity and tends to be emphasized in decisions
surrounding tenure and promotion, placing “enormous pressure on individual faculty members to publish and to secure funding” (Penney et al., 2015, p. 458).

At the same time as women may be feeling pressures to be extremely productive in their academic work, they continue to assume the bulk of the responsibility for unpaid household labour and childcare work (Bianchi, 2011; Erickson, 2005; Guppy & Luongo, 2015; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010; Lee & Waite, 2005; Mattingly & Sayer, 2006; Suitor, Mecom, & Feld, 2001). “Twenty years ago, women in Canada performed 64% of unpaid housework and 75% of unpaid child care work (for an average of 4.2 hours per day). Today they perform 60% of unpaid housework and 68% of unpaid childcare work (for a total of 3.9 hours per day)” (MacDonald & McIntroff, 2015, p. 40). Clearly, caring for households and children is still expected for women in a way that is not true for men. The dominant cultural scripts surrounding ‘intensive mothering’ demand that women expend huge amounts of time, energy, and money raising children (Lynch, 2008). It is little wonder that when motherhood enters into the equation alongside the heavy workload demands of an academic career, many academic women find it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. Academic mothers, more so than academic fathers, are still forced to “live their lives in two separate worlds and many find that they are not doing as well as they would like in either world” (Pillay, 2009, p. 503).

As such, ‘balance’ has become a dominant theme in the academic and popular literatures, explored from within a variety of different perspectives including, for example: work and organization, education, clinical psychology, and feminist studies. There are many different ways in which ‘balance’ has been theorized and defined. The basic idea underlying notions of ‘balance’ is that some sort of harmony can be achieved in managing the important, often overlapping, and sometimes competing areas that define an individual’s life roles and
responsibilities. Alternately, “WFC [Work-family conflict] arises when work responsibilities negatively impact one’s ability to complete family responsibilities. Similarly, FWC [Family-work conflict] occurs when family responsibilities negatively impact one’s ability to fulfill work duties” (Higgins, Duxbury, & Julien, 2014, pp. 69-70). Much of the research on work-family and family-work balance/conflict in relation to academic careers tends to focus on women’s experiences. A gradual cultural shift in the ways in which gender roles are defined suggests that academic fathers are now dealing with some of the same issues that have confronted mothers in the workforce for decades. The current study was designed to explore the challenges faced by all academic parents attempting to combine a career with parenting. Our analysis focuses on the looking at the combined effects of the gendered nature of women’s role as primary caregiver and the academic culture on the work-family and family-work balance of academic parents.

Methods

Using a semi-structured interview schedule, 21 faculty members (12 men; 9 women) from a small liberal arts university campus in central Alberta were interviewed about their work and family life, and about their experiences in combining academic careers with family responsibilities. Faculty with a child(ren) were solicited for interviews (N= 39); 54% agreed to participate in the project. The majority of the interviews (N=15) were conducted by email, while the remainder (N=6) were recorded and then transcribed for analysis. The group interviewed represents faculty from a variety of academic ranks (full, associate, and assistant professors), who were in tenured, tenure-track, and precarious faculty positions. At the time of interview, 76% were married. The average number of children being cared for was 1.9 (range = 1 to 5) with the children ranging in age from 10 months to 18 years. The majority of faculty interviewed
indicated that they work in excess of 40 hours/week. 76% noted that they regularly work during the evenings; 72% regularly work on weekends.

Findings and Discussion

We conducted a content analysis of the transcripts in order to identify key themes contributing to challenges faced by academic parents in attempting to balance work and family life. Although over 50% of the participants indicated that they had achieved a good balance, all described this balance as coming at some ‘cost’ either to themselves, their families, and/or their careers. Of particular interest for this paper were two systemic issues – prescribed gender roles and the gendered academic culture – identified by the men and women in this study and isolated for discussion as critical factors imposing on balance.

Gender and the culture of care

One of the central themes emerging from our interviews was an explicit concern that continues to permeate not only academic institutions but Western societies more generally; namely, the consequences of inequitable parenting demands that continue to burden female much more so than male faculty. Identified by both men and women were issues surrounding proscribed gender roles and the social expectations still differentially informing men’s and women’s role as caregivers. For some male faculty in our study who also aspired to be engaged fathers, gender stereotypes worked to erase their contributions to family life; for others, stereotypes privileged their role as parent in a way that was not true for female faculty. Regardless of whether gender stereotypes worked for or against fathers in helping them achieve balance, the majority of male faculty noted the need for social change specifically in relation to
who should be taking on the role of parenting. These ideas were typified in a number of the statements we heard from fathers.

Social change can take the form of men shouldering more of the load at home. All too often women are unnecessarily limited because of family responsibilities. Women are expected to be caregivers and are often hurt in their careers if they take on this role. (#1 Male)

Our society is still struggling with what exactly being a father means both personally and professionally, and I don’t see that tension going away any time soon. (#8 Male)

For female faculty, gender roles were also highlighted as a systemic problem contributing to some of the difficulties they faced in achieving balance. The women, however, talked about problematic gender role expectations and highlighted the issues in slightly different ways compared to their male colleagues. Largely, while women acknowledged the more fluid nature of gender roles in today’s contemporary Western societies, they felt that gender roles had not shifted far enough to be of much benefit to women academics who are also parents. For some, the shift meant that men could now be acknowledged for their engagement in family life; but for most, the minimal shifts in gender roles meant that women continue to pay a larger ‘penalty’ for parenting including more time spent in childcare (less time devoted to work and personal activities); giving up having children all together; and for some, being forced to deal with internalized notions that mothers should not be pursuing academic careers. As noted by some of these mothers:
I think women still ‘pay’ more for having children. I am seeing changes in younger male faculty that are promising. I think they expect to be highly involved in their families and assume the right to do so. (*#19 Female*)

I think that the gender lines with respect to expectations have become more fluid, so men put in more time with family than they did traditionally. This has actually likely improved the work/family balance for men. However, I think men with children still are more likely in a position to be able to rely on their partner to pick up the slack with family when work deadlines take over a lot of their time. I think women are less able to rely on their partners giving up time to pick up the slack at home when work schedules are hectic, so instead they give up personal time. (*#15 Female*)

In relation to work-family and family-work balance, almost all of the participants talked about the importance and need for supports external to the work environment for successfully balancing career and family demands. For male faculty, ‘support’ often came in the form of a ‘wife’ who had chosen to stay-at-home to care for children at least until they reached school-age. For female faculty, few had partners who had elected to be stay-at-home dads. Although most had partners who ‘helped’ out with childcare, almost without exception the women interviewed considered themselves as the primary caregivers. Not only were ‘wives’ identified as a primary source of balance, but for many faculty having access to extended family members who could be relied on to help with family care was also seen as important factor for achieving some sense of balance. A typical scenario for the male faculty interviewed was described as follows:
My wife stopped working after our first child was born… my wife is still at home. I am not sure I would have been able to keep my position and be happy enough in it if she had been working full-time. For men, this would be an important part of the work/life balance: the roles partners play. (#7 Male)

The scenario for the majority of women interviewed was quite different from that of their male colleagues:

I think [my husband] thinks he played a larger role than he did. He would help me pick up from daycare, but in terms of primary caregiving that was always me. I remain the primary caregiver. He was OK as emergency backup. If my family was closer by, they would be more likely to babysit. It would actually be a huge relief. (#5 Female)

My husband is a willing enough helper for the most part, but I am the primary parent in all things. If I don’t organize it, it likely won’t get done. The ‘it’ refers to everything from dental appointments to vacations. This not only requires my time to see to all of the details of daily life, but takes over mental focus and energy that I would rather use for work-related activities. (#15 Female)

**Gender and the academic culture**

The participants’ observations about the impact of cultural proscriptions surrounding gender and women’s caring responsibilities are in keeping with findings from the extant literature (e.g., Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). In terms of the relationship between gender and
academic institutions, academia can still be described as a working environment configured around a male career trajectory and a place that effectively forces parents to choose between work and family (Careless, 2012). “The organizational culture and structures of the academy are regarded as both perpetuating and privileging masculine practices and norms” (Aiston & Jung, 2015, p. 205). There are a number of ways in which the ‘maleness’ of academic institutions is maintained; including, the relatively poor representation of women in the higher levels of academic administration, the fact that ‘merit’ is often based on what men do well, and university’s research priorities that often tend to favour those disciplines in which men tend to dominate (Winchester & Browning, 2015).

Research productivity, evidenced through, for example, the number of doctoral students, successful competitive grant applications, publications and citations, play a major role in academic career advancement. Although the publication ‘gap’ has declined, men’s research productivity still outstrips that of women’s (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Hart & Metcalfe, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Some researchers have suggested that family related factors, marriage and children in particular, contribute to women’s lower research productivity because mothers have less time to spend on research and writing both of which require time and sustained levels of concentration (Wilson, 2012). Our participants also confirmed that if they have to ‘let go’ of one aspect of their job, it is often research. Others researchers, choosing five of the 19 countries (Japan, Hong Kong, Germany, US, and Finland) participating in the Changing Academic Profession (CAP) survey found that on average “[m]arried academic women are more productive than single academic women” (Aiston & Jung, 2015, p. 210) and “family is not in all cases operating as a form of negative equity in the prestige economy of higher education” (Aiston & Jung, 2015, p. 213). Aiston and Jung’s (2015) findings are counter-intuitive and contrary to the
literature exploring the relationships between family responsibilities and career progression in relation to productivity; other researchers have clearly shown that family responsibilities can, and often do, interfere with a mother’s capacity to fully engage in creative work associated with research and writing. Probert (2005) argues that analysts of gender inequities in academic institutions are “looking in the wrong place” (p. 69), suggesting that the focus of inequities reside, not with institutions, but with gendered norms defining women’s roles outside of the workplace. Probert (2005) quotes Morehead (2003) who also argued that “the household beats the workplace hands down as a site where gender matters and where gender determines what you do” (p. 69).

While this may be the case, women’s gendered roles in the home interact with the expectations and demands made by institutions. Not only is it more difficult for mothers, particularly those caring for young children, to find time and space for research and writing, but they also often find it difficult to travel to attend and participate in conferences to disseminate findings of the research they have done (Nazer, 2008). Seierstad and Healy (2012) further note that “academic work is international; to succeed, reputations need to be made both nationally and internationally” (p. 307) and this often requires travel and time spent away from home. Similarly, Toffoletti and Starr’s (2016) research, based on interviews with 31 scholars at an Australian university, demonstrated “that family and domestic responsibilities feature prominently as sources of work-life conflict for female scholars” (p. 13).

Universities today are not the same as they were even two decades ago. “One of the defining features of universities in nearly all OECD countries in the latter part of the twentieth century has been fundamental reforms particularly in governance and steering. The increasing influence of management, or ‘new managerialism’ refers to the permeation of ideas from the
private sector, including performance management schemes, budgetary decentralization and the restructuring of governance roles and academic units” (Bendl, Danowitz, & Schmidt, 2014, p. 321). This necessitates a shift from ‘ivory tower’ to ‘business,’ with managerial structures becoming “essential quality markers for a well-functioning and output-oriented university, summarized in catchwords such as ‘world class’, ‘modernity’ and ‘efficiency’” (Kreissl, Striedinger, Sauer, & Hofbauer, 2015, p. 230).

The practical implications for the professoriate are more competition, higher workloads, and higher expectations in regards to research productivity. Intertwined with broader gender issues identified by our participants, this ‘new’ academic culture also imposes on faculty’s ability to maintain a sense of balance. Like other researcher (e.g., Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2013), some of the male academics in our study called it a ‘greedy’ institution, defined by an employer who would continue to take whatever academics were willing to give, and whose time demands and workloads were unreasonable. In short, some of our male participants felt that academia had become a system “designed for people not to have balance” (#18 Male) and one in which “career and kids do not mix” (#16 Male). As one male participant described it:

I think the model of the professor from earlier times assumed a very busy male faculty member, and a supportive wife at home. Despite a supposedly more egalitarian society, the academic model still assumes that a professor is always available, ready to assume work throughout the day. (#14 Male)

Although less criticism was levelled at the academic culture by the women participating in this study, similar sentiments were reflected by a few of the women faculty.
[Academic institutions] reward people who stereotypically are single or you have a wife or you have a wife and no kids. (#20 Female)

As part of the overall discontent with the ‘academic culture’ and its negative impact on ‘balance’, many participants detailed concerns about unreasonable academic workloads, highlighting the need for structural institutional change. Male faculty were concerned about high teaching workloads (normally 3+3) and the impact teaching has on finding dedicated time and space for research. Heavier administrative and service workloads, for some, also made it harder to balance teaching and research workloads, never mind family. There was a sense that expectations surrounding research productivity had increased at their institution in recent years, heightening concerns and anxieties about tenure and promotion. In short:

The university is constantly downloading new responsibilities onto faculty members, and increasing expectations to the point where being an academic has become and undesirable profession, one that I have serious reservations recommending to my own students. Younger faculty face the prospect of insurmountable expectations…the current working conditions make having children feel like a risky proposition, in the sense that it would be hard to be both a good parent and a successful academic. Busy-ness has replaced righteousness as a virtue in academe. If you are not always busy, creating a ‘product’ there must be something wrong with you. If you make time to reflect, explore, play, or contribute outside of the university, you are treated as a lesser being. (#14 Male)

Although female faculty were generally less critical about workload expectations and the need for structural change, several did note that the teaching expectations “aren’t realistic with the
[existing] research expectations” (#10 Female) and that there are “simply too many tasks to complete every day” (#15 Female).

While most participants in our study were able to identify external factors contributing to the challenges in maintaining balance (e.g., institutional expectations, workloads, gender inequities), some also looked inwardly to understand why their attempts at balance were either being realized or conversely, being thwarted. For some of the male faculty, work tended to “trump [their] sense of obligation to family” (#7 Male); whereas others asserted that “being an ‘academic’ is just a ‘job’ for me. I am more than just a professor.” (#16 Male). Finally, others recognized that much of the stress

…over what is demanded of us at the university is self-imposed. I no longer blame administrators, or the general culture, because I know professors better and I know they like to feel important and busy and productive, myself included. (#7 Male)

Female faculty were much more likely than male faculty to look inwardly to help explain and resolve conflicts between work and family life. Many of the women faculty in one way or another seemed to accept the inherent difficulties of managing two very large and time consuming ‘jobs’ (i.e., academic work and family) and were unwilling to apologize for or compromise their role as parent. These women noted:

I accepted that I made some choices, having a large family being the most important one. I became less ambitious career wise. I did not, nor do I, feel any regrets. One just has to adapt. I cannot be the best at everything, so I settle for being good. There are not enough hours in a day, nor enough energy to do everything one could do. (#3 Female)
I never wanted to be a workaholic who is just all about their job. (#6 Female)

I never believed [balance problems] were largely systemic; it was my personality that demanded certain degrees of craziness… I am not a really flexible person and wasn’t willing to accept less than my ideal (which of course I accepted daily…but it took me a long time to accept that I could plan to do less and live a happier life). (#19 Female)

I’m kind of flexible and I’m not super-duper ambitious. (#20 Female)

Other researchers exploring balance and conflict note that academic women construct “their inability to successfully manage work-life balance as a personal issue, not a consequence of the socio-cultural order of work and home as distinct and distinctly gendered spheres that shape the reality of how women experience work-life balance” (Toffoletti & Starr, 2015, p. 13).

O’Connor’s (2015) study of senior academic administrators who acknowledged and accepted the ‘long-hours’ culture, found that for the majority of both men and women “work/life imbalance was not seen as a problem because of their life stage: ‘if I was younger, a disadvantage would be that I would not see my family growing up. I would have missed out. But … my children have grown up (Professor Kieran Naughton)’” (p.308). And when references to work-life balance were made O’Connor (2015) found that “it was most likely to be made by men” (p. 309).

For both men and women, a sense of autonomy and control over scheduled work commitments during normal work days was judged as a positive part of the academic culture and an important factor contributing to balance. Notwithstanding the positive assessment, almost all participants described this ‘flexibility’ as coming at a cost. While flexibility permitted some
freedom to attend to family commitments during normal working hours (e.g., following the birth of a child, being home with sick children, attending school functions, pick-up and drop-off schedules, family medical appointments), there was also an understanding that time taken away from work during ‘regular’ work hours would somehow have to be made up for outside of regular working hours. As both men and women noted:

I find I have much greater time flexibility in my job than most of my friends. On the flip side, I recognize that my work is never ‘done’ and that I bring work home with me much more than many of them. While I miss having evenings/weekends/vacations in which I can put work away and solely engage with my family, I find that the ability to be there more often makes that a worthwhile trade. (# 8 Male)

I have enough non-teaching days that I can see to routine family responsibilities and occasional school assemblies or field trips without taking time away from scheduled teaching duties. I don’t feel guilty about taking some time to do these things because I spend a large amount of time working in the evenings and weekends plus I typically take work with me to occupy my time while I am waiting at appointments. (#15 Female)

Although flexibility was perceived as a benefit, it did not compensate for the amount of time that faculty felt was required to achieve a true sense of balance, and in fact flexibility contributed to conflicts in keeping the boundaries between work and family distinct. Men identified the struggle for balance as not having enough time for work and family and needing “discipline” to keep work and family separate and/or “prioritizing work and family” either by putting work first or by putting family first. While a number of women mentioned “time” as factor (paired with sleep-
deprivation) for many, there seemed to be a level of acceptance that “time” would have to be taken away from work in order to manage family life. For example, as some of the female faculty members noted:

There will never be enough hours in a day to do everything we like. I just do not want to hide behind my children for my own failure to publish. (#3 Female)

Now [that I have a child] I don’t have this sense of urgency to keep working in the evening. I think [having a child] has actually improved my work life balance, as I prioritize time at home more. Having a kid does change/shift your priorities. I still want to be successful at work, but also, more importantly, I want to be a wonderful mom. (#6 Female)

I think my family always comes first in my head. I never saw giving up my family; but I was often ready to hand in my resignation. You don’t find balance because the factors [child’s age, commuting, job responsibilities] keep changing… I think in my head, I just keep doing the best I can do. (#22 Female)

Setting clear boundaries between work and family, noted by some as useful strategy to help reduce conflict and maintain balance, is problematic in an academic environment (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). The lines between these two competing sets of responsibilities are often blurred for academics who tend to bring work home or with them to family engagements (e.g., marking papers while waiting at children’s morning hockey practice; reviewing articles while monitoring children’s homework in the evening; checking email while the rest of the family are watching
television together). The reverse also occurs when children need to accompany parents to the workplace (e.g., babysitter suddenly cancels; sick child has to be retrieved from school; a dentist appointment is scheduled during the middle of a work day), and most faculty admitted bringing their children to work and/or class when no other childcare options were available.

While flexibility at work (time and place) has been touted as a pathway to achieving balance, blurred boundaries between work and family can ironically contribute to increased levels of stress. “When boundaries are less clear employees have more difficulty negotiating with family and employers about when and where work and home responsibilities are carried out” (Penney et al., 2015, p. 459). Flexible work arrangements, in terms of both time (e.g., when to work) and place (e.g., where to work and the ability to ‘telework’) may provide workers with some sense of autonomy and control over their work. This in turn may reduce the interference experienced between the domains of work and non-work. However, it is also the case that working at home can raise stress levels by increasing the permeability of the boundary between work and family domains, making it more difficult to juggle work and family schedules (Higgins, Duxbury, & Julien, 2014, p. 69). Higgins and colleagues found that “employees who worked regular, predictable work schedule [also] reported lower levels of [work-family conflict] than those who had variability with respect to work start and stop times and location” (p. 76). They also found that “employees who perform telework report higher levels of [family-work conflict] and [work-family conflict] than their counterparts who use other work arrangements, particularly when work demands were deemed to be higher” (p. 78). The demands of academic positions tend to be high. Other studies have reported, for example, that university faculty report working, on average, more than fifty hours a week (Adamo, 2013, p. 44). And as noted earlier, most participants in this study reported working greater than 40 hours in a normal work week.
For outsiders looking in, “academe would appear to be the most family friendly workplace imaginable” (Townsley & Broadfoot, 2008, p. 135). However, the autonomy and flexibility of the job that might give the appearance of a family-friendly workplace often generates “stress and anxiety about maintaining excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service when the dual demands of work and family are constantly vying for attention” (Townsley & Broadfoot, 2008, p. 135).

Conclusions

For many of our participants being an academic and being a parent necessitated making sacrifices. For both women and men, sacrifices often involved giving up career related opportunities like attending conferences or letting go of sabbatical opportunities, particularly when those opportunities required extensive or international travel; giving up dedicated time to do research, to write, and to publish; giving up time to hone their ‘teaching craft’; and letting go of time that could be otherwise be devoted to personal development activities (e.g., exercise, hobbies, reading). And, for many, one of the less tangible sacrifices seemed to be giving up the notion of that being an academic is an all-encompassing profession or ‘calling’ and instead redefining their careers in academia as simply a job.

Research, because its demands are not immediate, tends to be shunted to the side. I was not about to give up family time to attend to research which could only be done in the summers and off-hours. [The biggest challenge for me] is being a productive researcher at the same time as being an attentive and loving father. (#14 Male)
Over time I have found this schedule (55-58 hours/week) increasingly difficult to keep up with, to the point that I feel I am just repeating a litany of tasks each day. I have had to give up all of my personal time that could be spent on hobbies or fitness and I resent this. 

(#15 Female)

I have shifted my perception of my career to be more about a job that I like to do rather than an occupation that I must complete. (#15 Female)

The findings from this study suggest that the cultural and structural realities of the academic work environment are not only lagging far behind the realities for most academic women with children but also for male faculty who desire to be active and engaged parents alongside their roles as a productive academic. The themes highlighted in this paper do suggest some systemic causes as well as personal factors that mitigate against academics being able to achieve a fully satisfactory work-family and family-work balance. For both men and women, gender-roles and gender expectations not only continue to play a significant role in defining parenting responsibilities, but they also play important roles through informing the academic culture. The academic culture remains in many ways unchanged from a time when families were structured in very different ways and women made up only a minimal portion of its workforce. Within this ‘culture,’ academic workloads are deemed unmanageable by both men and women, particularly in relation to the family roles men and women privilege outside of paid employment. Finally, achieving work-family and family-work balance for most academic parents is largely accomplished through personal accommodations that involve self-blame, support, and personal sacrifice. For many academics, both men and women, balance is often achieved only through reducing their own expectations of what defines a productive and successful academic employee.
References


