

University of Alabama in Huntsville

LOUIS

RCEU Project Proposals

Faculty Scholarship

1-1-2017

Work-Family Balance and Success in Academia: Are We There Yet

Sophia Marinova

University of Alabama in Huntsville

Wafa Hakim Orman

University of Alabama in Huntsville

Dianhan Zheng

University of Alabama in Huntsville

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/rceu-proposals>

Recommended Citation

Marinova, Sophia; Orman, Wafa Hakim; and Zheng, Dianhan, "Work-Family Balance and Success in Academia: Are We There Yet" (2017). *RCEU Project Proposals*. 245.

<https://louis.uah.edu/rceu-proposals/245>

This Proposal is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in RCEU Project Proposals by an authorized administrator of LOUIS.

RCEU Proposal: Work-family balance and success in Academia: Are we there yet?

Faculty Mentors:

Sophia Marinova Department of Management, Marketing, & IS College of Business Administration Rm. 323 301 Sparkman Dr, Huntsville AL 35899 Phone: 256-824-6565 Email: sophia.marinova@uah.edu	Wafa Hakim Orman Department of Economics, Finance, & Accounting College of Business Administration Rm. 313 301 Sparkman Dr, Huntsville AL 35899 Phone: 256-824-5674 Email: wafa.orman@uah.edu	Dianhan Zheng Department of Psychology College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences 301 Sparkman Drive Morton Hall Rm. 327 AL 35899 Phone 256-824-2318 Email: dianhan.zheng@uah.edu
--	--	---

Project Summary

In 2015, in 96.7% of married-couple families with children, at least one parent was employed; in 60.6% of married-couple families, both parents worked (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The issue of work-family conflict and balance has come to the forefront, with attention from both the media and researchers (Slaughter, 2015). Recognizing the significance of the problem, recent presidential hopefuls proposed some paid leave and child-care provisions.

Academic environments provide a natural setting for studying these issues, since the provision of more work-family friendly academic policies should encourage the attraction, promotion and retention of diverse college faculty. In 2013, 43% of all full-time faculty in U.S. degree-granting colleges were women. The gender gap is larger when rank is taken into consideration. For instance, while 50% of assistant professors were female, among full professors only 30% were female (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). One reason for the gender gap in faculty pay and promotion may be women's sacrifices for their families or the perception thereof. Existing research has found that being married benefits male faculty but may have adverse effects on female faculty (e.g., Toutkoushian, 1998; Townsend, 2013).

At the same time, recent literature on work-family balance focuses on a more general "caregiver bias," which both men and women face in the workplace if they are a primary caregiver—so this is not only a "female" issue (Henle, Fisher, & Mattingly, 2015). It is equally important to note that family-work enrichment offers the possibility of positive spillover effects from family life to work life, thus providing the potential for multiple pathways for both improved individual well-being and performance (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) in more balanced environments.

Indeed, academic environments have risen to the challenge of providing both male and female caretakers with some work-family balance through policies such as reduced teaching loads and tenure clock-stopping policies on the birth of a child. However, research on the full impact of such policies remains to be done. For example, could taking a tenure clock hold have unintended negative impacts on the perceptions of effectiveness for female professors? What are the potential benefits and costs of taking advantage of work-family balance policies? Do work-family balance policies have indirect positive impacts even on those who may not take advantage of them? Are there negative (perceived or objective) externalities for others who do not take

advantage of such policies? Do male and female faculty benefit equally? Do minorities in general benefit from these types of policies, and is the caregiver bias affected by minority status?

For example, some rather provocative research suggests that in the span of two decades (1985-2004), the “adoption of gender-neutral tenure clock stopping policies substantially reduced female tenure rates while substantially increasing male tenure rates” in the top-50 economics departments (Antecol, Bedard, & Stearns, 2016). Compounding the problem is the strong stereotypical bias demonstrated by leadership research. Although some women have made it to the top of organizations, their ascendancy into leadership positions is often so complex and so full of intricacies that it has been likened to a “labyrinth” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Reflecting this sentiment, some researchers have wondered whether women in leadership positions in society are “power players or abundant tokens?” (Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2016).

Based on an initial literature review, we will develop questions to survey faculty and doctoral students at the top 200 research universities in the United States. We plan to use Qualtrics to reach a wide base of survey participants through their emails. The survey will ask questions relating to forces within and outside the institution that may impact faculty retention, promotion, and tenure: formal and informal perceptions of work-family balance/conflict, “chilly” climates vs. supportive climates, favorability of workplace family-friendly policies, communal and leadership influences, a supportive spouse (partner), and their impact on retention, publication success, and human capital development towards attaining promotion and tenure.

Student Prerequisites

We prefer basic familiarity with MS Excel, Qualtrics and a completion of at least introductory statistics or research methods courses such as MSC 287 or equivalent. We will train the student in other software required. Most importantly, we look for a dedicated student interested in the topic of research!

Student Duties

The student recruited through the RCEU summer program will be able to experience all phases of research (e.g. literature search, survey development, analysis). They will help us review the literature; collect and compile institutional email information in order to send out surveys. S/he will help us develop the survey (e.g. input into Qualtrics), monitor the survey process, and do some initial data analysis. We will teach the student analytical skills in software (like R or SPSS), which are useful in any analytical discipline or career.

We expect that by working on this project, the student will gain a hands-on understanding of research in general on an important and relevant topic. Moreover, we are an inter-disciplinary team composed of faculty from management (Sophia Marinova), economics (Wafa Hakim Orman), and psychology (Dianhan Zheng), which would provide a great inter-disciplinary learning experience for the student recruited for our research endeavor.

Mentor Supervision & Interaction

We will have regular meetings once or twice a week. The student will be provided with a desk and space in a shared office near our own offices, so they can ask us questions as needed. If they prefer to do some of the work at home that will be acceptable for the most part. The student will be interacting with all three of us on a regular basis.