

THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSES, CULTURAL MESSAGES AND CAMPUS  
POLICIES ON WOMEN FACULTY MEMBERS' CAREER AND FAMILY DECISIONS:  
AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES

A Thesis by

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HUMANITIES

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Communication.

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## DEDICATION

To Dr. Ballard Reisch, when things got tough, you stuck by me and allowed me to believe this process was possible. I could not have done this without you

Stefan, thank you for your constant support. You took my mind off the stress, and went out of your way to make sure you did everything you could to help me attain my goal. I couldn't have wished for a better person to be with

My girl Sapphi, for all the adorableness and snuggles that kept me going, and for ensuring I never truly felt alone

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My grandad, who always told me to keep my eye on the ball, who I miss every day, and who I know was with me when I wrote this



*"It matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be." Dumbledore*

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.....

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## ABSTRACT

Since 1982, women have annually attained more bachelor's degrees than men. Since 1987, women have earned more masters' degrees than men, and since 2006, women have earned more doctoral degrees than men. However, males fill more prestigious positions within academia. Contemplating a career as a woman in academia myself, it was important for me to investigate this further. This exploratory qualitative communication study focuses on the impact of cultural discourses and campus policies on tenure and tenure-track women University faculty member's family decisions. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with women University academics, five from each stage of the academic career trajectory, assistant professor, associate professor and full professor. Discourse theory and grounded theory were used to conduct a thematic analysis identifying cultural discourses in academe impacting organizational culture, factors that facilitate and hinder work-life balance decision-making, and institutional policies around work-life issues. Analysis uncovered two dominant discourses, the traditional and the pro work-life discourse which impact the culture of academic institutions. This study provides insights from women academics who have flourished, strived, and succeeded in their disciplines, but have also had to make difficult decisions that have impacted their journey through academia and their capacity to prioritize and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

*"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."* Albert Einstein

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to understand the impact of emerging discourses within academia and campus policies on tenure and tenure-track women University faculty members' work-life decisions. Marcus concluded (2008) that women face more obstacles as faculty in higher education than as managers and directors in corporate America. As a student seeking a career in academia myself, this made me wonder if this dynamic would be reflected in women faculty members' accounts and experiences. This personal interest was the foundation for the present exploratory study. I interviewed fifteen women University faculty in the social sciences and humanities, five from each career trajectory, tenure-track assistant professors, tenured associate professors, and tenured full professors.

Based in discourse theory and using a grounded theory methodology, interviews were analyzed for emerging discourses within the academy as well as cultural factors that facilitated or hindered participants' work-life decision-making. Two discourses emerged within academia which shaped organizational culture and influenced faculty members' experiences and work-life decision-making, the Traditional Discourse and the Pro Work-Life Discourse. Next, the impact of these discourses were derived from data analysis including the relationship between institutional policies and organizational culture. By exploring the academic discourses and cultural dynamics within academia, the influence of the two discourses and organizational culture on faculty members' perception and utilization of the institutional policies, and ultimately their work-life decisions were revealed. Additionally, four relationships between institutional policies

and organizational/departmental policies were revealed, *Congruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, *Congruity between Formal and Informal Policies and Culture (negative)*, *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, and *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (negative)*.

This research delved into the accounts of women academics who have flourished, strived, and succeeded in their disciplines. Difficult decisions were commonly made by faculty members in this study, which impacted their journey through academia and their capacity to prioritize and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Support was a crucial factor in making these decisions and when faculty members felt supported and facilitated, they felt more comfortable and confident in making good work-life decisions.

This study provides context and understanding to previous research by identifying that two existing discourses in academia influence both organizational culture, and faculty members' utilization and perception of institutional policies. This study highlights that culture has more of an impact on the perception and utilization of the policies in academia than the policies themselves. Results illustrated that characteristics from the traditional discourse, pro work-life discourse, or both exist within departmental culture. The prominent discourses influence culture and vice versa, while the culture can impact the utilization of institutional policies. Both dominant discourses within their institution and departmental culture influenced faculty member's work-life decisions.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Women and work-life balance**

As of 2008, more than 60 percent of mothers in the U.S. are working outside the home for paid wages (US Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2010). Thus, the presence of women in the workforce is not a novel phenomenon. In contemporary U.S. society, it is commonplace for families to be dual-earner households where both parents are financially responsible (Bhandari, 2004, p.94). With both parents working, managing time successfully between work and family is important.

Work-life balance is defined as satisfaction and good functioning both at work and at home with minimum conflict (Calvert, 2009, p. 55). Conflict can arise when there are concerns about insufficient time to take care of family responsibilities because of work obligations (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004) or vice versa (Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmons, 2009). This is a relatively modern term, that tries to successfully blend and balance work and family responsibilities in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The term work-life balance first appeared in the 1980s at a time when the spheres of work and family life were more detached than they had ever been (Barnett, 1999, p.144). At that time, there was a steep increase in married women's participation in the labor force, which has been described as "one of the most significant social and economic trends in modern U.S. history" (Hayghe, 1997, p.41). Due to this societal change, married mothers found themselves performing a balancing act between their obligations as employees and their responsibilities as wives and mothers. Due to this known added stress, married women with young children were less likely to be

employed than single women, or women with older families. These difficulties in work-family balance became known as “women’s issues”, which made female employees with families less employable than males because of these perceived family limitations. Women with families were considered more likely to be exposed to high stress levels, exhausted, and incapable of coping with the demands of their complex lifestyles. These perceptions are still present in today’s society and create complications for women employees based on the idea that their attention to family responsibilities affects their performance at work (Hoobler, et. al., p. 954).

During the industrial revolution, urbanization led to increased costs of living, and women joined the workforce to provide extra financial support to their families (Bhandari, 2004, p. 102). To help support their families, women were expected to take on two working roles to ensure their family functioned efficiently, one in the workplace, the other in the home. Even today, married women continue to do more housework than married men (Sayer, 2005, p.124). Gender theorists associate this with the prevalent effects that gender has on identity, family interactions, societal norms and opportunity structures (Risman, 2004, p.167). Bhandari (2004) concluded that the quality of life for women is affected by their dual roles; a job is an additional task for women to perform as well as their household family responsibilities (p.102). Although the number of women striving to succeed in careers has grown exponentially over the past decade, organizations are still male-dominated (Daugherty, 2012, p. 47).

In addition to having more responsibility for the daily running of the household, there are also more occupational opportunities available for women now than ever before (Haw, 1982, p.132). These opportunities result in an increase of career-oriented

and educated women entering the workforce. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), 62 percent of women in the U.S. participate in the labor force. Women are also moving up in the occupational hierarchy and becoming more successful in their working lives, undertaking jobs with higher levels of responsibility. However, women are more likely to be stuck in middle management. In corporate America, 52 percent of managerial and professional positions were comprised of females, but less than 10 percent were senior executives (Daugherty, 2012, p.48). Only 7 percent of those holding chairman, CEO, COO, and executive vice president positions in the U.S. are women (Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon, 2009, p.939).

Also according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), the median weekly earnings of women in full-time management and professional positions were \$923 compared to \$1,256 for men. From these statistics and results, women face more pressure to bow down to their spouse's work schedule. After all, men earn a higher wage and have more opportunity to advance in the workforce. A study by Baker (2010) combined the data from qualitative interviews with overseas research to explore perceptions of the choices and constraints regarding work and family life between male and female permanent faculty employees from two institutions; a research university and a teaching university. The article found that in most English speaking countries over the past thirty years, the gender bias has changed with more women earning doctorates and entering academia, including 20% in senior professional positions; however, men are more likely to achieve tenure, publish research and earn a higher salary and rank. Even though Baker's research identified an improvement in the gender bias within

academia, her research confirmed that more couples are giving priority to the husband's career, or women are taking time out to have and raise their children (p. 13).

The turn of a new century has created the new family, the new workforce, and the new cooperation, but novel approaches to work-life procedures have not been incorporated in response to these changes. In order to improve work and family life, old assumptions need to be modernized and alternative opportunities need to be given to create a fresh approach to work-life issues (Barnett, 1999, p.143).

### **Culture of care**

Even today, married women continue to do more housework than married men (Sayer, 2005, p.124). Gender theorists associate this with the prevalent effects that gender has on identity, family interactions, societal norms and opportunity structures (Risman, 2004, p.167). According to the Older Women's League (2001), 31 percent of the adult American population provides some sort of informal care for friends or relatives over the age of 50 and 20-40 percent is part of the sandwich generation, caring for both children and aging parents (Sallee, 2008). Bianchi et al., (2007) found that employed women spend more time on housework and care for family members than employed men. Mason and Goulden (2004) found that women with children spend over 100 hours a week on caregiving, housework, and professional responsibilities, while men spend closer to 85 hours a week on the same tasks (Sallee, 2008). Not only do women spend more time on housework, they also spend more time with their children, with men spending 20.3 hours a week and women spending 35.5 hours a week (Sallee, 2008).

Much like child responsibilities, elder care disproportionately falls to women and according to the Older Women's League (2001), approximately 75 percent of all elder care is performed by women. Part of women's increased responsibility in the home comes from societal expectations and institutional policies that penalize men for engaging in family care (Sallee, 2008).

For faculty women, care responsibilities play a more significant role in time allocation than for faculty men (Misra, Lundquist & Templer, 2012). Overall, women faculty tend to be more "on the hook" for care and housework than male faculty, and the presence of children affects the amount of time faculty spend on both housework and, particularly, childcare (In Misra, Lundquist & Templer, 2012).

### **University faculty and work-life balance**

The average non-tenured, tenure-track faculty member works approximately 52.5 hours per week (Hoffer & Grigorian, 2005). The American Association of University Professors notes that tenure was historically intended for the male professor, assuming that family responsibilities were managed by someone else (Sotirin, 2008). Even though faculty members' schedules are flexible, professors are expected to work long hours and have numerous professional foci in addition to personal responsibilities.

Philipsen (2010) reported that the benefits of a flexible academic daily schedule (e.g. working from home) result in blurred boundaries, which create difficulties for faculty members as they try to maintain a clear distinction between family time and work time (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013, p. 294). In a qualitative study by Quinn (2011) assessing graduate and professional students' opinions on work and family balance in academic careers, both graduate and professional students' responses suggest that work and

family are separate roles and that these roles are more likely to be blurred because of the flexible schedule options available to faculty. The balancing of these roles should not rely on the flexible options available to them. However, in order for many academics, especially women, to sustain their workloads and manage family responsibilities, work and family time are more likely to overlap. Utilizing time by working at home seems to be a method academics use to hide themselves and their families from the fact that they are constantly working. This also supports the idea of blurred boundaries. By 'playing on the laptop' in the same room in which their children are playing, faculty parents feel more like they are supporting their family as they are not isolating themselves by being in their office, or in another room on weekends (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013, p. 289). Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra's qualitative research on the power of time, gender, work and organization in academia does not support Golden and Veiga's (2005) results that flexibility decreases stress level, because working during supposed family time can create stress and strain (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013, p. 294). The stress can lead to guilt and overall self-dissatisfaction with decreased time spent with children and in academic pursuits (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). The flexible working schedules also seem to accentuate gender roles and reproduce unequal gender power (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013, p. 293).

Intellectual life has been described as "an integrated way of living over the long haul that applies as aptly to parenting and care-giving as it does to teaching, writing, rigorous researching, and critical thinking" (Sotirin, 2008). Most professors at four year institutions, especially pre tenure-track faculty not only balance the time they devote to

work and family life, but also to research, teaching and service in order to be successful scholars (Breen & Barbuto, 2010).

The system and culture established in universities and in many other professions was a patriarchal model from the top down based on men being the sole breadwinners with wives to take care of the family and domestic responsibilities (Marcus, 2007; Philipsen, 2010). The culture and nature of academia itself rewards faculty for being “ideal workers.” The “ideal worker” is one who, in essence, is “married” to his/her work, leaving little time for raising children (Ward & Bensimon, 2003). Time poverty is common among academics, especially individuals in tenure-track positions. Professors themselves consider the workload heavy and recognize that they are always expected to do more (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013, p. 291).

Not surprisingly, family care commitments and work intensification are the two major sources of work-life conflicts (Cooke & Jing, 2009). With long hours, multiple foci and high expectations placed on faculty, organizational practices should be available for both women and men, especially in relation to care responsibilities. Sallee (2013) warns that when policies exclude second parents, some parental arrangements are ignored and this can reinforce gender stereotypes with men being responsible for breadwinning and women being responsible for care giving. Even if father-friendly policies do exist, institutional practices and norms may discriminate against men who utilize them (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Haas & Hwang, 1995).

A few studies compare mothers and fathers and their perceptions in academe. This research shows that men are more likely to earn higher salaries, receive more discretionary funds and receive more international grants (Roos & Gattaa, 2009) Even

though both genders work 60 hours a week, the men appear to get more support for their long working schedules and they seem to bear less overall responsibility for the day-to-day maintenance of their families (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013, p. 291). Men are also more likely to hold tenure-track positions at research universities and are more likely to get tenure (Mason & Goulden, 2004).

### **Women University faculty and work-life balance**

Due to the current system of academia, many academic women are left with lower paying, less prestigious, non-tenure track positions (30 percent), compared to 18 percent of full-time men (Marcus, 2007). An alternative hypothesis to sexism has been suggested for these decisions; that women are “selecting out” of the prestigious and highest paying positions because of the heavy workload (Mason & Goulden, 2004). This could mean that fewer women are reaching their full potential because they are working at institutions or in positions that require a lighter workload in the hope of making more time for family. The American Association of University Professors concluded that women in academia face more obstacles than women managers and directors in corporate America (Marcus, 2007). According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2013), since 1982, women have annually attained more bachelor’s degrees, since 1987, women have earned more master’s degrees, and since 2006, women have earned more doctoral degrees than men. However, males hold more prestigious positions within academia as their statistics show a that there is a gender difference of 70,142 full professors and 19,745 associate professors (National Center of Education Statistics, 2013). The same statistics show that there are 1,383 more female assistant professors and 13,550 more female lecturers than male.

Academe takes a toll on all faculty, not just mothers (Solomon, 2011). However, with success in the academy being based on long working hours, research, teaching and service, female faculty are finding themselves at a greater disadvantage. In a study by McCoy, Newell & Gardner (2013), which investigated the importance of environmental conditions in women and men faculty's well-being, female faculty members reported lower job satisfaction, higher intent to leave, lower emotional health, and marginally lower physical health than their male counterparts (p.315). Also, women and men differ as to what constitutes the "life" aspect of balance. For women it is usually devoting more time to their family. For men, it is spending more time pursuing personal interests (Yadav, 2014).

Due to gender stereotypes and workplace practices, women academics are more likely to be seen as not taking their career seriously. The employed maternal body is often treated as unwelcome at work (Gatrell, 2011; Gatrell, 2013). Pregnancy can be seen as a lack of seriousness about a female faculty member's career and could be viewed as evidence of a lack of discipline, control and commitment. To some people this communicates stereotypical female priorities toward having a family rather over scholarship (Sotirin, 2008). Female faculty taking time off for care responsibilities can be seen as putting family before their career. Male faculty members are also at risk of being considered as less focused on specific areas of work, especially if they share equal responsibility for childcare, or are the primary family caregiver. These norms prevent family policies from being used to help employees. Isgro and Castañeda (2015) call for an organizational change that emphasizes people's emotional and personal needs as well as their professional obligations and aspirations (Isgro & Castañeda,

2015). They argue that institutional policies should be used without judgment or stipulation to help both women and men faculty members balance their work and family responsibilities.

The majority of research regarding women University faculty members and managing work-life balance investigates faculty member or graduate student mothers and the problems they face, or how they cope with the responsibilities of being a graduate student/professor and being a mother. The majority of these studies focus on young first-time mothers in particular, and some investigate women faculty members at different stages of their careers (Solomon, 2010, p. 3). Research shows that such faculty find it difficult to manage family duties along with the responsibilities of an academic career (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Later in their careers women were more likely to describe their current situations as healthy, balanced and having control over their lives. Older faculty explained how they felt torn for decades between their personal and professional lives (Philipsen, 2010).

Mothering and work demands cause time restraints, excessive work demands, lack of support or understanding from their departments and either absent work-life policies or a risk of stipulation in making use of them (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). As women take on the role of working professionals in addition to their traditional roles as homemakers, they are under great pressure to balance their work and personal lives (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).

For men, parenthood acts as an impression boost. For women, they are more likely to be perceived as less competent workers (Schlehofer, 2012). These impressions can impact female faculty members even if they are not married or do not have children.

Women who are of childbearing age are sometimes penalized professionally even if they are not mothers (Cummins, 2005). Fathers of young children are the most likely to secure tenure-track jobs; mothers of young children are least likely to secure tenure-track jobs (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Wolfinger et al., 2009).

Little research exists about how faculty without children manage work and personal responsibilities (Solomon, 2010, p. 3). Female faculty commonly delay motherhood, or will purposely plan pregnancies during the summer break. Some women felt they had to go back to work before they were ready and they found this difficult (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Twombly, 2007). These issues are particularly significant during the pre-tenure years as these years often fall within women's most fertile child bearing years (Philipsen, 2010, p. 19).

Today, women faculty are more likely than their male counterparts to be single and have no children (26 percent compared to 11 percent) (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006, Marcus, 2007), or feel pressure to delay parenthood until after tenure due to the concerns that starting a family will delay the process, or signify a lack of commitment (Jacobs, 2004 and Mason & Goulden, 2004 as cited in Solomon, 2010, p. 3). Women are being discouraged from careers in academia because the timing and requirements of tenure make it so hard to raise families (Marcus, 2007).

In Solomon's study, "Sacrificing at the altar of tenure: Assistant professors' work/life management" (2010), an equal amount of parent and nonparent assistant professors were interviewed. The faculty members that expressed needing to work constantly were single. This made economic sense as tenure was a method of creating financial security for themselves, especially if they were living on a sole income.

Whether single, or married with families, the majority of the faculty had high standards and worked on the expectation of being “ideal” (Ward & Bensimon, 2003). Single participants on the tenure-track were more likely to prioritize and sacrifice personal time for career success and security. Others downplayed their roles as professors in order to give priority to their families; a balanced number of fathers and mothers did this. Several men without children in this study expressed feeling pressured to delay fatherhood until after tenure. Interestingly, both groups with and without children felt that they were sacrificing something for the career choices they made and they both felt tension (Solomon, 2010, p. 13).

Other studies that compared work satisfaction and workload for faculty with and without children found that single faculty had more dissatisfaction with their workload than married faculty with children, married faculty without children and single faculty with children (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). These findings seem to mirror those of Solomon’s study whereby the dissatisfaction seems to be experienced by faculty without partners and children who are spending significantly more hours on work (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). For faculty, meeting work and family responsibilities exacerbates the challenge of working under pressure and time constraints, especially during pre-tenure years. However, academe seems to be demanding for all faculty across situations (Solomon, 2010, p. 3). Due to known time constraints, parents could be more realistic with their goals and what they can achieve within a given time frame. Also, having a partner or family can create an ulterior focus to relieve the stress and pressure of work. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) suggest that academics who combine work and family while on the tenure track at research universities can have a positive

experience. Having children helped to put the stress of tenure into a healthier perspective (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). The roles of parent and academic can be used as a buffer, allowing temporary respite from the stress inherent in each sphere (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

### **Managing work-life balance in different Institutions**

Most of the research regarding professors and managing work-life balance was specific to research universities and some community colleges; however, Wolf-Wendel & Ward (2006) investigated the differences in boundaries between work and family life within different types of institutions for faculty mothers. This study highlighted that women are underrepresented in research universities due to their reluctance to apply based on the fear that they will not have enough time for their families. This perception could cause women to steer away from choosing research universities and encourage them to work at community colleges instead (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Twombly, 2007).

Each institution prioritizes responsibilities for faculty and different institutions have different expectations for their faculty. Faculty life for mothers on the tenure-track is not uniform across institutional types, in addition, motherhood impacts the types of jobs women choose impacting their experiences as faculty (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Research universities have significant research expectations. At liberal arts colleges, the pull is toward being a great teacher and being available to students. Comprehensive institutions have multiple pulls simultaneously (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). One of the factors that attract women to community college positions is that they can often focus solely on teaching. The job does not necessarily require them to conduct research and publish to be successful (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Twombly, 2007).

Due to these expectations, some women faculty members are not applying to research universities as they believe their demands to be incompatible with achieving work and family balance (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006) Wolf-Wendel & Ward (2008) concluded from their research that community college faculty expressed a higher content with their jobs as they felt it was more conducive to maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

### **Policies and procedures in academia**

Other areas of research within faculty and work-life balance have examined the policies and practices that are currently in place at institutions. Since each institution has different expectations, their organizational practices tend to be adapted to their specific focus. Consequently, McCoy, Newell & Gardner, (2013) advance that policies and practices to support work-life integration should be seen not as a “women's issue”, but as critical for female and male employees in all disciplines, in all stages of professional development (p. 321). For both women and men, the more they perceived institutional support, the more satisfied they were with their job, the less likely they were to leave and the greater their physical and emotional health (McCoy, Newell & Gardner, 2013, p. 317). Research on current policies within academe suggests that more family friendly policies should be available to both women and men, without stipulation. In relation to work-family policies, institutions studied perpetuate outdated gender roles, disadvantaging women in the workplace, and men who want to be involved fathers (Sallee, 2008). Van Deusen and colleagues (2008) reported that working parents of both sexes feel uncomfortable utilizing family-friendly policies, even though they are intended to ease their workload (as cited in Reddick et al., 2012). As a result, Sotirin, (2008) argued that the academy must continue to change. More institutions should

implement progressive policy guidelines and assist faculty with family care and family-friendly policies such as tenure extensions, renewable family or medical leaves, and support programs to assist with major life events and demands (Sotirin, 2008).

Current junior faculty is considering family concerns more heavily than did preceding generations; therefore, there will be an even greater need for work-life policies (Bristol, Abbuhl & Sonnad, 2008). Universities are being challenged to rethink policies and practices in order to ensure a more equitable environment for family life and academic life (Isgro & Castañeda, 2015). The most talented faculty are more likely to be drawn to an institution which supplies effective work-life policies that are creative, flexible and accessible (Bristol, Abbuhl & Sonnad, 2008). Today, the notion of work/life satisfaction seems more important than ever to attract and retain the best faculty (Tower & Dilks, 2015). If campuses want to recruit and retain quality faculty, they must deal with matters of family life. They need to be progressive in creating and implementing policies that support faculty women and men, in their simultaneous pursuit of tenure and parenthood. The lack of such policies has the potential to steer qualified women away from pursuing faculty careers at top tier institutions (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006).

Stigma may surround those who use work-life policies, which may discourage faculty from using these policies in fear that they will seem less committed to work (Bristol, Abbuhl & Sonnad, 2008). Some faculty are concerned that using work-life policies will make them appear as weak or as not serious academics if they take time off to raise a child (Marcus, 2007). One study found that many female academics apparently choose not to use what flexibility is available to them because they fear that such attitudes will put them at a disadvantage (Marcus, 2007).

Faculty members in Reddick, et al.'s (2012) study admitted that they had not examined their options, or assumed that policies were targeted at women exclusively. The majority of respondents were unfamiliar with family-friendly university policies such as modified instructional leave or stopping the tenure clock (Reddick et al., 2012). Forty-five percent of participants indicated that they were unaware of the existence of any institutional work-life policy or program (Sallee, 2008).

### **Rationale**

As of 2008, more than 60 percent of mothers in the U.S. were working outside the home for paid wages (US Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2010). In contemporary U.S. society, it is commonplace for families to be dual-earner households where both parents are financially responsible (Bhandari, 2004, p.94).

The American Association of University Professors concluded that, "women face more obstacles as faculty in higher education than they do as managers and directors in corporate America (Marcus, 2007). Due to the current structure of the academy, many women hold lower paying, less prestigious, non-tenure track jobs compared to their male counterparts (Marcus, 2007). This dynamic is either due to prevailing sexism, to women "selecting out" of the prestigious and highest paying positions due to work-family balance priorities, or a combination of both (Schlehofer, 2012). As women faculty members enter the academy within this context, it is of interest to unpack what cultural factors influence their career decisions. Thus the following research question is advanced:

**RQ1. What discourses in academia emerge from women faculty members' accounts of their work-life decisions?**

Most professors at four year institutions, especially tenure-track faculty not only balance the time they devote to work and family life, but also the widely varying demands of research, teaching and service in order to be successful scholars (Breen & Barbuto, 2010). This research question seeks to discover whether discourses in academia are identified from faculty members' responses and whether these discourses shaped their experiences and decision-making in relation to family and career trajectory. Through women's' accounts of their experiences in academia, any discourses identified could allow for a better understanding of the cultural context behind their decisions (Elton, 2011). This dynamic leads to the following research question:

**RQ2. What factors facilitate or hinder women faculty members' work and family choices, and how do these factors impact the perception and utilization of organizational policies in academe?**

Women, whether mothers or of child-bearing age, are often viewed as less competent workers than men (Schlehofer, 2012). For men, the converse is true; fathers of young children most often receive tenure-track jobs, while mothers of children least often receive tenure-track jobs (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Wolfinger et al., 2009). Philipsen (2010) found that faculty women in early stages of their careers (especially pre-tenure) felt stress between the desire to have children and the goal of earning tenure. Once tenure was achieved, mid-career women reported more balance and a "relatively sane life" (p. 20). While later career women reflected on feeling torn for decades between their personal and professional lives. They also indicated that in their

later (post-tenure) stages, they felt healthier, that they were experiencing a better life balance, and that they were more in control of their lives than they did at earlier stages in their careers. (Philipsen, 2010, p. 21). Faculty members' accounts of factors that facilitated or hindered their work-life decisions will be identified.

The following section of this research question emerges to gain insight into how the organizational policies affected faculty members work and family choices.

In a study by McCoy, Newell & Gardner (2013), which investigated the importance of environmental conditions in women and men faculty's well-being, female faculty members reported lower job satisfaction, higher intent to leave, lower emotional health, and marginally lower physical health than their male counterparts (p. 315).

With respect to balancing family and work obligations, research has found that female faculty commonly delay motherhood, or purposely plan childbirth during the summer break; even so, some women reported having to go back to work before they were ready, which they found difficult (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Twombly, 2007). These issues are particularly significant during the pre-tenure years as these years often fall within women's most fertile child bearing years (Philipsen, 2010, p. 19).

Mothering and work demands cause time constraints, excessive work demands, lack of support or understanding from their departments, and either absent work-life policies or a risk of stigmatization in making use of them (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Thus, the final section of this research question gains insight into women University faculty members' perceptions of or encounters with organizational policies and practices, and whether they felt the policies at their institution facilitated or hindered their work-life decisions.

CHAPTER 3  
METHODOLOGY  
THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

**Discourse theory**

A discourse constructs our understanding of a phenomenon, a system of knowledge. It is the process through which social construction occurs (Elton, 2011, p. 60). We understand health, identity and other phenomena through discourse (Lupton, 1994) and it is through discourse that women come to know what they know about particular phenomena in the world (Lorber, 1997). From this perspective, discourse is much more than spoken or written language; it is a practice (Foucault, 1972). This study explored the impact of cultural discourses within the academy on tenured and tenure-track women University faculty members' decisions. Emphasis was given to their perceptions and accounts of work-life balance and the impact of institutional and departmental work-life policies. Gee (1999) explained that discourse "involves acting-interacting-thinking-valuing-talking-(sometimes writing-reading) in the "appropriate way" with the "appropriate props" at the "appropriate places" (p. 26).

In this study, Discourse theory provided a framework for analyzing the accounts women gave and the extent to which they identify dominant cultural discourses within the academy (Elton, 2011, p. 55) regarding women University faculty members and work-life balance. Discourse theory allows the emergence of two discourses present in academe, which provides an understanding of how written or spoken communication messages or interactions can be influenced by these discourses.

Discourses are located “in wider historical, political, and social processes and practices” (Lupton, 1994, p. 61). This study investigated the emerging discourses in academe from the accounts of women University faculty members. Results highlight the historical, political and social processes within the culture of academe as they influence women’s choices and impact their decisions, perceptions, experiences and behavior.

### **Grounded theory**

This study also took a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory could be used as both a methodology and a method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) Therefore, this theory could inform the philosophical assumptions that drive the research process and/or act as a technique for analyzing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), when collecting data, “the participant not only tells what is going on, but also tells the researcher how to view it correctly” (p. 3). The data determines the outcome; the data analysis and collection removes predetermined ideas by grounding the analysis in the data (Elton, 2011, p. 86).

Grounded theory seeks to generate theory that relates to the empirical world, researchers must be familiar with that world and the phenomenon being studied (Charmaz, 2008). This study collected the accounts of tenured and tenure-track women University faculty members emphasizing their experiences, perceptions, decisions, and behaviors regarding the negotiation of work-life balance in the academy. Based on analysis of their accounts, recurring themes were identified. Using grounded theory as a method, I collected data and entered the analysis process without preconceived ideas about potential findings for each of the two major stages of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data collected from the semi-structured interviews shaped the

results and provided an understanding of the individual experiences of women University faculty members.

The process of analyzing the data using a grounded theory approach involved three types of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. For this study, open coding and axial coding were used to highlight the themes across all interviews, and then specifically between each research question. The themes were self-emergent both across research questions and within each research question.

## METHODS

### **Participant recruitment.**

Paperwork was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Wichita State University in February 2016; this included the IRB application form, the consent form and recruitment materials. IRB approval #3616 was received on 3/13/2016. Minor modifications to questions and procedures were approved on 4/8/2016 (Appendix B).

Participants were tenured and tenure-track women University faculty members from the social sciences and humanities disciplines from public and private universities. The sample was limited to the social sciences and humanities as the researcher had a personal interest in pursuing an academic career in this area of research. Faculty members were recruited both on the WSU campus and via Facebook, Twitter, messaging through a campus daily news blast to faculty called WSU Today, word of mouth, and through the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender (OSCLG) listserve ([OSCLG-l@mtu.edu](mailto:OSCLG-l@mtu.edu)). According to their website [www.osclg.org](http://www.osclg.org), “the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender (OSCLG) seeks to provide a forum for professional discussion, presentation of

research and demonstration of creative projects in the areas of communication, language and gender, and to promote recognition of those doing work in this area". In advance of the interview, potential interviewees who expressed interest in participating in the study were contacted by the interviewer to schedule the date, time and location of the interview. Following the scheduling of their interview, participants were emailed the study description, the interview questions and the informed consent form. Each self-selected participant signed the consent form and returned it to the interviewee prior to the interview. Participants returned the signed consent form via email, or brought it to the interview. Once the signed consent form was returned, the interview took place either via Skype, or face to face. Interviews were scheduled based on participant preferences in terms of location, time, and method of the interview.

Planned recruitment methods were complemented by convenience or snowball sampling to find additional participants (Field, 2006) as each participant was invited to recommend three additional tenured or tenure-track, women University faculty who might be interested in participating. The sampling methodology was continued until five participants from each of the three academic ranks, tenure track assistant professors, tenured associate professors, and tenured full professors had been selected for interview.

### **Participants.**

The sampling used in this study allowed "the researcher to specify the characteristics of a population of interest and then locate individuals who have those characteristics" (Johnson & Cristensen, 2004, p. 231). Participants are key informants

who have specific knowledge about the research topic (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010; Patton, 2002, p. 46).

Participants of this study were fifteen (n=15) tenured and tenure-track women University faculty members from social sciences and humanities disciplines from any public or private 4-year university. In this study, fourteen of the interviewees were professors at institutions in the U.S. One of the interviewees was at an institution in Europe.

At the time of the interviews, participants were employed in public (n=12) and private institutions (n=3) in eight states across the U.S. (Texas (n=2), Missouri (n=2), Maryland (n=1), Indiana (n=1), Nevada (n=1), Michigan (n=1), Alabama (n=1), California (n=1), Kansas (n=4), Europe (n=1). All fifteen interviewees were white. Participants received their doctoral degrees between the ages of 25 and 44, with an average age of 32.1 years. One assistant professor had two children born while she was in graduate school. Two associate professors had children. One had a child born during her time in graduate school and the other while she was on tenure track. The other had a child while on tenure track. Four of the five full professors had children. Three had two children each. One had one child. Three of the children born to full professors were born during graduate school. Two were born when their mothers were on tenure-track. Two were born when their mothers were associate professors. For more information about participant demographics (Table 1). The first participants to respond to the recruitment materials and snowball sampling were interviewed for this study.

TABLE 1

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1 displays demographic information about each interview categorized into by career trajectory, and highlights important information to provide added context to their narratives. For example, the type of university they are affiliated with, if they have children, the age/s of their children, and the stage of their career when they had their children (See Table 1).

Interview #	Race	Age at PhD	Type of University	Number of Children	Age of Children	Stage of career children were born/adopted/fostered
Assistant Professors						
Interview #3	White	32	Public	0	N/A	N/A
Interview #4	White	27	Public	0	N/A	N/A
Interview #6	White	35	Public	2	6, 8	Both in graduate school
Interview #8	White	27	Private	0	N/A	N/A
Interview #10	White	28	Public	0	N/A	N/A
Associate Professors						
Interview #2	White	31	Public	2	9, 12	Son – just after PhD Son – beginning of tenure-track
Interview #9	White	40	Public	0	N/A	N/A
Interview #13	White	30	Public	0	N/A	N/A
Full Professors						
Interview #14	White	36	Private	1	8	Son – tenure-track
Interview #15	White	30	Private	0	N/A	N/A
Interview #1	White	25	Public	2	22, 27	Son – untenured assistant Daughter - associate
Interview #5	White	31	Public	2	16, 25	Daughter – 1 month before master's degree Son – 4th year assistant professor
Interview #7	White	35	Public	2	18, 20	Daughter – 1 <sup>st</sup> year PhD Son – Last year PhD
Interview #11	White	44	Public	0	N/A	Stepdaughter – started PhD program
Interview #12	White	31	Public	1	23	Daughter – after tenure

Women faculty in social sciences and humanities were chosen for this exploratory study because of my personal interest in pursuing an academic career in this area of research. By understanding women faculty members' accounts and experiences would create a greater understanding for what I could expect as an academic. I chose women because as a potential professor myself, due to academe being based on a masculine model, I was curious about how women's experiences and work-life decision-making were impacted by this context.

### **Procedures.**

#### ***Semi-structured interviews.***

Qualitative research was the most appropriate method for this exploratory study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participant accounts of their experiences with making work-life balance decisions and utilizing work-life balance policies in academe. Qualitative research seeks to understand human behavior and phenomena from a participant's perspective, not from the researcher's (Solomon, 2010, p. 4). A qualitative research interview uses a semi-structured guide, which outlines topics or ideas the researcher covers in the course of the interview (Gurney, 2010, p. 67). Conducting interviews allowed for contextual understanding of participant's individual perceptions of discourses within the academy, the resulting institutional culture, organizational policies, and their impact on the work-life decisions of participants.

Because participants express their thoughts in their own words (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010), interviews are an appropriate method of qualitative research when a researcher is interested in participant experiences, perceptions, feelings, and knowledge (Elton, 2011, p. 93). They are a good method of understanding

discourse as they allow the researcher to explore certain aspects of people's experiences that cannot be acquired through observation. Interviews allow researchers to enter the other person's perspective (Patton, 2012, p. 341).

According to Hermanowicz (2002) semi-structured interviews bring the researcher closer to understanding the social world of participants more than any other method. Interviews allow the participants to communicate their experiences, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, the decisions they made, and the messages they received. Interviews require a balanced input from both researcher and participant, which results in a collaborative effort to create meaning (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997).

### ***Thematic analysis.***

The transcribed interviews were thematically analyzed and interpreted using open coding and then axial coding to highlight common themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1976). First, open coding was used to analyze participant responses in order to group them into general themes that were shared by participants. Open coding is a qualitative data analysis approach which involves reducing the information into major themes that describe the phenomenon under investigation. Strauss and Corbin (1990) described it as a procedure where "the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena reflected in the data" (p 62). According to Boyatzis (1998), "thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information (p. 4). During the thematic analysis, the researcher must remain open and flexible (Charmaz, 2008) to distinguish patterns within the data, which create themes. A theme is "a pattern found in the information that at a minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at

a maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Once the themes have been identified, they are given a code. A code may take different forms - it may be a list of themes, a complex model of themes, or something in between (Boyatzis, 1998). Open coding was used in this study to identify the overall themes across research questions.

Axial coding was used to analyze responses within each research question, looking for comparisons between the content of responses to each research question in order to discover whether they provided context or a deeper understanding for one another. Axial coding uses context to make connections among the categories and subcategories that emerged in open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1978).

Often times, researchers will move back and forth between open and axial coding, refining themes and categories. Using axial coding to analyze the data, led to the determination of similarities and differences in terms of work-life balance decisions, the impact of cultural discourses and other factors on decision-making, the perceptions of women University faculty members and work-life balance, and the utilization of work-life policies to support women’s decisions.

### ***Q-sort.***

Q-sort methodology was used both during the open coding and axial coding stages to identify the themes and subthemes within each research question. This is a systematic method of cutting and sorting content into a series of related categories. While the Q-sort method is often used for data analysis in quantitative research to assess the reliability and validity of constructs, it can also be used as an open sorting technique in qualitative research as per Stephens (unpublished, 1980). This approach is

consistent with Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998)'s approaches to grounded theory. In Q-sort methodology, individuals sort data into piles based on commonalities. Sorting can take place through either a fixed sorting or an open sorting approach. In a fixed approach, both the number of categories and number of pieces of data that can be sorted into each category are fixed and predetermined. For example, the data must be sorted into five categories with five pieces of data in each.

Alternatively, an open sorting approach allows the sorter, in this case the researcher, to sort data into the number of categories s/he finds within the data and the number pieces of data sorted into each category are variable (Alsaghier, Ford, Nguyen & Hexel, 2009). As this was an exploratory study, the Q-sort method was an efficient way of analyzing and making sense of a large amount of data, and the open sorting approach was used. This allowed all of the themes within the data to emerge, and allowed the researcher to identify all themes present across and between research questions.

### **Procedures.**

Fifteen in-depth face-to-face (and Skype as necessary) semi-structured interviews were conducted between March 31, 2016 and April 8, 2016. Interview lengths ranged from 35 to 105 minutes with the average 65.3 minutes. An equal number of women University faculty members from each career stage were interviewed: five tenure-track assistant professors, five tenured associate professors, and five full professors in order to answer the two research questions: What discourses in academia emerge from women faculty members' accounts of their work-life decisions? What factors facilitate or hinder women faculty members' work and family choices, and how

do these factors impact the perception and utilization of organizational policies in academe?

Fourteen questions were drawn from the interview protocol for this analysis. Seven questions involved participant accounts of the impact of cultural discourses on decision-making and included: questions about messages interviewees had received growing up and in school, from family, friends, peers, and mentors about what they could be or do, and about being a woman professor. They also included questions about the impact of these messages on their expectations, their decisions about work-life balance, and how their expectations differed from their experiences.

Two questions specifically involved the factors that facilitated or hindered their perceptions of their career advancement and work-life decisions. Five questions addressed whether organizational policies facilitated or hindered their abilities to manage work and family choices. In addition to questions directly asking about facilitating or hindering policies, other questions included: participant perceptions of work-life policies on their campus, whether the campus policies supported their work-life decisions, whether any of the policies should be developed or modified, and whether they have seen changes in work-life policies over time.

Following each interview, informed consent documents were separated from all other study materials, and no names or identifying information was used or retained in any written documentation. Identifying information was not linked to the data from the interviews. All interviews were identified by numbers and no names were used during data transcription, coding, or analysis. Demographics were not linked to participants by name.

### **Data Analysis Procedures.**

Qualitative research involves smaller samples and more in-depth data collection (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) in order to uncover deep understanding of individual experiences and perceptions within context. There were two stages of data analysis: preliminary analysis, and confirmatory analysis. Preliminary analysis was conducted on data files, thorough summary files of interview content prepared by the researcher. The purpose of the preliminary analysis was a structural reading of the data in order to allow themes to emerge. Confirmatory involved detailed analysis of interviewee responses to confirm and elaborate emergent themes. Confirmatory analysis was conducted on interview transcripts which were either translated word-for-word by the researchers (n=4) or a professional transcriptionist (n=11). Both phases were accomplished through Q-sort, open coding in the preliminary analysis, and open and axial coding in the confirmatory analysis. Following Q-sort in both phases, thematic analysis to define and characterize themes was conducted. This process of defining and characterizing themes was an iterative process until final themes emerged and were identified. The structure came from the data rather than being imposed on the data.

#### ***Preliminary Analysis.***

While the audio files were being professionally transcribed, the researcher listened to the interviews and created detailed individual data files for each interview. The content of the data files involved typing the interviewees responses to each question in sentences, but in note form. Interviewees responses were paraphrased in the data files unlike the transcriptions which were written word for word.

In order to get a handle on the content from the interview responses, a preliminary analysis was conducted by first coding the data files into related patterns under each interview question. If multiple sentences had the same message, or showed a pattern of relatability, these sentences were grouped together and color coded in a word document. In order for a pattern of relatability to be considered a commonality, the information had to come from at least two different interviews. If the related messages came from the same interview, it was not considered a commonality, but was grouped together and left at the end of each research question in case it became relevant later in the data analysis process. These commonalities were then given names based on their content, for example, "Supportive messages from family".

These commonalities were then collapsed into each research question. Related commonalities from each interview question were cut and pasted together to form tentative themes and the data in each tentative theme was color coded and given a name, for example, "Supportive messages from friends and family" and "Supportive messages from mentors" were grouped together with other commonalities to form the tentative theme "Felt supported." Initially, 29 tentative themes were identified across the two research questions.

The Q-sort method was then used to further collapse the initial 29 tentative themes into fifteen preliminary themes. This was done by again identifying emerging patterns in the data and giving those patterns a name thereby making it a preliminary theme. The preliminary analysis used open coding to identify the themes across research questions.

### ***Confirmatory Analysis.***

The fifteen preliminary themes were then Q-sorted into their specific research questions. A confirmatory analysis was then conducted by looking within each of the preliminary themes associated with each research question, and Q-sorting into patterns to highlight confirmatory themes. Once the patterns were identified, names were given to the confirmatory themes. The preliminary themes were open to change throughout this process. The preliminary themes provided context, the researcher didn't assume that the preliminary themes and confirmatory themes would be the same. Once the confirmatory themes were identified, the Q-sort method was used once again to look within each theme to identify subthemes present within each confirmatory theme. Axial coding was then used to unpack the relationship among themes within a research question.

Returning to the transcripts, responses to each research question were read, and quotes which directly related to the confirmatory themes and subthemes were highlighted. A word document was then created with each confirmatory theme and its subthemes. Quotations were inserted into the document under each related confirmatory theme or subtheme. Themes were still open to modification and rearranging throughout this process.

Once each document was filled with a list of quotations, each section was read to ensure each quote directly related to the confirmatory theme, or subtheme. At that point, if the content no longer fit, it was either moved to a section where it did directly relate, or deleted if it no longer had a prominence, or relatability to either the confirmatory themes or subthemes.

Narratives of these themes were then created from the content and the results from the respondents' interviews written in relation to each research question. The data collected from a final Axial coding looked for comparisons within the content of each research question was used in the Discussion and Conclusions chapter. The comparisons between each research question was used to discover whether the content provided a deeper understanding for one another.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### **Research Question 1 – What discourses in academia emerge from women faculty members' accounts of their work-life decisions?**

Social constructions emerge through discourse (Elton, 2011). In this study, two emergent discourses in academia were identified that influenced women University faculty members' decisions about work-life balance the *Traditional Discourse* and the *Pro Work-Life Discourse*.

For each participant, the prominent discourse was determined by their responses. When interviews were read, traditional and pro work-life characteristics were recorded. If interviewees described traditional characteristics, and less than two pro work-life characteristics, their institution was articulating a traditional discourse. If interviewees described pro work-life characteristics, and less than two traditional characteristics, their institution was characterized by the pro work-life discourse. If interviewees described both, the prominent one was highlighted, but both were recorded. In order for a discourse to be recognized, more than 2 characteristics had to be displayed in participant responses. The two emergent discourses were the *Traditional Discourse* and the *Pro Work-Life Discourse*. A summary of results for this chapter can be found in Table 2.

## TABLE 2

### POLICIES, CULTURE, CONGRUENCE AND AWARENESS

Table 2 identifies whether the institutions at which participants are employed have informal or formal policies, and a traditional, or pro work-life departmental culture. Also, if the institution is characterized by congruence between culture and policies and whether participants are aware of organizational policies available. Whether the institution was deemed formal or informal was determined by whether the institution had more written work-life policies than unwritten contextual policies, or vice versa. In response to questions #10, #13, and #14 interviewees either commented on policies available on their campus, or admitted that they had no formal policies at their institution. Some faculty members didn't know about specific policies available, but all fifteen participants identified whether their institution had written policies or informal policies. The most prominent institutional type for each interviewee was identified within each participant's responses to these interview questions (#10, #13 and #14). Whether the interviewee's departmental culture was deemed as having a traditional, or pro work-life culture was determined specifically by their responses to interview questions #10, #11 and #12. Congruence between policies and culture were determined by interviewee responses to questions #10-14. Policy awareness was determined by responses to question #12 (See Table 2).

Interview #	Formal Policies	Informal Policies	Traditional Departmental Culture	Pro Work-Life Departmental Culture	Positive Congruent	Negative Congruent	Positive Incongruent	Negative Incongruent	Awareness of WLB policies	
									Aware	Unaware
Assistant Professors										
Interview #3	X		x	XX	X				X	
Interview #4	X		x	X			X		X	
Interview #6	X		x	X		X			X	
Interview #8		X	XX			X				
Interview #10	X			X						X
Associate Professors										
Interview #2	X		x	X					X	
Interview #9	X			X					X	
Interview #13		X		XX						
Interview #14		X		XX						
Interview #15	X			XX					X	
Full Professors										
Interview #1	X		x	X	X				X	
Interview #5	X		XX	x			X			X
Interview #7	X		x	XX	X				X	
Interview #11	X			X	X					X
Interview #12	X		x	x						X

In relation to traditional departmental culture and pro work-life departmental culture, an "XX" was given to a departmental culture that was prominently identified in their responses, an "X" was given to a departmental culture that was moderately identified their responses, and an "x" was given to a departmental culture that was somewhat identified in their responses.

Key

XX Prominently identified

X Moderately identified

x Somewhat identified

### The traditional discourse vs. the pro work-life discourse.

The dominant academic discourses that emerged from this study were found to impact organizational culture and, in turn, faculty members' decision-making. Two subthemes were identified as consequences of the *Traditional Discourse*, *Operationalization of the Traditional Discourse – the Masculine Model in Academe* and *the Implications of the Traditional Discourse for Academic Women*. One subtheme was identified in the *Pro Work-Life Discourse* theme, *Blurred Work-Life Boundaries*.

### ***Traditional discourse.***

The Traditional Discourse promotes a traditional culture and practices within institutions. Emphasis is placed on the “ideal worker”, the perspective that academics should be “married to their work”, and the expectation that faculty will be physically present and working in their offices for a certain number of hours each day (Ward & Bensimon, 2003). A separation of work and family life is assumed, where career is prioritized, based on a masculine model where the man (typically) goes to work and his wife (typically) takes care of home and family responsibilities. While not this extreme, the institutions that participants indicated had characteristics of this discourse retained subtle expectations and ideals from this discourse that negatively impacted work-life balance and faculty decision-making.

### ***Operationalization of the traditional discourse – the masculine model in academe.***

The masculine model, comes from the classic view of the academy in which professors were men in a society where males were the primary breadwinners for the family who typically had a supportive partner, usually a wife who would take care of the home and family. Interviewee #11 noted, “It has been shown in a lot of studies that those boomers that rose through the ranks had “wives”. I’m using “wives” in quotes because it is not just that they were married. It’s that those people took care of everything.” Interviewee #7 articulated the work-life dilemma around the tenure-track process. “We built the system around the male body. So, for example, the full tenure review process normally hits in the strong child rearing years.”

Nine interviewees (Interviewees #1, #2, #4-#8, #11, #13) showed an awareness of the masculine model and how the ideals of academe were based on the traditional discourse. Further, they highlighted experiences they had which displayed traditional discourse characteristics.

Several participants further articulated the impact of the masculine model on the tenure process. Interviewee #4 advanced that the nature of tenure was surrounded with an “unspoken message”. “I think there is this overarching kind of unspoken message, not by them [department], but just by academia in general, that these six years that you are working on tenure are for tenure and tenure alone, and, you would probably, if you can afford to do so, need to kind of focus on that and maybe not as much on the other family things.”

The masculine model also influenced expectations about appropriate performance to achieve tenure for Interviewee #5. When talking to one of her tenure committee members about the rate of publications needed, she realized that based on the culture, it wasn't the place for her. Four publications a year as a qualitative researcher was an intense workload which she characterized as based on a “masculine model of what's needed and masculine as far as going even into the area of the scholarly paradigm because these are quantitative scholars, but also I find it is aligned with a masculine kind of ideology. More is better; bigger is better, all of that. You can do that if you are doing quantitative work. ... It is harder to do more when you are doing qualitative research” (Interviewee #5).

This emphasis on job as sole priority impacted not only faculty member's experiences with the tenure process, but with teaching responsibilities as well.

Interviewee #5 explained. “A chair of our department at one point scheduled me to teach a second class at night when I had only agreed to teach one grad class at night. That requires getting another baby sitter... I went in and I was like, “That’s going to be a problem for me.” And he was like, “Well what am I supposed to do?” I said, “Well get somebody else.” Interviewee #5 noted the irony in rarely using her children as explanation for work-life challenges because she didn’t want to be labelled as the mom. “...The fact that I keep saying I had never used that as an excuse is a great example of the problem. Why haven’t I ever used it as an explanation? See how acculturated I am to that idea that somehow having a baby and saying, I need to take time off or I can’t do that because I have a baby at home is one of those [hard] things?”

Interviewee #4 explained that men as well as women are held to expectations of the traditional discourse. “I know that I have friends, men in particular, who were told when they were in grad school by their advisors, that getting married right after or during grad school was a really bad idea because they needed to focus only on grad school for those three or four years that they were in their PhD program. And those marriages often fall apart, right?”

Four of the interviewees (Interviewees #1, #4, #5, #7) commented on the masculine model and the presence of traditional discourse characteristics at their institutions as creating a negative culture, which made work-life decisions more difficult. In some institutions and some departments, certain aspects of this discourse remain. For example, an intense workload and the expectation that career is the main priority. The presence of this discourse has a negative impact on faculty members’ experiences with work-life decisions. Participants noted that both female and male faculty members

can be expected to base their career on and meet these traditional expectations. However, it is easier for faculty members who have supportive partners who manage family responsibilities to focus more on their career, the masculine model. These faculty members felt they were more likely to meet the expectations of the traditional discourse.

*Implications of the traditional discourse for academic women.*

Participants in this study reported on a number of difficulties they had meeting expectations within the academy. Interviewee #13 noted that in her institution, family friendly policies weren't developed because they weren't needed. With professors being men with a consistent support system at home, they didn't need maternity leave, or to bring their children to campus when they were too young, sick, or didn't have school, "I think it goes back to the structure of the university in general. There is the assumption that professors were men that had wives."

Interviewee #11 described an experience she had that illustrated for her the exclusion of women from the traditional discourse. She discovered that the male new hires were having a weekly lunch with faculty members in higher positions. "I remember there was a point where I was among a group of new hires and I found out by accident that the men in that group were having lunch every week with a higher up in the college. I was like what? That's the most blatant [sexist] thing I can think of, and very passive."

Interviewee #4 commented on difficulties women face keeping career and family separate. "In my graduate degree, women were penalized for it [not keeping work and life issues separate] sometimes by other women. And the unspoken or sometimes spoken cultural expectations of, suck it up, and try and do everything that a man can do and then more, while you are on the tenure clock, and don't let your personal life hinder

your professional life. Those two things should never come together, that expectation I think is really unrealistic.” Interviewee #8 experienced feeling pressure to be present and attend the first day of class, “...My mom just had breast cancer and went through surgery and radiation and I didn’t travel home for her surgery because it was the first day of classes and I felt pressure to attend the class. Again I don’t think anyone would have fired me if I didn’t but I just felt like I couldn’t get away from work. I didn’t even have much time to acquire about family leave and things like that.”

The extent to which work and life, especially family and children are expected to be kept separate from the academy were illustrated by Interviewees #4, #5, and #6. Interviewee #4 recounted, “One of my mentors, she said to me one time, “You know what I love about you is that you never talk about your kids.” This faculty member was praised essentially for keeping her work and life separate. Alternatively, Interviewee #5 received the following message. “I was told recently when I was the executive administrator that I talk too much about my daughter in professional meetings. “Not just talking about children, but having them is informally proscribed as well.” Interviewee #6 recounted a conversation about her mentor, “I heard about her saying to another student, “it’s okay if you have one child, but don’t have more than one, because then it doesn’t look like an accident.”

Sometimes gendered expectations are less explicit. Interviewee #2 reported, “I was told by many faculty around here that basically the chair didn’t think that I was ever going to want to become a full professor because my family was more important than doing work. And, that’s not at all true! It was just ... as he perceived that women should be.” Interviewee #1 had a similar experience with the department chair from her

previous institution, “My previous department chair told me that he thought that I should never have had children because I would have been so much more proficient if I hadn’t. And I was already tap dancing circles around everybody in my department, including him, so I thought that was really weird. He’d never had children... he’d always had a support person, and so he just thought my life would have been easier if I hadn’t had children and I said, “You’re so wrong. You don’t know me at all. My children make it possible for me to do all the things that I do because they give me that energy shift, that time off, that other focus for my life.”

She also believed that people shouldn’t assume that because a faculty member has a family she is not serious about her career. “But I think it disadvantages people when they assume that because you’re a parent, you’re not going to be serious about becoming a full professor. I think that you need a really strong self-knowledge, which is what I had. I always knew what I wanted to do, and I didn’t really care what anybody else thought” (Interviewee #1).

The traditional discourse values the perception that time off, or time away from the office displays a lack of seriousness toward work and career, or worse, the expectation that a faculty member should be able to do more during allowed time off. “In real life you can’t take time off. I mean, there is a whole process involved in getting [tenure]. And what you have to prove... And the fact that the people that are on the committee who you have no control over might think that if you took a year off, a year’s sleep they mean, you have to have a year’s more work, they forget that it’s a year off. That it’s a year doing something else” (Interviewee #5).

Interviewee #5 experienced a situation with a department chair where she had asked for her tenure clock to be stopped, and the department chair assumed that because she wasn't having any problems with her pregnancy, she wouldn't need extra time, "I remember when I was pregnant with [son], so I was 35. I was at [institution] and I was in my fourth year. I went to ask the chair of the department, a woman by the way, if I could get an extra year on my tenure clock, and she said, "But you are having him at home" and I said, "Yes" and she said, "Well then you are not having any problems." This is an example of women being held to the expectations of the masculine model by other women. "It's not enough to be making a life, you actually had to be having some kind of problem for it to count. I just think that a lot of times this idea that somehow we are supposed to be following this masculine model about how much time we can commit, and we don't have other commitments to children, to other relationships. I think that's one of the big problems" (Interviewee #5).

Interviewee #2 felt that the demands of her department culture made it difficult for her to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Department cultures "very much dictate how much time you could spend away from the physical building and how much you can't. There are definitely departments on campus ... where the culture is, you have to be physically present and that's terrible for work-family-life balance. We all have the same expectations of what we produce. It's where you do it."

Interviewees' experiences reflected characteristics of the traditional discourse, both through the integration of the masculine model in academe and through their difficulties as academic women in meeting the demands of the traditional discourse. This disconnect between the stereotyped expectations of a masculine academic

structure and faculty women's work and life demands created difficulties for academic women in meeting expectations within the academy. Their examples demonstrated the strict segregation between work and life in regards to characteristics of the traditional discourse such as, work expectations, that time off or away displays a lack of seriousness, criticism for having, or even just talking about their children, and the spoken or unspoken messages that surround academe based on its traditional structure. The masculine model was identified by respondents as the initial ideology in which the traditional discourse in academia was grounded.

***Pro work-life discourse.***

The Pro Work-Life Discourse recognizes the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. It promotes a progressive culture that considers work and life to be interconnected, and seeks to understand and adapt to faculty members' dual foci on the academy and the family. Institutions reported as having this culture promoted work-life decisions and work-life balance and were more understanding and adaptive to faculty needs. These cultures recognized the importance of competing demands on faculty members and considered written policies as opportunities to support healthy work and family lifestyles.

The Pro Work-Life Discourse displays fluidity between work and life, flexibility, and the capacity to adapt to emerging situational needs. In contrast to the Traditional Discourse, it seeks to integrate and recognize both work and family. There currently is not an established pro work-life discourse both because academia has not yet moved enough away from the rigid traditional discourse and because of the fluidity and adaptability required. How institutions might manage work-life balance is emerging.

Except for Interviewee #15, all interviewees indicated that there was significant ground to be covered to actually achieve a culture truly supportive of work-life balance.

Interviewee #5 stated that work-life balance is predominantly culture oriented, especially when there is a progressive pro work-life culture that allows faculty members to have a healthy work and family lifestyle. A number of participants reported on flexible adaptation within their institutions or departments to meet individual faculty needs. For example, Interviewee #13 noted, "I have a colleague right now who has cancer and so our chair was able to move all of her teaching to online because she's still the primary bread winner for her family."

Pro work-life discourse may be reflected in flexible expectations about physical presence in the office. Interviewee #2 reported, "In our department we're pretty flexible in where people choose to do their research and choose to do their work and I think you get more out of people that way... We all have the same expectations of what we produce. It's where we do it."

Interviewee #7 concluded, "So recognizing that people do need to go home and be with their families, or they don't want to teach at night because they have to be home. Those types of things have changed a great deal. So it's kind of like a cultural thing."

Interviewee #6 had positive experiences at her institution as she was able to teach classes in untraditional formats at unusual times. She explained that her institution and department are giving her the opportunity to teach these classes and improve her work-life balance, "Yeah. So I think my chair completely supports me in doing those kinds of things. The university supports those things, not for the work-life..."

But in the end, I think it leads to work-life for people like me.” Interviewee #13 had a similar experience with her mentor and chair working with her when she couldn’t keep up. Her chair took over one of her large committee responsibilities to ensure she didn’t become overwhelmed and had a healthier work-life balance. Interviewee #7 was allocated money by the provost to pay for a “post doc” to work with her on her research. “He would talk to me and he said you need to become a full professor. He was so committed to having individuals move up the faculty into administration that he provided those resources to me.”

Interviewee #15 explained her experiences of European pro work-life culture, “In [country], we never had meetings past 5:30. We just didn’t, so that everybody could go get their kid.” She also described the flexibility present in her department from her supervisor, “My current head is in [city]... She flies in on a Monday, flies out on a Thursday. So when I went to go talk to her about the fact that my husband lives in [city], she looks and says, “I don’t care where you live. When we have a meeting, I need you to be here, and I need you to be here to teach. Where you spend the rest of your time is up to you.”

Interviewee #8 argued for the need to develop pro work-life policies. “Absolutely they [pro work-life policies] need to be developed ... I think this is something that people need to talk about. One of the reasons I would actually like to do this before I get tenure is I would love to bring this up to the administration as someone who doesn’t have children.”

Participants noted other examples of pro work-life culture including not having meetings after 3PM so people can pick their children up after school, encouraging

alternative class schedules, allowing faculty members to bank sick leave, or allowing faculty to frontload classes and teach more classes for one semester so that they can have more time to conduct research in another semester. One negative side effect of a more pro work-life culture reported by participants was blurred work-life boundaries.

*Blurred work–life boundaries.*

Blurred work-life boundaries were the most common negative effect of flexible schedules especially for faculty members on tenure-track. Interviewee #5 explained her experience. “You need to think about what it is that you want to do because once you get on that trajectory of doing research then you find yourself, like for me, constantly giving my kids the finger... the one more minute. One more minute, let me finish this thought. Or bringing work home. The choices that you make in terms of how to spend your time are determined by the deadline and tenure. It’s only now that I’m 51 and my son is 16 and I’m really close to being an empty nester that I can look back and go, I don’t know if that’s really what I wanted to do, but nobody ever talked to me about making that choice.”

Interviewee #6 experienced her children telling her that she has blurred work-life boundaries, and is on her computer all the time. She admits that she brings her computer home and types papers while her children play. “My kids tell me I work too much, which bothers me. It’s so difficult because I can remember my mom sitting in front of the TV watching soap operas. My kids are going to have the memory of me sitting in front of my computer typing papers. I try to tell them, they have no idea how good they have it. Of course they have no frame of reference. They are saying “You want me to limit my screen time, and yet you’re on your computer all the time.” I am.

When they're home doing imaginative play, when they're building forts, I'm usually working."

Interviewee #8 also admitted to blurred work-life boundaries. She talked about how she takes on a lot of the responsibility within the department, and is supported for these decisions. She finds that she is doing more than she is required, maybe because she doesn't have children yet, and blames herself for feeling bad about taking on less responsibility, "I struggle all the time with, I think people are calling it overwork. Working more than you are actually required to for a given job and most of the time it's men who overwork because women are handling the child care or other duties. I feel like I overwork a lot of times and I think my colleagues who overwork support them [her decisions]." Interviewee #5 explained that supervisors have told her she works too much and that a family member had made a joke about her work ethic. She admitted that she has done it to herself and would always feel as though she should have done more, "A balance is centered. But I've had ... an Aunt sent me something ... like a joke saying she does it all in high heels, you know? ...Like you're not paying attention to the kids I guess...I've had supervisors say like I work too much."

Interviewee #9 recognized that having blurred work-life boundaries is common in academia and believes that can be entwined with identity, "They [other faculty] post things on Facebook about working 60-70-80 hours a week, which I couldn't fathom for the life of me... I like teaching, but I know a lot of people that being a professor and teaching seems to be so tied up with their identity, and it's so much a part of their life."

Blurred work-life boundaries were common in interviewees' responses due to the workload and flexible schedule of academe. In a number of cases, faculty members

chose where and when they wanted to work, and created their own goals and expectations of what they wanted to accomplish. This resulted in them working more and blurring the boundaries between work and family. Four interviewees provided explicit personal examples of their blurred work-life boundaries.

The Pro Work-Life Discourse seeks to acknowledge the multiple competing demands of academic lifestyles, and facilitate faculty members in competently managing both work and life with limited stress and conflict.

The traditional discourse exemplifies the customary model of a professor. From the interviewees' responses, these characteristics still exist within departments. The pro work-life discourse is becoming more prominent within academe, with its characteristics slowly replacing the traditional rigid structure. Even though the pro work-life discourse isn't fully articulated, it displays a more realistic expectation of what the modern academic looks like, and how they choose to manage work-life balance.

**Research Question 2 – What factors facilitate or hinder women faculty members' work and family choices, and how do these factors impact the perception and utilization of organizational policies in academe?**

The second research question seeks to provide a better understanding of the organizational policies and practices that facilitate or hinder participants' work-life decisions. This section begins with a contextual overview that identified institutions based on whether they have informal or formal institutional policies regarding work-life issues. This discussion is followed by elaboration of two themes which address:

*Congruity or Incongruity between Institutional Culture and Policies and Policy Awareness.*

## **Contextual overview – Institutional policies and culture**

Two institutional types emerged from analysis of interview data. The first was institutions with informal, unwritten policies; the second was institutions with formal written policies. Three participants (Interviewees #8, #13, #14) were employees of institutions where informal contextual agreements were in place, meaning that no formal policies existed other than FMLA. In these institutions, interviewees found it necessary to negotiate with administrators the majority of their work-life issues. Twelve interviewees (Interviewees #1-7, #9-12, #15) were employed at institutions with formal written policies governing work-life practices. The dynamic of each institutional type are discussed below.

### **Informal policies and culture.**

For all three faculty members at institutions with informal policies (Interviewees #8, #13, #14), practices were determined at the department level, usually by negotiating an individual faculty member's situation with the department chair or dean. Within these institutions, the existing culture greatly impacted faculty members' abilities to manage work-life situations and maintain a healthy work-life routine.

Interviewee #13 said that her department was accepting and welcoming, but there were no policies to support this cultural dynamic, "So at our campus,... In our department, the policy doesn't exist but we'll figure it out." She elaborated on a current example: "One of my colleagues just had a baby three weeks ago... She teaches a 200 level version intro to the field that takes two credit hours and a 400 level capstone, and so usually one is like 8 weeks and the other one is four weeks. So she was able to

[arrange a workable schedule] because she met with our chair right away and said “Like okay, I’m having a kid”. All of her classes were front loaded this semester.”

She also shared a personal example where she received support from her department chair, displaying pro work-life characteristics. “I was telling my chair I can't keep up. So he actually took over one of my large committee duties. One of the ones that met like every other week for like 3 hours. He was like “Nope I'm doing that. You can't”. So I was really lucky that even though people were like “Do this.”, my chair and mentor was like, “No you can't do all of these things and you have to step back.” ...They were very good at trying to help me find things that they could support me with, while at the same time they were like “Oh this would be really great if you could do this.” She felt supported due to her department offering her opportunities, but also understanding when she was overwhelmed with her workload (Interviewee #13).

With informal policies the level of support was heavily dependent upon the departmental culture. Interviewee #14 explained that even though they do not have institutional policies in place, the dean works with them individually to manage their work-life, “Well, I would say the woman who was dean here was supportive, given that we don't have anything in place institutionally to support women who are having babies and raising small children. We just don't have anything like that. And so, I think what we do is a sort of shot gun approach to it all.”

Further, Interviewee #14 experienced a positive culture both at her current and former schools, not only from her superior, but from colleagues. She characterized the environments as collegial and friendly. “They were both small schools, really tight knit where I developed friendships with people that I work with. And that's always been a

good part of my life here and my previous college. I know colleges where the people are just toxic, and nobody gets along and they all hate each other. We actually have friendship here” (Interviewee #14).

Interviewee #13 also reported examples of friendship and support within her department. “... We do meal trains when people are sick. We do meal trains when people have babies. We have baby showers for each other”. She also commented on the positives of having an understanding and supportive department chair and a supportive, reliable departmental culture, “I think in terms of my department I’ve been very lucky because our chair is very flexible. He’s understanding. We’re really good at covering each other’s classes for conferences or family emergencies, whatever is going on. Many of us have had the family emergencies and the like. I have a colleague right now who has cancer and our chair was able to move all of her teaching to online” (Interviewee #13).

Interviewee #8 and her fellow colleagues, in contrast, had negative experiences with the culture present in her department, “It looks like a behind the door, I guess we will help you out [dynamic]. From a person to person rather than having an organization facilitating miserable lives for their employees. It’s discouraging and I think it absolutely hinders people. There was another female colleague in my department who ended up quitting, resigning after her second child was born. It was just not workable in her opinion. That’s the second time in my department that’s happened in the last few years. The person who I replaced also resigned because she was a female and she had had a second child late in life and felt overwhelmed and chose to make a decision. She chose her family”.

Along with these examples, Interviewee #8 articulated her frustration with negotiating maternity leave with her department and the pressure it builds having little control over what is decided. "...There is a burden of working it out with the department and/or academic vice president and there is at least sort of behind the scenes negotiations that happen. For example, a woman had a baby in my department last year and of course, everyone tries to time it so that they will have a baby in May and have the summer which I would do. It's frankly not working and I'm running out of time to wait for the right time to do it."

Interviewee #8 concluded, "From the people that I talk to... there are kind of two modes of thought. Some people think it's ridiculous that we don't have a better policy or a policy at all. I think that other people think it's no big deal when you figure it out."

Interviewee #13 had heard experiences of friends in other departments where the culture was negative and their department chairs unsupportive. She shared experiences of friends from other departments who were made to use all of their sick leave, including their non-teaching days by their department chairs to manage family emergencies. She also expressed how she felt that women shouldn't have to make a decision between working and being a mother. In these cases, a lack of formal policies created uncertainty about navigating the work-life practices that were determined by the department chair.

Interestingly, not all faculty members experiencing informal contextual policies felt that introducing formal institutional policies would improve their situation. "No there is no policy... just because we are so small, we can afford to, sort of work from the level of friendship and that is why we hate getting HR people [involved]. Unless they are

going to give us generous policies. And usually they don't" (Interviewee #14). She saw the current culture as positive and supportive and she didn't like the possibility of institutional policies giving them less than what their department chair was willing to accommodate.

In institutions where informal policies exist, all terms and conditions of current practices are determined by negotiating with the department chair or dean. Without written policies department chairs can work with each faculty member and create a strategy to best suit their individual situation or decide to be obstructionist, hindering quality work-life decisions.

Within institutions with formal policies, culture shapes the connotations of the policies, and thus, faculty members' decisions to utilize or not utilize them.

### **Formal Policies and Culture.**

Formal policies are written institutionalized policies that govern work-life practices. These policies can be used by faculty members when they find themselves in a covered situation, for example, maternity leave, or stopping the tenure clock.

Feedback from faculty at institutions with formal institutional policies (Interviewees #1-7, #9-12, #15) revealed a dynamic interaction between policy and culture. The majority of the interviewees felt, however, that department culture was most critical to their experiences, more than either organizational culture or institutional policies. Department culture set the tone for whether faculty felt supported or unsupported in their work-life decisions, which impacted their perceptions regarding the policies and practices in place, and ultimately their work-life decision-making.

Interviewee #5 commented on how difficult it would be to equate day to day work-life practices into specific policies, "...I don't think it's so much policy, I think it's culture, like active support of work-life balance as opposed to policy support. I don't even know how you would make that a policy."

Based on the findings of her own academic research on work-life balance, as well as her experiences as a faculty member, Interviewee #6 explained, "It's crazy that the policies are so vague at most universities, and all determined by the departments, like cultural decisions, cultural practices. The policy, pretty much everyone has FMLA, which I would use if I were sick or something, or taking care of a sick relative. But it was more about the cultural practices, rather than the policies that informed my decision, because I think those actually have more power in terms of work-life balance in academia right now."

Interviewee #6 also believed that an unsupportive department culture would override university policies as faculty members are subjected to the people and environment on a daily basis. She concluded: "I think the department's culture is so much stronger. Let's say your department wasn't supportive, even if the university had a policy, but the department wasn't supportive, that would impact your everyday life so much more. Because in the department, those are the people influencing you. ...Policy is way less important than cultural practice" (Interviewee #6).

Interviewee #9 noted one of the problems with relying on a department culture over written policies. "Things vary by department and it's because different departments kind of have different arrangements. Even some departments have different teaching

loads because of their accreditation. Some would say that's fair. Others would say it's not fair".

Even with written policies in place, departmental practices that influence work-life decisions surrounding the formal policies remain. Interviewee #11 explained that some practices are negotiated with department chairs, "Here in the academy you work out with your chair what's going to happen with your classes." Interviewee #5 explained that at a past institution, her department chair refused her request to stop the tenure clock when she was pregnant, even though institutional policies supported doing so.

Both in institutions with formal and informal policies, culture impacted women University faculty members' perceptions of the policies/practices currently in place.

### **Congruity and incongruity between institutional culture and policies.**

Four models emerged from analysis of accounts of women faculty in this study regarding the relationship between institutional culture and formal policies: *Congruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, *Congruity between Formal and Informal Policies and Culture (negative)*, *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, and *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (negative)*. It is important to note that the interviewees in this study experienced their institutions as more congruent than incongruent and a more supportive than unsupportive culture.

A congruity between culture and policy occurred when the work-life policy and departmental culture, whether institutional or departmental are in agreement. For example, the policy was supportive of maintaining a healthy work-life balance and colleagues and supervisors were also accepting and supportive of faculty utilizing these policies. An incongruity was an inconsistency or disagreement between the policies and

the institutional or departmental culture regarding work-life. For example, the institutional policies facilitated faculty members' work-life balance decisions; however, the culture within the department perceived that faculty members who utilized these policies were not serious about their career trajectories.

***Congruity between formal policies and culture (positive).***

Four interviewees were classified as experiencing positive congruency between the formal policies and departmental culture at their current institutions (Interviewees #1 #3, #7, #11) and all of these Interviewees shared their comments related to illuminating this model. These faculty members believed that both the policies and their departmental culture supported their work-life decisions. Interviewee #11 characterized these types of institutions. "The university is working hard to be more work-life friendly to help people make decisions without sacrificing everything else".

Interviewee #3 felt supported by her department in using the policies, and in her family choices, which overall boosted her confidence. "After doing new faculty orientation and hearing the benefits folks talk, I'm pretty confident I will be supported in my decision to have a family. I think that will be assisted not only by the policies but also by the culture in our department." She admitted that she felt confident with her decision to have a family because it was assisted by the culture and policies within her department. "I think in talking to my colleagues who are going through it now we are supporting one another and we're helping share information with one another about how to navigate the policies" (Interviewee #3).

Interviewee #7 felt supported by the policies as they allowed flexibility, which helped with managing work-life balance, "They [policies] helped because there was

more flexibility in scheduling, so if I needed to be home for something they would help me do that...The ability to adjust my work type to what classes I got, those were very helpful. My ability to bring my children when I taught in [foreign country]. That they would provide family type housing as opposed to individual housing was very useful.”

Interviewee #7 also found positive congruity between institutional policies and culture. “...A lot of heads of the departments are very supportive. So you have the official policy, and then you often have colleagues and heads of departments who even go a bit further. I have to say beyond even maternity leave, I think that one of the nice things that academia has, again not everywhere, but a lot of places really try to make the most of the flexibility that comes with the job.”

It is important for the institution to have facilitating policies, but it is even more important for departments to attain a positive culture, with work-life friendly practices in place. Interviewee #1 stated that two of her colleagues stopped the tenure clock and it didn't affect whether they received tenure. “Two of my colleagues did it, one stopped the tenure clock for two years, and she had no problem getting tenured and promoted. The other stopped for a year. She had no trouble getting tenured and promoted.” Witnessing other faculty members being successful utilizing the policies and receiving support from department chairs when negotiating work-life practices, allowed others to feel more confident in navigating their situations.

As well as navigating specific policies, cultural practices such as allowing children on campus can affect whether faculty members feel supported and better able to manage their work and family lifestyles. Interviewee #11 explained that she sees children on campus all the time and she likes that her institution is so family friendly.

“...We see kids around here all the time. I love seeing them. I don’t know if that’s a problem. I can’t imagine [having children on campus is a problem] because we have so many parents here and everybody knows it is hard being a parent juggling school, especially if you’re not out at the same time your kids’ schools are out... I’ve never heard a story of someone getting in trouble or being criticized for bringing their kids.”

Knowing that the formal policies were in place and the department was willing to be flexible and supportive boosted the interviewees’ confidence in utilizing work-life policies. Additionally, it also allowed them to maintain a healthy day to day work-life balance by giving them the flexibility to create a schedule conducive to both their work and family lifestyles.

***Congruity between formal and informal policies and culture (negative).***

Three interviewees were classified as experiencing a negative congruity between policy and culture at their current institution (Interviewees #6, #8). Five interviewees shared comments of negative congruency, three at an institution with formal policies (Interviewees #2, #4 #6) and two at institutions with informal policies (Interviewees #8, #13).

Interviewee #2 (formal) explained a written policy that affected her and her husband as academics at the same institution. “There’s a policy here...if you have two people, both working for the state, only one can take paternity leave. So my husband was never allowed to take paternity leave because we both work for the same institution. To me, that’s wrong; you want to honor both.” She felt that this policy reinforced traditional culture whether it meant to or not, with one parent staying at home to look after the baby and the other focusing on work, “And again, that’s the, well the

woman's the weaker one, we'll let her stay home and hug the baby. You, guy, need to get back to work, and it's a very sexist approach. So, that was definitely not a positive."

Interviewee #4 (formal) felt anxious about the policies, which had more of a negative impact on her decisions, "I think that they didn't necessarily help. You know, ... When I found out the things I was told at least about maternity leave and the tenure clock and things like that, it certainly scared me a lot. And so, I would say that it hindered in some ways my ability to maybe try and create a balance that fit who I am".

Negative congruency was displayed by both negative policies and a negative culture, specifically, for these participants, through policies denying faculty the ability to bring their children to campus. "It was like you can't bring your child to work under any circumstances. I thought it was interesting that there really was so much negativity about that" (Interviewee #6). To compensate, Interviewee #6 (formal) explained how she prioritized her research, teaching and family. She did what she needed to do. She understood that the requirements for tenure at her institution were based on publications and teaching evaluations, not "answering phones and this and that." She explained how a lot of women feel the need to ask permission, which she considers a hindrance. Her strategy is not to ask for permission. "There's something about not asking for permission. ...If I asked permission for everything, it would be so stressful. But I think women do, and that is why it is still a big hindrance. If you look at the statistics, of course moms are promoted less, moms are hired less." She concluded, "If my kids are sick, I bring them to school with me, and I hide them under my desk, and I don't ask. I think my chair would not do that, she would freak out and try to figure out, like "Oh my gosh, what can I do? We're not supposed to bring kids to work!" Well if my

kids are sick, and I'm not teaching and have office hours, I will cancel my office hours" (Interviewee #6).

In pursuing jobs, women faculty members were aware of this dynamic and some were more reluctant to consider positions in institutions that had both restrictive written policies and negative culture. Interviewee #13 (informal) explained that she had decided not to go to an institution that had requirements on face time and no specific work-life policies in place. In explaining her decision not to take a position at such an institution, she stated, "At my past university, their work-life policy sucked. They didn't help me at all. ...There weren't policies, but there were cultural practices. When I was on the job market, there were some places where it was more of a, you have to be here five days a week. I did not pursue those opportunities."

In a unique situation, Interviewee #8 (informal) while classified as being on a campus without formal policies noted that prohibiting faculty from bringing their children to campus was one of the only work-life policies they had. "In the policy manuals you are not allowed to have your children on campus. There have been times when, faculty had babies and they want to bring them up and introduce them to people, and unfortunately somebody would bring up a baby and they will say, "I don't want to stay too long. I don't want to run into so and so because I'm afraid she will tell on me, or I know he/she frowns on it. It is officially not allowed and I think unofficially people are nervous about it as well."

***Incongruity between formal policies and culture (positive).***

One interviewee was classified as experiencing positive incongruity between the formal policies and departmental culture at their current institution (Interviewee #4). In

this study, this was the only participant who shared comments related to illuminating this model.

Interviewee #4 had a positive experience due to good people in administrative positions that she felt would support her work-life decisions even if the written policies seemed daunting, “I think part of policy and part of the institution is having good people in administrative positions and there are a lot of good people in administrative positions who have empowered me, so I don’t want to sound like the university policy or procedures have all been bad. You need to start looking at the black and white writing, you know, on the contracts, it’s kind of, it can be scary.” Even though she felt the policies themselves could be improved, the empowering messages she received from her department and administration ensured that her overall experience was more positive than negative.

***Incongruity between formal policies and culture (negative).***

One interviewee was classified as currently working at an institution demonstrating negative incongruity between formal policies and departmental culture (Interviewees #5). Four Interviewees shared comments that highlighted this model (Interviewees #1, #3, #5, #15). The majority of interviewees that discussed incongruity between the policies and departmental culture reported that the policies were good. Some even considered them helpful. However, a negative departmental culture overrode the helpfulness of these policies and impacted participants’ decision-making. Interviewee #15 described, “One of the things that you hear a lot is that the policies are good. You often hear these horror stories about heads of department, for example, who are just not good at allowing people to use them [policies]. I think it’s more of finding

middle managers, who are really good at supporting the policies more than the actual policy itself.”

Even in institutions with formal written policies, departmental culture had more of an impact on faculty members’ experiences and decisions. Interviewee #5 explained that implementing a written policy is less complicated than changing the culture, “If you are talking policy, to implement a policy is one thing and in some ways it’s easier. You have something very specific and you say “Here is what we want to implement and here is how we are going to do that.”...Culture is much more complicated.” Also, as explained by Interviewee #3, even in institutions with written policies in place, a lot of departments still require scheduling and duties to be determined by the department chair, so even though the written policy sets guidelines, including the amount of time on maternity leave or stopping the tenure clock, there are still other factors determined by the department. “I think that there is something to the fact that their policy may say something but there is also in that policy, for example, how to navigate what your duties are during a semester in which you might take maternity leave...There are different options for what a chair might do and it’s the chair’s decision and sometimes it’s the dean’s decision.” She also described instances where friends from other universities had been required to negotiate additional factors that weren’t included in the written policy and had negative experiences with this, “I’ve had colleagues at different universities who have met with their department chair or their dean and they had to do letters and multiple meetings to negotiate the terms of what was going to happen before and after maternity leave. That just seems ridiculous to me. That seems like a huge potential hindrance to a lot of people, in addition to career trajectory” (Interviewee #3).

Interviewee #1 explained how her hard work as a faculty leader to get campus-wide policies implemented at a prior institution was undermined by the negative view of those policies by the current departmental culture. The policy stayed the same, but the culture regarding the policy became negative, in contrast to the intent of implementing the policy. She stated, “My kids grew up on a college campus, so it was really comfortable for me, but what I’ve learned now is that those policies we worked so hard to get at my past university, faculty are now reluctant to use. Even though they have the right to stop the tenure clock, they view it as an indication that they are not serious scholars. And that’s problematic because those of us who got those policies through, got them through for exactly the opposite reason, to recognize that faculty can be serious scholars and still need some time off for family issues.”

Four model relationships exist between policy and culture which impact decision-making: *Congruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, *Congruity between Formal and Informal Policies and Culture (negative)*, *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, and *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (negative)*. A number of interviewees in this study experienced one of these four models demonstrated in their departments, others commented on these models from past experiences, or from other faculty members. The four models highlight the relationship between policy and culture, which relates back to the two emerging discourses within academia discussed in RQ1. In order for the faculty members to feel confident and encouraged in their decisions, the departmental culture must support the policies.

### **Policy awareness.**

The awareness of policies was a prominent theme within the data. The perception of the policies, the overall culture, and how policies are implemented can be impacted by policy awareness. Understanding the policies, how they should be used, and colleagues' prior use of policies impacts faculty members' decisions on whether to use them.

From the interview responses, eight interviewees discussed having awareness of work-life policies (Interviewee #1-4, #6, #7, #9, #15). Four interviewees stated that they didn't know or were unsure of either the policies themselves, or the perception of the policies within the department (Interviewee #5, #10-12). Interviewee #11 felt somewhat embarrassed that she didn't know her department's policies. She explained: "I actually don't know. That's embarrassing...It is one of those things where if you haven't inquired about it or tried to use it, it's like you're not really going to know. It doesn't affect your life." Interviewee #10 agreed that the policies didn't impact her, so she doesn't know a lot about them, "Honestly, I don't really pay attention. It's like you don't pay attention to something until it impacts you. There is nothing that is impacting me in a major way right now" Interviewee #11 concurred. "It is one of those things where if you haven't inquired about it or tried to use it, it's like you're not really going to know. Until you are in that situation where you need to use one you are not going to know about it or how other people feel about it." For example, as Interviewee #9 noted regarding maternity leave, "It doesn't impact people unless they need to take it. It's not like people are adopting and having children left and right all over campus. I think that tends to be something that's maybe not paid attention to until it has to be acknowledged and paid attention to."

Faculty members from institutions with informal policies didn't state that they were unaware of the policies because there were no written policies in place to be aware of. "On our campus the policy doesn't exist... There is no policy... So at our campus good luck. In our department the policy doesn't exist but we'll figure it out" (Interviewee #13). Faculty from institutions with informal policies (Interviewees #8, #13, #14) talked about the development of their cultural practices as an alternative to awareness of policies.

At institutions with formal policies, a number of interviewees didn't know the policies because they weren't relevant to them. However, Interviewee #1 believed it would be helpful for all faculty members to know that policies exist and to understand how to utilize them so they feel more comfortable doing so if and when they need them. "It would be really helpful if people knew what they [policies] were and if throughout the tenure and promotion process they were reinforced to faculty, so that they knew they had the right to access these kinds of policies if they needed to." Interviewee #12 agreed that faculty members' and departments need to understand how to utilize the policies and follow them, "I'm a firm believer that institutions tend to create policies but then they don't follow up and make sure that they are being followed... So I think that's an important part of the process too and that would be something that's shared, the dean should make a first priority."

Four interviewees also explained that the policies aren't talked about enough and some had to research the policies themselves to get a better idea of what they were and how to use them (Interviewee #4, #5, #11, #12), "They will print them somewhere where you can get to them, but nobody talks about how they're used" (Interviewee #2).

Due to the lack of awareness, faculty members found themselves having to educate their department chairs about the policies, “So I think women who want to take family leave have to go educate their department chairs...You know how you get paid. Everybody knows that. The rest we don't.” (Interviewee #7). Interviewee #1 agreed, “In my experience, our HR people don't know how to use them. They don't know what they mean. They don't know often what they're doing.” She hadn't been well informed on the FMLA policy and it wasn't until she told a friend that she was on FMLA and explained what she was doing that she realized her activities were in violation of federal law. She found herself educating the HR department and her department chair, “I [had an] accident and they put me on FMLA, which means, I cannot have any interaction with my employer while I'm off. I continued to teach two classes, and ran the search for our new director. That was a flat out violation of federal law, but I didn't know that, and clearly the people who should have known that, didn't know that” (Interviewee #1).

Within both formal and informal institutions, the traditional and pro work-life cultural discourses (as seen in RQ1) shaped a more supportive or unsupportive departmental culture regarding the utilization and perception of work-life policies and practices. Traditional discourse characteristics emphasize a separation of work and family life creating a rigid structure. The Pro Work-Life Discourse strives to maintain a healthy work-family balance as a lucid flexible structure. Additionally, two institutional types are identified as reflected in the interviews, those with informal contextual policies and those with formal written policies. Departmental culture had a heavier impact on faculty in institutions with informal policies; however, even in institutions with formal written policies, faculty members had to negotiate certain factors with their supervisors. Faculty

members who experienced a positive departmental culture were more likely to feel supported in their decisions, perceive the policies as a facilitating factor to work-life decisions, and utilize policies to maintain a healthy work-life balance. A negative departmental culture usually resulted in participants feeling unsupported, perceiving the culture as a hindering factor, and experiencing a greater reluctance to utilize policies.

Four models were identified with respect to the congruence between culture and policies, congruity positive, congruity negative, incongruity positive and incongruity negative that influenced both faculty members' reported feelings of support and willingness to make positive work-life decisions. Finally, a lack of knowledge of available policies was viewed as a hindrance to faculty women's abilities to make healthy work-life decisions.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS

The application of discourse theory as an overarching structure for this project allowed for identification of the relationships among discourse, context including organizational culture, institutional policies, and the work-life decisions of the female university faculty members who participated in this study. In RQ1, two discourses were identified that were consistent with findings from previous research. However, this study identified the presence of these discourses in academia, their influence on institutional and departmental cultures (and to a lesser extent, vice versa), and how both policies and culture influenced faculty members' work-life decisions.

Four models were identified based on the dynamic interaction between institutional and departmental culture and the perception and utilization of institutional policies. These models provided a unique context for some of the inconsistencies found in previous literature on institutional policies. In this study, due to the relationship between policy and culture, it was identified that both the written policies themselves and the departmental culture influenced whether faculty members felt supported and therefore facilitated in their work-life decisions.

In this chapter, eight major themes were identified and either supported or clarified previous literature, or developed as a unique finding of this study. Major themes included: *Emergent Discourses*, *Traditional Discourse and Policies*, *Pro Work-life Discourse*, *Blurred Boundaries*, *Policies and Culture*, *Congruity and Incongruity*, and *Policy Awareness*. In the *Congruity and Incongruity* theme, four sub themes were identified, *Congruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, *Congruity between*

*Formal and Informal Policies and Culture (negative), Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive), and Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (negative).*

### **Emergent Discourses.**

Identifying the two emergent dominant discourses within the academy from interviewee' responses created context for understanding women faculty members' experiences and offered insight into their work-life decision-making. The two discourses were the Traditional Discourse and the Pro Work-Life Discourse. The Traditional Discourse demands physical presence, a career focus, and offers less overall flexibility, which hinders faculty members' abilities to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Whereas the more progressive Pro Work-Life Discourse facilitates faculty members in having a healthier lifestyle and feeling more supported in their family and career decisions. Organizational cultures mirror these characteristics.

The characteristics of these discourses were present in the organizational and departmental cultures interviewees reported on. The majority of interviewees shared examples that displayed the presence of both traditional and pro work-life characteristics in their organizational and departmental cultures. Yet, in most cases, one discourse emerged as more prominent than the other.

In this study, one interview highlighted a prominent Traditional Discourse (Interviewee #8). Six interviews led to classification of their institutions as having a prominent Pro Work-Life Discourse (Interviewees #9-11, #13-15), and eight interviewees worked at institutions that demonstrated characteristics of both discourses (Interviewees #1-7, #12). Seven of the eight reported the prominence of one discourse

over the other, six of the eight, a Pro Work-Life Discourse (Interviewees #1-4, #6, #7), one (Interviewee #5), a Traditional Discourse, and one a balance of the two discourses (Interviewee #12). (See Table 2). Analysis of interview transcripts indicated that for twelve of the fifteen participants in this study, a Pro Work-Life Discourse was prominent in their current institutions.

The organizational culture, especially the departmental culture, of an institution, impacted by one or both of these discourses, influenced women University faculty members' decisions about family as well as their abilities to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Figure 1).

Figure 1 displays the ongoing reciprocal influence between discourse and departmental culture, and how both of these factors impact faculty members' decisions.

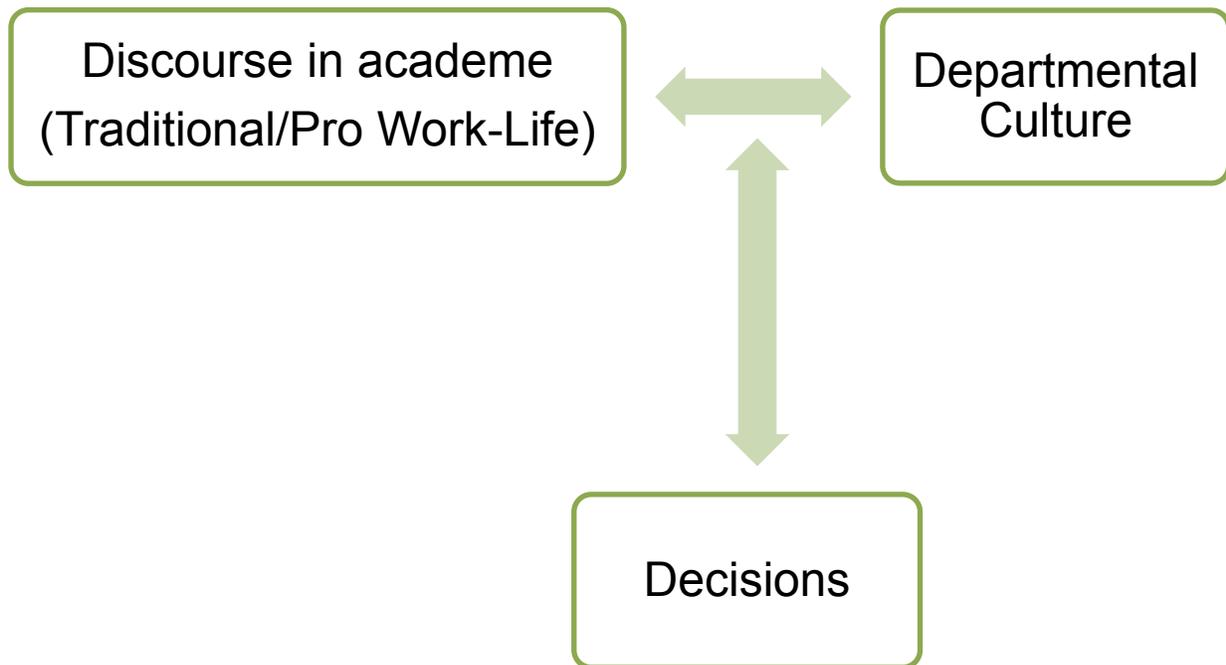


FIGURE 1

INFLUENCE OF DISCOURSE AND DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE.

### ***Traditional discourse and policies.***

In line with previous research, interviewees in this study recognized that academia was largely characterized by a Traditional Discourse grounded in a masculine, patriarchal, top-down model. This discourse was predicated on the expectation of a male professor who was the sole breadwinner for his family, with a wife at home who took care of family and domestic responsibilities (Marcus, 2007; Philipsen, 2010). Ward and Bensimon (2003) called this construction the “ideal worker” who is “married” to his career. Many study participants felt that the rigid expectations they faced were derived from this “masculine” model, specifically, the expectations to be physically present on campus, to prioritize career over family, the view that taking time off communicates lack of seriousness about one’s career, and the separation of career and family.

In their work-life studies about women and policy, Bristol, Abbuhl and Sonnad (2008) and Marcus (2007) identified the stigma, also reported by participants in this study, surrounding the usage of work-life policies. Specifically, participants in this study reported that if the institutional or departmental culture wasn’t positive, even with supportive policies in place, like those around stopping the tenure clock or taking leave to manage family issues, they were afraid to use them. Participants in Marcus (2007) study admitted to choosing not to use the flexibility available to them for fear that it would put them at a disadvantage. In line with Sotirin’s (2008) conclusion that tenure was historically intended for the male professor who had a wife to manage family responsibilities, participants in this study felt discouraged from utilizing policies because of fear that they would be seen as less committed or less serious about their work. They

feared that using policies that allowed for leaves or stopping the tenure clock for work-life issues would hurt them in their quest for tenure.

For participants in this study the stigma surrounding using pro work-life policies originated in departmental culture. Departments demonstrating a stigma towards the policies possessed traditional discourse characteristics. In contrast, departments that valued policies designed to help faculty members balance their work and family life possessed pro work-life characteristics.

***Pro work-life discourse and policy.***

In contrast to the Traditional Discourse, the Pro Work-Life Discourse is characterized by flexibility and fluidity that varies across departments and institutions and has not yet resulted in a generalized model. Analysis of data from this study indicated that pro work-life adaptations looked different in different situations and at different institutions. However, all respondents indicated the importance of prioritizing a healthy work-life balance within departments and institutions.

Even though most participants saw their institutions as being more pro work-life than traditional discourse oriented, they saved most of their elaboration for discussion of how their institutions and departments could improve their pro work-life culture and substitute pro work-life characteristics for traditional ones.

Bristol, Abbuhl and Sonnad (2008) found that talented faculty are drawn to institutions which provided creative, accessible and flexible work-life policies. The importance of work-life satisfaction was also identified by Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) and Tower and Dilks (2015). Authors of both studies concluded that in order to recruit and retain quality faculty, campuses needed to be progressive in implementing policies

that supported both female and male academics. One interviewee specifically discussed the importance of pro work-life policies, or lack thereof, in her decisions to consider jobs at various institutions. She sought institutions with limited expectations to be present on campus aside from classes and office hours. For her, the flexibility of where she completed her work was important for her in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

The universities reported on here are gaining more flexibility and fluidity and are developing policies and cultures that acknowledge the importance of a healthy work-life balance. This study also supported research by Bristol, Abbuhl and Sonnad (2008) that the current generation of faculty is taking family concerns more heavily than previous generations did, which increases the need for work-life policies. Interviewees in this study elaborated on the need to improve institutional policies and practices. They considered having a work-life balance important and some went so far as to indicate that they were committed to developing policies and procedures at their institutions in the hope of further improving faculty work-life balance.

#### *Blurred work-life boundaries.*

Prior literature noted that time poverty is common among academics and even professors consider their workload to be heavy. They also feel that they are always expected to do more (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). This supports the notion that flexible schedules in academia can cause academics to work more in order to meet expectations, especially faculty members on tenure-track.

Blurred work-life boundaries were common in interviewees responses and considered one of the only negative aspects to having a flexible schedule. The option of when and where they wanted to work in some cases, caused an imbalance in their work

and family time as there wasn't a clock off point for them as there is for many 9-5 jobs. Consistent with Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra's research (2013) these blurred boundaries can create difficulties for faculty members in creating a clear distinction between work and life. In this study, interviewees admitted to working on their laptop while their children watch TV, or play, which again parallels Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra's (2013) findings that "playing on the laptop" is a method academics use to hide the fact they are constantly working from their families. Additionally, by being in the same room, they feel more involved in family time and supporting their family opposed to isolating themselves. Ward & Wolf-Wendel (2004) also found that for some academics, the stress caused by blurred work-life boundaries can lead to guilt and self-dissatisfaction with how their time is spent.

Institutions are moving forward in understanding the importance of a healthy work-life balance, and in the availability of supportive work-life policies and practices responsive to faculty members' needs, which is displayed in the responses from the interviewees in this study. Consistent with findings from this study, previous research by Isgro & Castaneda (2015) argued for changes in the academy that more fully acknowledge the complex and multi-faceted nature of faculty lives. This call is consistent with other research (Quinn, 2011) that concluded that in order for many academics, especially women, to sustain their workloads and manage family responsibilities, work and family time are more likely to overlap. The accounts of participants in this study indicated that changes are in fact being made as pro work-life cultural characteristics were reflected in fourteen of the fifteen interviews. With one exception, the institutions that faculty reported on in this study are demonstrating the

modernization of assumptions and a fresh approach to work-life issues that Barnett (1999) called for. On a larger scale, institutions and departments within academia must work towards replacing the traditional characteristics with pro work-life characteristics, eliminating the rigid structure and providing faculty members with a flexible, fluid environment that meets their work-life needs, and is more accommodating to the modern academic.

***Policies and culture.***

From this research, two institutional types emerged: one institution had informal unwritten policies regarding work-life issues and the other had formal written policies. Institutions with informal unwritten policies required faculty members to negotiate their needs with supervisors through informal contextual agreements. Institutions with formal written policies codified practices governing the management of work-life issues, usually related to specific situations (illness, child birth, etc.).

Regardless of the existence of formal or informal policies, for participants in this study, departmental culture was identified as the most influential factor regarding faculty work-life decisions, and policy utilization. Department culture was more important than organizational culture or institutional policies. The level of support faculty members felt from their department in relation to work-life policies and practices impacted their decisions of whether or not to use available policies and influenced their work-life decisions. Interviewees explained that being subjected to the people and environment of their department on a daily basis meant that an unsupportive departmental culture would have more influence on their decisions than formal written policies.

Based on participant accounts of their experiences within their institutions and departments, four models emerged regarding the relationship between institutional culture and formal policies: *Congruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, *Congruity between Formal and Informal Policies and Culture (negative)*, *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive)*, and *Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (negative)*. In this study, interviewees experienced more congruency between the policies and culture, and a more positive than negative culture. These four models were unique to this research, offering additional information not yet articulated in the literature (Figure 2).

Figure 2 displays the four models present between institutional policy and organizational culture.

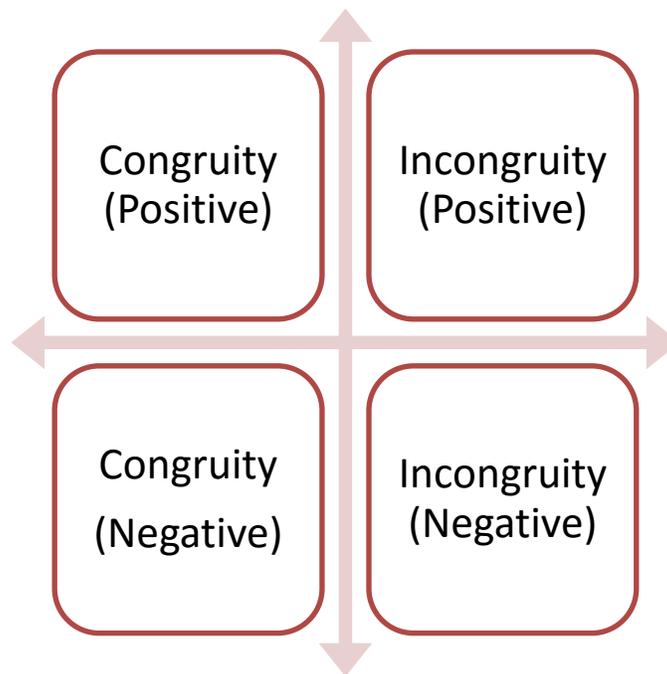


FIGURE 2

CONGRUITY AND INCONGRUITY BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE.

### **Congruity and Incongruity.**

With respect to the relationship between policy and culture, a congruency exists when policy and culture align. An incongruency occurs when policy and culture differ. The four models provide insight into both the relationships between policy and culture and the impact of this relationship on faculty willingness to utilize available policies or make positive work-life decisions.

#### ***Congruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive).***

A positive congruence indicated that supportive work-life policies existed and that department culture reaffirmed these policies. This model allowed faculty members to feel supported by the written policies and that support was reinforced by departmental culture. The existence of a positive congruity between formal policies and culture boosted interviewee confidence in utilizing work-life policies. Additionally, it also allowed them to maintain a healthy day to day work-life balance by giving them the flexibility to create a schedule conducive to both their work and family lifestyles.

#### ***Congruity between Formal and Informal Policies and Culture (negative).***

A negative congruence indicated a negative, unsupportive culture characterized by either a lack of work-life policies or restrictive policies which were also enforced at the department level. This dynamic created fear in participants and discourage faculty from making desired work-life decisions or led them to leave the institution.

#### ***Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (positive).***

A positive incongruence occurred when institutional policies were unsupportive of faculty work-life needs, but departmental culture was supportive of work-life balance decisions. This model highlighted how a supportive departmental culture can outweigh

negative policies. Faculty members receiving support from their department were more likely to consider their work-life decisions as being facilitated, than faculty members who had positive policies available, but a negative departmental culture.

***Incongruity between Formal Policies and Culture (negative).***

Faculty members that commented on a negative incongruence reported that the policies were positive, however the negative department culture outweighed the supportive policies and inhibited healthy work-life decisions. Even when supportive policies existed, department culture and fear kept some participants in this study from using them. This dynamic is reflected in prior research. For example, Van Deusen and colleagues (2008) reported that working parents of both sexes feel uncomfortable utilizing family-friendly policies, even though they are intended to ease their workload.

The findings of this study highlight the two major policy types and the influence culture has on the perception and utilization of policies. The prior research generalized that faculty members feel uncomfortable utilizing policies, however, the interviewees' responses in this study identified a connection between culture and policy that explained their reluctance. The unwillingness of interviewees to utilize supportive policies when an unsupportive departmental context existed illustrated the critical role of departmental culture in influencing faculty work-life decisions.

In order for the faculty members to feel confident and encouraged in their decisions, the departmental culture must support the policies. However, if the departmental culture and policies differed, it was better for faculty members to be in an environment with a positive culture than one with positive policies.

In understanding the relationship between institutional policies and departmental culture, these four models link back to the cultural discourses identified in this study. Positive congruity identified prominent pro work-life discourse characteristics where faculty members felt supported in their work-life decisions both by their departments and by the policies available to them. Negative congruity displayed prominent traditional discourse characteristics where faculty members felt unsupported in their work-life decisions by institutional policies and within their departments. This perceived lack of support is grounded in the expected segregation between work and life issues in the academy. Positive incongruity displayed a mixture of pro work-life and traditional discourse characteristics, but a more prominent pro work-life culture. In this study, this happened when departments had a supportive, pro work-life culture, but policies were either negative or needed more development. Negative incongruity also demonstrated a mixture of the two characteristics, but traditional characteristics were more prominent. In this case, the written policies were supportive of faculty members work-life situations, but the departmental culture needed to progress to be more supportive of faculty members' work-life decisions.

### **Policy Awareness.**

Unlike Reddick, et al.'s (2012) findings that faculty members often did not examine the work-life policy options on their campus and were unfamiliar with family-friendly university policies such as modified instructional leave or stopping the tenure clock, participants in this study indicated a general awareness of policies but concluded that unless the policies directly impacted them, they didn't research them extensively. A number of those participants for whom policies were relevant found themselves in the

position of educating administrators and HR about them in order to ensure they are used correctly. Overall, interviewees in this study considered having an awareness of the policies available to them important.

In summary, the dominant organizational culture of a department or institution influenced women University faculty members' decisions about family and their ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Therefore, faculty's ability to manage a healthy day-to-day work-life balance depended on the discourse within the academy that principally shaped the existing departmental culture. The culture largely influenced the perception and therefore utilization of policies within departments, which then had an impact on faculty members' decisions. Departments where good policies were in place and the department was willing to be flexible and supportive boosted the interviewees' confidence in utilizing work-life policies.

### **Future Research**

Based on the results of this study, future research could investigate the impact of cultural discourses and organizational policies across each of the three career trajectories within academia. In order to assess change in discourses, organizational cultures and institutional policies over time, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study following the same participants through each of the three career trajectories. This would also allow for more in-depth analysis of individual narratives, and investigation of women University faculty members' perceptions of work-life balance and the factors that influence their decisions as they progress through the academy. For this study, I chose to focus on women University faculty members due to my interest in their experiences and my desire to pursue an academic career as a woman who will be

faced with these issues and also as an academic who desires to continue research in this important area.

In further future research, it would be interesting to either focus on men, or have a balanced number of women and men academics to discover whether perceptions, accounts, and experiences differ between sex. The focus of this research could address whether the traditional and pro work-life discourses influence women's and men's accounts and decisions differently.

Because all of the participants of my study were white, it would be valuable to expand research on this topic to gain insights into the how professors from different racial and ethnic groups experience these dynamics. Over two thirds of the interviews in this study also came from faculty from public universities. Future research, could either focus solely on public or private institutions to offer a deeper understanding of either context, or involved a balanced number of participants from both public and private institutions to allow for comparison. Since this was an exploratory qualitative exploratory study, a quantitative survey based on results could be developed that would allow for solicitation of a random or representative sample of women University faculty members in order to identify themes across the academy and allow for generalization of results.

## **Conclusions**

From the interviewees' responses, cultural discourses are developing and changing the culture of academe from a traditional, rigid structure where the expectations are based around the masculine model which demands separation of work and family life to a more flexible, fluid structure that adapts to the modern ideology that work and life shouldn't be separated or compartmentalized. Maintaining a healthy work-

life balance has become more important as we realize that not maintaining a healthy work-life balance can influence physical, mental, and emotional health and decrease the productivity of scholars in the academy.

The pro work-life culture emphasizes maintaining a healthy work-family balance; whereas, the traditional culture is more restrictive and based upon expectations about the separation of work and family life. Two institutional types are prominent in academe, those with informal contextual policies and those with formal written policies. The perception and utilization of these policies depended on the departmental culture. For example, in this study Interviewee #1 described, two different departments can differ in culture and practices, which can influence how the policies are perceived within the department, and may influence the perception and utilization of these policies. This creates a different experience for faculty members, even though the policies available to them on paper look similar. Informal policies were greatly impacted by departmental culture; however, even in institutions with formal written policies, faculty members had to negotiate certain factors with their supervisors.

Faculty members in this study reported that they experienced more pro work-life characteristics in their department than traditional, but all reported that there is a significant amount of changes to be made before the culture was positive and fully responsive to work-life needs. This parallels prior research and Sotirin (2008) argued that the academy must continue to change. More institutions should implement progressive policy guidelines and assist faculty with family care and family-friendly policies such as tenure extensions, renewable family or medical leaves, and support programs to assist with major life events and demands (Sotirin, 2008).

In sum, two cultural discourses identified shaped departmental culture, which influenced the decisions of faculty members in this study. The departmental culture present heavily impacts the perception and utilization of existing organizational policies. Faculty members who experienced a positive departmental culture were more likely to feel supported in their decisions to utilize the policies designed to assist them in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. A negative departmental culture usually resulted in participants feeling unsupported and experiencing a greater reluctance to utilize policies. The interviewees in this study highlighted the movement from the rigid traditional culture to a pro work-life culture, but confessed more development needs to be made for the traditional characteristics within academia to be replaced.



My participants gave me valuable advice:

“I had one chapter finished and I wrote my entire dissertation and defended by February 15<sup>th</sup>. They gave me 15 days’ extension. My point is, you can do this. If I can write an entire dissertation as a single mother in basically three months you can do this thesis in the time that you have, I just wanted to tell you that.” (Interviewee #5)

And insight:

“I still think about sometimes leaving academe and, I don’t know, doing a startup business in a state where marijuana is legal. Because I do have a sort of have gardening thing in my blood. I explored that in my twenties, but it is still in there somehow, so who knows? It wasn’t a conscious decision. It was almost like I sort of stumbled into it [academia].” (Interviewee #14)

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RECRUITMENT MATERIALS FOR INTERVIEWS

#### **The impact of cultural messages and campus policies on women University faculty member's family decisions and career trajectories.**

##### Research and Interview Questions

#### **RQ1. What discourses in academia emerge from women faculty members' accounts of their work-life decisions?**

1. What messages did you receive when you were growing up about what it means to be a woman?
2. When you were growing up in school what messages did you receive about what you could or could not do or be?
3. When you were considering becoming a professor, what messages did you receive?  
(Potential prompt / clarification: From whom - family, friends, peers, mentors)  
(Potential prompt: Where did you get these messages?)
4. Which messages are most memorable to you, both positive and negative?)
5. How did these messages impact your expectations about what it would be like to be a woman in academia?
6. How have these messages impacted your decision-making in relation to marriage, having children, and progression through your career trajectory?
7. Now that you are a woman in academe, how have your experiences been different than your expectations?

APPENDIX A (continued)

**RQ2. What factors facilitate or hinder women faculty members' work and family choices, and how do these factors impact the perception and utilization of organizational policies in academe?**

8. What do you feel are the most significant hindrances for female faculty members in relation to career advancement?

(Potential prompt: Do you have any personal experiences with these?)

9. Can you share an example when someone who mattered supported or discouraged your work-life decisions?

(Potential prompt: In what ways were you supported / hindered in your work-life decisions?)

(Potential prompt: Who specifically supported you?)

**~~RQ3. Did professors at different stages of their careers perceive work-life balance issues differently?~~**

~~10. What are/were your experiences of the tenure-track process?~~

~~11. How did the nature of the tenure-track process impact your decision-making about marriage, children, and career trajectory?~~

~~12. In what way, if any, did your experiences change once you received tenure? (for associate / full professors)~~

~~13. As an (assistant or associate) professor, how do you expect your experiences to change as you work toward becoming a full professor? (for assistant / associate professors)~~

~~(Potential prompt: Do you intend to pursue full professor standing?)~~

#### APPENDIX A (continued)

~~14. As a full professor, how have your experiences changed from the previous two stages of your career?~~

~~15. Knowing what you know now, would you have made different decisions?~~

~~16. Looking back, what advice would you give to future professors about managing work and life priorities?~~

~~**RQ3. What organizational policies facilitate or hinder women academics' abilities to manage work and family choices?**~~

~~10. Did the policies at your university help or hinder you in making decisions about work-life balance?~~

~~(Potential prompt: In what ways?)~~

~~(Potential prompt: Did you use available policies to support your decisions?)~~

~~11. In your experience, what is the general perception of work-life policies on your campus?~~

~~12. Did campus policies support your work-life decisions?~~

~~13. In your opinion, should work-life policies on your campus be developed or modified?~~

~~14. During your academic career, have you seen changes in campus work-life policies?~~

~~(Potential prompt: Can you identify any changes that have been made?)~~

## APPENDIX B

### IRB RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

**(Consent form, recruitment email, phone script, Facebook and Twitter posts,  
OSCLG email and WSU Today blast.)**

#### **Recruitment Email**

Subject: Invitation to participate

You are invited to participate in a research study on the impact of cultural messages, campus policies, and personal experiences on women University faculty members' family decisions and career trajectories. Through analysis of accounts collected through semi-structured interviews with tenured and tenure-track female university faculty at different stages in their career trajectories (assistant professor, associate professor, full professor) this study is designed to offer insight into the impact of cultural discourses, campus policies and personal factors on women's decisions about family, children and career development.

You are invited to participate if you meet the primary inclusion criteria of being a tenured, or tenure-track university woman faculty member in social sciences or humanities disciplines. Approximately 15 participants will be interviewed for this study. If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me via Phone (316) 573-5155, or email [hjweatherburn@wichita.edu](mailto:hjweatherburn@wichita.edu), or Dr. Deborah Ballard-Reisch, (316) 978-6066, [deborah.ballard-reisch@wichita.edu](mailto:deborah.ballard-reisch@wichita.edu).

Thank you for your time,

Hollie Weatherburn  
(316) 573-2737  
[hjweatherburn@wichita.edu](mailto:hjweatherburn@wichita.edu)

APPENDIX B (continued)

**Advertisement for Strategic Communication Daily News Blast/ WSU Today /  
OSCLG-I@mti.edu listserv (The Organization for the Study of Communication,  
Language and Gender)**

Title: Communication Study Participation Opportunity

Attention female assistant, associate and full professors in humanities and social sciences disciplines. You are invited to take part in a research study focusing on the impact of cultural discourses and campus policies on women faculty members' family decisions and career trajectories. If you are interested in taking part in a 45 minute, semi-structured interview, please contact Hollie Weatherburn, (316) 573-2737, [hjweatherburn@wichita.edu](mailto:hjweatherburn@wichita.edu) or Dr. Ballard-Reisch, (316) 978-6066, [deborah.ballard-reisch@wichita.edu](mailto:deborah.ballard-reisch@wichita.edu). This research study is for Hollie's master's thesis from the Elliott School of Communication.

The purpose of the exploratory study is to investigate the accounts of tenured and tenure-track, female, university faculty at different stages in their career trajectories (assistant professor, associate professor, full professor) in order to better understand the cultural discourses, campus policies, and personal factors that influence female, university faculty members' decisions about family, children and career development. For this study, researchers are looking for 15 self-selected female, university faculty members who are willing to participate in a semi-structured interview. These interviews will hopefully highlight the factors that facilitate or hinder their decisions regarding how to balance work-life and uncover whether female professors at different career stages

## APPENDIX B (continued)

perceive work-life balance issues and organizational policies differently. The interview will take place at a location convenient for the participant, if conducted face-to-face, or via Skype; interviews will last approximately 45 minutes.

### **Facebook Post**

I am conducting a research study for my master's thesis focusing on women University faculty and work-life balance. The study focuses on tenured and tenure-track faculty in social sciences and humanities disciplines. If you are interested in participating in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45 minutes, or know of anyone that would be interested please contact me via Facebook Message or [hjweatherburn@wichita.edu](mailto:hjweatherburn@wichita.edu) or [deborah.ballard-reisch@wichita.edu](mailto:deborah.ballard-reisch@wichita.edu). When contacts are received, Hollie Weatherburn will email Informed Consent document and interview questions in advance of scheduling phone call.

### **Twitter Post**

Attention tenured/tenure-track women University faculty in social sciences and humanities disciplines! We need your insight on work-life balance (attach link to study description).

### **Phone script**

Hello (name of participant)

My name is Hollie Weatherburn and I am conducting the research study focusing on the impact of cultural discourse, campus policies, and personal factors on women faculty

## APPENDIX B (continued)

member's family decisions and career trajectories. Based upon your expressed interest in participating in this study, I am calling to confirm that you are a tenure or tenure-track female, university faculty member and to set a time and location for your interview.

When would you like to do the interview? It will take approximately 45 minutes and can be conducted either in person or via Skype. What would be easiest for you? (Set date, time, method of interview). Please verify your preferred email so I can forward you a copy of the informed consent document and the interview questions.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to talking with you (review time, place, method of interview). Please remember that I cannot conduct the interview without your informed consent document. When completed, please email your Informed Consent document to me by return email.

### **Script used at the beginning of the interview**

Hello, (participant name), This is Hollie Weatherburn calling. This is the time and date we've scheduled for your interview on work-life balance and female university faculty.

Does this time still work for you?

As you recall, you have agreed to participate in this semi-structured interview for my master's thesis study entitled: The impact of cultural messages and campus policies on women faculty members' family decisions and career trajectories.

The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate the accounts of tenured and tenure-track, female university faculty members at different stages in their career trajectories (assistant professor, associate professor, full professor) in order to better

## APPENDIX B (continued)

understand the cultural discourses, campus policies, and personal factors that influence decisions' about family, children and career development.

This interview will last approximately 45 minutes and it will be audio recorded for later transcription. Except for informed consent documents, which will be separated from all other study materials, no names or identifying information will be used or retained in any written documentation. No names or personal information will be recorded in the audio recording. All identifiers will be removed at the transcription stage and numbers will be used as identifiers throughout the coding and analysis of the data. The data will be retained for five years after the completion of the master's thesis project. It will be stored in the principle investigator's locked office on a password-protected computer.

Just a reminder: You can end the interview at any time or refuse to answer any of the questions asked. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University.

Do you have any questions at this time? I want to affirm verbally that you agree to take part in this interview.

I'm going to start recording now. Based on the informed consent document you have received, do you agree to take part in this interview?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and taking the time out of your schedule, your participation in this semi-structured interview is much appreciated.

Once you are ready, we will begin with the first question.

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FORM

#### *Consent Form*



#### Consent Form

**Purpose:** You are invited to participate in a research study of the impact of cultural messages, campus policies, and personal experiences on women University faculty members' family decisions and career trajectories. Through analysis of accounts collected through semi-structured interviews with tenured and tenure-track female university faculty at different stages in their career trajectories (assistant professor, associate professor, full professor) this study is designed to offer insight into the impact of cultural discourses, campus policies and personal factors on women's decisions about family, children and career development.

**Participant Selection:** You were selected as a participant in this study based on your expression of interest in the study, or because you were recommended by someone who has already taken part in the study, and because you meet the primary inclusion criteria of being a tenured, or tenure-track university woman faculty members in social sciences and humanities disciplines. Approximately 14 other participants will be interviewed for this study.

## APPENDIX C (continued)

**Explanation of Procedures:** If you decide to participate, a semi-structured interview will be carried out either on Skype or face-to-face. The study will again be explained and information regarding confidentiality and potential risks will be discussed. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will be audio recorded for transcription. This procedure will be completed once for each participant. The purpose of this procedure is to collect the data and explore the narratives of women University faculty members and the impact of cultural messages and campus policies on their decisions about marriage, children and career development. Some of the questions that will be asked include: How have your experiences impacted your decision-making in relation to marriage, having children and progression through your career trajectory? Did the policies at your university help or hinder you in making decisions about work-life balance?

**Discomfort/Risks:** The possible risks of this study are minimal. Some of the interview questions could be seen as sensitive in nature. Should you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can refuse to answer it, or discontinue the interview at any time. If distress occurs, a list of available on-campus and community counseling services will be provided to you to access them if you so desire.

**Benefits:** This study will help to better understand the cultural narratives influencing female tenured and tenure track faculty members' experiences of balancing work and life in academia at different points in their career trajectories. This exploratory study builds on prior research by offering a unique discourse approach looking at individuals' stories from each career stage and perceptions of work-life issues and campus policies that

## APPENDIX C (continued)

facilitate or hinder desired decisions. This could improve future understanding of women faculty members' situations and experiences balancing work and life.

**Confidentiality:** Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board;

The researchers may publish the results of the study. If they do, they will only discuss group results. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.

Audio recordings of the interviews will not include personal information. These will be kept on a password protected faculty computer in a locked office, unavailable to students for five years after the thesis is completed.

**Refusal/Withdrawal:** Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

APPENDIX C (continued)

**Contact:** If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Dr. Deborah Ballard-Reisch, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, Phone (316) 978-6066, Deborah.Ballard-Reisch@wichita.edu or Hollie Weatherburn, Phone (316) 573-2737, hjweatherburn@wichita.edu. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, Phone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
- You are aware that this is a research study,
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
- You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date