

PARENTAL LEAVE IN ACADEMIA

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This is a report¹ of the empirical findings of a nationwide study that investigates the implementation of paid parental leave in academia. We conducted two separate surveys – the first gathered institutional-level information, while the second provided individual-level data. This analysis reports the major findings of the institutional survey which involved canvassing school administrators about their institution's policies intended to help faculty balance work and family. More detail on the methodology used is reported in the Appendix.

Summary of Findings

- Paid parental leave policies are rare and concentrated among elite, private schools.
 - Only 18 percent of schools offer a gender-neutral, parental leave.
 - o Another 8 percent offer a paid leave to women only.
 - A total of 26 percent offer some paid leave above a six-week maternity leave either women-only or both-eligible.
- Among top-tier schools (ranked elite and "very difficult"), 51 percent offer paid leave.
- Private schools are almost twice as likely as public schools to offer a paid leave: 34
 percent of private schools, compared to 18 percent of public schools offer a paid
 leave.
- Exclusive use of federally-mandated unpaid FMLA leave is most common at 36 percent of schools. 18 percent offer a full semester.
- Among schools that do not offer a paid leave, 23 percent have informal policies.
- Most schools provide full relief of duties and expect no research during leave except for elite schools: there were no elite schools that offered a gender-neutral parental leave with full relief of duties and no research expected.
- All of the administrators surveyed replied, officially, that there is no stigma attached to policy utilization; but their more candid anecdotal responses provide some evidence that stigma is a factor in policy use.

¹ This report is based on Chapter Four of the author's dissertation, *Empowering Shakespeare's Sister: The Politics of Parental Leave*. Special thanks are due to Steve Rhoads, the Principal Investigator of the Family, Gender and Tenure Project, Paul Freedman, Mary Stegmaier and Chris Rhoads for their valuable contributions to this report.

Although we cannot answer definitively what effects a full-scale, national, American version of European-style paid parental leave would have, situations where it is already being implemented provide natural experiments worth exploring. The academic setting, where paid leave policies have been in place at some major universities for more than a decade, provides one such laboratory. However, very little research has been done on the effects and effectiveness of these policies in furthering professional advancement for women. In fact, the existing literature on work and family policies in academia includes very little about what university maternity-related policies consist of: whether, for example, the leaves are usually paid, whether more women than men take leave (or even whether leaves are available to men as well as women), how much leave is offered, and finally, whether there might be penalties associated with utilizing the policy.

This study, while broader than a case study, offers many of the strengths of a "crucial-case" study, which is a case that provides a fit so close to the subject under investigation that the findings can be characterized logically as representative. (Eckstein 1975) The academy provides such a case for parental leave.

If paid leave has the potential to work effectively and advantageously anywhere, it should do so in academia. (Raabe 1997) Motivation to recruit and retain female faculty is high. University communities are typically characterized by a commitment to justice concerns. And female faculty members are, by definition, well educated and have high levels of professional commitment. These women may also be more likely to be married to men less invested in traditional gender roles.

Furthermore, academia provides a clear example of the pressures that feed into the work-family crucible. Junior faculty members in academia contend with a set of career pressures that are unique: the highly structured, time-constrained career ladder of the tenure process is a system that is specific to the academic arena. Nevertheless, the intense academic career track exhibits pressures similar to those faced in other professional occupations, and is analogous to the experiences of other professionals in other disciplines trying to balance career and family. The average Ph.D. recipient is thirty-four years old. (Drago and Williams 2000) Therefore, the average academic woman confronts the beginning of the intense tenure process precisely during years when she might be beginning her family.(Finkel and Olswang 1996; Young and Wright 2001) In fact, however, a recent study using data from the National Center for Education Statistics, found that the majority of academic women who do achieve tenure, do not have children in the post-Ph.D. time period. (Mason and Goulden 2002)

Similarly, men and women who enter the legal profession face the challenge of making Partner in their law firm in their late 20's and early 30's, which notoriously conflicts with childbearing; the military has a time-bounded "up or out" system very similar to the tenure process; the medical profession, with its residency system is similarly indifferent to parenting concerns; and the corporate world -- birthplace of the "mommy track" -- while lacking a specified industry-wide "system" for advancement,

does place a high premium on an "overtime culture," that makes high achievement and childbearing difficult to reconcile. (Fried 1998; Schwartz 1989) For these reasons, we argue that data developed on academic professionals is representative of professionals in other areas.

Institutional Survey Descriptive Data

The following section reports the descriptive data found through the institutional survey – the prevalence of paid leave, variation in leave content, requirements for leave utilization, extent of policy utilization from the administration's point of view, and campus dynamics related to the policy. Because we utilized two sequential samples, but did not administer the full survey to the second sample, we report data here from the Combined Sample for policy prevalence and content, and from Sample One alone on further questions.

Definitions

Although we began with a research hypothesis that a parental leave is a full semester relief of teaching and other duties available to both men and women, it quickly became apparent that the reality of leave offered is much more varied. We faced a challenging definitional issue: how much leave is "paid leave?" In order to reflect reality more accurately, we developed a more limited definition of paid leave: more than 6 weeks of full relief of the faculty member's teaching duties with full pay, or half relief of teaching for one full semester or quarter, or full relief with half pay for a semester or quarter.

We found another surprise when we reviewed eligibility criteria. Our working definition of parental leave was gender-neutral, but we found a significant number of schools with leave policies more generous than a short-term six-week maternity leave, for which men were ineligible. To encompass this reality, we developed a category of "women-only" parental leave schools.

Anything six weeks or less we define as a "maternity leave," which is considered a fairly typical maternity leave policy, and is generally based on a guideline for medical recovery time recommended by the American College of Obstetricians for a normal delivery. The analytical framework used here, then, views a leave for female faculty that is six weeks or less as short-term "maternity leave" under a medical recovery model,² and the more expansive policies offered to both men and women as "parental leave" which is a "parenting" paradigm.

Additionally, many schools when queried if their institution offered a paid leave policy responded "yes" when, in fact, the policy merely permitted utilization of other

² The frequent use of sick and disability leave to finance maternity leave is a natural fit with approaching maternity leave with a medical model.

accrued paid benefits for maternity leave - sick, vacation, annual, and personal leaves. These policies did not meet our definition of paid leave.

Policy Prevalence

How prevalent is paid parenting leave in academia? It is rare. In the Combined Sample, parental leaves offered to both men and women for more than 6 weeks are offered at only 18% of the schools. **The majority of schools**, **82%**, **do not offer a true** "parental" leave. (n=153)

Another 8% of schools offer a paid leave of more than 6 weeks for women-only. This means that 74% of schools, a large majority, do not offer paid leave, above either short-term paid maternity leave or the unpaid 12 weeks mandated by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. In other words, **nearly three-quarters of schools provide less than six weeks paid leave for new parents.**

Leave for Both Men and Women	Leave >6 w	eeks for Women only	
"Parental Leave"	"W	omen-Only"	
18%	8%		
Parenting Leave > 6 weeks for		No Parentin	ng Leave
Women and/or Both		(only short-term, M	Maternity Leave)
"Any Leave"		"No Paid	Leave"
26%		74%	

n=153

Our working hypothesis was that paid gender-neutral parental leave, when offered, would be the province of primarily elite institutions.³ In fact, we do find that the relationship between school rank and paid parental leave is highly significant. (p=.000) This is true both for women-only schools (p=.044) and for both-eligible schools as well (p=.025).

In looking at "parental" leaves, the most generous leave policies, those offered to both men and women, the schools most likely to offer the benefit were the top category – 33 percent of the Elite and "Very Difficult" schools, as ranked by *Peterson's Guide*, offer

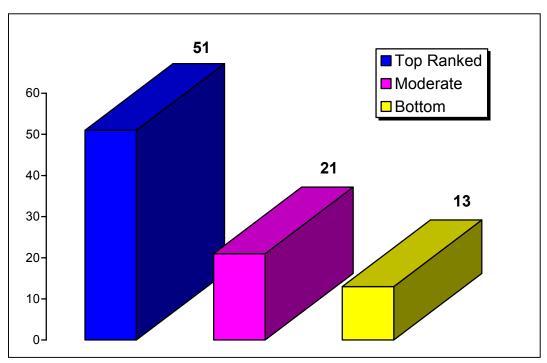
³ As detailed in the methodology section, this is why we over-sampled among elite schools in order to find enough schools that had paid leave, to build a large enough sample of professors at paid leave schools for the individual-level survey. As a result, the data reported here is weighted to adjust for this over-sampling. This whole sequence – the over-sampling and the weighting – makes an analysis within rank very difficult. As a means to addressing this difficulty, we recoded the ranks into broader categories, reducing the ranks from five to three: top two, moderate and bottom two. This provides 35 schools in the top category, 87 in the middle and 31 in the bottom.

the both-eligible leave, whereas these policies were available at only 15 percent of the moderate difficulty schools, and 10 percent of the bottom-ranked schools. The most interesting difference is among the women-only schools. These were clustered primarily in the top schools – among the schools that offered this kind of policy (n=12), 50 percent were top-ranked schools.⁴

Turning to look at the relationship between type of institution, whether or not it is public or private, we find a significant relationship for the both-eligible policies, (p=.027) but not for women-only. (p=.602) While 24 percent of the private institutions offer a both-eligible parental leave, (n=86) these policies are found at only 10 percent of the public institutions. (n=62) In fact, among those schools that offer any kind of leave, (either both-eligible and/or women-only) 73 percent are private schools.

In summary, we find paid leave (any kind of paid parenting leave over six weeks – gender-neutral and/or women-only) to be a benefit offered predominantly at private, elite institutions. Elite institutions have the highest percentage of schools offering some kind of paid parental leave: 51 percent of elite schools offer some kind of paid parental leave. Similarly, private schools are nearly twice as likely at 34 percent to offer any leave, as are public schools at 18 percent.

Figure One: Percent of Institutions, within Rank, which offer Any Paid Parental Leave



n=152, F=3.761, df=2, p=.025

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⁴ Although the percentages are different, the substance of these findings remains the same in the raw, unweighted data. The unweighted data are representative of the *faculty* at universities nationwide.

Policy Content and Eligibility

The challenge involved in coding the leave policies of various institutions in a systematic way, and in making summary commentary about them, becomes clear when we examine the vast array of different policies making up the content of leave policies in academia. We coded as many as 12 different responses, which we eventually collapsed into 8 for analysis purposes. However, even among the original 12 categories there were nuances within "same" responses.

Turning first to the entire combined sample, we found that the most common policy used is the default position: 36 percent of the sample provide only the federally-mandated 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Next, is a policy to allow the use of accrued sick leave. Exactly one-fourth of the sample, 25 percent uses this approach to parenting leaves. The next most common approach jumps to the other end of the spectrum, providing a full semester or quarter of leave: 5 just under one-fifth of the sample, 18 percent, uses this approach. Next, 9 percent of the sample provided eight to twelve weeks of paid parenting leave. Another 7 percent provide a paid, short-term six-week maternity leave. 6 The next 5 percent provided half-pay or a course relief, and the remaining 1 percent provided either a 2-week maternity leave or postponed duties.

⁵ For simplicity, hereafter, where we refer to a full semester of leave, this will be assumed to include those schools on a quarter schedule.

⁶ One of these schools provided only 67 percent compensation under their disability plan. As a group, these schools did not qualify for our definition of paid parental leave, except for one which provided for a "minimum" six-week leave for women-only.

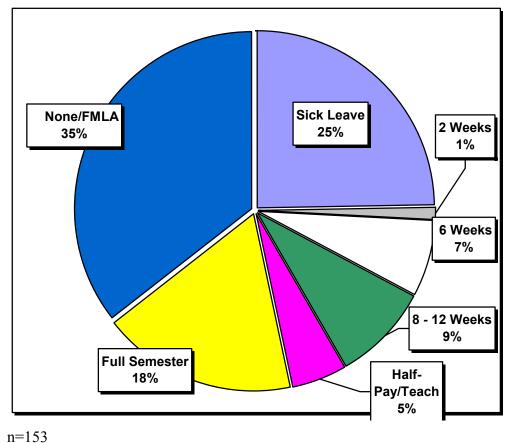


Figure Two: Policies for Childbearing and Parenting Leaves, Paid and Unpaid

11-133

Looking only at the universe of institutions with paid parental leave above 6 weeks (including "women-only"), the majority, 67 percent, did offer a full semester of leave. (n=40)

Table One: "ANY LEAVE" SCHOOLS

Half-Pay/Half-Teach	Eight to Twelve Weeks	Full Semester
8%	25%	67%

(n=40)

Among the schools that did not offer a paid parental leave, the most common response, at 49 percent, to pregnancy and childbirth among faculty is the use of FMLA leave. The next most common approach, for 33 percent of the schools, is to allow the use of accumulated sick leave – in fact many referred to this as "paid" leave. Next, 9 percent of schools provided a six-week paid maternity leave; another 1% provided two weeks. Finally, 4 percent allowed for half-pay and a reduced teaching load or a rearranged, or deferred, teaching load -- these all had gender-neutral polices. A final category of schools provided a full semester of leave to their professors, but this was done unofficially. (n=113)

There was a statistically significant relationship between school ranking, using the three-rank variable, and the content of leave offered. (p=.026) The top two tiers, Elite and Very Competitive schools, were the most likely to offer a full semester or quarter off -35 percent of top-ranked schools offered this much leave. (n=34) The Minimally Competitive schools had the widest range of leave policies: 48 percent offered only FMLA; 19 percent sick leave; 7 percent half-pay/half-teach or two weeks; 7 percent six weeks; 10 percent 8-12 weeks; and another 10 percent a full semester. (n=31).

* * *

The remainder of the survey, that addressed more detailed questions about policy implementation and usage, was administered only to the 84 schools in Sample One. The following sections report the results from that data.

Informal Arrangements

Another example of the difficulty involved in categorizing the wide variety of policies we found, was determining the difference between official and unofficial policies. This was surprisingly difficult. For example, at one institution with an official policy of providing six weeks fully paid leave, we were told that "in practice the dean and department chair work with a female faculty member to allow them to take the whole semester off."

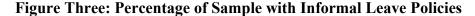
Indeed, one of the more important findings of this study is that there is a high occurrence of informal arrangements related to leave policies. For the complete Sample One, 39 percent reported the existence of informal policies. (n=36) Among those schools that did not offer any official paid parenting leave, just over one-fifth, 23 percent, said that informal arrangements were used. (n=26)

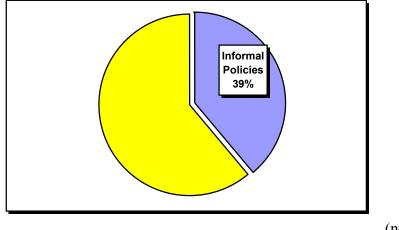
⁷ The sick leave policies themselves were highly varied. Some schools stipulated an upper limit of leave that could be taken; others allowed use of any amount accrued. In many cases, sick leave was also used in conjunction with vacation, annual, personal and leave without pay.

⁸ One institution did make their maternity leave policy gender-neutral.

⁹ This category is differentiated from sick leave in that it is an additional paid benefit that does not deplete another benefit, such as sick leave or vacation, which might be used in another context. However, with the use of sick leave, some faculty might also be taking a six-week leave with salary continuation.

¹⁰ This is one category of policies that has some paid leave schools. These schools that are classified as "unpaid" or "maternity leave" have less generous policies than the paid schools.





(n=36)

Several additional factors lead me to believe that this issue bears further study. In the second survey done of the faculty members themselves, we find anecdotal evidence that informal arrangements were negotiated at the departmental level. By their very nature, informal arrangements may not always be known to the university administrators who were our respondents in this institutional survey.

On the other hand, as some administrators explained their policies, it became clear that their informal policies were quite routine and approached formality, lacking only the systematization of a written policy. We believe there may be a fair amount of these policies that we came to think of as "formal informal policies." For example, one administrator told us:

There is no written policy on paid leave but human resources works with the different colleges to come up with practices to accommodate faculty. Faculty will consult with their dean, and are sometimes allowed to work at home part time. Sometimes they will be allowed to take a quarter off or have reduced teaching load for a quarter. The schools are usually flexible and allow the woman to choose whether to take the quarter before or after the birth off.

Although this is a school that would be classified as an "unpaid leave" school and, on paper, might be categorized as a school offering no more than the federally mandated unpaid leave, in reality, it appears to function much more like some of the schools with the most generous policies. It may be that, in actual implementation, the flexibility of a "formally informal" policy actually provides superior benefits to faculty members.

For example, a criticism reported by an administrator at an institution with a paid leave policy was that their faculty felt the policy was "too rigid." At this particular institution, a female faculty member with three small children, married to a man in the military, made a request to stop the clock when her husband was temporarily assigned elsewhere for a year. Her request was denied because her case didn't fit the specified criteria.

Conversely, we found praise for the work/family policies at an institution where faculty was allowed use of only available accrued sick leave. The administrator reported that: "people are quite glad that the policy is quite generous. Even if the faculty member is eligible for family leave, but doesn't actually take the leave he/she can stop the tenure clock." Why would their faculty perceive these policies to be "generous" where we categorize them at the bottom of the scale of benefits? Perhaps it is because of informal arrangements. Elsewhere in the survey, this same administrator reported that: "It's common for a faculty member to work out an arrangement with the department chair to reduce teaching load during the semester after childbirth and then to make that up over the summer or in later semesters."

On the other hand, informal arrangements present the possibility of discriminatory application. Another administrator reported that at her institution:

... there are many informal arrangements for parental leave. Some departments are very sensitive to the needs of faculty after childbirth and they will work out a change in faculty duties so that a professor can teach more one semester and then take off for the semester after childbirth or have different duties from home.

In this situation as described, faculty members may be happy about the flexibility and responsiveness of the leave policies. However, it might also be that while "some departments" are "very sensitive," that others are not.

Relief of all duties

Another variation on leave content was the amount of duty relief a professor taking "leave" received. Among schools that offered any paid parental leave above a short-term maternity leave, the majority, 75 percent, offered full relief of duties. (n=24) Relief of duties is related to rank, (p=.01) but not type of institution (p=.80).

There is a cautionary note: within the category of schools with the most generous leave policies, those that offer a full quarter or semester of leave, 14 percent do not relieve all duties with the paid leave. (n=14) Typically this means that a professor might take 6 to 8 weeks of a full maternity leave at home and then resume advising duties, committee responsibilities and be expected to pursue research.

These non-full relief schools are all top tier schools. So, even though elite schools have the highest rate of offering paid parental leave, 33 percent do not relieve professors of all duties. (n=7) When the scope is narrowed even further to look only at schools that offer a gender-neutral parental leave, 20 percent do not offer full relief of duties. (n=15) Therefore, there are only 9 schools (13 percent) in Sample One that offer a full semester of leave, with full relief of duties. (n=71)

Research Expectations

Another element that factors in to a university's leave policy, one that has particular salience for assistant professors on the tenure track, is expectations regarding continuation of research. Among schools that offer any paid leave, 100% do not expect any research to be done while the professor is on leave or has the clock stopped. (n=18) It is important to note, however, that this is in the weighted sample. The weighting drops 4 schools, out of 21, (19 percent) that did expect research. These schools were top-tier institutions, 3 elite and 1 "very difficult."

This leads to an important caveat about elite schools. Remember that this group of schools also had a high percentage of institutions offering "women-only" policies. In examining the data without using the recoded ranking variable that groups together elite and very difficult schools, I find that, while the majority of elite schools do not have research expectations for their faculty on leave, when the focus is on schools that offer full, paid, gender-neutral parental leaves, among elite schools, 100 percent of these schools do expect research. This means that in our sample, there are no elite schools that offer a paid, gender-neutral, parental leave that relieves the faculty member of all duties and expectations of research for a full semester.

However, the picture may be somewhat more complicated. The anecdotal responses we received from administrators indicated that the messages communicated to faculty about real expectations, may diverge from the stated expectations. And it could also be that competition from other peers who have taken leave and continued their research agenda simultaneously may raise expectations. One administrator reported that: "No research expected, but it frequently happens." At another institution, it states explicitly in a faculty memo regarding stopped clock policy that "work accomplished during the excluded period may be cited in the promotion/tenure case." Another told us that there is "No bias against clock stop but what is done during stopped clock is taken into consideration during tenure decision."

Rates of Policy Utilization

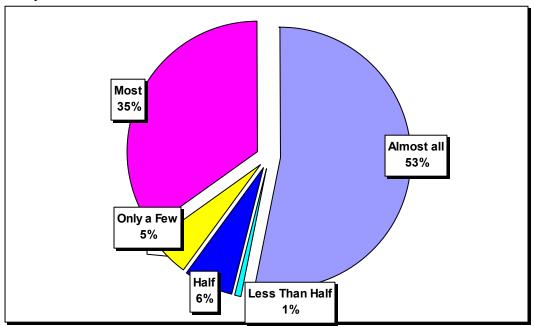
Institutions may offer leave and stopped clock benefits, but how often are they utilized? When we asked administrators, "What percentage of eligible women/men take leave in a year?" with response categories of "Almost all, most, half, less than half, only a few, or none?" we found significant gender differences.

Admittedly, these data reflect a particular administrator's best estimate of the percentage of faculty utilizing the policy, rather than hard numbers. As a result, this is a subjective question that depends for its accuracy on the administrators' level of interaction with faculty. For example, one administrator responded that since she works only with the professors who do request leave, she did not know how many faculty who were eligible did *not* request leave. Nevertheless, although this subjectivity can be a liability for this question, it is also a strength – this gives us an opportunity to gauge administrators' perceptions of benefit utilization, as well as giving us at least a rough picture of rates of usage.

Among the schools that offered any paid leave above short-term maternity leave, a clear majority, 53 percent, reported that "almost all" eligible women utilized their leave policy. Another 35 percent reported that "most" women took leave; while 6 percent reported "half" and 5 percent reported "only a few." (n=20)

The results are dramatically different for male usage of parental leave benefits. Among schools that offer paid parental leave, over a quarter, 26 percent reported that they had no men who utilized their parental leave policy. This was followed by 46 percent reporting "only a few." However, 23 percent of the administrators at these schools reported that "almost all" of their eligible men did take leave. (n=10)

Figure Five: Percentage of Eligible Women Utilizing an Institution's Paid Leave Policy



n=20

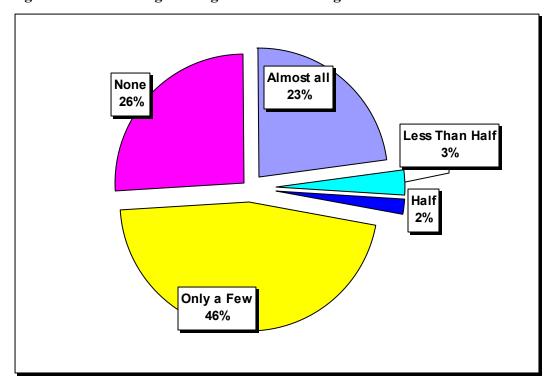


Figure Six: Percentage of Eligible Men Utilizing an Institutions Paid Leave Policy

n=10

Policy Effect

On some campuses, concerns about these benefits have resulted in extensive dialogue. In order to gauge the atmosphere on a particular campus about these work/family benefits, we asked our respondents if they have heard praise and/or criticism for their policies. The answer was yes to both for schools with a paid policy: 58 percent of schools with paid leave reported praise and 39 percent reported hearing criticism. (n=25 and 26)

Some of the volunteered responses to these questions provided helpful information and raised important issues. One administrator reported her own criticism of her institution's policy: the leave policy does not apply to adoptive parents.

Another theme sounded by two different administrators, one at a large public university, the other at a small, private university, underscored one of our research interests: are there unintended consequences to gender-neutrality in parental leave provision? The first administrator commented:

Both men and women are eligible for [the leave policy]. For women the childbearing leave is part of [this time] off, so the woman who goes through the pregnancy and giving birth gets the same amount of time as the man. [We] frequently hear that this isn't fair, since the woman should get more time off. Inadvertently the man gets a greater benefit.

The second administrator reported: "Some are concerned that it's not equitable for women, because women are usually the primary caretaker. Women who take the leave care for the child, but for men it's an extra semester for research." She then related the story of a man and a woman who were hired in the same department at the same time. They both later took parental leave. The woman was the primary caretaker, so she used the leave to take care of her child. The man's wife did not work, so she took care of the child, and he got an extra semester for research.

Just for the record, we asked our respondents if policy users encounter any bias against them as a result of utilizing work and family policies. All respondents, 100 percent, denied, officially, that any bias exists at their own institution. (n=35) However, some administrators did volunteer some illuminating comments on the issue. At some institutions, official policy may be undercut by department-level implementation. One administrator told us: "some women who have used the policies have had a less than positive response." Yet another volunteered that: "Some female faculty who have submitted a request [for stopped clock] have been told by their department chair that they shouldn't because it will count against them."

Other administrators responded that even when a bias does not exist, there might still be a fear of stigma. One administrator volunteered that he does not believe using the policies has counted against anyone, but "there may be a perception that it can." Another declared that they work hard at her institution to make sure bias doesn't happen, but: "there is a belief in some departments that one shouldn't stop the clock because it will count against you."

Finally, another administrator admitted that overt bias does have another face – increased scrutiny and diminished expectations. "It doesn't seem to count against them," this administrator remarked, "but there is an additional expectation – are they going to be productive after leave/stopped clock?"

APPENDIX

Methodology

The research objective for the Family, Gender and Tenure Project as a whole was to find and interview individual faculty members at universities and colleges nationwide with a paid parental leave policy. As a result, we used a multi-stage stratified sampling technique, and the sample of universities with which we began was chosen to be representative of faculty nationwide. The analysis reported here is based on a sample of 168 four-year colleges and universities (comprised of two separately drawn probability samples of 84 schools) drawn from all of the institutions listed in *Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges*. The sample was stratified by competitiveness; within strata, schools were selected with probabilities proportionate to the size of each school's full-time faculty to ensure that smaller schools would not have a disproportionate chance of selection. The result was a representative sample of faculty at universities nationwide.

Because the sample of universities was chosen to be representative of faculty, the institutional data reported in this paper from the Combined Sample have been weighted by the inverse of the probability of selection. The weighting was done by stratum, and determined by the size of the faculty of each school within each stratum. The final weighting was smoothed to bring the sample size to 168.

The first-stage institutional survey was used to identify schools with paid leave policies; these schools were then used to assemble the sample of eligible professors for the second-stage individual survey. During the summer of 2001, researchers interviewed by telephone administrators at each of the 84 colleges and universities in Sample One. Although this report covers only the data related to paid leave policies, the survey included questions about both leave and stopped clock policies. The administrators were queried on the availability, content and policy history of the policies; eligibility requirements and procedures for utilizing the policies; extent of policy utilization, and the existence of any positive or negative issues arising from the presence or absence of the policies. The institutional survey was only administered in its entirety to administrators from Sample One; Sample Two administrators received an abbreviated set of questions. At the completion of the institutional survey, 7 schools from Sample One and 8 schools from Sample Two remained non-responsive. The valid cases used for the analysis presented here were 153 (91 percent of the original sample).

Some administrators requested additional information and a hard copy of the survey. These requests were accommodated and the survey then retrieved by fax or mail. These data were compared with and augmented by public information on university policies gathered from university web sites.

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