Perceptions about Work-Family Balance Among DU Community Members with Young Children

Cultural Anthropology – Winter 2017

Section 1: Work/Life Balance
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Introduction

The balance between work and life is difficult to manage for professors and students, not to mention those who also have the added responsibility of being a parent. It is hard to take care of your obligations outside of the home, as well as be a nurturing, attentive, and present parent. After interviewing students and faculty with children, five major themes were found among their responses pertaining to the maintenance of that balance. These themes were guilt, job status, schedule flexibility, parental leave, and colleague reactions.

The first theme that seemed to be addressed commonly was guilt. Students and professors feel that there is a constant conflict between spending the appropriate amount of time at work and at home, so as to make sure that both aspects of their lives are being given enough attention. The guilt that people feel about spending too much time at work comes from the belief that they are not allocating enough time to spend with their families, and that their children are going to feel neglected. The other end of the spectrum is parents who feel that they spend too much time at home taking care of their children, and not enough time at work. These parents are worried that they are not pulling their own weight or that they are letting their coworkers down. No matter how time is divided, parents feel as though they are not giving the necessary amount of time to one or both aspects of their lives.

Another theme among the interviewed parents was the impact that job status has on income and benefits. Job status, in reference to both having a job and having a secure job, can have a big impact on way professors and students raise their children. Part time workers fear being replaceable or losing their jobs when allotting time to care for their children or take maternity leave. A lot of full time working professors and students have left their beloved jobs for part time jobs (or no job), resulting in a decrease in job status and household income in order to make more
time to care for their children. However, professors with tenure seem to be pretty flexible and available for their children.

Schedule flexibility was a huge factor that came up when discussing the balance between work and life. Undergraduate students, graduate students, tenured professors, and non-tenured professors all have varying degrees of schedule flexibility, which impacts their ability to care for their children or have a life outside of work or school. Some students believe that being a student makes their schedule more flexible because they are able to create their own class schedule and choose one that works for them to be able to balance school with the needs of their children. Other students find it difficult because of required courses that they have to take at specific times which inhibits their ability to make time for their children. This is the case for tenured versus non-tenured professors as well.

Parental leave was another theme that came up frequently. Parental leave is extremely important in reducing stress, as well as creating meaningful quality time for parents as they have a new baby enter their family. Maternity leave is given for mothers to care for their newborn child and recover from childbirth. New fathers are also sometimes given leave to help out in the care of the new baby. Many parents expressed gratitude for the opportunity to take time off of work to spend with their new family, which is very nice and accommodating for new parents. It is a little more difficult for students, as less accommodations are provided to assist them in managing school work, and less leave time is given to students with a newborn child.

The final theme that was addressed regularly was colleague reactions. Professors have expressed that a supportive work environment is extremely helpful in maintaining a healthy balance between work and home life. When professors feel like they have the support of their coworkers, it is easier to manage when unexpected things get thrown at them. A lot of people feel
as though they will be judged for taking extra time off of work to spend with their children, but overall balancing work and home life is very dependent on the professor and the situation they are placed in.

Overall there seems to be a constant struggle between managing work/school and home life. People often feel torn between where they should spend their time, fear for the status of their jobs, constantly assess their flexibility though the different aspects of their lives, aim to be stress free during parental leave, and question how their coworkers view them. The following sections discuss the struggles of these five sub themes in further detail.

**Guilt**

A common theme that emerged under the Work/School theme was guilt. Guilt is traditionally thought of and defined by a shame felt by a person who believes they have done something wrong. This feeling can evoke action to make right any wrongdoings. This definition applies to this category because of the incessant struggle to find and outline a work/life balance, however this guilt is not always felt appropriately. There is an internal battle felt by parents that will be explored further.

Overall, the group identified that parents (be it professors or students) feel guilt because they try to devote themselves completely to their family and school requirements, respectively. There is a problem in striking a balance of time that can be spent on each without feeling that the other aspect has been disregarded. This is further investigated through quote analysis provided from student-conducted interviews.

“It's definitely that guilt, like, that I’m not spending enough time with her. When, I mean, I know I spend a lot of time with her. Some people I know hardly see their kids, and I see her every day, even if she’s asleep. I just have to keep telling myself
and her that, you know, like mommy and I will be around a lot more soon sort of thing. And she’s young, but kids get it, I think.”

As this quote demonstrates, it is hard to feel that you are missing out on your child’s growth and developments. Seeing them even though they are asleep sometimes is not enough; when the work/life balance is shifted, or even just perceived as unbalanced, the individual will express an under-arching feeling of guilt from one or more aspects. This individual feels this guilt among the family aspect, and worries that he does not dedicate enough time to being at home, although he understands that this is not realistic.

“Mostly feeling guilt as a parent because I know that, like, sometimes when I have to on weekends do my assignments and, like, not devote time to her it’s, like, challenging because I know that I’m showing her how to have a strong work ethic and that education is really important, but at the same time I struggle with guilt feeling that she needs more from me. She needs more time and attention, so it is difficult to juggle around, especially throw in that I was a business owner. I just sold my business so that I could better juggle those things.”

This parent is able to serve her child while putting herself through school. One up-side, she feels, is what this struggle and effort shows her daughter in terms of strength and perseverance. The guilt of being self-centered and focusing on her own future is quieted by the reminder that her daughter will benefit from her schooling. Ultimately, though, this individual is not selfish, in fact putting herself through school to benefit her daughter is extremely well thought out, and will support her child further throughout life. There are limits, though, as this individual notes. She had to sell her business in order to become more available for the other aspects of life demanding her attention.
“Sometimes I felt like I was being a bad mom by staying an extra hour at school to get help from my professor.” The student speaking in this quote describes what guilt feels like perfectly, since she states that she feels like a bad mom because she stays at school extra to get help with her work. This feeling of being a bad parent because they (she) sometimes have to put schoolwork as a priority seems to be a common theme among students in particular. This mom struggles with wanting to be a good student, but also wanting to provide proper attention and time for her child.

There have been overwhelming instances of interviewees feeling that they are unable to carry their own weight and do their part in either role, which is another theme seen throughout the subcategory of guilt. “I was really stressed, because I was a single mom, when I started to work here that I be perceived as if I couldn't carry my own weight because I had two kids at home and things like that.” Professors feel guilty because they need to be there to take care of their children and have a home life, but they also have responsibilities at school to their coworkers and their students to get their work done and be a good teacher.

“Yeah, and now I feel a little bit more guilty when I’m at home and it’s just us I need to give her my full, undivided attention.”

This family is juggling the work/school life balance of a parent, which is significantly more challenging when additional factors (such as struggles on family life to properly allot time and making sure the time is well spent) are superimposed by a demanding job. While many cultural anthropologists are recording working family time allotment, there is definitely a lot to be said in the avenues of family life of a student-work struggle. Time is the most important thing any parent can commit to giving their child, and quality over quantity is necessary in a stable household.

The common theme among these quotes is that no matter what happens, no matter how their time is divided, parents feel as though one, or both, areas of their lives are suffering. Some
of the interviewees were students, whose lives become more complicated with the necessity of studying and preparation for class. Having a child and trying to earn a degree is a level of stress virtually unparalleled. For instance, one interviewee is able to “quiet” the feelings of guilt by remembering that her actions are important life lessons for her child, as this difficult task shows strong work ethic, and determination. At the same time, though, there are things that she has to give up, such as sleep. What is the line, then? At what point is this feeling of guilt validated, and when does the person need to reevaluate their priorities, or at least the balance between the demands of their life?

Professors ultimately understand this debacle as well. Instead of studying, they have to fit in time for lesson planning, grading, and their continual research. This leads to long hours, and potentially returning home late. Personally, the professor I interviewed would make sure to handle this by going to work early so his job responsibilities could be finished at a reasonable hour to make time for family dinners. He also is trying to address this by finding ways to incorporate his children into his work, like bringing them on class trips so they can, too, can see the work ethic of their parents.

**Job Status**

Job status refers both to having a job and the level to which this job is secure or not. Job status varied widely across these interviews. The interviews conducted included both university employees and students. In the group of employees, some were part-time and full-time staff, and some were tenured and non-tenured faculty. All of these statuses impacted income and access to benefits.

The interviews showed that parenthood is frequently associated with the fear of losing a job or needing to quit a job. Despite maternity leave procedures, the respondents often felt
obligated to quit their job or feared being replaced. For example, one respondent expressed her fear of being terminated when she became a mother, "I was afraid if I went on maternity leave that um they would try to get rid of me. Which they did try...Yah, um there was a, you know, there were other people who thought they could do my job, that sort of saw that as an opportunity. Um, so yah, I was uncomfortable about that."

Other respondents discuss voluntary changes to their jobs, “So she works from home and she, uh, she hasn’t, uh she hasn't had to have a job outside of the home since she got pregnant the first time.” In this quote and many others, there is a theme of parents, particularly women losing their job status because of the demands of parenthood. Spouses quit fulfilling work, or fear losing their work, and in many cases are forced to take part-time work because of family demands.

This appears to be an issue in the DU community because the school employs a large number of part-time faculty and staff. We found that the fear of losing a job due to parenthood had a push effect on employees. There were people who were either pushed away from parenting and away from employment with the school. The majority of the respondents have full-time job status, but the idea of working part-time came up frequently in the interviews. We found that many also seemed to have someone working part-time in their family. For example, a respondent talks about leaving a beloved teaching position for part-time hourly work when she had children,

“Well, my husband is a high school teacher, and so that poses a particular dilemma, because we would have had to have child care at six in the morning…even when they are school age, we would have to have someone for two hours before school and several hours afterward, and so, at that point, I stopped doing it. I wanted to be home with them anyway.”

This quote also echoes another common sub-theme. Taking part-time work can lead to a decrease in job status, but for many parents, it is worth it because it allows them to spend more
time with their children. Part-time work also reduces the stress of juggling schedules. In all of our research we found that a large number of the women interviewed saw a decrease in job status to part-time work by personal choice. While some in the sample did feel forced to move into part-time employment, the majority made the decision for themselves.

In some cases, child rearing can impact an employee’s ability to do his or her job effectively. One woman, for example, was forced at times to bring her baby to work, “My little son was little, he was like maybe 3 months old when I started MIT. And so, yeah, so I was still nursing him and everything, so he would come with me sometimes.” The respondent’s job status at this time was that of a part-time faculty member of another university. Clearly this effected both her ability to care for her son and her ability to work as she had to bring her child to work. This demonstrates how often part-time work can be detrimental to work life. With better benefits it is likely that this woman would have been able to see more flexibility in her role as a mother and as a teacher.

We also observed a number of respondents who were looking to change their job status, "I anticipate that will happen again [taking on more childcare obligations] when my wife gets a job, especially because the jobs my wife is interviewing for are saying that she will have to work weekends pretty regularly." The search for new work can cause stress and disruption in the family unit, as parents worry about how they are going to balance their lives in light of the time that is required for interviewing and possible different hours from a new job. Parents also worry about the financial cost of moving from a higher status, higher paid position to a lower paid position. The interview process, too, was seen to be quite arduous and a disincentive to leaving low paying part-time work.
This belies another theme often discussed in these quotes, seniority. The most senior workers seem to have fewer issues with parenthood than the junior ones, "And I am very privileged that I’m in a tenured position, I have a lot of flexibility which I think is nice for raising children because if I have to pick someone up early and I’m not teaching I can plan around so that I can work on the weekend or later at night so I can make up for what I missed earlier." Tenure is the most common marker of this theme and is well discussed. The respondent above is especially happy to be in such a privileged status, which gives her greater flexibility. Seniority plays a large role in the lives of the respondents with worries over job status highly magnified by those lacking seniority. This was not true in every case; for example, one student who worked in a restaurant and many part time employees felt as though they had adequate flexibility, but it was true in enough cases to suggest a trend.

Ultimately, job status is a current that runs strongly through all of these people’s lives. It conjures both worry and happiness in its various forms. Job status represents an important social hierarchy in almost all of the interviews conducted.

**Schedule Flexibility**

Schedule flexibility is the availability to arrange time freely. People who have schedule flexibility are more in charge of their time. In this study, schedule flexibility refers to having a balance between family and work/study life. The interviewees in our project include both professors and students, and we can see many of them struggle with schedule flexibility. The degree of flexibility is different from case to case, depending on the assistance they received from the school. For example, offering days-off, childcare, and financial support, or flexibility in their class schedule as a whole. The work and study environment is crucial to all the interviewees because a good balance can help them take care of their children and maintain their jobs at the
same time. Time management is also an important factor, which can make a huge difference in their schedule flexibility. We found that a great aspect of time management is related to their job title. There are many differences in the people that were interviewed, from undergraduate students, graduate students, to professors. The interviews provided insight into their daily lives, the struggles of scheduling time, and even personal frustrations.

Among professors, those who were tenured compared to those who were not have very different experiences. One faculty member mentioned that having a tenured position at DU helps their schedule flexibility, "And I am very privileged that I’m in a tenured position, I have a lot of flexibility which I think is nice for raising children because if I have to pick someone up early and I’m not teaching I can plan around so that I can work on the weekend or later at night so I can make up for what I missed earlier."

Another professor briefly mentioned the difficulties in having children and attending faculty meetings, but the professor then indicated that the supervisors were understanding to their situations,

"A number of faculty have children and so for instance, if I’m in a faculty meeting and the meeting is scheduled from 1:30- 3:30 a few faculty members if they don’t have alternatives for childcare that day sometimes were able to leave the faculty meeting a little bit earlier than we normally would and it’s understood that you know picking up our kids is something we have to do because if we don’t have an alternative caretaker it means we’re the ones picking up our kids and there’s not a lot of flexibility around that."

Through the interviews, we further learned that there were two strong views students had in regards to schedule flexibility. Half of the students thought that due to their life as a student they
did not have any schedule flexibility, as some required classes only offered at certain times. There was one male graduate student who was very committed to his schoolwork. This may be because getting a Master’s degree plays a more prevalent role in their lives; thus, graduate students have less flexibility in their schedule as shown in the quote below, “I try and do my work-study in the morning and then have my grad classes. After all that’s done I pick up the baby. I don’t have much of a life besides school and the baby.”

The other half of the student group felt that being a student gave them the most flexibility, as they could schedule their classes to avoid conflicts between their responsibilities as both students and parents. Undergraduate students have more flexibility in their schedule since they have more options to choose from, and they have four years to take all of their required classes. Simply based in the fact that they are completing their undergraduate degrees they have a bit more flexibility. They can decide how they can balance between their schoolwork, work life, and family life,

"Exactly. But now its new managers, so it’s like, you need me, or I need you on the weekends. It’s like OK, or its either you take it or you lose it. And I’m like OK, my reason was, I’m not going to pay a babysitter the whole day on the weekend and I’m not even making what I’m going to pay the babysitter. So I’m like, fine I stick with two days. So I stick with two days. That’s what they give me, so that’s what they put up for me, so here I am only Monday and Wednesday.”

Ultimately, both perspectives gave a great emphasis on the importance of schedule flexibility.

In America, there is a great desire for a better quality of life. Life itself has become easier in terms of communication, but more hectic in terms of the constant notifications coming from one place or another. With an increase in women in the workforce and as a result an increase in
housework, time has become even more of a commodity than before. This was proved through the many interviewees who spoke to their desire for greater schedule flexibility, especially with being a parent and affiliated to DU in some way.

**Parental Leave**

The theme of ‘parental leave’ is important for expecting mothers and fathers because it allows parents extra time to be with their families during a period of major change. In addition, certain parental leave policies alleviate the worry of having to lose pay or job status position while spending time away from work. Such parental leave policies reduce stressful factors in the lives of families, which allows for more meaningful family time. However, some institutions, depending on the policy, may not be able to accommodate every parent’s specific needs.

Parental leave policies allow for the parent of a newborn child to take time off in order to care for the child and adjust to the differences this type of life change can bring. In most cases, parental leave is mainly given to mothers, since they need to provide for the newborn nutritionally in the first few months after their birth, and also recover from childbirth. However, there are cases where fathers are granted leave as well to help the mother care for the child. The University of Denver parental leave policy is granted to faculty, staff and even students for mothers and fathers who just had a baby. Granted, there are contingencies to this policy that apply differently to parents depending on their affiliation with the University.

On one end of the spectrum, members of the University have had very beneficial experiences with the policy. These members of the DU community are very happy with the opportunity they we granted and the way they were supported during their parental leave. In one example an interviewee states, “I felt very supported. I started my position here at DU as staff, full-time, four weeks or six weeks after my daughter was born.” This example, and others like it,
show that faculty/staff members who already had a child before working at the University were pleased with the amount of paid time off they received as well as the freedom to be able to spend time with their families after they already had their baby.

In another example, an interviewee explains, "Yeah, so most companies don’t provide paternity leave. Moms get maternity leave typically but, um I got ten weeks of paid paternity leave, plus I could take an extra two weeks of sick time to make twelve weeks." This faculty member provides another positive example of the University’s parental leave policy. They were able to benefit by being able to support their family while at the same time not have to worry about losing their job. Although these two examples show the benefits of the policy, it is clear that not every parent can be satisfied in the same ways.

There are different ways in which the parental leave policy at the University can be accommodating. For example, some parents were happy to be able to take leave to spend time with their family away from work. When that was no longer an option due to various reasons (i.e. they were in the middle of teaching a class when they had their baby), other parents were happy to be supported by faculty members when they had no other option but to bring their children to campus so that they would not fall behind in their class work. One interviewee said,

"Oh yeah, of course, two years ago I got to bring my baby to work with me...He was here let’s see October, November, December... um three and a half months. I would come to work part time during the day and help extend my maternity leave um and everybody here in the office was gracious enough to allow me to let him come in and he was so tiny that he would just eat and sleep the whole time."

In this example, the flexibility of the University’s policy is apparent in doing the best they can to accommodate new parents during times when additional childcare is not an option. Other examples
like this one show how the University adjusts to specific needs of the parent under certain circumstances. However, sometimes the timing of the childbirth does not allow for such flexibility of the policy.

There are circumstances where people can take advantage of the leave, but it can come at a less opportune time. When instances of pregnancy conflict with class schedules people feel torn between their work obligations and their newfound responsibilities as a parent. An example of this can be seen in the quote, “So you also can’t let your students down so it is a really hard choice because you also don’t want to let your baby down.” As you can see, this can make things difficult for the parent with their normal workload and their obligations to take care of their families. While the University’s parental leave policy allows parents to be with their families for some extended time, their commitment to their work is still a priority.

On the other end of the spectrum, members of the University run into issues with their work-life-home life balancing act. This disparity came up specifically in the eyes of a graduate student at the University when she was torn between her schooling and her new child. She says, “Yes, because it was only like 10 days of maternity leave, because I was a graduate student.” This is a clear example of how the amount of time allotted for leave can differ depending on the affiliation with the school. While staff/faculty members receive 10+ weeks off of paid leave, graduate students only get 10 days off. This student was not able to benefit from the same leave given to other members at the University and because of that she struggled with these differences in her coursework and her home life.

Parental leave is a very helpful benefit in a new parent’s life, whether it takes place during the birth of their first child or additional child in their family. These quotes demonstrate the topic of ‘paternal leave’ in a way that is positive at times, but also slightly negative. Most of the quotes
affirmed that they received some kind of maternity leave right after their family had a baby. This is beneficial because these parents received an opportunity to spend quality time at home with their families while keeping their job. However, these quotes also showed that the amount of time they got off either was not enough time to completely be able to take care of their family or they showed that the amount of time they got off was not satisfactory for the amount of work they had to do to keep up on all of their classes. This can especially be seen in the example about the graduate student. Although these quotes are positive in the respect that all interviewees got some time off for maternity leave, they also negatively reflect how the University falls short of providing adequate forms of maternity leave for all families and parents.

**Reactions of Male Faculty**

Paternal leave policies at the University of Denver seem to have a positive response with the male faculty that utilize this time to foster a better work/life balance. Unlike maternal leave at the University of Denver, which seems to have created a more negative response, paternal leave has been utilized and praised by the men interviewed at the University of Denver. Although more male faculty members were involved in the interview process than male students, the faculty’s response had an overall good experience with the university’s policies. The ten weeks given to male faculty allows for new parents to spend time at home with their spouses and their newly born children. Some of these male faculty members even mentioned taking some of their vacation time to extend their leave as well, making for a more convenient experience when starting or expanding a family. This male faculty member mentioned during an interview his experience in terms of the time he was given: "Ya, so most companies don’t provide paternity leave. Moms get maternity leave typically but, um I got ten weeks of paid paternity leave, plus I could take an extra two weeks of sick time to make twelve weeks”. By his mentioning and comparisons to other companies that
do not provide this time to new fathers, this faculty member seems content with the University of Denver’s policies.

The male faculty at the University of Denver mentioned their agreement with the policies offered at the University of Denver. In terms of childcare, most of the men involved in the study felt relatively comfortable with their work/life balance. In one interview, a male faculty member mentioned that missing work related responsibilities because of his kids makes him uncomfortable.

“It always makes me feel uncomfortable. And I can’t say I’ve faced any sort of uh resentment or you know discrimination or anything like that but I always feel like when I have to say that ‘I can’t do this because of my kids…’ I always feel like maybe I’m not quite pulling my weight as a faculty member or as a colleague. Um so it’s sort of…it might just be sort of perception as opposed to reality.”

Most departments at the University of Denver are filled with faculty members with kids, which can make it difficult to arrange meetings around childcare. In comparison, a male faculty member also weighed in on how the University of Denver makes him feel about these situations by stating that, “the institution I used to work at before DU...was much more kind of um grumbling about [missing things because of childcare] um there was much more grumbling about people that were unavailable at times because of parenting. And I didn’t find that to be very healthy for me…at DU I think it’s a lot better though.” Although finding a work/balance can be difficult for anyone, it seems that the University of Denver does a good job of allowing male faculty to at least have the opportunity to do so.

**Colleague Reactions**

Colleague reactions are highly influential on a person’s ability to have a work-life balance, especially if they have a child. An unsupportive colleague presence in the workplace can make it
extremely difficult to have flexibility in a childcare schedule. On the other hand, supportive colleagues can be very helpful and provide reassurance when a parent is trying to balance childcare with work. There are an incredible variety of reactions that colleagues can have in regard to those with children. In addition, the reactions people have can be dependent on their own experience, as well as their placement in specific departments and universities. Certain reactions could also depend on differences in gender and background. A supportive work environment is vital to helping struggling individuals in maintaining a work-life balance.

One element that appeared in the interviews was the influence of a spouse in maintaining a work-life balance. “Other faculties who have a wife who stays home doesn’t have to worry about if their kids don’t have school or if their kids are sick, you know, time for research.” This quote represents a good majority of the working class single parent. The lack of support that singles are given dramatically affects them and how they are able to live their own lives. Many similar opinions occurred in the interviews and overall were a major aspect of this topic. It can seem unfair that those with a stay-at-home spouse are given the chance to thrive, and are given more time in comparison to those who do not have this luxury. Those parents who have primary custody are often found to be facing many more hardships than those who only see their kids on the weekends. This can also lead to judgment based on gender differences and personal background.

A supportive work environment is vital to maintaining a work-life balance. Especially with younger children there are constant curveballs. Anything can happen to disrupt a schedule. Having colleague support can make it easier to deal with these curveballs. Having respect for scheduling obligations is very important for having flexibility with children: “I felt very supported. I started my position here at DU as staff, full-time, four weeks or six weeks after my daughter was born.”
On the other hand, an unsupportive environment can be extremely stressful and difficult to handle: “One day one of mine got sick on that really bad snow day. I thought I was in the clear because they only asked for non-essential personnel. But I was later reprimanded by the head of my department.”

Many interviewees were often embarrassed to have to ask for exceptions because of children. The lack of support in this environment and negative reactions on the part of colleagues can be extremely harmful to someone who is already struggling to have balance:

"And you know, it’s horribly awkward at times and I think some of the stuff you’re just kinda like really? And you can never say, You know that’s pick-up time. Would it be okay if we met earlier? You know someone else would be like, Oh yah, 2:30. That’s a great time I could maybe say, I’m unavailable at that time, could we meet, noon would be better for me. I could meet for 2 hours at noon! But you don’t feel like you can say it’s because of my kid."

This person did not feel comfortable explaining that she was restricted by her child. She was afraid that she would be judged for not being able to put in the extra time required of the job.

Another aspect that can make a large difference is the way in which university policy or ideals impact the attitude of employees. If family is prioritized by the school, employees are far more likely to be supportive of someone with children: “There’s a definite kind of respect for kind of our obligations elsewhere, and for scheduling around those as much as possible. And that if you can’t make something work because of kid stuff, so be it. I feel like the University’s actually pretty good about that too.” A certain respect for obligations outside of work is key to a supportive environment, and makes a large difference for those who do not have the kind of support systems outside of school that can act as a safety net if something comes up.
This respect for obligations is created by university and departmental attitude as well as a colleague’s own personal situation. If co-workers have children of their own, the shared experience can help them empathize and therefore respect obligations outside of school and work. This can even go as far as offering direct help to someone who might be a single parent, or be in a similar situation in which they are the sole caretaker of a child.

There was a large variety of reactions from colleagues mentioned throughout the transcripts. One largely recurring theme was that people felt as though they would be judged by colleagues for taking extra time for maternity leave or childcare purposes. This being said, there were many cases where people felt supported in their decision to take time. The overarching theme was that people had different experiences; some people felt threatened, while others felt supported. This fact may have had something to do with the status of the interviewee. Professors often felt less judged than students, and women felt more judgement than men.

**Conclusion**

Creating a stable, loving household full of achievements and aspirations is the goal of all moms and dads as they venture into parenthood. Within the stable household many aspects are necessary to create this, including work, school, economic stability, emotional support and physical, in-the-moment participation. Parents juggling all of these things, in addition to learning a new trade or who are teaching and lesson planning, experience an unparalleled circumstance of difficulty. Parents who are students or professors experience an array of situations which they must face in the swift, unforgiving environment of the classroom.

Guilt is a main proponent in any parent’s life, which will constantly result in second guessing their decisions to ensure the best start for their children. As a result, students and
professors alike emphasize the amount of time dedicated to academics outside of class and its interference with the already small allotment of time a working parent has with their child.

Another aspect of parenting is job status and job security. The trend among women is an apprehension toward maternity leave for fear of their job security, or they demonstrate variance between preference for full-time work or full-time parenthood. Inconsistent job variances add another layer of stress onto the family unit. On the other hand, the University of Denver offers its students, staff and faculty parental leave for both mothers and fathers for varying amounts of time. Professors benefit more greatly than students in these times because schedule flexibility is not always possible for students planning their classes.

In respect to campus/colleague professor opinion, it varied greatly. In general, people experienced supportive colleagues. While having an understanding work environment is important, many parents, particularly mothers, had a hard time taking additional time off for fear of judgement.

Finally, the importance of schedule flexibility. Undergraduate parents reported to have more flexibility in their schedule in terms of classes being taken over a four year span and the ability to choose them. Professors faced the occasional faux pas of leaving a faculty meeting to fetch a child from school, but graduate students seemed to struggle the most when planning their schedules and obligations around child care with very little schedule flexibility.

Many problems arise from being a parent while involved in the world of academia. The added pressure of being a student or professor while parenting is many-faceted and varies from household to household. The student, staff and faculty of the University of Denver face a great deal of adversity while simultaneously caring for a family and continuing their education and building careers.