Recasting the Parentative: Seeking Balance Amidst the Busyness

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Recasting the Parentative
Seeking balance amidst the busyness
The Team

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Background

This research builds off an ACRL 2017 panel session, When Treading Water Isn’t Enough: What Academic Librarian Parents Need to Thrive, that elicited audience participation and feedback on work-life balance issues for academic librarian parents.
Survey

Distribution:
40 ALA/ACRL Listservs

Timeline:
October 22 - November 12, 2018

Responses:
1,033 responses total
(581 viable responses)
Main Questions Explored:

What stereotypes about working parents exist within the culture of academic libraries?
In what ways are working mothers and fathers impacted by these stereotypes?
How can institutions work to challenge these stereotypes and provide support for academic librarians who are balancing career advancement and family obligations?
What is your current rank?

- Non-faculty: 31.8%
- Non-tenure track: 23.2%
- Tenured: 21.6%
- Tenure track: 16.6%
- Does not apply: 6.8%
What is your current role?

- Librarian: 63.1%
- Department Head: 16.5%
- Dean/ Director: 11.7%
- Assistant Dean: 4.3%
- Para/ Support: 3.2%
What is your institution's Carnegie Classification?

- Doctoral: 37.3%
- Master's: 25.9%
- Associate's: 19.5%
- Bacc. College: 15.1%
- Special Focus: 1.9%
Do you have children?

No, but expecting
1.6%
No, and not
13.5%
Yes
84.9%
How many children do you have?

- One: 186
- Two: 223
- Three: 52
- Four: 16
- Five: 3
- Six: 1
- Seven: 1
- Eight: 1
What is your gender?

- Female: 82.0%
- Male: 15.9%
- Prefer not to: 1.4%
What is your relationship status?

- Prefer not to say: 0.9%
- In a relationship: 3.5%
- Divorced: 4.4%
- Single: 8.8%
- Married: 81.4%
How many years have you been a parent/guardian?
Years at current institution

- 0-5 years: 42.2%
- 10-20 years: 23.3%
- 5-10 years: 22.4%
- 20+ years: 12.0%
Years working in academic libraries

- 20+ years: 25.9%
- 5-10 years: 27.5%
- 10-20 years: 30.3%
- 0-5 years: 16.4%
Results
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotypes Researched</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Library workers with children are always leaving early or coming in late</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Library workers with children get preferential treatment from their supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Library workers with children don’t work as much as those without children</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Library workers with children are unreliable</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Library workers with children are not as committed to their careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Library workers with children put in less effort than their counterparts without children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Library workers with children are distracted at work by thoughts of their children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How many stereotypes (pre-defined) have you experienced?

- Zero: the longest bar, indicating the highest number of experiences.
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- Six
- Seven
To what extent do you agree that the following stereotypes exist in your library’s work environment?

1. Library workers with children are always leaving early or coming in late
2. Library workers with children get preferential treatment from their supervisors
3. Library workers with children don’t work as much as those without children
4. Library workers with children are unreliable
5. Library workers with children are not as committed to their careers
6. Library workers with children put in less effort at work than their counterparts without children
7. Library workers with children are distracted at work by thoughts of their children
Have you personally experienced any of the following stereotypes in your library work environment?

1. Library workers with children are always leaving early or coming in late
2. Library workers with children get preferential treatment from their supervisors
3. Library workers with children don’t work as much as those without children
4. Library workers with children are unreliable
5. Library workers with children are not as committed to their careers
6. Library workers with children put in less effort at work than their counterparts without children
7. Library workers with children are distracted at work by thoughts of their children
To what extent do you feel that the following stereotypes affect your ability to be successful at your work?

1. Library workers with children are always leaving early or coming in late
2. Library workers with children get preferential treatment from their supervisors
3. Library workers with children don’t work as much as those without children
4. Library workers with children are unreliable
5. Library workers with children are not as committed to their careers
6. Library workers with children put in less effort at work than their counterparts without children
7. Library workers with children are distracted at work by thoughts of their children
Stereotypes you have encountered not listed above:

- Schedules: 63
- Gender: 15
- Anti Stereotype: 11
- Career: 10
- Microinvalidations: 8
- Talk about kids: 5
- Prefered Treatment: 5
- Other: 5
- Exhausted: 5
- Money: 3
- Selling stuff: 2
How have you been impacted by parenting stereotypes in your library work environment?

- 80% of respondents said they were not impacted or did not respond.
- Many respondents noted that they benefited from being a parent: e.g. more flexible hours, no weekend shifts.
- Many respondents noted having supervisors with children is a positive thing and directly impacting their work/life balance.
- Inductive Coding Results (20% of total respondents):
  - I am seen as getting preferential treatment
  - I am seen as less dedicated to my job
  - I am seen as more dedicated to my job
  - I am seen as disruptive to operations and others have to pick up the slack
  - I experience a loss of advancement/opportunity
  - My general level of stress is increased
  - I am required to over perform to compensate
  - I am seen as unable to meet work expectations
To what extent would the availability of the following types of institutional support push back against parenting stereotypes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible hours</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onsite daycare</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommuting opportunities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to appropriate lactation spaces</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use your cumulative leave for caretaking duties</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental leave</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus parental support network</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended period of paid leave for caretaking duties</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop the tenure clock</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sharing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to employee assistance program (counseling, referrals)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Savings Accounts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended period of unpaid leave for caretaking duties</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not at all (0) <-> Very much (10). Mean
Have you taken advantage of any of the following services at your institution?

- Flexible Savings Accounts
- Access to employee assistance program (counseling, referrals)
- Ability to use your cumulative leave for caretaking duties
- Parental leave
- Flexible hours
- Extended period of unpaid leave for caretaking duties
- Access to appropriate lactation spaces
- Telecommuting opportunities
- Extended period of paid leave for caretaking duties
- Onsite daycare
- Stop the tenure clock
- On campus parental support network
- Job sharing

[Graph showing the percentage of respondents who have taken advantage of each service, with options for 'Yes', 'No (but it is offered)', and 'Is not offered at my institution'.]
Analysis
Parenting Stereotypes Are Real

- 17% agree that these stereotypes exist
  - Those without children are significantly more likely to agree that these parenting stereotypes exist, \( t(74) = 2.662, p < .05 \)
- 53% say they have experienced these stereotypes
- 23% say these stereotypes impact their work
- 94% say that institutional supports push back against these stereotypes
Women See These Stereotypes Differently

- Women are significantly more likely than men to say that these parenting stereotypes strongly impact their work, $t(138)=2.02$, $p<.05$

- Women are significantly more likely than men to say that the supports will help overcome the stereotypes, $t(329)=4.313$, $p<.001$
Time Diminishes the Perception of These Stereotypes

- The longer you've been a parent, the less likely you are to believe that these stereotypes exist, $r=-.118$, $p<.05$
- The more children you have the less likely you are to agree that the following stereotypes exist, $r=-.111$, $p<.05$
- The longer you've been a parent, the less likely you are to believe that these stereotypes impact your ability to be successful at work, $r=-.092$, $p<.05$
Literature
Changing the narrative: Dismantling the Stereotypes/Recasting the Parentative
94% of the respondents says that institutional supports push back against these stereotypes.
And the Non-Library Literature Suggests . . .

**Programs**

Work/Family programs that provide working parents an opportunity to validate their effectiveness.

Public funded childcare and extended parental leaves.

Train managers on implicit bias.

**Policies**

Better communicate and promote their family-friendly policies.

Paid family leave and flexibility to choose schedules/work from home.

FMLA should be expanded to include smaller employers and a broader variety of parenting responsibilities.
And the Library and Higher Education Literature Suggests . . .

**Programs**

Create a mentorship program between tenured faculty parents and tenured-track parents.

Hold a panel session on successful parents/professors during new employee/faculty orientation.

Create a support group for parents.

**Policies**

Offer telecommuting, flex-time, or job share/part-time opportunities.

Library administrators should be aware that not all staff may be equally supportive of librarians who choose to be mothers.

Promotion clock stops and tenure-track extensions.
And the literature suggests that no one “has it all.”
What do you think would help dismantle these stereotypes at your institution?
Share your response here:  

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Think-Pair-Share

What do you think would help dismantle these stereotypes at your institution?

Share your response here:

Questions?