



---

3-1-2005

## Motherhood and Tenure: Can Catholic Universities Support Both?

Bridget Burke Ravizza

Karen Peterson-Iyer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce>

---

### Recommended Citation

Ravizza, B. B., & Peterson-Iyer, K. (2005). Motherhood and Tenure: Can Catholic Universities Support Both?. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 8 (3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.0803032013>

This Article is brought to you for free with open access by the School of Education at Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for publication in *Journal of Catholic Education* by the journal's editorial board and has been published on the web by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information about Digital Commons, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu). To contact the editorial board of *Journal of Catholic Education*, please email [JCE@nd.edu](mailto:JCE@nd.edu).

---

## MOTHERHOOD AND TENURE: CAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES SUPPORT BOTH?

BRIDGET BURKE RAVIZZA

*St. Norbert College*

KAREN PETERSON-IYER

*This paper presents a plan for the implementation of more family-friendly policies at Catholic colleges and universities, both as a matter of justice for women and on behalf of the well-being of families. It is motivated by the teachings of the Catholic social tradition that emphasize the equality and dignity of women; the importance of the dual vocations of Christian parents, who are called to raise children and to work more publicly on behalf of the common good; and the inherent value of children and their right to be properly nurtured and educated within the Christian family. Our starting point is the condition of families in the U.S. today as they struggle to thrive in spite of tremendous demands placed on parents who also work outside the home. We examine the negative effects on women and families that result from a refusal to accommodate parents with young children in the workplace. We are concerned in particular with the challenges faced by women academics at colleges and universities who are also mothers. We argue that, by and large, these women are not adequately supported in academia, even at Catholic universities, in spite of that tradition's professed commitment to the health and well-being of families. Finally, we offer several concrete suggestions by which universities may better support women academics who are mothers, thereby contributing to the well-being of women and families.*

In recent decades, longer days and longer workweeks have become the norm in the American workplace. Average workers are expected to spend more and more time at work if they are to succeed in their careers or in certain cases maintain their jobs at all. Academia, along with medicine and law, is particularly time-intensive. In fact, on average, the more successful a person is, the longer his or her workweek (Hewlett, 2002). Hochschild (2001), a sociologist, argues in *The Time Bind* that this long hour work culture “has largely competed with the family, and won” (p.

203). In our society, when work and family have gone to battle, work has too often come out ahead and, in some cases, has dealt the family a fatal blow.

Hochschild explains how this has occurred. The so-called first shift of one's day at the workplace increasingly takes more time, which infringes on the second-shift of one's day, involving the work done to care for home and family. As Hochschild (2001) explains, "The longer the workday at the office or plant, the more we feel pressed at home to hurry, to delegate, to forgo, to segment, to hyperorganize the precious remains of family time" (p. 215). In other words, we begin to run our household like a business to improve efficiency: we hire others to care for our children for long periods of the day; we pack in activities, so that soccer games, baths, and reading time are slotted and completed on strict schedule; we prepare meals as quickly as possible, often compromising nutritional value; we pencil in quality time with our children – all in an attempt to use effectively the scarce and precious time of the second shift. Furthermore, Hochschild points out that parents now face a third shift as a result of their time deficit and their attempts to solve it, such as hurrying and organizing. In this third shift, parents engage in "noticing, understanding, and coping with the emotional consequences of the compressed second shift" (Hochschild, 2001, p. 215). In other words, parents must spend a good deal of time emotionally consoling and decompressing their children, who suffer the consequences of an increasingly tight second shift.

The time bind described so vividly by Hochschild is particularly intense for women who continue to do the vast majority of housework and childcare, even when they work outside the home. The entree of large numbers of women into the labor force in the past quarter century created high hopes on the part of feminists and others that men would begin to take a more active role in the day-to-day lives of their children, easing some of this burden. Yet while many young fathers today are more active in the lives of their children, women continue to cover up to 75% of home-related and child-related responsibilities (Hewlett, 2002). In fact, according to Crittenden (2001), economist and author of *The Price of Motherhood*, working mothers work an average of 80 hours a week, compared to 72 hours a week for working fathers. Even when wives earn more than half of the family income, husbands, by their own estimates, typically contribute no more than 30% of the domestic services and childcare (Crittenden, 2001). In a recent survey of professional women, 40% think their husbands actually create more work for them than they contribute (Hewlett, 2002; Suitor, Mecom, & Feld, 2001).

Economist Hewlett (2002), in *Creating A Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*, attributes the continuing wage gap between

men and women, as well as the small number of women rising to the top in many professions including the academy, to the unequal impact of becoming a parent. Hewlett writes:

Children lie at the heart of the matter. Close analysis of the wage gap reveals that only a small portion of the gap can be attributed to discrimination (getting paid less for doing the same job, or being denied access – to jobs, education, or credit – on account of sex). Increasingly, women earn less than men because of the unequal impact of family responsibilities. (p. 136)

As most workplaces are now structured, “childbearing and childrearing interrupt and limit women’s careers, permanently depressing their earning power” (Hewlett, 2002, p. 136). A relative lack of flexibility in most workplaces means that a parent of either sex who seeks to accommodate his or her work schedule to fit the needs of children faces major hurdles. Many women are therefore forced to cut back on their hours or quit their jobs entirely once they have children. Their resulting loss of income, often referred to as the “mommy tax,” typically amounts to more than \$1 million for a college-educated woman in the United States (Crittenden, 2001). The mommy tax translates not only into decreased economic power and stability for women during their working years; it also means dramatically lower savings and pensions for elderly American women. This is one of the reasons that motherhood, as noted by Crittenden, is the single biggest risk factor for poverty in old age.

A refusal of employers reasonably to accommodate working mothers forces a difficult choice for too many women: their families or their careers (Fogg, 2003; Hewlett, 2002). The most successful strategy for a woman to narrow the gender wage gap and raise her lifetime earnings is what Crittenden refers to as the “be a man strategy.” That is: finish school, find a job, develop seniority, make partner, get tenure, and put off children until the last possible moment. It seems today that an ambitious young woman must commit completely to her career in her 20s and usually well into her 30s if she wants to ensure long-term success. To deviate from the “be a man” strategy is to jeopardize her career, and so she puts off having children, often until it is too late. Hewlett’s study shows that the more successful a woman is professionally, the less likely it is that she will have a partner and have children. Interestingly, the exact opposite is true for men; the more successful a man is professionally, the more likely he is to have a partner and children.

## THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Unfortunately, it seems that colleges and universities – including Catholic ones – are doing little to ease this burden faced by working mothers in American society. In the academy, as elsewhere, women are paying a price for having children. As West, a law professor who works with the American Association of University Professors [AAUP], succinctly puts it: “Parenting is not a welcome event in the academy” (as cited in Cohen, 2002, p. 1). This message is made clear, in subtle and not so subtle ways, to those entering academia.

As Crittenden (2001) states: “In profession after profession, the accepted structures and conventions repel dedicated parents like a body repels a foreign object” (p. 35). Like the corporate establishment, academia shows little interest in changing its *modus operandi* to better support family life. Cohen (2002) explores the issue of motherhood within colleges and universities in a *New York Times* article entitled “The Baby Bias,” writing:

It would seem that a university – with its ability to allow teachers to work from home, its paid sabbatical semester and its famously liberal thinking – would be an ideal place to balance career and family. But by all accounts, the intense competition, the long hours and the unspoken expectations of the academy’s traditionally male culture make it really, really hard to have a baby and be a professor. (p. 1)

For this reason, as in many other professions, women often do not have children or postpone having children until after receiving tenure. Cohen (2002) notes, citing a study by the University of California at Berkeley, that only 38% of female, tenured humanities and social science professors in their 40s have children, compared with 61% of males; and it is 50% of women compared to 70% of tenured men in the sciences. But there can be wider and sometimes devastating implications for women who put off having children. Unfortunately, the biological clock and the tenure clock are usually ticking at the same time, since the average age for a female Ph.D. recipient is 34 and the probationary period for earning tenure is on average 7 years (Cohen, 2002). This means that by the time the average female professor is ready to go up for tenure, she is over 40, and confronting high infertility rates. The possibilities of women conceiving in their 40s, even with the help of artificial reproductive technologies, are slim. Sacrificing the possibility of having children seems like a hefty price to pay for tenure.

So why is it that women are discouraged – implicitly or explicitly – from having children if they seek success in the academy? As Cohen (2002) points out,

The tenure system presents parents with several layers of challenges. Three criteria are reasonably objective: scholarship (measured by number [and quality] of publications) and teaching and service. Children can easily soak up enough time to put any of these in jeopardy. But tenure decisions also rely on a fourth criterion, collegiality – “a concept that is, almost by design, impossible to define,” says Pamela Haig, a researcher with the legal advocacy fund of the American Association of University Women. (p. 1)

It is here, with the criterion of collegiality, that things can get especially sticky for parents with young children, particularly mothers. Cohen (2002) explains that, “collegiality means adhering to a mostly unspoken assortment of expected behaviors, and having babies is not on the list” (p. 1). The AAUP (1999) has argued that the development of the criterion of collegiality alongside the traditional criteria of scholarship, teaching, and service is “highly unfortunate” and “should be discouraged,” because it too often turns out to be a pretext for tenure denial. An AAUP statement on collegiality points out that historically collegiality has “been associated with ensuring homogeneity, and hence with practices that exclude persons on the basis of their difference from the perceived norm” (AAUP, 1999, p. 1). If that norm includes childlessness or at least a commitment of countless hours to one’s department, to the detriment of outside obligations, it is easy to see how parents of young children will fall short.

In 1996, The Foundation of the College and University Personnel Association (CUPA) and the Families and Work Institute jointly conducted a study to assess levels of support for family-friendly programs in colleges and universities in the U. S. and to profile best practices among institutions of higher education (Friedman, Rimsky, & Johnson, 1996). To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive study of its kind to date. Some of the practices considered include: the existence of flextime; part-time work possibilities; benefits for part-time work; job sharing; family leave; child care centers on campus; child care referral; and sensitivity training about work-family issues for faculty and administrators. The top 29 campuses were published in the report as playing a leadership role in family-friendly initiatives. Just 2 of those 29 are Catholic institutions: Fairfield University and the University of San Diego. The report also analyzes 15 model initiatives (i.e., creative and effective responses to the pressures of balancing work and family on campuses) and 4 organizational case studies that illustrate how a family-friendly agenda can be put in place at various kinds of institutions. None of the model initiatives or organizational cases studies is from a Catholic campus.

There are two noteworthy points about this study. First of all, researchers had a low response rate of 26%, which makes it difficult to make generalizations about the presence or lack of family-friendly policies

on our country's campuses. The low response rate can be attributed to a number of factors, but researchers point out that it may well indicate "a generally low level of activity focused on work-family concerns" (Friedman et al., 1996, p. 10). That is, perhaps the majority of institutions did not respond because they "have no story to tell" (p. 21).

Secondly, it is telling that only 2 of the top 29 campuses recognized for their family-friendly practices are Catholic. There is nothing in the study to indicate that Catholic schools are progressive in pushing family-friendly agenda on their campuses. In fact, of the 94 designated "leadership schools" – recognized for having on average 30 policies or programs that enable employees to balance work and family – only 13% are religiously affiliated, while 38% of "non-leadership schools" are religiously affiliated. It is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the presence of family-friendly initiatives on Catholic campuses because, to our knowledge, no comprehensive study has been done. Yet this study shows that "family-friendly institutions are significantly more likely to be public institutions" (Friedman et al., 1996, p. 27). Arguably, the opposite should be the case.

## **WHY SYSTEMIC CHANGES? A THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT**

So it seems for women in academia who want or have children, the situation is far from equitable, even on Catholic campuses. One intention of this paper is to influence any nationwide conversation that may be ongoing; Catholic universities ought to be talking about how they can better support women and families rather than whether or not they should hire women of childbearing years.

We acknowledge the resistance such policies will face: some argue that the system is fine just as it is. The logic is as follows: if women choose to have children, they must deal with the consequences rather than expecting systemic changes on their behalf. Indeed, when the *Chronicle of Higher Education* had an online discussion a few years ago about changes that could be made at colleges and universities to better accommodate working parents, "many respondents were ferociously against special rights for moms (one labeled them *prima donnas*)" (Cohen, 2002, p. 2). Another respondent, a female professor at Rice University, claimed to be tired of "children and breeders" getting all the time and consideration (Cohen, 2002). Such a reaction to the movement to establish family-friendly policies is not limited to academia; it occurs in professions across the board. Changes to accommodate working mothers will surely be met with resistance by some in our academic communities, since such changes can be viewed as unfairly penalizing those who do not, for whatever reason, have

children to care for. According to this view, those unencumbered by children will be unfairly held to different standards and will be left to pick up the slack of colleagues with children. From this perspective, it is the perceived special privileges for parents that are not just. Indeed, how proposed changes may affect academic colleagues is an important consideration, and reservations about such changes must be taken into account in discussions about possible changes.

At the same time, we should remember that, as Hewlett (2002) argues, “when a woman has a child, she is not indulging in an expensive hobby; rather she is taking on an awesome responsibility that has serious societal significance” (p. 308). In the United States, a prevalent culture of individualism seems to prevent us from acknowledging that the choice of caring for children is anything but a purely individual one. Often the many sacrifices that women must make for the sake of having children – for example, their career ambitions or their financial security – are justified with the argument that having children and attending to their needs are matters of personal choice. As columnist Goodman (2001) writes, “The world or at least the workplace continues to regard children as a personal lifestyle choice, as if women had decided to take up sky-diving or dog breeding. You had ‘em, you take care of ‘em” (p. A21).

And yet this approach ignores the social dimensions of the issue, as described above. Women disproportionately pay a price, socially and economically, when they become parents because of prevalent patterns of child-rearing practices and an unwillingness of employers reasonably to accommodate working mothers. The “it’s an individual choice” view also ignores the fact that all of society benefits from the unpaid labor of women as they work many hours, days, years to raise healthy, well-adjusted children who will become productive citizens. As Crittenden (2001) argues, it is no longer adequate to frame the marginalization of mothers in the workplace as a matter of individual choice or as part of life’s inevitable compromises. The marginalization of mothers in the workplace is a social problem, and one for which employers must take at least partial responsibility.

An examination of the Catholic social tradition can help us move beyond individualistic thinking on these matters, helping us put them in social and theological perspective. From a Catholic point of view, the “it’s a hobby” view of children is not only inaccurate, but morally dangerous. Indeed, the significance of the family – and parental commitment to it – cannot be underestimated. Family is understood within the Catholic tradition to be domestic church; that is, the family is the primary community in which children are educated in Christian values and practices which in turn bear fruit in the wider community. Clearly put by Pope Paul VI (1992) in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:



The family that is aware of its mission as “domestic church” is a family in which all members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them.... As such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families and of the neighborhood of which it forms a part. (para. 71)

Ideally, Christian spouses, inspired by the Spirit of Christ, build a home in which faith, hope and love are abundant and thereby “contribute jointly to the glory of God” (Vatican Council II, 1992, para. 48). Parents lead the way by example and family prayer so that “children and indeed everyone gathered around the family hearth will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation, and holiness” (Vatican Council II, 1992, para. 48). The family, simply put, is a kind of school of deeper humanity in which parents are the primary teachers (Vatican Council II, 1992).

Christian parents have a mandate to recognize children as gifts from God, not hobbies, and to treat children with the care and dignity they deserve as vulnerable persons made in God’s image. Parents, then, have a vital responsibility to maintain a healthy marriage and family, since the well-being of the individual person and even society itself is recognized to be “intimately linked with the condition of the community of the family” (Vatican Council II, 1992, para. 47). It is for this reason that parenthood has long been considered within the Catholic tradition to be a “lofty calling.”

Yet it has traditionally been the vocation of motherhood that has been highlighted and expounded upon in theological treatises and in daily conversation. Motherhood has long been held up as the finest vocation for women in the Christian tradition. To bear and educate children, to sacrifice and care for them – this was, and often still is, extolled as a woman’s worthiest role. Pope John Paul II (1988), in his apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, claims that God entrusts the human being to women in a special way. “Of course,” he argues, “God entrusts every human being to each and every other human being. But this entrusting concerns women in a special way – precisely by reason of their femininity – and this in a particular way determines their vocation” (para. 30). The privileged status of the vocation of motherhood that the above quote indicates is rooted in a theology of complementarity that has rightly been the subject of much feminist critique. The logic of the theology of complementarity is as follows: men and women are psychologically and physically different and therefore must assume separate but complementary roles in the social order.

The Catholic tradition has long relied on this kind of theology, and Pope John Paul II continues to utilize it in his own work. For example, in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the Pope’s reflections center on two “dimensions of

the female vocation,” that are exemplified in the Mother of Jesus: that of motherhood and that of virginity (1988). In the vocation of motherhood, a woman offers herself as self-gift to her spouse, who in turn offers himself and treats her with dignity and respect. The mutual giving of man and woman in marriage opens itself up to the gift of new life, a child (John Paul II, 1988). The path of virginity is offered as an alternative method of realizing womanhood, whereby a virgin dedicates her life to God as a bride of Christ, fostering her “naturally spousal predisposition of the feminine personality” (John Paul II, 1988, para. 20).

Furthermore, in Pope John Paul II’s 1995 *Letter to Women*, he argues that men and women are created for different ends and vocations due to the fact that “womanhood and manhood are complementary not only from the physical and psychological points of view, but also from the ontological” (para. 7). In this letter, the Pope asks women to reflect on their particular “feminine genius,” so that this genius may be more fully expressed in the life of the Church and society as a whole. What feminists object to here is primarily the attempt to define “womanhood” in a static way and the link that seems to be made between created, biological differences and different (and limited) social roles and vocations distinctive to gender. In traditional Catholic social teaching, we see that motherhood, wifehood, and homemaker are the proper manifestations of womanhood according to the natural law. Although this interpretation is slowly changing – indeed the Pope praises the many ways that women are contributing to society as workers in the public realm – it remains a problematic consequence of this kind of theology.

Parenthood, especially motherhood, is recognized within the Catholic tradition as a supremely important vocation. So important, in fact, that men and women within marriage are to be open to the creation of new life in each and every act of sexual intercourse. As John Paul II (1992) notes in *Centimus Annus*, children are not “one of the many ‘things’ which an individual can have or not have, according to taste, and which compete with other possibilities” (para. 39). Rather, the family is the sanctuary of life; it is the “heart of the culture of life” in which life is welcomed and protected against the many attacks it is exposed to in our culture of death (John Paul II, 1992, para. 39). Children, then, are to be welcomed, protected, nurtured, whenever they may come into the family and should not be viewed as competing with other possibilities that spouses may have in mind for their lives.

Yet while condemning artificial birth control and promoting motherhood as the highest expression of feminine genius, the Pope does not seem adequately to deal with the fact that motherhood in the vast majority of cases results de facto in women having less access to social and material goods. It is our contention that, in the lives of real women, motherhood

does compete with other possibilities, possibilities that can substantially advance women's well-being. Indeed, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1986), in their landmark document *Economic Justice for All*, recognize that many mothers, especially poor and/or single mothers, face particularly challenging socioeconomic hurdles, and that the health and well-being of families in general may be compromised by the way U.S. economic life is structured. There the bishops acknowledge that "great stresses are created in family life by the way work is organized and scheduled," (para. 85) and they go on to urge:

Economic and social policies as well as the organization of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life. The long-range future of this nation is intimately linked with the well-being of families, for the family is the most basic form of human community. Efficiency and competition in the marketplace must be moderated by *greater concern for the way work schedules and compensation support or threaten the bonds between spouses and between parents and children* [italics added]. (para. 93)

It is clear that the internal flourishing of families is deeply connected to the promotion of social justice in a more public sense. Not just individuals, or even individual families, but rather social institutions must be designed to promote the well-being of mothers; in doing so, they will in fact be promoting the well-being of all individuals – women, men, and children – and of the families in which they live.

In summary, Catholic social teaching clearly recognizes the importance of the family as the basic unit of society and as domestic church. It also upholds the vocation of parenthood, particularly motherhood, and highlights the essential roles that parents play in ensuring familial flourishing. What has not been sufficiently dealt with, and what demands attention, is the fact that women are too often put at an economic and social disadvantage as mothers because they are not adequately supported within their communities. Social institutions are morally obligated to find ways to better support mothers (and families in general) as a matter of justice. Moreover, Catholic institutions surely carry a special burden of responsibility here, guided as they are by Catholic social teaching and driven by a commitment to human well-being and the common good.

## HOW CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CAN BETTER SUPPORT MOTHERS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

The Catholic tradition argues that Christians and all men and women who hold the community of the family in high esteem should “sincerely rejoice in the ways by which [persons] today find help in fostering this community of love and perfecting its life, and by which spouses and parents are assisted in their lofty calling” (Vatican Council II, 1992, para. 47). Indeed, there are systemic changes that Catholic institutions of higher education can make which can serve to assist parents in their “lofty calling” and thereby promote the equality of women and foster the family. Such family-friendly changes are slowly taking root in colleges across the country; arguably, colleges grounded in the Catholic tradition ought to be at the forefront of implementing these changes. The tradition’s pro-women and pro-family rhetoric seems to demand such policies.

We put forth the following changes as first steps (or additional steps) that Catholic colleges and universities may take on behalf of women and families. It is important to recognize here that “transforming the academic workplace into one that supports family life requires substantial changes in policy and, more significantly, changes in academic culture” (AAUP, 2001, p. 2). Changes in policy without corresponding changes in culture will have no real long-term effects for women in academia. We acknowledge that the following are not the only changes that can or should be made, and we offer them here for critique and discussion.

A final caveat: it goes without saying that institutions with larger operating budgets will likely be able to offer more generous policies. However, while cost is often cited as a barrier to implementing family-friendly initiatives, “there are initiatives that higher education institutions can pursue that are inexpensive and very desirable to employees”; moreover, smaller and less affluent institutions are often able to overcome resource limitations by having human resource managers who know the needs of their employees and who think creatively (Friedman et al., 1996, p. 59). Minimally, we should agree that financial cost alone should not be a conversation-stopper for institutions who desire to implement more family-friendly policies.

### **1. Paid maternity and paternity leave should be guaranteed for men and women alike in academic settings. Moreover, such leave should not count against women and men when they face tenure decisions.**

Paid maternity and paternity leave allows parents the time to properly nurture young children without jeopardizing their careers. This, along with other pro-family policies, is an effective way to combat the “mommy tax,”

as it enables women “to maintain a continuous employment history through their childbearing years, which has an extremely positive effect on earnings” (Hewlett, 2002, p. 145). Currently, federal law requires colleges and universities to provide the same disability benefits for pregnancy and childbirth as are provided for other physical disabilities. Hence, women professors are entitled to paid pregnancy leaves if they are entitled to paid disability leaves in their benefits packages. Such leaves are routinely 6 to 8 weeks. The AAUP (2001), however, recommends that all colleges and universities offer paid disability leaves for pregnancy (p. 3).

As of today, institutions of higher education are required by the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) at least to guarantee a woman or man unpaid leave, up to 12 weeks within a 12-month period, for care of a newborn or newly adopted infant, or for care of children, spouses or parents who are seriously ill. (The majority of institutions, whether public or private, make no allowances beyond what is demanded by the FMLA [Cohen, 2002].) Cohen (2002) points out that “in academia, the 12-week leave is awkward, as it usually requires canceling classes for the entire semester, saddling a professor with as much as half a year away from work, unpaid” (p. 2). For many, such leaves are thus economically prohibitive, as professors do not make a great deal of money in the first place – particularly non-tenured professors. Further, there are other reasons why women opt out of extended maternity leave, unpaid or otherwise. An interesting editorial appeared in the *Boston Globe* in March 1999, written by Fraumeni, a professor of economics at Northeastern University. In it, the author refers to a study done at Northeastern which examined the retention rates of male and female faculty and the effect of taking maternity leave on a woman’s chances for tenure. Fraumeni writes:

The [FMLA] gives workers the right to family and medical leaves, including maternity leaves. One question the study asked was: What is the impact on our careers of taking such a leave? Looking at tenure rates of female assistant professors from 1994-97 revealed a striking difference: Tenure was granted to 73 percent of the women who did not take a maternity leave but denied to everyone that did. The message to women at Northeastern is clear: Don’t have children before you have tenure. (1999, p. A12)

Admittedly, there may be other factors that contributed to the results in this particular study, but they nonetheless should give us pause. It is not enough to have so-called family-friendly policies in place – such as automatic paid maternity leave following the birth of a new child – if they lack a just follow through in other structures of the institution and thereby negatively impact those who make use of them.

Along these same lines, one 1999 study on the implementation of the FMLA in Pennsylvania's colleges and universities concludes that, "while this policy might help prevent overt discrimination against women who decide to be mothers as well as educators and researchers, we [the researchers] suspect that more subtle forms of discrimination are reflected in hiring practices...and tenure and promotion decisions" (Bressler & Kelly, 1999, p. 10). The researchers cite one example from their survey which vividly illustrates such subtle discrimination: an administrator expressed frank reluctance to hire "'young, married female faculty' because their potential as childbearers would disrupt the entire academic community" (Bressler & Kelly, 1999, p. 9; Norrell & Norrell, 1996). Drawing on another study, the researchers conclude simply that "some institutions solve the problem of dealing with requests for maternity and early childcare leaves by not hiring women who are more likely to make these requests" (Bressler & Kelly, 1999, p. 9).

It is clear, then, that two things must be addressed: (a) the limitations of various maternity leave policies that are now in place at colleges and universities; and (b) the existence and perpetuation of an academic culture that is not welcoming to children. It seems that implementing a policy that ensures paid maternity (and paternity) leave for new parents is a basic way to foster work/family balance in the earliest stages of a child's life and could effectively counteract the "mommy tax." However, it is illogical to have a policy in place which is meant to support families and then to penalize persons who take advantage of such a policy. Changes in academic culture must occur simultaneously.

## **2. Colleges and universities should offer more flexibility in the work-week and should explore reductions or reorganization of new parent workloads.**

Greenspan, expert on the emotional and intellectual development of infants and young children, argues that children need a great deal of nurturance from their parents, particularly in their first 3 years, in order to flourish (Greenspan & Salmon, 2001). Greenspan points out that many children are simply not getting the focused attention they need in our society because parents are not spending enough time with their children, often due to the demands of work outside the home. In order to reverse this trend, Greenspan suggests that parents make children their top priority and view them as the equal responsibility of both parents, which does not necessarily mean that one or both parents need stop working. To counteract the pull of work and the resulting time bind so many face, Greenspan proposes what he calls the "four-thirds solution" in which both parents work two-thirds time in a variety of different forms in order to spend adequate, qual-

ity time with their children. If each parent works only two-thirds of the time, instead of full-time, a child could receive care from his or her own parents for two-thirds of the workweek. Greenspan explicitly uses the term the “four-thirds solution” as a metaphor for many different arrangements which may achieve the same objective – making children a priority. Some use the language of a 60-hour workweek for dual-income families, which may be an easier way to envision how a model can work (Browning, Miller-McLemore, Couture, Lyon, & Franklin, 2000). Parents may combine a 40 hour a week job with a 20 hour a week job, or both parents may work 30 hours a week.

Some have argued that there is nothing intrinsically better about a 60-hour workweek (40-20 or 30-30 split) than a 40-0 split, provided the partner who does not work outside the home receives adequate financial security and as long as both spouses spend adequate time with children (Miles, 2003). We will not settle this debate here, but it is our belief, given the unhappy history and social trends described above, that the 40-0 split (or more often the 50- or 60-0 split) is a dangerous proposition for many women, although admittedly this is not necessarily the case. Our concern is to seek alternatives that allow women (and men) to work in more flexible arrangements so that family life is not shortchanged and yet women are not discouraged from paid work.

A combined 60-hour workweek allows for the proper nurturance of children and contributes to mutuality in parenting; it serves mothers and fathers insofar as it allows for better (and ideally equal) access to the responsibilities and privileges of both the public and private realms. One need not be steeped in feminist theory to see how that is good for women. It also provides more time for spouses to spend with one another, building their relationship, which is the central relationship of the family. Similarly, children and parents can benefit tremendously from more time spent together – reading stories, playing games, kissing and hugging, talking to one another. Children and parents alike long for more of this kind of pure presence.

Furthermore, the 60-hour workweek or the “four-thirds solution” can contribute to a Christian family’s wider commitment to the common good. Modern theologians who write on the Christian family caution us to remember that the Christian family is not insular but is obligated to reach out to the poor in wider society; Christians must be committed to a common good beyond the boundaries of the nuclear family (Cahill, 2000; Rubio, 2002). But let us be honest: dual career parents who are each working full-time have little spare time to be making adequate connections in the wider community which concretely live out a familial commitment to mercy and justice. Parents who are overworked tend to spend the weekends

playing catch-up – finally attending to the many chores which accumulate over the course of the week. It is clear to see how a lighter workweek for each spouse can help a family open itself up to the wider community.

Employers need to be willing to offer their employees these alternative schedules, so that families may create the combinations that meet their specific needs. Using models like the “four-thirds solution” or a 60-hour combined workweek as a goal may help us to reestablish priorities and find concrete ways to enable women to better balance work and family.

Men and women who are scholar-teachers working in colleges and universities already have an advantage in terms of flexibility in the workweek over parents who are working strictly 9 to 5, or, very often, 8 to 6 jobs. Faculty members can generally determine their own schedules with some flexibility – scheduling classes, meetings, and office hours in a way that does not conflict with responsibilities for their children, such as picking them up from school, or taking them to the occasional medical or dental appointment. Colleagues who are sensitive to the needs of parents and who are willing to accommodate their sometimes hectic schedules provide much-needed support for those struggling to balance work and family.

Still, the traditional academic environment places enormous time demands on scholar-teachers, and the often unclear boundaries between work and family life can impose tremendous burdens on young families. There is certainly more that colleges and universities can do in this regard. A standard teaching reduction policy for new mothers and fathers, including adoptive parents, is one possibility. Some institutions of higher education have created modified duty policies to allow faculty members to be relieved of some teaching or service obligations “while remaining in active service status,” enabling them to continue research or other obligations at full pay (AAUP, 2001, p. 4). One example of such a modified-duties policy exists within the University of California system, allowing faculty

partial or full relief from teaching for one quarter (or semester) if the faculty member has “substantial responsibility” for care of a newborn or newly adopted child under the age of 5. This period of modified duties is not considered a leave, and the faculty member receives full pay. (AAUP, 2001, p. 4)

Other institutions offer reduced semester or year long teaching loads for childcare, with proportionate reductions in pay (AAUP, 2001). Policies like these could ease the time bind many mothers and fathers face when they have young children. The AAUP (2001) recommends that colleges and universities offer the possibility of reduced load appointments for full-time faculty members, regardless of tenure status, and encourages institutions to “explore the possibility of adopting policies providing for short-term peri-



ods of modified duties at full pay for family responsibilities” (p. 4).

Another possibility which may ease the burden on busy parents is job sharing or splitting positions. Why cannot two colleagues share one full-time position or a one and a half time position if each has commitments to young children? Job sharing or splitting positions by academics on the tenure track is indeed becoming more common, and models that are working can be found (Goldsmith, Komlos, & Gold, 2001; Lubchenco & Menge, 1993; Schneider, 2000). It seems prudent to explore alternative workweek models that allow for more time with family and yet do not necessarily cut women out of the tenure track.

### **3. Colleges and universities should explore the possibilities of an adjusted tenure clock for scholars with young children.**

Too often, as noted above, an untenured female teacher-scholar hears the ticking of both her biological clock and her tenure clock at the same time. Or if she has children already, she may be listening to both the tick of her tenure clock and the cries of her children, calling out for the attention that they rightly deserve. Either way, many women professors are in a time bind, and tenure requirements are an enormous factor. We must be willing to rethink those requirements as a matter of equality for women. As the AAUP (2001) succinctly states:

The resolution of pretenure family-work conflicts is critical to ensuring that academic opportunities are truly equitable. Such conflicts often occur just when the research and publication demands of the tenure process are most onerous, and when many faculty members have responsibilities for infants and young children. Institutions should adopt policies that do not create conflicts between having children and establishing an optimal research record on the basis of which the tenure decision is to be made. (p. 4)

One way to diminish conflicts between having children and establishing a research record is to slow down the tenure clock for parents with young children. Some institutions of higher education – Stanford is one example – stop the tenure clock for a year when a woman has a baby. In fact, in 2001 the Faculty Senate at Stanford approved a revised tenure clock extension policy, which includes adoptive parents and new fathers who endure “substantial and sustained childcare responsibilities,” allowing them to apply for a tenure extension for up to 1 year after the birth or adoption of a child (Kapitan, 2001). This seems like a reasonable accommodation to make, an accommodation which helps to counteract the pressure that forces many to choose between motherhood and having an academic career. Indeed, guidelines adopted by the AAUP in November of 2001 sup-

port this measure; they call for allowing the tenure clock to be stopped for up to 1 year for each newborn or newly adopted child (for a maximum of two 1-year extensions) if the petitioning faculty member is a primary or co-equal caregiver (p. 5).

Drago and Williams (2000), two scholars of work and family (and gender) issues, argue for the possibility of a half-time tenure track that would allow faculty members to care for children or elderly or ill family members or partners. In "A Half-Time Tenure Track Proposal," they suggest that academics in certain circumstances be placed on half-time status for a period of 1 to 12 years, with the tenure clock running at half speed (Drago & Williams, 2000). Lengthening the time in which people must meet tenure requirements if they have young children at home may help to retain mothers who otherwise would be weeded out of the system. Holding on to good scholars who are otherwise encumbered by familial commitments seems like a valid reason at least to talk about flexible tenure requirements.

Again we note that it is not enough to have a policy on the books if women are not encouraged to take advantage of it, or if it works to their disadvantage in the long run. For example in Cohen's article, a female professor at the University of California Irvine, where there is the possibility of tenure clock extension for parenting, explains that she had been advised not to extend her clock. In her words, "Everyone said it's career suicide – senior faculty, chairs and administrators" (Cohen, 2002, p. 3). She indicates that when it comes time for tenure evaluation an assumption is made that a tenure clock extension is "extra time" provided to a professor, and so more research is expected of that professor than is expected in an average tenure case. In other words, those who have taken an extension have been expected by senior faculty to "do more" in order to make tenure, to make up for the fact that they extended their clock in the first place. While it is understood that women (and men) who take advantage of extended tenure policies should be judged by the same academic standards as those who do not, it defeats the purpose of the extended time provided if more product/work is expected when one is evaluated for tenure.

Unclear or unrealistic standards by senior faculty compound pressures for untenured, junior professors. For these reasons, the AAUP (2001) argues that the "implicit model of total dedication" that exists on some campuses, which expects one to "demonstrate that work is one's primary, even sole commitment," must be "clarified and modified to recognize the realities of the lives of faculty members who wish to raise children while pursuing an academic career" (p. 5). When traditional tenure requirements were established, they were created for a typical professor who was a single man, or a man with a wife at home to care for the children. This snapshot of a professor is no longer universal, and it would behoove us to

rethink tenure requirements to reflect the changing face of the teacher-scholar. Lengthening the tenure clock and reassessing the criteria of collegiality seem like good places to begin discussion.

More flexible tenure requirements acknowledge that motherhood is not purely a matter of individual choice and are one way that employers can help to ensure that women do not pay an unreasonable price for having children. Policies like slowing down the tenure clock recognize that there are social and communal benefits to good parenting and corresponding responsibilities to support women and families.

**4. Taking time out of an academic career to raise children should not be seen as a blot on one's career.**

If the nurturance of children is a priority of the community and is not understood to be simply a matter of personal choice, decisions to take time off the traditional academic career path should not be considered in a negative light. This is a difficult step to talk about concretely, since it is more about attitude than about policy *per se*, but attitudes clearly do affect policy in this regard. To illustrate, let us present a case. A search committee at an institution of higher education is evaluating a stack of CVs to narrow down the candidates and make decisions about those it will consider for initial interviews. Among the candidates are some women who have less published work and teaching experience than other candidates because they have been at home full- or part-time with young children, but are now ready to move into academia full-time. We argue that a search committee honor these choices, not merely rhetorically, by giving fair and thoughtful consideration to those women who have made difficult decisions on behalf of their families. In short, time taken outside academia for the nurturance of children, rather than being viewed as an excuse for lack of scholarship or full-time teaching experience, should be considered real work. It should rightly be considered an enriching life experience which can add perspective and insight into one's teaching and academic work.

**5. All efforts should be made to provide part-time and adjunct (full-time, non-tenure track) faculty with a just wage and benefits.**

It is no secret that part-time and adjunct faculty members at colleges and universities receive far less pay and far fewer benefits than full-time tenure track faculty. Much has been written about the low pay, large work load, lack of benefits and respect that part-timers and adjunct endure, often having to work at two or three institutions to make ends meet (Fulton, 2000). The practice of overusing and abusing part-timers in order to meet university budget requirements is certainly cause for ethical reflection.

Mothers who teach part-time at colleges and universities in order to

spend more time with children are unavoidably affected by this unjust structure. Part-time work is certainly a benefit for parents of young children who wish to stay in the academic arena while raising children; they can teach and yet be free from departmental commitments and committee work as well as pressure to publish. It can be one flexible method of creating a 60-hour workweek between parents. However, as mentioned above, even part-time work should include benefits if at all possible and, most certainly, should guarantee a just wage for good work. Moreover, time spent teaching part-time or as an adjunct should not count against someone who later chooses to enter the full-time system.

### **6. Colleges and universities should provide on-campus childcare.**

Many institutions already provide this service, and those who do not can easily find successful models for doing so. On-campus childcare benefits employers, parents, and students. Parents know the difficulty of finding good and convenient childcare. On-campus childcare helps employees and also “helps institutions keep employees happy at work instead of at home when the babysitter gets sick” (Merik, 1996, p. B2). In addition to the convenience and sense of security provided by on-campus childcare, being able to drop in to visit one’s child[ren] during a break or lunch hour is a benefit that is non-quantifiable. Moreover, childcare at a college or university offers unique opportunities for student involvement, and can provide practical preparation for students planning careers that focus on children, such as early childhood education.

The AAUP (2001) notes that some institutions may decide not to support on-site childcare due to size or other considerations. Still, these institutions are encouraged to explore other alternatives, “such as cooperative arrangements with other nearby employers, resource and referral services, and financial assistance” (p. 6). All in all, “universities and colleges should assume a share of the responsibility for the provision of childcare services” (AAUP, 2001, p. 6).

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper is a modest attempt to illustrate a lack of support within colleges and universities for women and men with young children; to explicate some of the effects of that lack of support; to provide a theological argument for why systemic changes should be made, particularly at Catholic institutions; and to offer suggestions as to what those changes might be. There is much work still to be done. Our hope is that conversations ensue which openly consider, and reconsider, topics like collegiality, shared academic positions, reduced loads for parents with young children, and part-

time or adjusted tenure track options. Moreover, we hope that faculty and administrators at Catholic colleges and universities will ponder and discuss what it means for Catholic institutions to take the lead on these matters – and thus to begin to live up to their own family-supportive ideals.

## REFERENCES

- American Association of University Professors. (1999). *On collegiality as a criterion for faculty evaluation*. Retrieved October 27, 2004, from <http://www.aaup.org/statements/Redbook/collegia.htm>
- American Association of University Professors. (2001). *Statement of principles on family responsibilities and academic work*. Retrieved October 27, 2004, from <http://www.aaup.org/statements/REPORTS/re01fam.htm>
- Bressler, S., & Kelly, J. (1999, June). *Maternal inequities: The implementation of the FMLA in Pennsylvania's colleges and universities*. Paper presented at Annual Conference of the National Women's Studies Association, Albuquerque, NM.
- Browning, D. S., Miller-McLemore, B. J., Couture, P. D., Lyon, K. B., & Franklin, R. M. (2000). *From culture wars to common ground: Religion and the American family debate* (2nd ed.). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Cahill, L. S. (2000). *Family: A Christian social perspective*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Cohen, H. (2002, August 4). The baby bias. *The New York Times*, p. 4A24.
- Crittenden, A. (2001). *The price of motherhood: Why the most important job in the world is still the least valued*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Drago, R., & Williams, J. (2000, Nov/Dec). A half-time tenure track proposal. *Change*, 32(6), 46-51.
- Fogg, P. (2003, June 13). Family time: Why some women quit their coveted tenure track jobs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A10.
- Fraumeni, B. (1999, March 30). Maternity leave and a woman's chances for tenure [Letter to the editor]. *The Boston Globe*, p. A12.
- Friedman, D. E., Rinsky, C., & Johnson, A. (1996). *College and university reference guide to work-family programs*. New York: Families and Work Institute.
- Fulton, R. D. (2000, May/June). The plight of part-timers in higher education. *Change*, 32(3), 38-43.
- Goldsmith, J. A., Komlos, J., & Gold, P. S. (2001). *Chicago guide to your academic career: A portable mentor for scholars from graduate school through tenure*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Goodman, E. (2001, May 10). Our "prisoner of love" problem. *The Boston Globe*, p. A21.
- Greenspan, S., & Salmon, J. (2001). *The four-thirds solution: Solving the child-care crisis in America today*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.
- Hewlett, S. A. (2002). *Creating a life: Professional women and the quest for children*. New York: Talk Miramax Books.
- Hochschild, A. R. (2001). *The time bind: When work becomes home and home becomes work*. New York: Henry Holt.
- John Paul II. (1988). *Mulieris dignitatem*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.
- John Paul II. (1992). Centesimus annus. In T. A. Shannon & D. J. O'Brien (Eds.), *Catholic social thought* (pp. 437-488). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- John Paul II. (1995, June 29). *Letter to women*. Retrieved October 27, 2004, from [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_29061995\\_women\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women_en.html)
- Kapitan, C. (2001, October 29). Faculty senate approves tenure clock extension. *Stanford University News Service*. Retrieved October 27, 2004, from <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2001/october31/tenure-1031.html>
- Lubchenco, J., & Menge, B. A. (1993, April). Split positions can provide a sane career track – A personal account. *Bioscience*, 43(4), 243-249.

- Merik, S. (1996, July 26). Helping higher education's working poor. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. B2.
- Miles, R. (2003, June). *A response to Don Browning's "Critical familism, civil society, and the law."* Retrieved October 27, 2004, from [http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/062003/response\\_miles.shtml](http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/062003/response_miles.shtml)
- National Conference of Catholic Bishops. (1986). *Economic justice for all: Pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the U.S. economy*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.
- Norrell, E. J., & Norrell, T. H. (1996). Faculty and family policies in higher education. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17, 203-226.
- Paul VI. (1992). *Evangelii nuntiandi*. In T. A. Shannon & D. J. O'Brien (Eds.), *Catholic social thought* (pp. 303-345). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Rubio, J. H. (2002). The dual vocation of Christian parents. *Theological Studies*, 63, 786-812.
- Schneider, A. (2000, December 8). Job sharing rises as professors seek flexible schedules. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A10.
- Suitor, J. J., Mecom, D., & Feld, I. S. (2001, Fall). Gender, household labor, and scholarly productivity among university professors. *Gender Issues*, 19(4), 50-68.
- Vatican Council II. (1992). *Gaudium et spes*. In T. A. Shannon & D. J. O'Brien (Eds.), *Catholic social thought* (pp. 166-237). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

*Bridget Burke Ravizza is an assistant professor of religious studies at St. Norbert College. Karen Peterson-Iyer has taught as an adjunct in the Religious Studies Department at Santa Clara University and at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Dr. Bridget Burke Ravizza, St. Norbert College, 100 Grant Street, De Pere, WI 54115.*