Bias Against Caregiving in the Academy: Pitfalls and Opportunities

Keynote Address for the NSF ADVANCE Program Workshop
November 7, 2010

Robert Drago, Ph.D.

Research Director, Institute for Women’s Policy Research
Research funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

Contact: drago@iwpr.org
Leaks in the Academic Pipeline for Women*

* Preliminary results based on Survival Analysis of the Survey of Doctorate Recipients (a national biennial longitudinal data set funded by the National Science Foundation and others, 1979 to 1995). Percentages take into account disciplinary, age, ethnicity, PhD calendar year, time-to-PhD degree, and National Research Council academic reputation rankings of PhD program effects. For each event (PhD to TT job procurement, or Associate to Full Professor), data is limited to a maximum of 16 years. The waterline is an artistic rendering of the statistical effects of family and gender. Mary Ann Mason & Marc Goulden.
Women Fast-Track Professionals with Babies* in the Household, by Age of Professional

*Children, Ages 0 or 1 in Household.

Source: Census 2000, provided by Marc Goulden.
Bias Avoidance

- Bias against caregiving
  - Joan Williams’ New glass ceiling
  - Valian’s Cumulative disadvantage

- Bias avoidance: the dog that doesn’t bark
  - Productive & Unproductive BA
  - Game with unknown rules
Research Projects

- Mapping Project (Drago/Colbeck)
  - 5087 faculty at 507 schools, 10 case studies, 13 shadowing participants

- Survey of College/University Policies (Hollenshead/Sullivan)
  - 2343 faculty at 255 colleges and university
  - [http://www.cew.umich.edu/PDFs/designing06.pdf](http://www.cew.umich.edu/PDFs/designing06.pdf)
Gender and Bias Avoidance

- **Motherhood norm**
  - Assumption women should provide care
  - Unequal household division of labor

- **Ideal worker norm**
  - Assumption professionals committed to career
  - Lengthening of workday/workweek for professionals

- \(\Rightarrow\) Women engage in bias avoidance more often
Bias Avoidance: Focus Groups

“My baby’s sick, my mother-in-law’s dying, and I can’t be at the meeting. And I actually ended up going to the meeting and leaving it in tears…”

“I mean I don’t discuss this stuff with anybody… you know what I mean?”
Productive Bias Avoidance by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stayed single</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited # children</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reduced load</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed 2nd child</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No parental leave</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unproductive Bias Avoidance by Gender

Daddy Privilege: [On missing work:] “...[l]’s viewed as cool when a dad is involved with his kids... But when a mom is doing [that,] it’s like “oh, there she goes again, you know, she’s off doing the mom thing...”
Work-Family Policies
Hollenshead/Sullivan Survey

Unpaid leave to care for dep.s beyond FMLA
Paid leave for dep.s beyond sick/vacation leave
Temp. relief from teaching or modified duties for dep. care
Stoppage of the tenure clock
Reduced appt/pay for dep. Care
Part-time appt.s or job sharing
Dual-career assistance
Additive scale: $\alpha = .686$
Summary of Results

- Women => More BA
- Main correlates reduced BA:
  - Organizational climate
  - Supervisor support
  - Univ. policies
- Chemistry => more kids, more BA
- Faculty unions => less BA
...and It is Not Just Children

MetLife Survey (Feb 2010) =>

- 12% of employees w Elder Care responsibilities.
- More likely to report own health problems.
- As a result: Health insurance costs 8% higher.
Ways to Improve

1) Inclusive Practices

2) Work-life Policies

3) Bias Resistance
Inclusive Practices

Alternative School:

A faculty woman on bringing children to the office: “The department does not have a problem with it... [and] the students don’t have a problem with it, but in reality it doesn’t work well because the kids want attention and students need attention...” (Woman in focus group)
Inclusive Practices

- Involvement in decision-making
  - Course offerings, physical plant, athletics, etc.

- Consideration of disparate groups
  - Ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, family status

- Support for “whole individual”
  - Not just families
Work-Life Policies

• Paid leave, reduced hours, child- elder-care supports, flexible hours

• Design to constituency:
  • Faculty – back-up child care
  • Staff – child care res. & ref.
  • Students – child care subsidies

• Communicate outside & inside

• Have broad constituencies evaluate work-life impact of policies…
“It’s illegal to ask somebody [in the faculty hiring process] if they’re married and about their family, but I volunteered that information because I wanted... them to know who they were hiring. They’re not just hiring a teacher and a researcher; they’re hiring a dad and husband, too.” (A faculty father’s report in a shadowing interview)
Working successfully on serious issues may not solve the problems… but it means we are making progress; we are doing the right thing.