

## The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives in Faculty Roles and Work Lives

Susan J. Bracken, Jeanie K. Allen, and Diane R. Dean, eds.  
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REVIEWED BY KRISTIN MARSH

In *The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives in Faculty Roles and Work Lives*, editors Susan J. Bracken, Jeanie K. Allen, and Diane R. Dean bring together six very different studies of faculty life. As a collection, they offer evidence of the challenges facing women and men faculty as they navigate career and family within a high-demand professional context. This volume elucidates a basic contradiction: academe was not designed with the whole person in mind; rather, faculty work and family lives were long kept separate, rendering invisible the diverse needs of faculty. This may have worked well (theoretically) for a narrow swath of workers: white heterosexual men with non-employed wives maintaining the home and caring for children. Although white women and women and men of color have found increasing representation among the ranks of academic faculty, the rules of the game of academic success have remained largely the same. High stakes publishing expectations, rigid teaching responsibilities, and service obligations that grow as one's career progresses leave little time for family responsibilities, especially for (potential) mothers.

Each chapter in *The Balancing Act* presents meaningful findings reflecting rigorous research by reputable scholars. Mason, Goulden, and Wolfinger set a discouraging stage, establishing the stifling relationship between academic careers and family formation. Compared with men, women academics are less likely to consider children a viable option alongside career. And mothers are much less likely to choose an academic pathway. Embodying the contradiction between work and family, women see few models of work-life balance and know they will have to make a choice (one not facing their male counterparts). Questions the volume tackle include, if academe is incompatible with family, perhaps universities could change? And likewise, how might women and men faculty strategize to meet demands across work and family?

The second, individual-level, question is privileged in the volume. Colbeck challenges the zero-sum assumption that "time spent in paid work is necessarily time not devoted to personal or family activities" (34). She examines the extent to which faculty integrate or segment their roles, suggesting that an integrative approach (with more flexibility and permeabili-

ty between roles) can enhance balance and satisfaction. Creamer examines strategies of co-working couples, finding a prevalent early-career strategy of downplaying the extent of collaboration, in defense against free-riding assumptions. And Neuman, Terosky, and Schell explore strategies of learning among newly tenured faculty at research universities. The challenge is maintaining personally-fulfilling professional development while taking on new service and leadership responsibilities, and the authors delineate alternative approaches. Although these authors recognize that institutional structures shape an imperative for careful strategy at many levels, their studies nevertheless suggest that it is really up to individual faculty to find what works in their personal search for balance.

Other chapters address the university context more explicitly. Wolf-Wendel and Ward emphasize that different institution types have different expectations for faculty, thereby shaping the kinds of autonomy faculty have access to. The commonality, however, is that women faculty at all institution types struggle with balance. To the limited extent that universities offer accommodating policies, these policies are not well known and the onus is on individual faculty to arrange for classes to be covered, etc. The authors outline concrete steps universities could and should implement to provide climates that are more family friendly. Finally, Hart's chapter on the outcomes of campus climate studies at one large university examines the potential for consciousness raising and faculty-driven change efforts, highlighting the simultaneous need for faculty to stay vigilant collectively, as well as the limits of faculty unity if administrators lack the will to support change.

Implications for institutional reform inform this volume. Pay and promotional equity, daycare options, transparent leave policies, etc., are crucial. However, these accommodations usually exist alongside marginalizing assumptions about productivity. Quantifying and prioritizing publishing records over teaching, service, and leadership, ignore the fact that work itself is gendered. Women and men tend to teach and mentor differently, women and racial/ethnic minorities do more service work (particularly equity work), and students and administrators evaluate effectiveness through a male-privileging gendered lens. Recognizing these differences and re-evaluating what matters to universities, and what counts as productivity, could improve the sense of balance and job satisfactions for all faculty.

This collection was timely when published, and several chapters now represent larger contributions to the gender and academe literature (see, for example, Mason, et al; Ward and Wolf-Wendel). But the importance of *The Balancing Act* remains, as faculty continue to face difficult choices in combining a productive work life with personal goals; unfortunately, the issues we face appear timeless.

## References

- Mason, Mary Anne, Nicholas H. Wolfinger, and Marc Goulden. 2013. *Do Babies Matter?: Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower*. Rutgers University Press, 2013.
- Ward, Kelly and Lisa Wolf-Wendel. 2012. *Academic Motherhood: How Faculty Manage Work and Family*. Rutgers University Press, 2012.

## Muslim Mothering: Global Histories, Theories, and Practices

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REVIEWED BY DANIELLE ROTH-JOHNSON

Within the current global context and throughout history, Muslim women have often been stereotyped as a silenced and monolithic group deprived of individual agency by religious strictures. Such representations often drastically oversimplify the wide-ranging and diverse situations of women in the contemporary Islamic diaspora. In order to provide a more accurate and complex account of their lives and religious views, more works written by Muslim women themselves are needed. To that end, Margaret Aziza Pappano and Dana M. Olwan's *Muslim Mothering: Local and Global Histories, Theories, and Practices* offers readers an interdisciplinary examination of the varied and complex ways Muslim mothers conceptualize and rework notions of Islamic motherhood in their daily lives. In their introduction to the edited volume, the authors say they assembled this edited collection to demonstrate "how Muslim mothers experience mothering" (3). Featuring a diverse group of contributors from around the globe tackling a wide range of topics, this collection of essays and academic studies endeavors to deconstruct stereotypes about Muslim women and mothers through works that showcase the multifaceted nature of their experiences and the challenges they face. To accomplish this task, the editors first endeavor to place the articles in their proper historical context in their introductory chapter, "Muslim Mothering: Between Sacred Texts and Contemporary Practices." In this essay, they begin by discussing the hallowed status of mothers in Islamic sacred texts and about