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Presidential Address

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## The Faculty Time Divide<sup>1</sup>

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*The time demands of academic life are examined, drawing on data from a large national sample of faculty. I outline the divide between full-time faculty, who work long hours irrespective of rank or institution type, and part-time faculty, who work at low pay with little job security, status, recognition, or fringe benefits. The expectations of academic life in dual-career couples are hard to reconcile with the demands of parenting. This is a common problem because assistant professors are generally too old to wait until they have tenure to have children. The segmentation of academic life into an overworked core and a marginalized periphery tends to perpetuate gender inequality.*

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**KEY WORDS:** working time; work–family conflict; gender inequality; faculty workload; glass ceiling.

We work too hard. Yes, I know that sounds like a funny thing to say, especially coming from me, because you have just heard about how many articles and books I have written and because I have worked so hard at organizing this year’s Eastern Sociological Society meetings. And it is ironic to hear such an assertion at this particular moment, since here we all are on a Saturday evening attending yet another presentation. But that indeed is going to be the theme of my talk.

We work too hard. By “we” I mean full-time faculty at academic institutions. Many of my friends and acquaintances in academia find it difficult to keep their working lives under control. Aquatic references seem most common, as in “I am swamped at the moment”; “I am under water”; and the ever popular “I am drowning (in papers, exams, proposals, committee work . . .)” One of my friends says he will get back to me when he has a chance to come up for air. He is quite an athlete, and I suppose he can hold his breath for

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quite some time, but I do begin to worry if I don't hear from him for a few weeks. Others prefer more arid metaphors, as in "I am buried in papers," but the wet metaphors seem to dominate the dry, perhaps because time, like water, is not easy to contain.

Most view their own situations as the result of bad choices they make as individuals. We are so busy simply because we have taken on too many projects, presentations, committee assignments, new courses to teach, and countless other commitments. But we need to remember C. Wright Mills's dictum that what appear to be personal troubles from the individual's point of view may from a sociological point of view represent a public issue (Mills, 1959). In short, I hope to persuade you that our chaotic and overloaded schedules reflect not only our own personal choices but also broader patterns of life in academia and indeed in American society more generally.

These long hours make personal and family life a challenge, and make it especially difficult for responsible and engaged parents to become members of the academy. The endless demands of academic life make participation in the broader community more difficult as well. Since parenting responsibilities continue to fall more heavily on mothers than on fathers, the long hours of academic life are especially challenging to mothers and limit the opportunities for women to thrive in academia. I will suggest that the long and growing hours expected of full-time professors are one reason that women have made less progress entering the academy than other professions. Limiting the demands of academic life would promote gender equality, a more reasonable balance between work and family commitments, and greater civic participation outside the ivy walls.

The story for full-time faculty has a counterpart for part-time faculty, whose titles include adjuncts, visitors, and instructors. The issue for part-timers is not short hours. As we will see, part-timers put in nearly the equivalent of a full-time work week. Rather, the problem for part-timers is the lack of status, recognition, job security, and research support. Nor should the low pay of part-timers be overlooked. Part-time faculty, most of whom have earned their doctoral degrees, earn approximately the minimum wage. That is the other side of the "faculty time divide" that is referred to in the title. One of the themes tonight is that the fates of the overworked full timers and those of the vulnerable and underpaid part timers are linked in a variety of ways. Limiting the number and improving the status of part-timers will go hand in hand with addressing the excessive demands on full-time faculty.

I will advance this thesis in three steps. First, I will sketch some of the themes of my book on working time and work-family conflict with Kathleen Gerson, *The Time Divide: Work, Family and Gender Inequality* (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004). This discussion will provide some of the context for the analysis of working time among faculty. Second, I will present analyses of data

on faculty working time from the 1998 National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty. In short, the middle section of the paper takes the national time divide and explores its application in the academic context. Third, I will discuss some ways in which we can begin to bring the faculty work week under control.

## TRENDS IN WORKING TIME IN THE UNITED STATES

Juliet Schor raised the issue of working time in her 1991 book, *The Overworked American* (Schor, 1991). Schor maintained that after declining for a century or more, working time began to increase again during the 1980s. Spending more time at work, Schor contended, was the principal source of the time pressures so many people experience. Kathleen Gerson and I have conducted a detailed appraisal of trends in working time and concluded that Schor has indeed identified an important social issue, but we differ from her in pinpointing the principal causes of this phenomenon. In other words, while the time pressures Schor discusses are indeed real, the principal source of this development is not the lengthening of the average work week.

The sense that Americans are overworked and squeezed for time is rooted in basic social changes that are placing increasing pressures on workers and their families. Yet focusing on average changes in working time contributes to misdiagnosing the sources and shape of these new time squeezes. We find, instead, that the average work week for individual workers has changed very little in the last several decades. This apparent stability, however, masks important changes in the ways that jobs and families are structured. We find that a diversifying work force has been accompanied by a bifurcation in working time, with more jobs requiring either very long or short work weeks. This time divide among jobs tends to mirror the class divide as well, with long working hours concentrated among managerial and professional workers and shorter working hours for workers with more modest educational and occupational credentials.

A second factor contributing to the rise of time pressures can be found in the transformation of family life. Even though individual workers may not be putting in significantly longer hours at the workplace, family time is squeezed because more household members are working. The rise of dual-earning couples has contributed to a large increase in the combined working time of married couples, and the rise of single-parent homes has created more households in which one worker is solely responsible for both breadwinning and domestic caretaking.

These developments go a long way to explaining why Americans are more pressed for time, but other work and family changes add additional

pressures. Beyond the issue of working time, job structure matters. Job intensity may have increased in many occupations, even as nonstandard work schedules have expanded for a growing number of workers. For those in high-pressure jobs, flexibility, autonomy, and control over the conditions of work help ease the difficulties posed by long working hours, but these privileges tend to be reserved for those at the higher levels of bureaucratic hierarchies. Yet gaining access to these jobs is especially hard for the workers who most need these supports, such as mothers and other women, as well as involved parents of either sex.

On the other side of the time divide, domestic life also involves intensifying pressures. Parenting norms that emphasize “intensive” caretaking set up unattainable standards for employed mothers and fathers. In the absence of widely available, high-quality child care, parents must develop private strategies for coping, including hiring others to care for their children. Though necessary, this strategy has triggered criticism across the political spectrum, adding to the binds of middle- and working-class parents alike. Let us now consider how these trends are manifest in the case of academics

## DATA

The data analyzed here were drawn from the 1998 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), administered by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education (Zimmler, 2001). The survey, designed to collect information on faculty and other instructional staff in institutions of higher education, is currently the most comprehensive study of postsecondary faculty.<sup>3</sup> This cross-sectional survey has been administered three times: during the 1987–88, 1992–93, and 1998–99 academic years. In 1998, 960 colleges and universities, representing all public and private not-for-profit, degree-granting institutions in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, were included in the institutional sampling frame. The faculty sample was drawn from the 819 colleges and universities that responded to the institutional survey. Of the final eligible faculty sample of 19,213, a total of 17,600 respondents completed the faculty questionnaire, for a response rate of 83.2%.

For the present analysis, the sample was restricted to those faculty members at 4-year institutions who considered their academic appointment to be their primary job and who did not spend the majority of their time in administrative activities. This resulted in a final sample size of 11,162 faculty

<sup>3</sup>The operant definition of *faculty* for the NSOPF includes instructional faculty, noninstructional faculty, and instructional personnel without faculty status.

members, of which 10,092 were full time. Selective reports from the 1992 administration of the same survey are also presented.

One important limitation of the NSOPF is that it does not solicit information on the spouses of faculty members. We partly fill this gap by drawing on data from married couples in the 1990 Census where either spouse reported their occupation as “postsecondary teacher.” We rearranged data from the 1990 Census so that we could examine the experiences of couples (see Jacobs and Labov, 2002, for details on the procedures and sample characteristics).

### THE FACULTY WORK WEEK

Professors put in very long hours. Full-time male faculty report working 54.8 hours per week on average; their female counterparts report working almost as many hours (52.8 hours per week).<sup>4</sup> These results may be seen in Table I, which presents the average work week as well as the proportion working long hours by sex, institution type, and rank. Faculty work more hours per week than in most other occupations. In 2000, the average employed man worked 43.1 hours per week. Male professors thus exceed the labor force average for men by a rather substantial margin. Indeed, professors report a longer work week than do most of their counterparts in high-status occupations. The average male professional or manager worked 46.0 hours per week, a full 9-hour day less than professors. Female professors exceed their same-sex counterparts in paid working time by an even larger margin. The average employed woman worked 37.1 hours in 2000, and female professionals and managers worked 39.5 hours on average.<sup>5</sup>

The faculty work week grew in length during the 1990s. Working time was up notably in 1998 compared with the findings of a similar survey conducted in 1992 (1.8 hours per week for men and 2.8 hours per week for women), although inconsistencies in the survey questions raise uncertainties

<sup>4</sup>The lion’s share of faculty working time is devoted to their main position, with outside consulting representing a minor fraction of total work effort. Both male and female full-time faculty report working about 4 hours per week doing other work, including unpaid work outside their home institution and compensated extramural activities such as consulting. The balance—50.5 hours per week for men and 49.2 hours per week for women—is devoted to their principal position. Among full-time faculty, a sizable minority of men (34.4%) and women (27.0%) do some paid consulting work. The average number of weekly hours spent consulting is 5.2 for men and 4.7 for women.

<sup>5</sup>The comparisons cited here are imprecise because faculty are solely full-timers, while the professional comparison group includes both full-time and part-time workers. To have a more direct comparison, I conducted an analysis of the 2000 Current Population Survey. I found that faculty did work longer hours than other professionals, and the differences would be even larger if faculty had been restricted to full-time faculty in 4-year institutions. Unfortunately, the CPS data do not allow us to restrict the faculty data in this way.

**Table I.** Average Weekly Total Hours for Full-Time Faculty by Sex, Rank, and Institution Type

	Average weekly hours		% 50+ hours		% 60+ hours	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
All	54.8	52.8	72.2	63.4	38.1	32.5
Rank						
Full	55.3	55.1	74.4	71.8	39.2	41.2
Associate	54.0	54.3	71.3	67.0	34.5	36.5
Assistant	55.8	53.5	75.5	68.5	43.2	33.5
Instructor/lecturer	51.8	48.8	55.3	46.7	32.1	22.2
Other rank/no ranking system	54.4	49.8	69.2	50.5	35.6	20.4
Institution						
Research	55.8	54.0	75.5	67.1	41.9	35.4
Doctoral	55.5	52.1	73.7	62.2	38.6	30.3
Comprehensive	52.7	51.8	63.8	59.5	30.9	30.3
Liberal arts	54.0	53.4	72.0	65.1	36.4	35.3
Other	55.3	51.7	76.5	59.7	40.4	25.6

Source: 1998 NSOPF.

about this point.<sup>6</sup> The data do not allow for a complete analysis of the reasons for this change, but the evidence indicates that both teaching and research time increased. This conclusion reflects the fact that the proportion of time devoted to teaching remained essentially unchanged during this period.

The growth in teaching time is a response to external pressures to devote more time and energy to teaching. Early in 1990s, faculty began to be criticized for spending only a few hours per week in the classroom. These complaints were most common at large, public universities but were sometimes raised at private universities as well (Clayton, 2000; Healy, 2000; Honan, 1998; Moore, 1996; Sykes, 1988). Most of the concerns were raised by external critics concerned with spiraling tuition rates, such as editorial page writers and state legislators, but sometimes the critics came from the ranks of academia itself (Massy and Zemsky, 1994).<sup>7</sup> Teaching time has increased somewhat in response to these concerns. Research expectations increased as well, as reflected in higher tenure standards at second- and third-tier institutions, as well as the rise of posttenure reviews (Harper, 1995; Masters, 1993).

The growing faculty work week no doubt also reflects new technologies such as the widespread adoption of e-mail. E-mail makes sending a given message quicker, but tends to increase the number of messages sent and

<sup>6</sup>The conclusion regarding increased time on the job during the 1990s may not be right, since 1998 was restricted to faculty whose academic position was their primary job, while the 1992 survey did not allow for such a restriction.

<sup>7</sup>Massy and Zemsky (1994) characterize as “discretionary” the time that faculty spend on research, but increasing expectations in this area make a substantial commitment of time and energy to research anything but discretionary.

received. Many professors see sifting through, sorting, and reading their e-mails as adding a new dimension to their work day. And, since e-mails can be read at home, e-mail tends to increase the amount of time faculty spend working at home.

The effect of e-mail on working time is similar to that of many other labor-saving devices and techniques. Labor-saving technologies like e-mail do not reduce time but instead can dramatically increase the volume of certain types of activities. In this regard, e-mail is like word processors and many of the household labor-saving devices discussed by Cowan (1983). In each case, new technology results in greatly improved speed and quality but not less work.

Long hours are not restricted to faculty at elite research universities but are evident among professors working in liberal arts and other institutions as well. Faculty in research institutions report working the longest hours (an average of 55.8 for men and 54.0 for women), but the average work weeks of full-time faculty in other institutions follow this standard quite closely. For example, male full-time faculty in liberal arts colleges work 54.0 hours per week, and their female counterparts put in 53.4 hours per week. Both male and female full-time faculty at all institutional groups average above 50 hours per week.

Assistant professors work long hours, but so too do tenured associate and full professors. Faculty at all ranks put in over 50 hours per week. Even lecturers and instructors put in over 50 hours per week.

Male assistant professors put in slightly longer hours than do their female counterparts (55.8 hours per week for the men vs. 53.5 hours for the women). For men, there is a slight post-tenure slump, with the length of the work week declining by 2 hours, only to rise again for full professors.<sup>8</sup> For women, the work week actually grows steadily as they advance from the ranks of assistant to associate to full professor. The increments are about three quarters of an hour for each of these steps. It may be that as women age out of their childbearing years, and are less likely to have young children at home, they have slightly more time to devote to their careers.

My research with Kathleen Gerson reminds me to scrutinize the distribution as well as the average work week. A 50-hour work week is normative. Roughly two-thirds of faculty report working such long hours. A 60-hour work week is also common. A sizable minority of faculty report working at least 60 hours per week.

<sup>8</sup>It may be that hours decline after tenure but that this is offset by differential attrition. In other words, it is possible that the assistant professors that actually make it to tenure work 60 hours per week, and then cut back to 55 posttenure. The data suggest that there is no change, but that is because the short-hour assistant professors are no longer in the picture. One would need longitudinal data to assess this possibility.

The gender gap in working time for assistant professors is a bit sharper among those working 60-plus hours per week. Men are more likely to put in more than 60 hours per week as assistant professors (43.2% for men vs. 33.5% for women). This may contribute to the greater likelihood that men will obtain tenure, if this time is used efficiently.

Do professors exaggerate their work week? This is certainly a possibility, since professors do not often have fixed hours of work in the office or laboratory. Because the defining rhythms of many jobs are reduced or absent in the case of faculty, their schedules are less easily defined, and there may be more room for error or exaggeration in the estimation of their time on the job. I have considered this possibility and have concluded that a substantial inflation of faculty time on the job is unlikely. Indeed, I think there are good reasons to suspect that professors underestimate the amount of time they work at least as often as they exaggerate.

I have conducted a detailed appraisal of self-reports about the length of the work week and have found that they had remarkably high validity (Jacobs, 1998). Nor was there evidence about systematic bias in self-reports. In other words, neither job attributes, such as flexible schedules, nor personal attributes, such as a hectic family life, were systematically related to biases in reports about how much time respondents put in on the job. As a result of this research, I tend to believe the self-reports provided by faculty about how many hours they work per week.

I would like to share some anecdotal evidence I accumulated in the course of preparing for this conference that suggests that faculty do indeed put in long hours. In the process of trying to find discussants for a number of sessions, I woke up early one Saturday morning in December to send off notes to about a dozen faculty. One colleague e-mailed me back before I even had a chance to log off at 6 A.M. Others sent notes volunteering to participate in the ESS meeting all day and all night on Saturday, and from very early Sunday morning until very late on Sunday night. Nearly all had responded by Sunday evening. The final two “straggled” in on Monday and Tuesday. I was struck by the speed and generosity of the responses (most agreed to participate), especially given that this was the end of the semester and that people were busy giving and grading exams. It seems reasonable to infer from this small and nonrepresentative sample that many, if not most, faculty work on the weekends, at least to check their e-mails.

It is also worth noting how quickly one becomes used to instant responses. Despite my best intentions, I found myself expecting very rapid responses to my solicitations. I had to catch myself when I reacted to the Tuesday response as a laggard. In short, the use of e-mail quickly becomes



normative, and even response times become normative. Left unchecked, the expectations regarding constant availability become ingrained.

Professors often find themselves thinking about an upcoming lecture or a question pertaining to their research at all times of the day and night. The time they designate as “work time” may well understate the pervasive character of work in the life of professors.<sup>9</sup>

### Joint Working Hours

The long hours discussed so far represent just one component of the family’s work week. Data from the 1990 Census help us to fill in a portion of the dual-career aspects of faculty’s weekly schedules.<sup>10</sup>

The census data indicate that dual-earner couples are common in academia, with fully employed partners more typical of female faculty than of their male counterparts. A large fraction of full-time faculty are married to other full-time employees. As we see in Table II, just over half (56.2%) of married male faculty and nearly all (88.5%) of married female faculty have spouses working full time. Female faculty are more likely to be married to male faculty (18.2% vs. 12.5%), but the partners of both groups are typically professionals or managers (69.5% for female faculty, 70.7% for male faculty). For married faculty, both partners combined put in long work weeks (84.1 hours per week on average for male faculty vs. 89.3% for female faculty). A sizable minority are in couples devoting 100 + hours per week to paid employment (17.3% for men vs. 25.4% for women.) These figures would probably be even higher if we could restrict the analysis to full-time faculty working at 4-year institutions. Thus, the pressure generated by the long faculty work weeks discussed above are compounded by the fact that most faculty, especially most female faculty, have spouses who are themselves putting in long hours.

<sup>9</sup>Kathleen Gerson has pointed out that faculty self-reports regarding their work schedules are valuable as evidence of the normative expectations that faculty face. In other words, if faculty report working 60 hours per week because they feel they should be working 60 hours per week, then this expectation itself may become a part of the everyday life of faculty.

<sup>10</sup>I sought to determine whether the hours reports from the census were similar to those from the NSOPF data. The average work week for full-time male postsecondary teachers obtained from the census data was 46.7 hours (43.9 hours per week for females). (Since the census data did not include an indication of whether the position was classified as part-time, those working 35 hours per week or more were defined as full-time.) This is lower than the NSOPF data partly because it includes those working at 2-year as well as 4-year institutions. The census sample is also restricted to married couples. When broadened to approximate the census definitions as closely as possible, the NSOPF results matched very closely for men and came reasonably close for women. The 1992 average NSOPF hours for men were 46.7 and 39.1 for women.

**Table II.** Faculty and Spouse Employment Patterns

	Men ( <i>n</i> = 2540)	Women ( <i>n</i> = 1042)
Faculty with employed spouse (%)	71.4	91.8
Faculty with full-time employed spouse (%)	56.2	88.5
Of those with employed spouses:		
Married to another faculty member (%)	12.5	18.2
Married to professional or manager (%)	70.7	69.5
Total hours in paid employment, both partners	84.1	89.3
Couples working 80+ hours (%)	71.3	87.5
Couples working 100+ hours (%)	17.3	25.4

*Note.* Faculty members are defined as having occupations 113–154 in 1990 Census: teachers, postsecondary (all fields). In these couples, the target or reference person is a full-time faculty (working 35+ hours per week). The employed spouse is defined as those reporting they are employed and working at least 1 hour per week for pay.

*Source:* U.S. Census of Population, 1990.

### Assistant Professors and Young Families

In my personal experience, academia has provided a reasonably family-friendly career because my wife and I waited to have children until after I received tenure. I received my Ph.D. degree at age 28, and I started my first full-time job later that year. I received tenure at age 34. My wife and I had our first child when we were 36, and our second child was born when we were 41. Having tenure and control over my time enabled me to be available if one of my daughters was sick, if school closed early because of snow, or if there was a gap between school and summer camp. In short, being able to sequence life-course events by having tenure first and raising a family only after tenure took the sharpest edges off the conflict between work and family. But this pattern is not typical of the life course of most faculty today.

The average assistant professor is more than 40 years of age (see Table III). Initially I was skeptical of this finding, but all of the analysis I did to substantiate it tended to confirm it. For example, it is consistent with the fact that the average Ph.D. degree is earned at age 33. It is consistent with the average age of 39 of assistant professors at University of Pennsylvania,

**Table III.** Average Age by Sex and Rank for Full-time Faculty

Full-time faculty	Men	Women
Full professor	56.3	54.1
Associate professor	49.6	49.6
Assistant professor	42.0	43.4
Instructor/lecturer	44.4	44.8
Other rank/no ranking system	46.6	44.5

*Source:* 1998 NSOPF.

which would be expected to have lots of fast-track faculty. In additional analyses (not shown), I found that nearly all assistant professors are over 30, more than four out of five are over age 35 (83.4% of the men and 84.3% of the women) and more than half are over age 40.

Because so many assistant professors are above age 30, many have decided to have children. Slightly over half (51.8%) of male assistant professors are married and have children, compared with 35.2% of their female counterparts. Another 12.0% of female assistant professors are single mothers, while 6.6% of male faculty report being single and having children. Combining these two groups, nearly half of women assistant professors are mothers, and nearly three in five of their male counterparts are fathers. This group especially feels the time crunch. Recent research suggests that “early” parenting (having a child while an assistant professor or earlier) reduces women’s chances of receiving tenure by 20–25%, while early parenting has a slight positive effect on men’s chances of promotion (Mason, 2003).

**Never Done**

Despite all the hours they work, faculty often feel that they do not have enough time to keep current in their field. Overall job satisfaction levels among faculty are quite high (see Table IV.) Among full-time faculty, 84.8% of men and 81.8% of full-time women report being somewhat or very satisfied with their jobs. Even among female assistant professors who work over 60 hours per week, 76.0% report being somewhat or very satisfied with their jobs (N.B.: for this group, the percentage who are very satisfied is only 26.5%).

Most faculty report being satisfied with the time they have to spend with students and the time they have to prepare for classes. The more common

**Table IV.** Job Satisfaction for Full-Time Faculty Members, by Sex

	Men		Women	
	Dissatisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
Overall job satisfaction	15.2	3.1	18.2	3.8
Work load	30.4	8.6	35.5	10.8
Time for working with students	20.2	3.5	23.3	4.6
Time for keeping current in one’s field	45.1	13.3	52.5	17.0
Time for class preparation	21.7	4.3	26.8	6.1

Source: 1998 NSOPF.

complaint is that there is not enough time to keep current in one's field. This problem is reported by 44.6% of male and 51.5% of female faculty. Women are more likely to report being dissatisfied with their work load (38.1% of women vs. 24.6% of men). This reflects not only the hours they work but the scarcity of stay-at-home husbands. Thus, the chief complaint of professors is that after working 55 hours per week, they feel frustrated by not being able to spend enough time keeping up to date in their specialty. In short, the demands of the job, especially in terms of research, are perceived as essentially unlimited.

### THE ACADEMIC UNDERCLASS

Part-time jobs are plentiful in academia. Postsecondary institutions (both 2- and 4-year) have increased their reliance on part-time faculty during the past two decades. The ratio of full-time positions to part-time positions has fallen from 3.6 to 1 in 1970 to 1.4 to 1 in 1999 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). While hiring part-time faculty was initiated by many institutions as a cost-effective way of meeting teaching needs when budgets were tight, some now argue that this practice has become a more permanent fixture in the hiring process (Antony and Valadez 2002; Schell and Stock, 2001). The total number of part-time faculty at all institutions of higher education (2-year, 4-year, public, and private) nearly doubled from 1976 to 1995, while the number of full-time faculty increased just 27% during the same time period (National Education Association, 1998). In 1999, part-time faculty comprised 39% of all faculty in American higher education institutions and taught nearly 40% of credit-bearing classes and students (National Education Association, 2001). Female faculty are disproportionately likely to be employed part-time in academia. Nearly one-half of female faculty and just over one-third of male faculty were employed part-time in 1995, despite the fact that men constitute the majority of all faculty in American higher education institutions (National Education Association, 2001).<sup>11</sup>

Part-timers really work nearly full time. Male faculty who report that they are employed in part-time positions average about 36.1 hours per week, while female part-timers report working 31.2 hours per week on average. (Keep in mind that the sample is restricted to those who said that being a

<sup>11</sup>Data on preferences for part-time work are inconsistent. Over three-fourths of part-time faculty surveyed in the 1998-99 NSOPF preferred to teach part-time rather than full time (National Education Association 2001; see also Antony and Valadez, 2002). However, nearly three-fifths (58.0%) of part-time faculty also report that they work part-time because a full-time position was unavailable.

faculty member was their primary job.)<sup>12</sup> Thus, faculty in poorly paid, part-time positions with no job security and often no benefits work what many consider to be nearly a full-time work week.

The problem then is not the shortage of part-time jobs but the stark difference in rewards and security between part-time and full-time positions. Part-timers are paid poverty-level wages—\$7000 on average, which represents one-eighth as much as full-time men and one-sixth as much as full-time women. As a point of comparison, the poverty line for a family of four in 1999 was \$16700 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Because few part-time faculty receive benefits (Gappa and Leslie, 1993), such as health insurance and retirement, the gap in total compensation between full-time and part-time faculty is even larger than the disparity in wages.

There was no gender gap in wages among part-timers, although part-timers are disproportionately female. These low wages were offered equally to men and women. Recall that part-timers work an average of 35 hours per week. Over 40 weeks per year that averages out to \$5.00 per hour, which is less than the \$5.15 minimum wage.

The gap in treatment between full-time and part-time faculty is one of the most striking cases of labor market segmentation (Pfeffer and Baron, 1988; see also Cappelli, 2001). It reinforces the long hours of full-timers in a variety of ways. First, the risk of not getting tenure and becoming a part-timer is a powerful incentive for assistant professors to work very long hours. Second, part-timers do not absorb the full burden of advising students or developing curricula and courses. They also typically play little or no role in faculty governance, either at the departmental level or at the university level. As a result, such key committee assignments as search committees, promotion, and tenure committees, typically are reserved for members of the full-time standing faculty. The rise in the number of part-timers thus shifts part of the academic burden to full-timers, thus increasing the time pressures described above. Thus, the exploitation of part-timers is linked to the excessive demands placed on full-timers.

## **GENDER GAPS IN RANK, FULL-TIME STATUS, AND EARNINGS**

Women continue to trail behind men in academic rank. In 1980–81, 49.7% of full-time women faculty were employed in tenured positions,

<sup>12</sup>This restriction brings the fraction of part-timers down to 9.5% of the sample. The rationale for this restriction is that the economic plight of part-timers is best understood among those whose primary source of employment is teaching. Part-time employment for those with other primary jobs raises a set of issues different than those that are the focus of this paper.

**Table V.** Median Salary by Sex and Employment Status

	1992 salary (\$)	F/M ratio	1998 salary (\$)	F/M ratio
All	30,000		35,000	
Men	35,000	0.629	40,000	0.675
Women	22,000		27,000	
Full-time	42,000		50,000	
Men	46,532	0.774	55,000	0.782
Women	36,000		43,000	
Part-time	4500		7000	
Men	4500	1.018	7000	0.985
Women	4579		6900	

Sources: 1992 and 1998 NSOPF.

compared with 70.0% of their male counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). By 1996–97, this disparity had hardly narrowed at all, with 51.6% of female and 71.8% of male faculty in tenured positions. The historical trend is similarly discouraging in private universities, where 69.4% of the male faculty were tenured in 1996–97, compared with 44.6% of the female faculty. The expectation that the pipeline of new faculty will narrow the gender gap in academia has not materialized over the last two decades.

Differences in full-time status and rank—which reveal the dual challenges of the faculty time divide—continue to play a critical role in the salary disparities between men and women faculty. Overall, female faculty earn 67.5% as much as their male counterparts (see Table V). Among full-time faculty, the gap is 78.2%. The single variable that explains the largest share of the gender differential among full-time faculty is academic rank (see the regression summary in Table VI and the full results of the wage regression in Table VII).<sup>13,14</sup> Specifically, adding the control for rank raises the ratio of women’s earnings relative to men’s from 0.797 to 0.887. Women are more likely to be assistant professors than their male counterparts, and their lower earnings reflect this fact. Thus, women’s overrepresentation among part-time faculty and at the rank of assistant professors among full-time faculty explain the preponderance of the gender gap in earnings among faculty. Bellas (1994, 1997) maintains that faculty who teach in female-dominated fields like the humanities and education are paid less than their male counterparts in other fields. Our data support Bellas’s findings, but our results suggest that this effect explains less of the gender gap in wages among faculty than do rank and full-time status.

<sup>13</sup>The coefficients in Table VII are unstandardized regression coefficients, which can be interpreted as roughly equivalent to the percentage change in earnings per unit change in the independent variable.

<sup>14</sup>Additional analyses, including the effect of marital and parental status on earnings, were conducted. These measures were not statistically significant for men or women (net of hours worked and other variables in the equations), and so are not reported in Table VII.

**Table VI.** Controlling for Gender Gap in Salary

	1998 ratio of female/male wages net of controls
All	0.675
Full-time	0.782
Hours worked	0.797
Rank (assistant, associate, full, etc.)	0.887
Experience (years employed at institution)	0.895
Institutional type (research, liberal arts, etc.)	0.926
Degree (Ph.D., professional degree)	0.935
Field of specialization (biology, business, education, etc.)	0.946
Productivity (articles and books published, etc.)	0.959
Other controls (union member, departmental chair, consulting income)	0.959

**WINNER TAKE ALL?**

One argument that has been put forth regarding the long work weeks of faculty is that the reward structure of academia tends toward a winner-take-all system (Frank, 1995). For example, the structure of DNA can only be discovered once. The rewards for being first are often sizable, but there is little or no recognition given to those who finish the race second. This kind of stiff competition can motivate a large number of professors to work long hours, even though the rewards will only go to a few. How does this thesis square with the facts on working time? First, as we saw in Table I, long hours are not limited to faculty in leading research institutions. Faculty at liberal arts colleges tend to work long hours even though they spend less of their time on research and are rarely in line for Nobel Prizes. There are many demands on the time of faculty, and it seems that long hours are characteristic of those who focus on teaching as well as those who focus on research.

There is some support for the winner-take-all thesis in the last set of columns of Table I, which displays the proportion working 60 or more hours per week by type of institution. If one focuses on the proportion of men working more than 60 hours per week, this proportion is highest at the research institutions and declines steadily as one moves to doctoral, liberal arts, and comprehensive institutions. (The category “other” includes medical schools.) However, this pattern does not seem to hold as clearly for female faculty.

To see if this effect is real or spurious, a multivariate regression analysis of the determinants of working time was conducted. The goal was to examine the relationship between time spent on research and the total working hours of faculty. In the analysis conducted on male respondents, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the proportion of time spent on research and total working time. However, this association did not

**Table VII.** Regression Analysis of Log Salary

Intercept	10.497**
Female	-0.056**
Weekly hours	0.001**
Rank	
Full professor	0.154**
Associate professor (reference)	
Assistant professor	0.037*
Instructor/lecturer	-0.130**
Other rank/no ranking system	-0.189**
Field	
Biological sciences	0.122**
Physical sciences	0.073**
Medicine/dentistry	0.416**
Nursing	0.212**
Other health fields	0.200**
Architecture/ engineering	0.223**
Business	0.329**
Computer science/math	0.167**
Social sciences	0.155**
Education	0.085**
Arts and humanities (reference)	
Vocational fields	0.081
Other fields	0.078**
Institution type	
Research	0.129**
Doctoral	0.031
Comprehensive (reference)	
Liberal arts	-0.086**
Other institutions	0.167**
Employment history	
Years at institution	-0.001
Years in academia	0.006**
Education	
Ph.D.	0.095**
Professional degree	0.230**
Field	
Biological sciences	0.122**
Physical sciences	0.073**
Medicine/dentistry	0.416**
Nursing	0.212**
Other health fields	0.200**
Architecture/engineering	0.223**
Business	0.329**
Computer science/math	0.167**
Social sciences	0.155**
Education	0.085**
Arts and humanities (reference)	
Vocational fields	0.081
Other fields	0.078**
Education	
Ph.D.	0.095**
Professional degree	0.230**
Grants	0.017**
Buys out teaching requirements	0.014



**Table VII.** (Continued)

Department chair	0.012
Temporary appointment	-0.090**
Union member	0.018
Does outside consulting	0.022
Other outside employment	-0.014
Percent of time spent teaching	-0.002**
Articles written	0.002**
Book reviews/chapters	-0.000
Books	-0.001
Presentations	0.000
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.425

\* *p* < 0.05; \*\* *p* < 0.01.

persist when other variables were taken into account. For women there was no relationship at all without controls, and a very slight negative effect with control variables. Thus, the drive to be the first to discover important new findings in one’s field of research does not differentiate those who work the longest hours from other faculty. (See Table VIII for the complete regression analysis of working time.)<sup>15</sup>

### THE NEED FOR SHORTER HOURS

As the above analysis suggests, the central problem is that faculty jobs are very demanding. This makes life very challenging for faculty in dual-earner marriages, which includes most married male faculty and nearly all married female faculty. It is difficult to raise children when both parents work very long hours. Most professors cannot wait until they have secured tenure to have children, and the job demands continue to be high among tenured professors as well. These problems are not restricted to elite research institutions but are evident in liberal arts and comprehensive institutions as well. And even after working without end, faculty continue to feel that they are unable to fully keep up with the latest developments in their field.

Deep immersion in research and teaching can be tremendously absorbing and satisfying, and sometimes requires long hours of concentrated effort and attention. However, few can sustain this total absorption in a productive vein for the 30 or 40 years of an academic career without interruption.

<sup>15</sup>Note that the coefficient of time spent on research is small and not statistically significant for men and is slightly negative for women. These small coefficients suggest that time spent on research is not driving the long work weeks put in by faculty. There are many other interesting patterns in Table VIII, including variation across faculty field of specialization, the small net negative effect of parenthood on men’s working time (in most occupations, men tend to work for pay slightly more when children arrive), and the small differences by rank and institution type.

**Table VIII.** Regression Analysis of Weekly Hours for Full-Time Faculty

	Male	Female
Intercept	43.121**	41.866**
Married with children <18	-1.740**	-3.845**
Married without children <18	-1.080	-1.195*
Single with children <18	-0.471	-2.197**
Single without children <18		
Rank		
Full professor	1.983**	0.635
Associate professor (reference)		
Assistant professor	1.575**	-0.352
Instructor/lecturer	-1.253	-3.199**
Other rank/no ranking system	0.528	-2.877**
Institution type		
Research	2.305**	1.251*
Doctoral	1.550**	-0.159
Comprehensive (reference)		
Liberal arts	1.167	1.188
Other	0.189	-0.663
Field		
Biological sciences	3.008**	2.523**
Physical sciences	2.416**	0.768
Medicine and dentistry	4.089**	3.250**
Nursing	5.074	2.448**
Other health fields	3.270**	1.800
Architecture and engineering	2.050**	2.951
Business	-0.250	-1.013
Computer science/math	0.236	0.243
Social sciences	0.314	0.801
Education	1.051	2.457**
Arts and humanities (reference)		
Vocational and other fields	3.026**	3.750**
Percent of time spent on research	-0.001	-0.023*
Age	0.438**	0.506**
Age <sup>2</sup>	-0.006**	-0.006**
Education		
Ph.D.	0.387	1.732**
Professional degree	1.971*	2.530*
Department chair	2.080**	1.626*
Temporary appointment	-0.981*	-0.085
Union member	-0.378	-0.673
Outside employment		
Consulting	3.710**	4.659**
Other employment	0.792*	0.929*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.065	0.079

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

And, over the long run, personal and family life must be reconciled with the demands of work (Fogg, 2003).

Long hours pose special challenges for women. Delaying having children is one strategy, and many female faculty do delay marriage and childbearing. But the strategy of delay cannot work for most faculty, since

the majority of faculty remain in the assistant professor rank until their late thirties or even forties. Even with high rates of nonparenting and nonmarriage among female faculty, women continue to lag behind men in salary and the chances of obtaining tenure. As we have seen, part-time jobs are plentiful in academia. The problem is not the shortage of part-time jobs but the stark differences in rewards and security between part-time and full-time positions.

There is a scarcity of part-time tenure track and tenured positions, but creating a new layer of second-tier positions would simply shift gender inequality to a different stratum in the faculty hierarchy. Surely part-time tenured positions would be an improvement over the abysmal pay and insecurity of nontenure track part-time positions, but perhaps we can shoot for something even better: shortening the work week for faculty. It is not written in stone that faculty will work over 50 hours per week. For example, European professors do not typically work over 50 hours per week.

Efforts to address the work–family dilemmas of faculty have focused on parental leaves and other measures to slow down the tenure clock (American Association of University Professors, 2001; Hollenshead, 2003; Ostrow, 2002). While these are necessary and useful measures, taking advantage of parenting leaves can be risky, as it may be taken as a signal by some that one is not exclusively devoted to the academic calling (Drago, 2003). Others have called for tenure reviews that focus on quality (such as the best three articles) rather than the quantity of publications. This too is a step in the right direction, but (a) faculty continue to be ranked versus their peers in other institutions, and these rankings take quantity and quality into account; (b) no evidence to date suggests that such policies have reduced the amount of time assistant professors devote to research.

The essence of the problem is that academic jobs demand far more time and energy than is reasonable. They pose impossible demands on faculty time. An exclusive devotion (Blair-Loy, 2003) to academic pursuits is expected, often to the detriment of personal life and family time. Whereas a generation ago, a male professor could rely on his stay-at-home wife to support his exclusive devotion to the pursuit of knowledge and teaching, the modern dual-earner family cannot sustain this commitment to work on the part of both partners. The demands of faculty jobs make it difficult if not impossible to succeed while being responsible parents and active members of the community. The present system may become self-defeating if academia is no longer able to recruit the best and the brightest as a result of impossibly demanding job expectations. The continued attrition of women deprives academia of a major source of talent. Therefore, we should place on the agenda the notion not simply of tinkering with the tenure clock but fundamentally altering the expectations of the academic calling.

How might working time be reduced in academia? The tenure hurdle is clearly the place to start. Tenure represents a single-round elimination tournament. It is not quite a winner-take-all structure in that the “winners” (those who make it over the tenure bar) do not actually win that much. But the point is that those who do not obtain tenure come away with little despite the major career investments they have made. This fact creates an enormous incentive to do everything possible to ensure that one has exceeded expectations. The cumulative effect of this behavior is that expectations continue to increase and it becomes harder and harder to exceed these expectations. Add to this the changing demographics of the profession—more women entering academia and more men with serious parenting expectations—and we have the work–family challenge posed above.

The problem with lowering the tenure bar is twofold. First, tenure review committees are composed of faculty who themselves threaded the eye of this needle and who continue to work 50 hours per week or more on average. (Indeed, they work so much that they scarcely have the time to read the tenure files.) So any changes in the expectations regarding tenure will have to involve changing the attitudes of those with a deep emotional attachment to the lofty standard of an academic calling. Second, no school administration will choose to pursue this strategy unilaterally for fear that it will plunge in the academic rankings. Would the University of Pennsylvania ever want to say publicly that it is easier to get tenure there than at Princeton? Would the University of Wisconsin announce to job candidates, “Consider joining us at Madison, rather than Ann Arbor or Berkeley, because we will let you lead a life outside of your office or your lab?” It may seem unrealistic or even suicidal at first, but this is precisely what is needed. Bold action by prominent university officials is needed to make it clear that academia is entitled to only so much of an aspiring academic’s time and soul. Put in terms of the academic labor market, universities need to offer a family-compatible lifestyle as a draw to recruit talented faculty.

Schools compete for new faculty recruits in terms of salary and resources, all set against the backdrop of the academic prestige structure. What I am suggesting is that schools offer a family-friendly university culture as a carrot in bidding for scarce talent. I believe that colleges and universities would quickly have a queue of eager applicants if they announced that tenure would not require the sacrifice of body, soul, family, and progeny. They need to say something like this: “We want quality teaching, and we are going to judge that by new comprehensive evaluations of teaching that include not just superficial student ratings but also a serious assessment of the course content. We are going to judge research not by the number of lines on your curriculum vitae but by the quality of the research and by its impact on the field. But, most important, we want to make it clear that we value

faculty as individuals, parents, and members of the academic community. We expect faculty to work hard, but not more than 50 hours per week.” If a few schools started down this road, many would follow. Where academic job advertisements now routinely say “Women and minorities are encouraged to apply,” imagine schools advertising “Junior faculty typically succeed in our institution because we help to give them the resources to do their work and the time they need to think and to live their lives.” The second advertisement would attract tremendous interest from academic job candidates. I look forward to the day when it is as ubiquitous as the first.

There is anecdotal evidence that prospective faculty take the chances of earning tenure into account in the selection of schools. I have talked informally with a number of Ph.D.’s who did not pursue tenure track jobs at top-tier institutions because they felt that the requirements for tenure were unrealistic. In one case a woman with a husband and three children did not want to move her family to an Ivy League university only to have to move again a few years later. She declined to even interview at this internationally known school and instead accepted a position at a major state university, where she subsequently obtained tenure. A second a young woman without children declined an offer of an assistant professor position at another Ivy League school in favor of a postdoctoral fellowship because she did not want to spend 5 years being chewed up and spit out with no realistic chance at promotion. A university filled with fine young scholars such as the two just mentioned would move quickly up the academic rankings.

A second impetus for change could be academic unions. Faculty unions represent 14.4% of full-time faculty in the United States.<sup>16</sup> but have not pressed for shorter hours. We found that being in a faculty union was not associated with a shorter work week, net of other factors affecting working time (see Table VIII). To date faculty unions have focused principally on wages and job security. When they have addressed the issue of working time, it has usually been a matter of course loads rather than a matter of the total amount of time expected for teaching and research (Rhoads, 1998).

Faculty unionization has been impeded by the Supreme Court decision in the *Yeshiva* case, which held that faculty are sometimes so integrally involved in decision making in so many aspects of campus life that they are considered management and are thus not eligible to unionize (Hendrickson, 1999). It should be noted that this decision applies to some campuses and not others. When it does apply, faculty can argue for self-regulation based on the notion of a community of scholars. In other words, when faculty are classified

<sup>16</sup>I was surprised to learn that 13.4% of part-time faculty were also unionized, which is virtually the same percentage as full-time faculty. Part-time faculty is a growth area for faculty unionization efforts (Mattson, 2000).

as employees, they can try to unionize and try to influence working time in this manner. When they are considered management, they can attempt to exert their managerial prerogatives to the same end.

Another potential area for faculty influence is in the use of part-timers. One strategy is to try to organize part-timers in order to improve their pay and job security. Standing faculty have an economic interest in this agenda because the more that part-timers are treated like regular faculty, the less incentive there is to hire part-timers. A complementary strategy is for committees of standing faculty and for faculty unions to try to limit the use of part-time faculty. As an increasing share of teaching is done by abysmally paid part-timers, the ranks of tenured and tenure-track faculty correspondingly diminish, and the competition for the remaining positions continues to intensify. Surely this issue should interest some faculty; perhaps in conjunction with the work-life concerns discussed here, a winning combination could be developed. Some recent initiatives in this area have been undertaken by the American Association of University Professors and others (Leatherman, 2000; Mattson, 2000).

A further straw in the wind: the unionization of graduate students (Duane, 2003). Perhaps the next generation of faculty will be accustomed to union membership from their days as graduate students, and it will not seem like such a foreign, unprofessional concept.

A third impetus for change might come from the health and safety concerns of employing medical residents. The long hours demanded by faculty positions in academic medical centers are a natural extension of the day and night demands of medical training programs. Recent efforts to cap the hours of medical residents at 80 (!) hours per week (even this new standard is riddled with exceptions and is not likely to be enforced in cash-strapped academic medical centers) are principally justified on the grounds of reducing medical errors and protecting the lives of patients from exhausted residents (Steinbrook, 2002). As women rapidly approach parity with men among entering classes of medical students, perhaps some institutions and specialties will figure out that the way to attract the most talented female students will be to offer family-friendly training programs. It is possible that moderated hours among residents and interns will be followed by more moderated hours on the part of medical faculty, and perhaps in this case the winds could blow from academic medical centers to other corners of the academy.

Without bold leadership from prominent colleges and universities, it will fall to national legislation to regulate the working time of faculty along with other professionals and managers. While it seems unrealistic to expect faculty to punch a time clock, one could establish 50 hours per work week as the standard for salaried professionals. This could reflect a monthly average

rather than a specific daily routine. Professionals could pursue a grievance procedure if they could show that it was not feasible to complete the demands of the job in 50 or fewer hours per week.

A national standard work week of 40 hours was established in 1938, over 60 years ago, at a time when a male breadwinner typically had the support of a stay-at-home wife. Now that academic couples are putting in between 85 and 90 hours per week on the job, something has to give. A 50-hour professional work week would be a good first step in dealing with the excessive time demands of professional and managerial work.

I have made the case that the excessive demands of the academic career are a systemic problem that calls for institutional remedies. But we can take action even in advance of the broader changes outlined above. We can try to keep faculty meetings to a minimum. In some departments, faculty meetings are actually canceled when there is no pressing agenda. We can endeavor to limit the number of committees and the number of faculty assigned to each committee. We can set limits on e-mail. We can limit the number of conferences by encouraging the clustering of events so that there are more free weekends without travel. Taken alone, each of these may represent a small step forward; when combined they may begin to make a difference, and they may help to lay the foundations for the establishment of real limits on faculty working time. The place to begin is to establish the notion that limits on the faculty work week are legitimate, that limits on work are healthy for individuals, families, and communities, and that such limits will enhance productivity in academia by broadening the pool of talent. Once this change in normative expectations is articulated and then established, practical steps will follow.

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