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Who Gets to Have a Life? Agency in Work-Life Balance for Single Faculty

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ABSTRACT
Faculty members with families face well-documented challenges in managing the demands of work and life. However, we know less about the experiences of single faculty members. Using agency as a theoretical framework, we assessed whether faculty members have different experiences in enacting agency in work-life balance based on their partner status, gender, and rank. We found single faculty members, particularly single, women associate professors, felt less agency in their ability to balance work and life than their partnered peers. We offer policy recommendations for institutions to more equitably support all faculty members in negotiating work-life challenges.

Responding to calls for more gender equitable practices, many postsecondary institutions implemented family-friendly reforms to enhance the recruitment and retention of women faculty members (Hollenshead et al., 2005; Lester & Sallee, 2009; Mason et al., 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) and improve faculty members' overall ability to manage work and life (Lundquist et al., 2012; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011). However, as revealed by several higher education news sources, single faculty members and faculty members without children are often invisible during the work-life debate (Anonymous Academic, 2017; Had, 2016; Patton, 2014; Reed, 2016). In these articles and the comments from readers, single faculty members argue that institutions assume faculty without nuclear family commitments are available to take on the work that faculty members with families cannot, which constrains their efforts to maintain healthy professional and personal lives.

There are several reasons why studying the experiences of single faculty members (defined in this study broadly as unmarried or unpartnered) is important. First, evidence suggests single faculty members produce fewer publications, spend less time on research, and spend more time on teaching and service (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Toutkoushian & Bellas, 1999). Such imbalances in productivity and workload undermine satisfaction with work-life (Feeney et al., 2014; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011), and dissatisfaction with work-life often causes faculty to leave their institutions (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; Gardner, 2013; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Rosser, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Second, women faculty members are more likely to be single compared to men faculty members (Eagan et al., 2014; Mason et al., 2013). Thus, enhancing faculty members' ability to be agentic in managing their professional and personal demands is not just a matter of personal satisfaction, productivity, and retention, but also of equity, justice, and diversity within higher education.

However, we know little about the experience of single faculty members because few studies on faculty work-life put them at the center of analysis, and even fewer studies have attempted to understand the ways in which institutional supports foster or constrain single faculty member's agency in integrating their personal and professional lives. In this study, we focus on faculty

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members' identity as single (unmarried or unpartnered) and define agency as assuming perspectives and/or taking actions to achieve one's goals (O'Meara, 2015, 2016; Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; O'Meara et al., 2011). In this study the goal is to understand how partner status influences agency in work-life. We use agency theory to assess whether faculty have differing experiences enacting agency in creating and/or maintaining a work-life balance based on their partner status. We also use agency as a frame to consider the ways in which institutions might more equitably put resources in place for faculty members to achieve work-life integration.

Background on faculty and work-life balance

This study is guided by the literature on work-life issues generally, including work-life conflict and work-life balance, and its relationships with faculty agency. We recognize the concept of work-life balance is contested. Some argue the idea of balance is unattainable, in that it assumes an "even balance" between work and life is possible (Sallee & Lester, 2017). Others argue the term artificially separates work and life in ways that are undesirable, especially to a new generation of faculty members (Trower, 2006, 2010). Critics of work-life balance suggest work-life integration or work-life fit might be more appropriate (Rapoport et al., 2001).

However, for the purpose of this article, we draw from past literature on work-life balance, which defines the term as an individual's ability to navigate, manage, or integrate their personal and professional lives in ways that fit their desired life and work styles (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Sallee & Lester, 2017). In doing so, we do not assume there is a normative balance to be achieved and recognize each individual has their own view of the balance of work and life that is appropriate for them. Despite the limitations of the term, our results revealed work-life balance, as related to policies and practices that influence their experience as faculty members, is in the vernacular of our participants. Conversely, we define work-life conflict as when individuals experience the demands of work and life as incompatible (Ehrens, 2016; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Sallee & Lester, 2017). High levels of work-life conflict have negative consequences for both organizations and individuals, including lower productivity, higher levels of stress and burnout, and reduced health outcomes (Frone et al., 1997; Maslach et al., 2001; O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Conflict is compounded when individuals perceive low organizational support for addressing their challenges (Casper & Swanberg, 2009; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Previous studies on work-life balance indicate faculty members experience challenges related to work-life balance differently based on aspects of their social identities and status. For example, researchers linked factors such as race/ethnicity (Denson et al., 2018), institutional type (Latz & Rediger, 2015; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006), and disciplinary background (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2015) to faculty members' experiences with work-life balance. A faculty member's ability to achieve work-life balance also can be influenced by their rank, in that assistant professors who lack tenure may experience more challenges in negotiating the demands of work and life because they are still developing management strategies (Cole et al., 2017; Sorcinelli, 1992) or have relatively less influence in demanding workplace flexibility (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2015). The vast majority of studies on faculty work-life balance focus on gender. Although both men and women faculty members struggle to balance personal and professional goals (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; Cress & Hart, 2009; Sallee, 2012, 2013; Reddick et al., 2012), women faculty members tend to report members higher levels of work-life conflict, primarily due to the demands of having children and navigating their careers (Mason et al., 2013; O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Thus, challenges related to work-life integration are commonly cited as a reason for the persistent gender inequities in academe (Cress & Hart, 2009; Mason et al., 2013).

We found that few empirical studies specifically examine the work-life balance experiences of single faculty members (for exceptions see Denson & Szelényi, 2017; Denson et al., 2018). This omission is an important one because approximately 18% of full-time faculty are single, separated, divorced, or widowed, and women faculty members are more likely to be single than men (Eagan et al., 2014; Fox,

2005; Hunter & Leahey, 2010; Mason et al., 2013; Perna, 2001, 2005). A recent study by Denson et al. (2018) found white, single faculty members without children had lower work-life balance than white, married faculty members who had children, while finding no differences between single and married faculty members from African American and Latina/o backgrounds. These findings suggest that aspects of the academic work environment might uniquely constrain the agency of single faculty members, who are more likely to be women (Eagan et al., 2014; Mason et al., 2013), in achieving work-life balance. Thus, understanding how the ways in which partner status influences agency in this domain may be an important consideration for understanding how to increase gender equity in the professoriate.

Research from other disciplines provides insight into some of these work environment features. Single professionals are asked to do more at work to accommodate partnered peers and/or colleagues with children, including filling-in for coworkers with children, taking undesirable work shifts, doing more travel, and taking on additional assignments (Casper et al., 2016; Casper & DePaulo, 2012; Casper & Swanberg, 2009; Young, 1999). Although professionals from these groups often report having strong ties to extended family, these commitments are often perceived as being less important than those with traditional obligations to their nuclear family (Casper et al., 2016). Unsurprisingly, single workers often face significant levels of work-life conflict (Casper & Swanberg, 2009).

There are multiple reasons why faculty members find managing their work lives and personal lives challenging. Increasing workloads, access to resources, and low levels of organizational support can contribute to work-life conflict and poor faculty morale, more generally (Denson et al., 2018; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011). One of the leading reasons, however, is the prevalence of ideal worker norms, the expectation that faculty members will perform work duties as if their personal obligations or demands are nonexistent (Sallee, 2012; Williams, 2001). Several studies show such norms negatively influence work-life integration for faculty members with children (Kachchaf et al., 2015; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Sallee, 2012). Moreover, women and men faculty members experience ideal worker norms differently based on the gendered expectation that women will typically take on primary parenting duties (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; Cress & Hart, 2009; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Sallee, 2012). Thus, as Cress and Hart (2009) argue, many of the features of the academic work environment, including ideal worker norms, serve to stymie faculty agency in areas such as work-life integration. Although single faculty members may "fit" the ideal worker norms given the members perception of fewer outside-of-work commitments, we anticipate ideal worker norms will likewise shape their experiences in enacting work-life balance. However, these norms may manifest in ways that differ from the experiences of faculty members currently documented in the literature and are likely shaped by the intersection of identity factors such as rank and gender.

Agency in faculty professional lives

In this study we drew on conceptualizations of agency nested in such social science disciplines as sociology, psychology, human development, organizational behavior, cultural, standpoint, and realist. Agency theory is particularly useful for noticing the ways faculty members navigate, negotiate, and reframe their environment to move towards their goals (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; O'Meara, 2015, 2016; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011). We draw primarily from O'Meara et al.'s (2011) framework of agency in faculty professional lives, where faculty agency is defined as assuming perspectives or taking actions to achieve goals. Those who have applied the concept of agency to faculty professional lives underscore that agency is always context specific (Neumann & Pereira, 2009; Neumann et al., 2006). For example, a faculty member might have agency in balancing work and life goals, but lack agency in pursuing their own career advancement or scholarly learning. Agency perspectives can be thought of as a form of meaning-making which "entails a reflexive purposefulness, a thoughtful directedness born of personal desire and valuing" (Neumann & Pereira, 2009, p. 139) wherein actors frame a situation in such a way as to help them meet goals. In other words, they see a situation in a way that helps get them closer to their goal. Agentic actions consist of individuals engaging in

strategic tasks or steps to achieve goals (Clausen, 1991; Elder, 1994, 1997; Gonzales, 2015; Marshall, 2005; Neumann et al., 2006). Although most of the agency literature merges perspectives and actions, researchers (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; O'Meara, 2015, 2016; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011) found that agency perspective and action were expressed as two distinct concepts, with agency perspective having a strong influence on agency action among tenure and tenure-track faculty members. As a result, we operationalize both concepts separately in this study.

A considerable amount of research shows that organizational contexts and environments shape faculty agency. For example, research has found department chair knowledge and support of work-life policies shapes faculty members' use of them and the climate for work-life balance (Sallee, 2012, 2013). Thus, academic units and leaders of academic institutions have a role in influencing how faculty members manage their work and lives (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; Cole et al., 2017; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Sallee, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). It is important to note an individual's agency often can be undermined in organizational contexts where some aspect of their identity is not well understood (O'Meara et al., 2011) or where exclusionary practices or policies constrain the actions and perspectives individuals can enact (Shapiro, 2019). Previous studies explored how factors of gender (O'Meara, 2015), race/ethnicity (Baez, 2000), rank (Terosky et al., 2014), and parenthood (O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) shape enactments of agency and how institutional context, norms, and cultures constrain agency (Gonzales, 2015)

Building upon this work, we utilize agency theory to better understand differences in work-life balance between single and partnered faculty members specifically. We believe this study to be among the first that uses the individual characteristic of being single (defined as unmarried or unpartnered) to examine faculty agency in work-life balance. Given the limited recognition of single faculty members in the literature, we hypothesize the work-life balance needs of this group may be less understood; thus, these faculty members may experience constraints in being agentic in balancing personal and professional demands. By enacting agency in work-life balance, we refer to assuming perspectives and/or taking actions to balance work and life goals. Using agency as our theoretical framework, we asked: Do faculty members have different experiences with agency in work-life balance based on their partner status? How does unit and institutional support shape faculty agency in work-life balance? To what extent does partner status intersect with gender and rank in shaping work-life balance?

Data and methods used in this study

Data for this study was collected from a single, land-grant institution (LGU). LGU is a four-year, public research institution in a suburban neighborhood outside of a large, urban center. The institution enrolls approximately 40,000 students; about 30,000 are undergraduates. It is a research-intensive institution. LGU's faculty work-life policies (indicated on the institution's faculty affairs and human resources websites) include a tenure delay policy, paid family leave, and a part-time tenure track option. The institution also offers faculty members access to health and retirement benefits, moving assistance, reduced rates at the LGU gym, and tuition remission for employees, spouses/partners, and dependents. In 2010, the institution was awarded an National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant to support the retention and advancement of women and under-represented minority faculty. LGU's ADVANCE program runs a variety of programs to support these goals, including peer networks, work-life policy awareness efforts, and a leadership program. In addition to faculty workshops and trainings, the ADVANCE program does research on faculty careers, including faculty interviews and surveys.

Data and sample

As part of the overall research activities, LGU's ADVANCE program administered a Faculty Work Environment Survey (FWES) to measure the degree to which tenure and tenure-track faculty members experienced their units and the university as investing in their professional growth and

creating an inclusive work environment. Authors developed the FWES using agency theory and created survey items related to agency in work-life balance based on an extensive review of the literature on agency and on faculty work-life facilitation and constraints. Content experts reviewed the survey, which was pilot tested and revised before implementation.

Our analysis drew from the results of a cross-section of the FWES, which was administered to all full-time, tenure and tenure-track faculty members. Of LGU's 1,611 tenure and tenure-track faculty members, 854 responded, for a response rate of about 53%. However, given that approximately 3% of respondents did not indicate either their gender, rank, or partner status, the final dataset for analysis include 828 respondents. In Table 1, we detail descriptive statistics of the respondents. In our sample, 41% of faculty respondents were women and 59% were men. In terms of partner status, around 81% of faculty members indicated they were married or had a life partner ("Partnered"), while roughly 17% reported being single, divorced, separated, or widowed ("Single"). In our sample, 12% of men were single in contrast to 24% of women; these findings are roughly consistent with national surveys that show women academics are less likely to be married/partnered than men (Eagan et al., 2014; Mason et al., 2013). Turning to rank, our sample was composed of 44% assistant professors, 32% associate professors, and 24% full professors. About a quarter (23%) of the full professors were single, while 18% of the associate professors and 14% of the assistant professors were single. Women associate and full professors were more likely to be single than men of the same ranks (Table 1).

Variables

In this study, we used unit and institutional support for work-life balance, as well as gender, faculty rank, and partner status as independent variables. We used items related to faculty agency in work-life balance as dependent variables. We sought to understand how faculty experiences of unit and institutional support for work-life balance shaped faculty agency in work-life balance as mediated by gender, rank, partner status, and their interactions. We coded participants as "single" if they reported being divorced, separated, widowed, and/or single and "partnered" if they reported being married or having a life partner. Given the extant literature on the ways work-life balance varies based on faculty gender and rank, we analyzed differences between single and partnered assistant, associate, and full professor men and women faculty members. We selected eight survey items related to work-life balance. Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item based on their own experiences within the LGU work environment for work-life balance in the last 12 months. We asked about the perspectives and actions they took to achieve work-life balance, their satisfaction with the climate for work-life balance in their units, and the organizational conditions that facilitated or constrained their ability to balance work and life. Each survey item was measured using a 5-point Likert-type response scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree). Confirmatory factor

Table 1 Descriptive statistics by gender, rank, and partner status.

Rank	Gender	Partnered		Single		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Assistant Professor							
	Men	84	81.6%	19	18.4%	103	100.0%
	Women	63	74.1%	22	25.9%	85	100.0%
Associate Professor*							
	Men	140	87.0%	21	13.0%	161	100.0%
	Women	77	76.2%	24	23.8%	101	100.0%
Full Professor**							
	Men	261	90.0%	29	10.0%	290	100.0%
	Women	68	77.3%	20	22.7%	88	100.0%
Total		693	83.7%	135	16.3%	828	100.00%

Significant at *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. Chi-square testing used.

analysis (CFA) performed on the survey items in prior studies had shown high loadings and robust statistics (Niehaus & O'Meara, 2015; O'Meara & Campbell, 2014; O'Meara, Rivera et al., 2017). We operationalized agency perspective as feeling as though one has the ability to balance work and life goals. We conceptualized agency behavior as having taken strategic steps toward creating a satisfactory work-life balance. We operationalized institutional support for work-life balance as faculty members perception that their institution had enacted policies or practices that make work-life balance possible. Finally, we measured unit support for work-life balance using a five-item scale. Here participants were asked if there were role models in their department for work-life balance, whether faculty members were satisfied with their unit's culture around work-life balance and/or if they perceived bias against caregiving in their unit. Furthermore, faculty members were asked if they were able to schedule work commitments around family schedules and be honest with colleagues about family/life roles and responsibilities.

Analyses

For purposes of data reduction we built a latent factor of unit support for work-life balance and tested the construct validity using CFA (Hancock & Mueller, 2013). All standardized loadings for the latent factor ranged from 0.725 to 0.884, proving construct validity. The final CFA model included a latent construct of unit support for work-life balance, and single item constructs of institution support for work-life balance, agency perspective and agency behavior. In case of the latent factor, we used the mean of the items as the overall measure of the factor. The higher the mean scores across the items, the stronger we assessed unit support for work-life balance to be. See Table 2 for descriptive statistics for the final constructs.

Next, we ran analyses of variance (ANOVA) on the final constructs controlling for gender, rank, and partner status. Finally, we conducted regression analyses with perceptions of unit and institutional support for work-life balance as independent variables and agency perspectives and behavior as dependent variables, controlling for gender, rank, and partner status.

We also analyzed 443 open-ended comments from one of the questions from the FWES focused on work-life balance. The question asked participants to identify one thing that would improve LGU's policies and programs to support faculty work-life balance. We noted comments where faculty members specifically referenced their partner status, rank, or gender playing a role in their work-life behaviors. We add these qualitative comments from single faculty members to the quantitative findings to offer a richer description of the experiences of single faculty members in navigating work-life balance.

Limitations

Though we took several precautions to ensure trustworthiness in our results, our study had several limitations. First, our data was collected from a single institution which limits the generalizability of our analysis. Second, while our survey had a relatively high response rate (53%) compared to similar faculty surveys nationwide (e.g., Eagan et al., 2014; Hurtado et al., 2012), when we compared the tenure and tenure-track faculty demographics at LGU to our sample, we found that men and full professors were slightly underrepresented and assistant and associate professors and women were overrepresented. Thus, we recognize that our findings are not fully representative of faculty at LGU. Third, we did not analyze differences in agency in work-life balance at the intersection of gender, rank, and partner and parental status, that is, whether partnered faculty members with or without children had different views of work-life balance compared to single faculty members with or without children. We made this decision for two reasons. One, while all respondents indicated their partner status, fewer respondents (N = 684) chose to indicate whether or not they had children. Thus, to maintain our sample size, we consider differences based on partner status alone. Therefore, although we had data on the intersection of parental status and partner status, and we provide some descriptive statistics on it, we did not factor this intersection into our regression analyses because of the small sample size in some of the groups

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and standardized item loadings for the final CFA model.

Constructs	Survey Item	Total		Partnered Faculty		Single Faculty		Standardized item loading	Agree/Strongly Agree
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Unit Support for Work-Life Balance	I am satisfied with my unit's culture around work-life balance.	3.36	1.04	3.40	1.04	3.23	1.04	0.868	52.4%
	There are role-models in my unit of how to create a satisfying work-life balance.	3.09	1.04	3.11	1.04	2.97	1.03	0.725	36.0%
	My unit supports faculty scheduling work commitments around family schedules	3.56	.95	3.55	0.97	3.63	0.84	0.784	55.8%
	In my unit, faculty can be honest with colleagues about family/life roles and responsibilities.	3.62	.99	3.64	0.99	3.60	0.94	0.884	60.7%
	There is NO bias against family care-giving in my unit.	3.49	1.02	3.50	1.03	3.40	0.93	0.776	51.1%
Institution Support for Work-Life Balance	The institution does what it can to make family life and the tenure track compatible.	3.05	1.07	3.09	1.06	2.95	1.09	–	35.5%
Agency Perspective	In general, I feel I have control over creating a satisfying work-life balance.	3.45	1.03	3.50	1.01	3.25**	1.05	–	56.6%
Agency Behavior	I have taken strategic steps toward creating a satisfactory work-life balance.	3.66	.96	3.71	0.93	3.47**	1.07	–	65.7%

Significant at *p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001. ANOVA testing used.

when broken down by gender, rank, partner status, and parental status together. Two, the word "single" was present in the qualitative comments of many respondents as a dominant explanation for inequities in work-life balance, as well in the vernacular of many of the popular press pieces (e.g., Reed, 2016) and research from organizational psychology (e.g., Casper & DePaulo, 2012) that helped to frame this study. We felt the focus on single faculty members (with the other characteristics noted) was enough of a focus and issue in and of itself for this study. Nevertheless, we recognize the emphasis on partner status as a limitation and recommend that in future studies, researchers consider the interaction of those variables. Finally, we recognize the importance of race/ethnicity when discussing equity issues and we anticipated this factor would influence faculty agency in work-life balance; however, we were not able to include this variable into the analysis due to small numbers of underrepresented minority faculty in some groups. When broken down by gender, rank, race/ethnicity, and partner status simultaneously, the sample would contain fewer than 5 respondents in some of the groups. Also related to respondent's identities, we recognize that gender is not a binary construct. However, gender was self-reported through the human resources system and, at the time of the survey, faculty employees only had male and female options to select from. We recognize this may exclude faculty members who do not identify with either of the two options.

The influence of partner status, gender, and rank on agency in work-life balance

Overall, we found significant differences in agency in work-life balance based on partner status and additional significant differences based on gender and rank. Qualitative comments confirmed partner status played a large role in faculty members perceptions about LGU's overall climate towards work-life balance.

Descriptive findings

We first ran descriptive statistics on each survey item and the constructs for all respondents (Table 2). Almost two-thirds of respondents agreed that in their unit faculty can be honest with colleagues about family/life roles and responsibilities (60.7%). Only about a third reported having role-models in their unit of how to create a satisfying work-life balance (36.0%), and that the institution did what it could to make family life and the tenure track compatible (35.5%). Over half of the participants felt they had control over creating a satisfying work-life balance (56.6%). Almost two-thirds had taken strategic steps toward creating a satisfactory work-life balance (65.7%).

ANOVA findings

Single faculty members were less likely than partnered faculty members to feel they had control over creating a satisfying work-life balance [$F(1, 818) = 7.10$, $p = .008$] or to have taken strategic steps toward creating a satisfactory work-life balance [$F(1, 821) = 7.41$, $p = .007$], that is, they were less likely to develop agentic perspectives and behavior towards their work-life balance. Single faculty members also descriptively scored lower than partnered faculty members on most of the items related to their satisfaction with unit and institutional support for work-life balance (Table 2). Furthermore, when looking at the intersection of partner and parental status, single faculty members with children descriptively scored lower on many items when compared to partnered faculty members with or without children and to single faculty members without children (Table 3).

Table 4 describes how the interaction of gender, rank, and partner status mediated perception of unit and institutional support for work-life balance and agency perspective and behavior in creating work-life balance. Generally, men were more satisfied with their agency perspective and behavior and their institutional support for work-life balance, while women, and particularly single women associate professors, were less satisfied.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics by partner status and parental status.

Constructs	Survey Item	Partnered No children		Single No children		Partnered With children		Single With children	
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Unit Support for Work-Life Balance	I am satisfied with my unit's culture around work-life balance.	3.38	1.06	3.17	1.08	3.36	1.03	3.19	1.17
	There are role-models in my unit of how to create a satisfying work-life balance.	3.09	1.06	2.99	1.01	3.09	1.03	2.81	1.13
	My unit supports faculty scheduling work commitments around family schedules	3.62	0.97	3.69	0.85	3.49	0.99	3.60	0.76
	In my unit, faculty can be honest with colleagues about family/life roles and responsibilities.	3.63	1.02	3.61	0.93	3.59	0.99	3.65	0.98
	There is NO bias against family care-giving in my unit.	3.54	0.99	3.37	0.94	3.36	1.07	3.35	1.06
Institution Support for Work-Life Balance	The institution does what it can to make family life and the tenure track compatible.	3.10	1.08	2.98	1.15	3.03	1.07	2.60	0.96
Agency Perspective	In general, I feel I have control over creating a satisfying work-life balance.	3.40	1.11	3.27	1.06	3.44	0.97	2.96	1.15
Agency Behavior	I have taken strategic steps toward creating a satisfactory work-life balance.	3.52	1.00	3.44	1.07	3.75	0.88	3.42	1.14

Table 4 Descriptive statistics on dependent variables by gender, rank and marital status.

	Partnered						Single					
	Assistant Professors		Associate Professors		Full Professors		Assistant Professors		Associate Professors		Full Professors	
Construct	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Unit Support for Work–Life Balance	3.46	3.35	3.36	3.22	3.53	3.53	3.79	3.63	3.32	2.99	3.56	3.20
	(.82)	(.81)	(.80)	(.86)	(.79)	(.85)	(.64)	(.79)	(.89)	(.71)	(.58)	(.84)
Institution Support for Work-Life Balance	3.14	2.96	3.02	2.82	3.21	3.14	3.41	2.96	3.11	2.28	3.16	2.79
	(1.12)	(1.10)	(1.03)	(1.03)	(1.04)	(1.10)	(1.00)	(1.00)	(1.27)	(.96)	(.94)	(1.11)
Agency Perspective	3.12	3.23	3.55	3.21	3.73	3.62	3.29	3.14	3.39	2.80	3.44	3.46
	(1.10)	(1.05)	(.91)	(1.08)	(.95)	(.95)	(1.04)	(1.12)	(1.24)	(1.07)	(.87)	(.89)
Agency Behavior	3.41	3.72	3.70	3.66	3.81	3.77	3.41	3.46	3.61	3.30	3.44	3.62
	(1.02)	(.93)	(.83)	(.91)	(.95)	(.92)	(1.12)	(1.30)	(.97)	(1.12)	(1.00)	(.93)

Means and standard deviations.

Partnered men full professors were more likely than partnered men assistant professors to report agency behavior [$F(11, 810) = 1.954$, $p = .031$], and agency perspective in work-life balance [$F(11, 807) = 4.815$, $p < .001$]. In contrast, single women associate professors were less likely than partnered men associate professors [$F(11, 807) = 4.815$, $p = .033$] and partnered men full professors [$F(11, 807) = 4.815$, $p = .001$] to report agency perspective. Partnered women assistant [$F(11, 807) = 4.815$, $p = .018$] and partnered women associate professors [$F(11, 807) = 4.815$, $p = .004$] were less likely than partnered men full professors to have agency perspective. Also, single women associate professors were less likely than partnered women full professors to have agency perspective [$F(11, 807) = 4.815$, $p = .026$].

Additionally, single women associate professors were less likely than partnered men assistant professors [$F(11, 807) = 2.491$, $p = .027$], less likely than partnered men full professors [$F(11, 807) = 2.491$, $p = .003$], and less likely than single men assistant professors [$F(11, 807) = 2.491$, $p = .025$] to be satisfied with their institutional support for work-life balance. Single women associate professors also were less likely than partnered women full professors to be satisfied with institutional support for work-life balance [$F(11, 807) = 2.491$, $p = .033$].

Regression analyses findings

In regression models, unit and institutional support for work-life balance were significant, positive predictors of agency perspective and behavior, controlling for gender, rank, and partner status (Tables 5 and 6). Specifically, the more faculty members perceived support for work-life balance in their unit and institution, the more they were satisfied with their agency perspective and behavior in creating work-life balance. Associate and full professors were more likely than assistant professors to demonstrate agency perspective and behavior (Tables 5 and 6). Single faculty members were less likely than partnered faculty members to exhibit agency behavior (Table 6). When looking at interaction effects, in terms of agency perspective, the scores were higher for partnered men associate (B = .490) and full professors (B = .554), followed by partnered women full professors (B = .467). Interestingly, single women full professors also were likely to report agency perspective for work-life balance (B = .519). For agency behavior, the scores were higher for partnered men full professors (B = .379), followed by partnered women assistant (B = .364), associate (B = .349), and full professors (B = .348), and partnered men associate professors (B = .332). The models predicted 30.0% of the variance (adjusted R^2) in agency perspective and 11.4% in agency behavior.

Table 5 Results from multiple linear regression models on agency perspective.

Variable	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	SE	p-value	B	SE	p-value
Women	−.05	.07	.490	-	-	-
Single	−.14	.08	.102	-	-	-
Associate Professor	.27	.08	.001	-	-	-
Full Professor	.40	.08	<.001	-	-	-
Unit Support for Work-Life Balance	.45	.05	<.001	.44	.05	<.001
Institution Support for Work-Life Balance	.20	.04	<.001	.20	.04	<.001
Partnered Men Associate	-	-	-	.49	.12	<.001
Partnered Men Full	-	-	-	.55	.11	<.001
Partnered Women Assistant	-	-	-	.20	.14	.159
Partnered Women Associate	-	-	-	.25	.14	.070
Partnered Women Full	-	-	-	.47	.14	.001
Single Men Assistant	-	-	-	.04	.23	.861
Single Men Associate	-	-	-	.25	.21	.246
Single Men Full	-	-	-	.27	.18	.148
Single Women Assistant	-	-	-	.13	.21	.521
Single Women Associate	-	-	-	.08	.20	.708
Single Women Full	-	-	-	.52	.22	.017
Adjusted R^2		.300			.300	

Reference group: Partnered Men Assistant Professors

Table 6 Results from multiple linear regression models on agency behavior.

Variable	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	SE	p-value	B	SE	p-value
Women	.10	.07	.160	-	-	-
Single	−.24	.09	.008	-	-	-
Associate Professor	.18	.09	.043	-	-	-
Full Professor	.23	.08	.007	-	-	-
Unit Support for Work-Life Balance	.26	.05	<.001	.26	.05	<.001
Institution Support for Work-Life Balance	.13	.04	.002	.12	.04	.002
Partnered Men Associate	-	-	-	.33	.13	.008
Partnered Men Full	-	-	-	.38	.11	.001
Partnered Women Assistant	-	-	-	.36	.15	.018
Partnered Women Associate	-	-	-	.35	.14	.016
Partnered Women Full	-	-	-	.35	.15	.020
Single Men Assistant	-	-	-	−.18	.24	.461
Single Men Associate	-	-	-	.16	.23	.472
Single Men Full	-	-	-	.00	.20	.999
Single Women Assistant	-	-	-	.07	.22	.731
Single Women Associate	-	-	-	.07	.22	.762
Single Women Full	-	-	-	.32	.23	.160
Adjusted R^2		.120			.114	

Reference group: Partnered Men Assistant Professors

Qualitative findings

Through open-ended survey comments, single faculty members reported many negative experiences in trying to establish a satisfying work-life balance, and this was true of men and women. Three themes emerged as dominant in comments from single faculty members. First, participants found it extremely frustrating that university policies, and administrators and colleagues framed work-life balance as focused primarily on caring for children. They specifically mentioned parental leave, part-time tenure track options, and stop the tenure clock as examples. Faculty members felt as though these work-life balance policies at LGU centered around faculty with traditional nuclear families. For example, one male, single faculty member said:

> Consider the family that is an N of 1. Often, single individuals have familial responsibilities that are not often captured in the nuclear family (spouse, child, etc.), but are paramount for the extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.). As a result, they are more reluctant to share or to be transparent about those responsibilities that impact work-life balance.

In other words, because LGU's current definition of "family „ included only those with traditional families, single faculty members often felt constrained in their ability to vocalize their own work-life balance concerns. Indeed many single faculty members called for a broader definition of work-life balance at LGU beyond raising children. As stated by one faculty member, "Consider that work-life balance goes beyond having children and a family to include a more holistic approach to well-being, mental health and self-awareness." To single faculty members, work-life balance included time for self-care outside of traditional family demands. Participants felt the absence of a more inclusive definition was a clear equity issue, especially for single faculty members without children.

A second theme was that single faculty members felt as though their needs to establish work-life balance were pitted up against the needs of faculty members with children. In such cases, their needs were not seen as important. For instance, one single woman associate professor said:

> While I understand that people with families and children need special scheduling considerations, those of us without family and children are often forced to accommodate for the aforementioned, creating a burden on those who are equally busy. Special requests are often taken from faculty with family and they are accommodated at the expense of others without children.

Single faculty members felt as though they were asked more often to take on undesirable work in order to facilitate work-life balance for partnered colleagues with traditional families, thereby

promoting unequal workloads. Another associate professor said, "Work/life balance is only seen in terms of 'family.' If someone is single or without children, it somehow works to minimize that person's equally as pressing need for a work life balance." Single faculty members often viewed work-life balance as a zero-sum game, where partnered faculty members with children had access to benefits while single faculty members did not.

Another aspect of the zero sum game identified by participants was feeling as if all of the additional work they were doing was prohibiting them starting or actually "having a life." For example, one single woman faculty member said:

> People who are not yet in a situation to start families arguably have even more need for time outside of work to become integrated into their communities, as they may not yet have a support network in their home. Going out and becoming integrated into the community is not often compatible with the first few years of the tenure track … my impression is that "work-life balance" has become synonymous with "spending time with children," and I think it should be broader than that.

Single faculty members, who needed time to forge new social networks outside of LGU, did not have time to do so because their needs were less visible and they were picking up work for others.

A third theme related to their unit's culture around work-life balance. Single faculty members attributed the challenges in enacting work-life balance at LGU to the larger culture of the institution. One said, "It is not about policies and programs, it's about transforming culture and the unwritten expectations, which is a daunting task to undertake." One other suggested that LGU needed to, "Enforce extensive training of deans, department chairs and other administrative leaders at the university so that they become genuinely supportive of these policies." In other words, single faculty members, and particularly single women, often felt as though LGU policy and practice was not intended to facilitate their work-life balance, and moreover, that the climate and culture of LGU was not conducive to enhancing their agency in this area.

The need for culture change in departments also was underscored by faculty members' observations about overly high expectations for performance overall. Ideal worker norms, wherein faculty were expected to work at full speed all of the time, undermined work-life balance efforts of all faculty members, but particularly for single faculty members and women associate professors who were among the most dissatisfied with institutional support for work-life balance compared to all other groups and felt the least agency in their ability to create a satisfying work-life balance. As one study participant summarized, "Expectations are relentless, and work-life balance isn't possible. Many colleagues and I get by on way too little sleep in an effort to keep our heads above water. To achieve work-life balance, we need realistic expectations." In other words, so long as institutions continue to validate and reward faculty members who conform to ideal worker norms, work-life balance will be unattainable.

Enhancing the work-life agency of single faculty members

This study contributes to the literature on faculty work-life balance by focusing on a group of faculty members who are often made invisible as it relates to work-life balance: faculty members who are single. Overall, we found that across gender and rank, partnered faculty members were more likely to report agentic perspectives or actions in achieving work-life balance compared to their single colleagues. Single women faculty members reported significantly lower agency in terms of perspectives and action in work-life balance when compared to partnered men and women in most areas. While we found agency in work-life balance increased with rank, we also found that single, associate professors demonstrated significantly less agency than faculty members from other ranks, indicating that partner status had a strong impact on faculty well-being with regard to their ability to balance their personal and professional lives. This impact became even stronger when intersecting with gender. Single women associate professors were least satisfied with institutional support for work-life balance compared to all other groups.

Qualitative comments underscored how and why single faculty members might be experiencing less agency in work-life balance. Specifically, they did not feel like their situation "fit" the way their units or institution understood work-balance needs. Instead they felt their needs were misunderstood and in competition with faculty members with partners and children. These findings are consistent with those from previous studies of faculty (Denson & Szelényi, 2017; Denson et al., 2018) and of professionals working outside of higher education (e.g., Casper et al., 2016; Casper & DePaulo, 2012; Keeney et al., 2013; Young, 1999), which show that single employees often report less satisfaction with their organization's work-life climate. Although some organizations have made strides in easing workplace flexibility for those with families, generally, efforts have not addressed the ways in which all workers, regardless of partner status, are deserving of personal lives outside of work (Keeney et al., 2013).

Existing studies from both inside and outside of higher education give some insight into why single faculty members feel less agentic in their ability to manage work and life. When faculty members perceive low organizational support for their work-life needs or feel as they are excluded from accessing certain benefits (e.g., flexible schedules) (Casper & Harris, 2008; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Young, 1999), their agency is constrained. In the case of single faculty members at LGU, our results reveal they were often encumbered by institutional culture and policies which emphasized the work-life needs of partnered faculty members with children. In other words, LGU's work-life policies seemed to facilitate greater agency for partnered faculty members, often making single faculty members feel as though they were left behind or that they had to pick up the workload of their counterparts who had partners and children.

Our results are consistent with research that shows women faculty members (Mason et al., 2013; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) and associate professors (Terosky et al., 2014; Trower, 2011) are more dissatisfied with their institutions' approach to work and life integration. There are many reasons why faculty members from these groups might face challenges in enacting agency in work-life balance. Research shows that associate professors often participate in higher levels of academic service (Misra et al., 2011), receive less recognition for their contributions (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011), and frequently lack clarity on what is required of them to advance to the rank of full professor (Baldwin et al., 2008; Lennartz & O'Meara, 2018). In other words, whereas departmental leaders and policies may sometimes shield assistant professors from participating in certain kinds of service and/or provide mentoring on tenure requirements, associate professors must often navigate environments in which there is less clarity and structure around work demands (Lennartz & O'Meara, 2018). Likewise, women faculty members often spend more time on teaching (Carrigan et al., 2011) and receive more requests for service work (Guarino & Borden, 2017; O'Meara et al., 2017). The cumulative effect of these workload inequities makes women and associate professors (and particularly, women associate professors) more vulnerable to work-life conflict, in that they are asked to do more while still seeking to advance their careers, which can result in work spilling-over (Staines, 1980) into personal time. Our results showed that single faculty members from these groups, who are constrained in their ability to take action in enacting work-life balance, may therefore be doubly disadvantaged in creating a workload that allows them to achieve the balance that they seek. Having considered the relationships among our findings and the extant research on agency, work-life balance, and faculty careers, we turn next to implications for equity-minded reform of work life policies and supports.

Implications for equity-minded work-life reform

The lack of support and visibility for single faculty members' work-life balance are critical equity concerns for higher education. In a study of faculty time allocation, sociologist Winslow (2010) observed that when we find mismatches between how women and men faculty members want to be spending their time, and are actually spending their time, we have found a power issue. The discrepancy reveals power, social capital, and resources that one group holds, and the other lacks,

in that work environment. In a similar vein, our study has uncovered an area where one group, in this case single faculty members, have felt constrained and marginalized by policies and practices that make their work-life needs invisible, and/or devalue them in comparison to the needs of parents with children. Ironically, this story started with good intentions. The National Science Foundation and other federal agencies have advocated work-life policies in direct response to the lower numbers of women retained and advanced to higher rank and the data showing the disproportionate negative effect of child-rearing on women's academic careers. Institutions followed suit with work-life policies to meet a stated and important need, and in many cases made support available for all academic parents.

However, in enacting such work-life supports in higher education, institutions have not heeded key elements of "equity-minded reform" as outlined by Bensimon et al. (2016). Although focused primarily on equity as it relates to race and student outcomes, the concepts Bensimon et al. outline for ensuring equity translate nicely, and have been applied by the authors and others to other areas of higher education. First among these tenants are the idea that enacting equitable policies and practices does not mean we need to treat all faculty members exactly the same but, instead, accommodate differences in needs (Bensimon et al.). In this case, it is critical we acknowledge the work-life needs of faculty members of different intersectional identities, and see those needs against the backdrop of relevant institutional contexts—such as gendered and racialized work environments and places where sexual orientation or being a first generation academic create distinct challenges in articulating and accessing supports. A second point made by Bensimon et al. is the idea that we do not enact a purely horizontal view of equity, positioning those with partners and children above those who are single and do not have children (Bensimon et al.). In this case, actors have positioned faculty members with children (partnered or not) as in greater need of support for work-life balance than any other group. This framing, language, and emphasis, has constrained the agency single faculty members feel to take time for health and wellness, friends, family, and other interests—because they have been positioned as less worthy.

Given that faculty members who are single represent a substantial portion of overall faculty nationwide, institutions should take steps to address their agency in order to reduce faculty turnover and increase faculty satisfaction. Our results provide institutions and departments with some direction on how they can improve agency work-life balance for single faculty members.

First, the framing of work-life resources plays an important role in single faculty members' perceptions of the overall climate for work-life balance at their institution. That is, by narrowly defining work-life benefits as being related only to policies such as paid family leave or tenure delay after the birth of a child, LGU sent the signal that single faculty members do not qualify or are not worthy of work-life balance. Thus, one way LGU and institutions like it could enhance single faculty members' agency in navigating their work and lives is by repackaging faculty work-life benefits such that they include partner and family-neutral benefits such as wellness programs or reduced/nego-tiated home loans. Institutions might consider creating a "cafeteria style" work-life benefits policy, where faculty can choose a combination of benefits that best meets their needs for work-life support (Center for Worklife Law, 2013). As noted by one single faculty participant, "One thing I would recommend would be to promote more wellness and physical activity. Give incentives for healthy living. For example, discounts at fitness centers or an allowance for work time to be devoted to physical activity." Such cafeteria-style benefits would therefore strengthen the agency of single faculty members by providing them with choices in the policies available to them in the work-life realm, rather than signaling that the only work-life supports available are related to partners and family.

Second, LGU's narrow definition of family, as interpreted through work-life benefits and institu-tional policies, excluded single faculty without members traditional nuclear families. LGU and other institutions can enhance single faculty members' agency and perception that work-life balance also applies to them by broadening the definition of family to include extended family/other relatives. Existing policies such as tenure delay or paid family leave are not flexibly extended to other family or

personal emergency situations. We suggest that institutions formally acknowledge that there are legitimate, non-child related reasons faculty members might utilize these policies for. Institutions should create guidelines for deans, department chairs, and faculty members for how tenure delay and paid leave can be arranged for elder care or other personal medical leave situations. Such guidance can help single faculty members without children, in particular, to navigate the use of work-life policies and feel greater agency in their ability to and acceptance of their utilization of these policies.

Third, few departments track faculty work activities such as teaching, mentoring, and campus or department service (O'Meara et al., 2017, 2018, 2019). Ambiguity in who is doing what can result in workload inequities, and in some faculty members taking on a greater share of work than others (O'Meara et al., 2019). As indicated by our findings, single women associate professors are among the least satisfied with work-life balance compared to all other groups. To ensure women, associate professors, and/or single faculty members are not taking on a greater share of work, departments can increase transparency around faculty work activities through the creation of "service dashboards" to track, make visible, and recognize faculty teaching, service, and research contributions (O'Meara, 2016; O'Meara et al., 2017, 2018). Such data can then be used to benchmark individual faculty performance and identify potential inequities related to gender, rank, or partner status. Such transparency has the potential to enhance the agency of those who are taking on a greater share of the work by empowering them to say no to new requests, and for departments/units as a whole to re-distribute work activities to be more equitable.

Finally, agency theory also reveals that organizational leaders play an important role in influencing how faculty members manage their work and lives (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014; Cole et al., 2017; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Sallee, 2012). Institutions, and in particular unit leaders and departmental chairs, can positively influence the climate for work-life balance by role-modeling positive work-life behavior and making visible the work-life policies available to faculty members within their units. Leaders must go beyond considering the ways in which institutions can become more "family-friendly" (Lester & Sallee, 2009). Instead, they should consider how flexible work arrangements and organizational practices (O'Meara, 2011), such as part-time tenure track roles, modified promotion and tenure criteria, and customized faculty workloads, can facilitate not only greater agency in work-life balance for single faculty members, but also make faculty careers more equitable and attractive for all faculty members. To initiate cultural change, those in positions of power need to lead by example and be willing to challenge previously accepted norms and institutional policies (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). It is critical leaders reposition the issue of work-life policies to be inclusive of all faculty needs, to articulate those needs as equally important, and to not be blind to the differences in needs and challenges faced by faculty members of many intersectional identities.

Conclusion

The research study described here sought to determine whether single faculty members have different experiences than partnered faculty members in enacting work-life balance and the role units and institutions have in providing support for agency in work-life balance. Our findings reveal that partnered faculty members were significantly more likely to report agentic perspectives or actions in achieving work-life balance compared to their single colleagues. When we dove deeper into the intersections of partner status, rank, and gender, we found single women associate professors were among the least satisfied with institutional support for work-life balance compared to all other groups. The question of who gets to have a life and an academic career is a strategic one for colleges and universities, as work-life dissatisfaction impacts faculty productivity and retention. However, it also is a question of equity for this group: If single faculty members feel less agency in work-life balance than faculty members who are partnered, their full participation (O'Meara, 2016; Sturm, 2006) in the academy is inhibited. Equity-minded reform (Bensimon et al., 2016) of work-life policies and practices

is critical to bring the needs and challenges of single faculty members into full view and address those needs with unique supports.

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