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Organizational Work-Family Support, Life Stages and Flexibility

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Extant research investigating the work-family needs of faculty suggests that they may differ from those in other fields where availability of affordable childcare may be the primary obstacle (e.g., Carr, Ash, & Friedman, 1998). For academics, family and personal care needs often go unmet because of the professional culture at many Universities that promotes “publish or perish” tenure requirements that often coincide with child-rearing years. Women faculty with children, in particular, perceive problems with institutional policies that often do not include formal maternity leave but instead include an expectation that one be ever-available. In this thought paper, I will explore the issues of work-family balance in academia with a particular focus on career and life stages. Despite the differences between academia and nonacademic jobs, research in one can certainly inform the other; thus, I will tie in research from multiple industries to discuss how all types of organizations can better support their employees’ work-life needs. Finally, I will suggest avenues for future research aimed at informing both academics and non-academics and taking into the account the distinct needs of those at different life stages.