
***The Paradox of Work Family Policy in the Nonprofit
Sector***

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Introduction

The idea of work and family as separate spheres has all but disappeared from workplace rhetoric. With women entering the workforce in record numbers, particularly women with young children, family issues are increasingly being brought into the workplace. Work-family policy has become a popular subject for mainstream magazines and talk shows. *Working Mother* and *Fortune* both publish annual lists of the 100 best companies to work for which includes a review of work-family policy. The federal government issued the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 in part to respond to issues of work-family balance. Family-friendly policies, which include but are not limited to flex-time, child care, personal time, and parental leave, are now central to many of corporate America's human resources departments. Men are also beginning to insist on policies that acknowledge their gradually increasing roles as caretakers and respect their right to prioritize family over career.

Given mounting pressure from workers seeking help in balancing their work-family roles, increasing attention from the media, and the development of policies in both the public and private sectors, it is not surprising that research on the impact and implications of work-family balance is on the rise. Researchers have examined this growing trend for decades in the private sector. An increasing interest in work-family policy in the governmental sector is also evident in the rising number of articles examining these policies in public agencies. Increasing professionalization is resulting in a growing number of professionals demanding and getting more family responsive policies in all sectors. Privatization appears to be blurring the boundaries between the sectors allowing both government and nonprofits to look more closely at private sector

practices. The increasing competition for employees pushes issues of work-family balance onto the radar screen of organizations searching for ways to recruit and retain the best employees. In spite of these trends, however, there has been little research into the nonprofit sector's responsiveness to the issues of work-family balance.

The nonprofit sector has always been important in terms of lending its voice to public policy debates and supporting underrepresented or marginalized groups. Women and children are one important stakeholder group that the nonprofit sector has supported and championed. Issues of childcare, poverty, and pay equity are central to the well being of women and children. The predominance of women working and volunteering in nonprofit agencies, the professionalization of the sector, and other important sector characteristics make the nonprofit arena seem an ideal place for the development and dissemination of work-family policies. Yet, the nonprofit arena is oddly silent in terms of work-family policy. What conditions might inhibit the growth of a work-family focus in the nonprofit sector? Is there a "double standard" at work in nonprofit organizations in terms of a work-life balance? Or are nonprofits recognizing and developing policies to address work-family issues? These are important questions to consider in the examination of work- family policy in the nonprofit sector.

The Nonprofit Sector: A Hospitable Environment?

Women's Work

Several sector characteristics suggest that the nonprofit arena might be a hospitable environment for the development and dissemination of new, innovative family-work policies. Women create, work in, and run the nonprofit world. In 1994, women made up 68.4% of the paid employees in the sector (Hodgkinson and Weitzman,

2000). Women also comprise 62% of the volunteers in nonprofit organizations (Independent Sector's Nonprofit Information Center, 1999). The Annual Charity Index, found that of the 222 organizations listed in the 1994 guide, 18% or 40 organizations had female executive directors compared with only 3 women CEO's found on Business Week's list of the top 1,000 U.S. companies. The "demographics of employee groups will undoubtedly have an impact on benefits attractiveness" (Herman, 1994, p. 581). Given the predominance of females in the nonprofit world, women may be in a unique position to demand and implement work-family policies.

Not only do women do most of the work in the nonprofit sector, they also continue to do the majority of care taking tasks in the home. The fastest growing segment of the workforce is married women with children under the age of 3 (Center for Work and the Family, 1999). Women, mothers in particular, "live a life of perpetual motion, effectively holding down two full-time jobs" (Schor, 1991, p. 125). Arlie Russell Hochschild refers to this as the "second shift": the house and childcare duties awaiting parents, mostly women, after their paid workday is done. Hochschild estimates that women work 10 to 15 hours more per week than their husbands at their combined paid employment and family tasks (1989). Schor (1991) looked at hours worked by men and women between 1969 and 1987. She found that men were doing more at home but it still only amounts to 60% of the work women do in the home. Schor attributes most of the change to the increase in male unemployment forcing men to attend to family tasks while women work in the paid labor force. She notes that men working in the paid labor force only do one additional hour of work per week in the home. Another study found that wives do over two and a half times more housework than their husbands (Blau, Ferber,

and Winkler, 1998). As most family tasks fall to women, they are likely to be more aware of the need for family-work policies. It is possible that women-run nonprofits and nonprofits with mostly female staff and volunteers, given the inequitable division of home labor, would be more responsive in providing additional and improved family-work policies.

Part-Time Employees and Volunteers

Another important characteristic of the nonprofit sector is the heavy reliance on part-time and volunteer labor. Nonprofits employ the equivalent of 6.3 million full-time volunteers in addition to the 11 million paid nonprofit employees (Salamon, 1999). One major attraction of the sector for women, particularly those with heavy care taking responsibilities in the home, is the availability of more flexible schedules. Part-time or flexible work arrangements allow women to earn an income while continuing to fulfill family obligations. Reskin and Roos note that “women with families may attach more importance than do men to part-time work or flexible hours” (1990, p. 63). Herman suggests that “although salaries are undoubtedly higher in the for-profit world, benefits may be better in nonprofits” (1994, p. 581). Benefits include not only paid benefits such as medical insurance or vacation time but might include flex-time or job sharing. These “non-paid” benefits may be particularly helpful to women as they continue to do most of the labor in the home. Pitts-Catsoupes and Bond found that nonprofits were more likely than for-profits to offer part-time employees benefits (2000). Historically, as the nonprofit sector developed, women were able to volunteer or work in a nonprofit agency and still work in the home thereby gaining valuable work experience without upsetting the gendered division of labor. Given the fact that “family care still is predominantly a

woman's role, nonprofits may have a greater stake in addressing employees' work-family conflict" (Gonyea, 1999, p. 131). This is particularly important in light of the number of women working in the sector. The flexibility and availability of part-time paid or volunteer positions is crucial to nonprofit sector workers and may be key in drawing and keeping millions of people active in nonprofit organizations.

Professionalization

While part-time workers and volunteers are vital to the survival of nonprofit organizations, the nonprofit world continues to become increasingly professionalized. The number of managerial women tripled in the nonprofit sector from 1969 to 1991 while female managers in government rose by approximately 33% and women managers lost ground in the private sector (Preston, 1994). Female nonprofit managers may be in a better position to change human resource policies than their numerically inferior female counterparts in the for-profit or governmental sectors. In a study of 105 human service agencies in Tarrant County, Texas, the respondents indicated that 86% of their boards and 94% of their management understood the need to balance work and family responsibilities at least somewhat (Hoefler and Jordan, 2000). Almost 93% of respondents reported that employees have at least somewhat of an opportunity to vary working hours or schedules to accommodate family demands. Of the 105 respondents 67% were female and 82% were executive directors, presidents, or some other high-level administrator (Hoefler and Jordan, 2000). This study suggests that women at the top of nonprofits are aware of the work-family demands of their staff.

The growing number of professionals in the sector may signal the need for nonprofits to focus on work-family policy as a method of recruitment and retention.

Nonprofits must “be aware of the time-off policies of organizations with which they compete for labor” (Herman, 1994, p. 586). Work-family benefits in most organizations “are more available to professional and technical employees as compared to clerical and sales employees and blue-collar or service employees” (Gonyea, 1999, p. 128). Given the increasing availability of work-family benefits being offered in the corporate world, nonprofits will have to respond in kind. With the continuing professionalization of the nonprofit sector, the best employees are likely to demand more and improved work-family policies.

Organizational Flexibility

The lack of resources in the nonprofit sector may limit the scope of family-responsive policies nonprofit organizations can provide employees. Small organizations, including most nonprofits, may not have the resources to build day-care centers or offer paid parental leave for their employees. They may, however, be able to provide more flexibility than larger organizations in terms of work-family policy. Herman notes that “nontraditional pay systems will become an integral part of (nonprofit) compensation packages” (1994, p. 558). Nonprofits are beginning to explore ways they can offer “nontraditional” benefit options to their employees without breaking the bank.

Possibilities include job sharing, co-op child-care groups, and flex-time. Small business owners indicated that alternative work schedules actually helped them in meeting the changing service demands of clients while also helping staff balance work-family life (Pitt-Catsouphes and Bond, 2000). While Glass and Estes, report that the smaller organizational size of many local nonprofits reduces the likelihood of the agency implementing formal work-family policies, they do not consider the use of informal

policies (1997). In contrast to Glass and Estes, Hohl, who examined both formal and informal policy, did not find size to be a significant or consistent factor in determining whether or not nonprofit organizations offered work-family policies (1996).

It may be possible for small organizations to “buy loyalty” without huge resources by “allowing workers to design a flexible work life” (*Working Mother*, October 2000, p. 90). Loyalty to mission and to organization is found in abundance in nonprofit employees. Nonprofit workers, in general, remain with agencies in spite of the very real monetary sacrifices because of a belief in the mission of the organization and the desire to have more meaningful work lives. Hohl notes that, while few nonprofits evaluate the effectiveness of work-family policy, all 30 of the nonprofit administrators she interviewed agreed that flexible work arrangements increased employee morale and retention, reduced tardiness and absenteeism, and improved the quality of their services (1996). Nonprofit agencies would likely have to do little in the way of work-family policies in order to cement the loyalty of workers. Nonprofits “can often more easily offer paid time off than salary increases as rewards for performance” (Herman, 1994, p. 585). Nonprofits frequently must rely on innovative ways to attract and retain employees in the current tight labor market. Offering unique work-family policies may be one way for nonprofits to compete for human resources with the private and public sectors.

Nature and Culture of the Nonprofit Sector

The “nature” of the nonprofit sector makes it more likely to be responsive to family needs than either the public or private sectors. The nonprofit sector has been described as voluntary, altruistic, and caring. Hohl notes that “as a group nonprofit organizations are held to higher societal expectations and scrutiny in ethical integrity and

fairness than either the public or private sector” (1996, p. 70). These attributes and others suggest that nonprofits might more readily recognize the tremendous pressure workers, especially women, face in balancing work and family obligations. While private corporations develop policy on the basis of economic cost-benefit analysis, “governmental policy more often sites ideological or moral justifications quite apart from economic costs or benefits” (Starrels, 1992, p. 266). This ideological dimension could arguably be extended to the nonprofit sector.

A study of 1,057 organizations with 100 or more employees, 173 of which were nonprofits, found that the not-for-profit organizations were more likely to implement policies to promote the work-life balance of employees while private companies were twice as likely to use the policies specifically to retain employees or improve performance (Pitt-Catsoupes and Bond, 2000). This two part study also looked at 188 small (less than 50 employees) and 88 medium and large (over 50 employees) workplaces. The researchers found that 90.9% of small business owners ranked caring for employees as people as most important in their organizations. Small business owners were also more likely (36.8%) than medium (14.3%) or large (9.1%) organizations to indicate that it is very important for them to help their employees balance work and family. Similar to the focus of the small business owners as reported by Pitts-Catsoupes and Bond, nonprofits are more likely to care for the whole person rather than what each employee contributes to the organization. Nonprofits might be more inclined to offer policies aligned with the caring nature of their missions than private organizations. The nonprofit sector, at its core, “is dedicated not to serving itself but to satisfying the needs of others and to creating public goods” (Fleischman, 1999, p. 175). This “other serving”

focus is the hallmark of the voluntary sector. Given this altruistic bent, nonprofits may more easily recognize the tremendous time conflict employees face in balancing work and family and may be more willing to explore options to make the balancing act easier.

It is interesting to note that “in most companies, family-responsive policies have simply been superimposed on a traditional work culture; thus the majority of employees have been receiving contradictory messages from their employers” (Gonyea, 1999, p. 135). Corporations are more likely to have formal work-family policies in place but may be less likely to encourage the use of the policies (Hochschild, 1997). Starrels suggests that “unsupportive supervisors and organizational cultures commonly counteract formal policies” (1992, p. 261). The organizational culture of nonprofits may be more supportive of the integration of work and family than the private sector. Many organizations are “beginning to recognize that several child care or elder care programs are not going to have their desired effects if they are implemented in a culture hostile to families” (Karsten, 1994, p. 178). The “competition for personnel is often a catalyst for the introduction of flexible work arrangements, once they are implemented, administrator and supervisor support is often key to the arrangement’s success” (Gonyea, 1999, p. 130). As more managers are women in the nonprofit sector, use of informal policies might be more widely accepted and encouraged than in the corporate arena.

Formal vs. Informal Policy

Very few studies distinguish formal and informal work-life balance policies. Yet, the literature suggests that informal policies may be the norm for many organizations. Hohl does discuss the use of informal, unwritten policy. She found that 55% of nonprofits offering part-time work, 60.2% offering flex-time, and 65.9% offering reduced

work weeks were doing so informally (1996). Hohl also found in interviews that organizations without written policy believe this “approach gave managers more flexibility, discretion, and fewer legal problems” than in organizations with written policies in place (1996, p. 78). She further notes that even in organizations with formal policies, the guidelines are general and vague. However, organizations with written policy tend to offer these arrangements based on objective criteria whereas informal policy appears to be approved as a reward or nonmonetary incentive by managers (1996).

Harvard Business Review notes that “a small but growing number of managers, many of them flying under the radar of officially sanctioned programs, approach the work-life question differently” (2000, p. 3). Gibelman found in her study of 74 large human service agencies that, in most cases, the availability of flextime is not reflected in formal organizational policy (2000). In their study of small business owners, Pitt-Catsouphes and Bond found in interviews that many managers discounted the importance of informal policy in helping employees achieve work-life balance (2000). Workers may be making individual arrangements with their boss in an effort to meet family obligations. In their study on work-family policy in nonprofit social service agencies Hoefler and Jordan note that “few formal policies exist to assist workers in balancing their legitimate personal needs with the legitimate personnel needs of their organizations” (2000, p. 17). Hoefler and Jordan imply that while flextime is offered by 65% of organizations in the study, part-time work by 61%, medical leave by 74%, maternity leave by 62%, and personal leave by 46%, for-profits are offering a broader array of work-family benefits than nonprofit organizations.

The Response of the Nonprofit Sector

The nonprofit sector is slowly responding to the competing demands of family and work. Fischel-Wolovick, et al note a 3% decline in job turnover among social workers and an increase in worker productivity, as measured by an increase in the number of cases opened monthly and the number of direct service provided (1988). They loosely attribute these results to the implementation of job sharing and compressed workweek in the department. Hohl notes that of the 156 organizations responding to her survey, 85% offer one or more of eight different work arrangements with similar levels of usage in all of the organizational categories (1996). This figure is in contrast to the current national figure of 61% of companies offering work-life balance policies as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1991. While the percentage difference between Hohl's 1996 study and the Bureau of Labor Statistics report of 1991 might partially be accounted for by increasing public awareness of and demand for work-family policy, many factors likely account for the 24% increase over the five year period. Pitt-Catsouphes and Bond found that nonprofits were more likely to allow employees to return to work gradually than for-profits, were more likely to offer extended maternity, parental, and adoption leaves but less likely to pay for them, and are more likely to offer on or near site childcare, vacation care for school aged children, and be supportive of the development of child care services in the community (2000). Nonprofits are responding to work-family issues in a variety of ways and the results are gradually becoming apparent.

The Nonprofit Sector as a Model

Several assumptions arise from the major role women play in the nonprofit arena. One supposition is that, since a greater number of women fill management positions in the nonprofit sector, they are in a better position to affect change in nonprofit human resource policies. Managerial women might be expected to focus on work-family policies for nonprofit staff. Another assumption is that since women still do the majority of care taking tasks in the home, women may be more aware of the need for family-work policies. Again, as a whole, the female dominated nonprofit workforce is more likely to bring family issues into the workplace than their male counterparts. A third assumption is that organizations focusing on the needs of women and children, particularly organizations dealing with issues of child care, elder care, or single parents, would be more aware of the need for providing family-work policies to their own employees. Women would appear to be both the most likely beneficiaries and the strongest advocates behind improvements in work-life policy. Women in the nonprofit sector may be in a better position to design and implement policies that confirm the value of “women’s work” and provide all employees with family responsive programs that meet the changing needs of workers over their lifetimes.

In terms of policy, nonprofits are active advocates. The not-for-profit sector can encourage government and business to adopt a specific policy stance or provide other agencies with research in order to support the policies developed elsewhere. In the case of work-family responsiveness, the nonprofit sector is in a unique position. Nonprofits can become examples to other organizations on the importance of and how to develop and implement family-friendly policies. Sector characteristics including the

preponderance of women, the nature of the sector, and the use of informal policies suggests that the nonprofit sector is hospitable to work-family policy.

The Nonprofit Sector: A Sector Out in the Cold?

The Struggle for Work-Family Policy

While the general nonprofit management literature suggests that nonprofits are in a unique position to galvanize the work-family policy debate, there is little research into work-family policy in the nonprofit sector. Judith Gonyea conducted a series of literature searches on work-family policy in the nonprofit sector published since 1985. In spite of the number of databases searched, she identified only four articles (1999). She also noted that an alarming “double standard may exist between the kinds of vision nonprofit organizations hold for society and their treatment of their own staff” (Gonyea, p. 133). While nonprofits profess to be committed to equality, their employees are treated in the same gender-stereotyped way as employees in private industry. Issues of family, which continue to be characterized as “women’s” problems, are not taken seriously or as affecting the entire organization. Though they are sorely needed, work-family policies have been slow to materialize in the nonprofit sector.

In general, work-family policy is in for an uphill battle. *Working Mother* magazine suggests three reasons why these policies may fall short: 1) while the policy is on the books, the corporate culture may demand work or “face time” be a priority, 2) managers may reject requests for individuals under them, and 3) work-family benefits are distributed inequitably. Another concern is the need to constantly revise the policies in meeting the changing demands of the workforce and the changing structure of the family (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 1998). The Fischel-Wolovick, et al alternative work

scheduling implementation study, examining flex-time, job sharing, and compressed work week policies, identified four specific concerns of managers: 1) collaboration and compatibility among workers, staff, and patients, 2) cost, 3) coverage, and 4) criteria for selection of participating employees (1988). While the implementation continued once managers fears were discussed openly, these are legitimate concerns regarding work-family policy implementation. In Hohl's study of flexible work arrangements in 156 nonprofit organizations, she found that 1) managers had unresolved concerns, 2) approval was sometimes based on subjective criteria, and 3) in a few cases, there was selective discouragement (1996). Managers unease or unfamiliarity with work-family policy may make them less likely to approve requests to use such policies. Some managers worry that if one employee is granted flex-time or job sharing, many other employees will want to use the same policy. Other supervisors believe the use of work-family policy will decrease efficiency and effectiveness overall. Family-friendly policies can be used to reward valuable employees, particularly professionals, while not being offered to employees with less perceived skill or value. Legitimate business reasons could be used to deny an employee's request for a specific policy. The term "legitimate," however, is not adequately defined and left up to the discretion of individual managers. Clearly, nonprofits are not immune to these problems or others that hinder an organization's ability to offer family-friendly policies to its employees.

Power in the Nonprofit Arena

Acker noted that men control and fill the positions of power in most organizations (1990). This is true in the nonprofit sector as well. Gibelman found that women were overrepresented in direct service positions at 68% compared to 48% of men while women

were underrepresented as upper level managers at 11% female compared to 22% male (2000). Often, “a small male elite holds the power and sets the agenda for an overwhelmingly female pool of employees and volunteers” (Steinberg and Jacobs, 1994, p. 94). Allison notes that “organizational policies and practices in general...are embedded in powerful political, social, historical, and symbolic contexts that have the power to reinforce domination and inequity” (1999, p. 82). Men, in positions of power, may see work-family policy as an implicit encroachment into their domain and may be reluctant to implement such policy. Making it difficult for women to gain positions of power, by not offering family-friendly policies, ensures men remain in control. Starrels argues that “workplace family policies are rather uncommon because women, in the aggregate, support them more than do men but have less power to develop them” (1992, p. 264). Women may need and want family-friendly policies yet may have no voice in setting the organizational agenda in order to secure the policies for themselves. O’Neill questions whether “the influence of women in and through the nonprofit sector is as great as their statistical significance” (1994, p. 1). Shaiko notes that while women are “overrepresented in the staffing of association and nonprofit sector organizations more generally, (they) are less successful in their efforts to fill key leadership positions” (1997, p. 125). While women numerically outnumber men in the sector, women are relegated to lower level positions with less power.

Neither is power balanced in the nonprofit boardroom. While women held 54% of board positions on boards with budgets of \$100,000 or less, only 36% of board positions are filled by women in organizations with annual budgets topping \$10 million (NCNB, 1997). A follow-up survey conducted in 1999 found that in 1,342 nonprofit

organizations, most with budgets over \$1 million, only 43% of the board members were women (NCNB). Several researchers have noted that women tend to be concentrated on smaller boards with lower budgets and less power (Shaiko, 1997; Odendahl and Youmans, 1994; Gittel and Covington, 1994). This suggests that the organizations with power in the sector have fewer women. While men, too, may desire work-life balance, they are less effected, in terms of career opportunity, salary, and care taking responsibilities, if such policies do not exist. It appears that women are hired in lower paying, lower prestige positions with little real opportunity to affect change or to develop policy. So, while “women are more supportive of policies than men, they have less power to formulate them” (Starrels, 1992, p. 260). Therefore, though women are in the majority in terms of workforce numbers, they remain in the power minority.

Even in volunteer positions, men are more likely than women to have the powerful policy and agenda setting roles. Several studies have noted that men are more likely to hold prestigious volunteer roles, such as a board position, whereas women are concentrated in the less influential direct service roles (Odendahl and Youmans, 1994; Metzendorf and Cnaan, 1992). A study of Red Cross volunteers found that 56% of male volunteers were in policy making roles compared with 39% of female volunteers (as cited in Metzendorf and Cnaan, 1992). The concentration of women in less powerful roles, even among volunteers, suggests that the numerical strength of women in the nonprofit sector is more than offset by the dominance of men in power positions.

The fact that men hold the power in the nonprofit arena suggests that encouraging them to support life-balance policies might increase the implementation of policy in organizations. However, while men may want to be more involved in family life, severe

social and cultural norms may discourage active support of work-family policy. Many managers still “consider the whole topic of striking a balance between work and personal life as a women’s issue—in other words, not their problem” (Harvard Business Review, 2000, p. 24). Starrels notes that “informal norms and practices circumvent the intended neutrality” of the gender neutral quality of legislation on child care and family leave benefits (1992, p. 262). Hochschild suggests that the term “family man” “in the modern workplace...has taken on negative overtones, designating a worker who isn’t a serious player; the term now tacitly but powerfully calls into question a worker’s masculinity” (1997, p. 132). In her study, Hohl found that a few nonprofit organizations actively discouraged men from using work-family policies (1996). Given the continued cultural and social insistence on judging men by their time commitment to work, it is unlikely that the males in power in the nonprofit sector will address work-family issues as a critical need of employees. Work-family programs in general “are far less institutionalized than other designed to protect traditionally male breadwinning responsibilities” such as military service leave or pension plans (Glass and Estes, 1997, p. 299). Since “male responsibilities” are generally more highly valued than responsibilities traditionally falling to women, there may be less organizational incentive, particularly from the male power centers, to address the needs of female staff members.

Barriers to Work-Family Policy in the Nonprofit Sector

a. Part-Time Workforce

In addition to issues of power, many barriers exist in the development of work-life balance policies in the nonprofit sector. While much of the nonprofit workforce is not full-time, part-time and less skilled employees are in perhaps the worst organizational

position from which to demand work-life policies. Even in the top 100 family-friendly companies chosen by *Working Mother* magazine, blue-collar employees, who are paid by the hour and is the job category into which approximately 66% of working mothers fall, are missing out. Upper level positions, including professionals, managers, and technicians are more likely to have access to flexible work arrangements than service and blue collar workers (Hohl, 1996). There is a “collective failure to provide policies for those most in need-low income workers, young and/or single parents at the early stages of their work careers” (Glass and Estes, 1997, p. 309). Given their weak organizational position, it appears as if the large, part-time workforce is no better off employed in the nonprofit arena than any other sector.

b. Service Sector

Approximately 80% of the nonprofit sector workforce toil in nonprofit organizations that provide services to clients (Salamon, 1999). Given that most of the nonprofit workforce is employed in agencies providing service to clients, there may be additional difficulties in offering work-family balance policies to direct care workers. Fischel-Wolovick, et al notes that in their study of the implementation of alternative work scheduling for 1,100 social workers at a teaching hospital the ability to meet the mission of quality service to clients was one of the barriers managers cited to immediate implementation (1988). The authors go on to state that “staff satisfaction, while certainly important, was still seen as a contextual issue” allowing managers to focus on whether alternative work arrangements would affect service delivery (1988, p. 96). It may be difficult or impossible for agencies providing services to offer flexible work arrangements to their staff in the face of client demand. Women in lower status jobs

“typically lack a formal mechanism for making such demands and they fear negative sanctions should they choose to vocalize them” (Starrels, 1992, p. 264). Additionally, many part-time employees may “encounter difficulties in obtaining full-time work, which usually also means few or no benefits” are available to them (Burbridge, 1994, p. 136). Though women at lower organizational levels in nonprofits appear to need work-life policies more urgently, it is the professional women who have the best access to these programs.

c. Professionalization

On the other end of the spectrum from part-time employees is the increasing professionalization of the nonprofit workforce. Professional women are more likely to have access to work-family policies than less skilled women (Glass and Estes, 1997). Yet, as noted previously, women may not be rising to the highest organizational levels where substantive policy change occurs. Also, “in the process of rising to a top management team, people may internalize or conform to certain traditions—for instance, sacrificing family concerns for the sake of work concerns—that make them less likely to be strong advocates for work-family issues” (Milliken, Martins, and Morgan, 1998, p. 589). Hochschild notes that “women managers, especially in male-dominated divisions, were caught between cultures” (1997, p. 86). Women, in an effort to rise to the top of the organization, may have to relinquish legitimate, deeply held concerns in order to gain organizational power. Allison notes that even in organizations that are non-discriminatory, “women and people of color are welcomed into the organization but are expected to behave in ways that conform to the organizational culture’s dominant values” (1999, p. 85). Given the prevalence of low skilled, part-time female workers in the

nonprofit sector and the dearth of female managerial employees with strong power bases altogether, few are covered by family responsive policies at all.

d. Organizational Size

Several other factors may inhibit the development of work-life policies in the nonprofit arena. The smaller organizational size of many local nonprofits may reduce the likelihood of the agency implementing work-family policies (Glass and Estes, 1997). Tight resources, limited staff size, and a heavy reliance on volunteers may reduce an organization's ability to or interest in providing work-life options to employees. Also, with fewer workers, the loss of one highly skilled employee may have a significant impact on the business of the organization (Blaue, Ferber, and Wikler, 1998).

e. Nature of the Sector

A "double standard may exist between the kinds of vision nonprofit organizations hold for society and their treatment of their own staff" (Gonyea, 1999, p. 133). While nonprofits profess to be committed to equality, their employees may work under the same conditions of inequity found in private industry. Though they are sorely needed, work-family policies have been slow to materialize in the nonprofit sector.

An Ideal Environment?

The nonprofit sector appears to have several characteristics which suggest that work-life balance might be attainable within the sector. Increasing professionalism and the number of women working in the sector are only two of several indicators of the nonprofit arena's likelihood of addressing fundamental family issues of concern to women. Upon deeper examination, however, several barriers remain. Women's lack of power as staff, professionals and volunteers is perhaps the most difficult barrier to

overcome on the road to work-life balance. Additional issues of part-time employees, resources, and a possible double standard also effectively block the implementation of responsive policy. These issues will have to be attended to if the nonprofit sector is to become a leader in the realm of work-life balance.

Conclusion: The Paradox of Work-Family Policy in the Nonprofit Sector

Work-family policy in the nonprofit sector is a complex issue. There appears to be a paradox between the seemingly hospitable environment the nonprofit world provides for the implementation of policies and the reality of family-friendly work arrangements within third sector organizations. The predominance of women in nonprofit organizations, women's continued responsibility for work in the home, the "caring" nature of the sector, and the tight resources are characteristics which all combine to make the nonprofit sector an arena ripe for the development of unique, truly responsive work-family policies. Given the flexibility of human resources policies available to nonprofit agencies, the nonprofit world could be the testing ground for innovative family-responsive arrangements that the private and public sectors might see and emulate. Voluntary organizations may be able to take the lessons learned from the corporate world and the guidelines prescribed by the government to create new family-work policies that are the best of all the sectors.

Yet, this does not appear to be happening. By most accounts, the nonprofit sector lags behind both the private and public sectors in instituting formal work-life balance policies for their employees. While women are numerically superior to men in nonprofit organizations, women tend to be locked out of power positions. Many general constraints work against the development of work-family policy in the nonprofit sector.

Management resistance, inequitable application of policy, and the need for continuous evaluation of the fit between policy and employee needs may make work-life balance policies appear more trouble than they are worth in the long run. The sector's dependence on part-time labor means many employees are unlikely to be covered by family-friendly policies. Professionalization may result in women conforming to male organizational norms in an effort to reach positions of power and in their rejecting the demand for policies that might call their commitment into question.

The competing pulls of sector characteristics hospitable to work-family policy and those that make the implementation of such policy a struggle are apparent. What has yet to be seen is how the sector as a whole will respond to this paradox. One thing is clear: the need to balance work and family is not going away. If anything, with the growing number of women, particularly those with children, entering the workforce, the increasingly complex family structures emerging in this age of divorce and remarriage, and the intense competition for skilled employees, the demand for such policies is likely to expand at an accelerated rate. Nonprofits may be in a solid position to lead the way in terms of work-life balance.

Implications for Future Research

There is a desperate need for more research on work and family policies in the nonprofit sector. While there are some encouraging signs, such as the presentation of an entire plenary session on work-family responsiveness in the nonprofit sector at the most recent Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action annual meeting held in November 2000, the number of studies focusing on nonprofits and work-

family policy are strikingly few. Many questions regarding family responsive policies in the nonprofit sector remain.

One of the most interesting issues is the distinction between formal and informal policies currently in use in nonprofits. The literature suggests that informal policies may be more prevalent in not-for-profit agencies than formal policies. Yet, little of the research literature, with the exception of the Hohl study, identifies this important distinction. It appears that nonprofit managers may not even consider informal arrangements part of a concerted effort to meet employees family needs. Researchers will have to develop studies that captures both the formal and informal policies and that challenge supervisors to identify and label informal arrangements as work-family policy.

There is also a need to explore the nature of the sector thesis. Does the caring, service nature of the sector translate into better treatment for nonprofit employees? While the dedication to mission and provision of public services suggests nonprofits might be more open to policies which provide balance for employees, it is not clear whether this is happening in reality or not. The idea of a double standard between care for clients and treatment of staff existing in the sector is troublesome and warrants further investigation.

Another area of interest is the role of women in designing and implementing work-family policy. At what organizational level does the presence of women tip the balance in favor of work-family policy? Are organizations that deal with women and family issues more cognizant of the need for work-family policies for their own employees?

The nonprofit sector's responsiveness to work-family issues is only just beginning. Whether the paradox exists and how the nonprofit sector deals with these issues is likely to be of increasing interest to nonprofit scholars for many years to come.

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