Mastering the Balancing Act

How to Find Work-Life Balance amidst the Unbalancing Demands of a Faculty Position

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"There is a structural mismatch of how the workplace is organized and the needs of the current workforce. Now the workforce expects the career path to mimic a life lived."

Dr. Kathleen Christiansen, Director Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Workplace, Work Force and Working Families Program

This isn't your daddy's workplace . . .

- Workforce demographic shifts

- Attitude shifts

- Workplace shifts

Work, Eat, Sleep, Work, Eat, Sleep, Work, Eat, Sleep

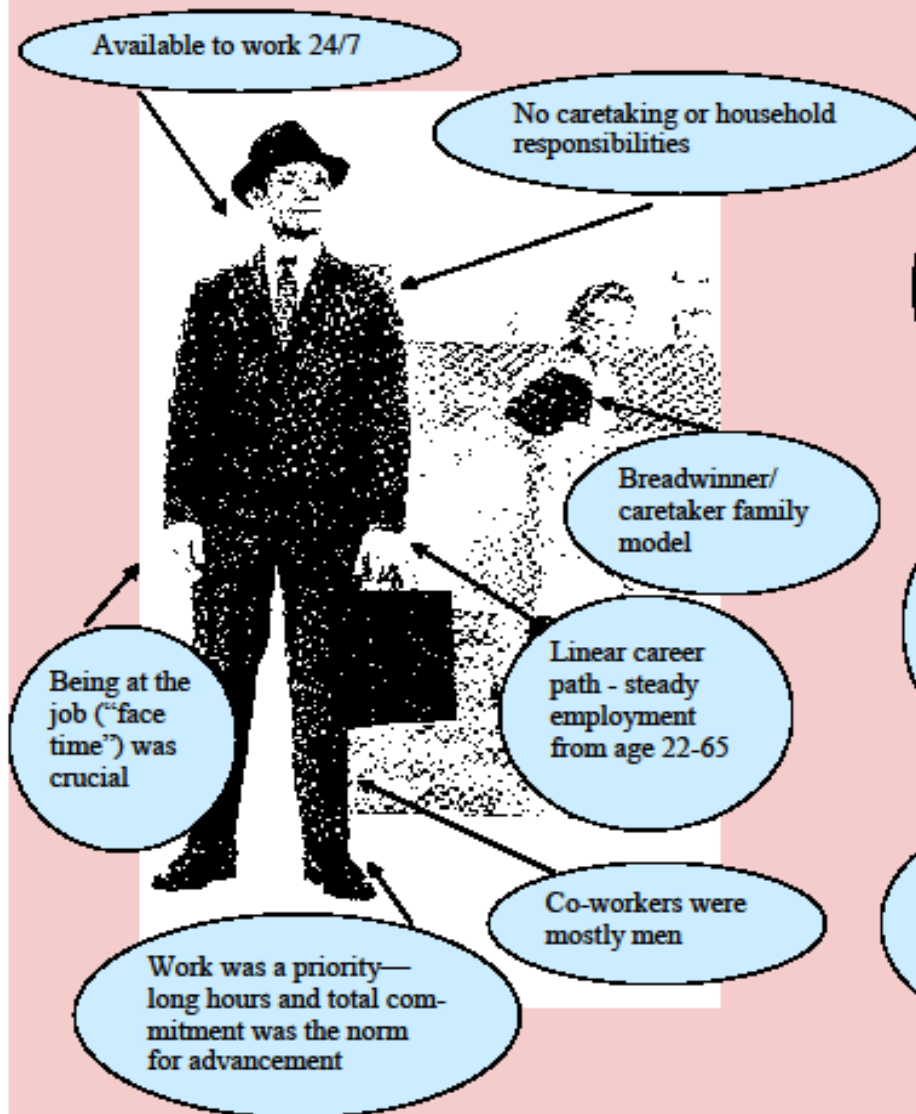Just another morning, noon and night at the office ...

- 1 in 4 US families tag team to manage child care
- 1 in 4 US families care for elderly relatives
- 75% of adults say they have no control over their schedule
- 80% or workers are dual earner couples
- 70% of all children live in households where all adults are employed
- 40% college-educated men work 50+ hours
- Among working class, 87% of families say they have 2 weeks or less of vacation and sick time combined

Source: Joan Williams, One Sick Child Away from Being Fired

A Cultural Contradiction

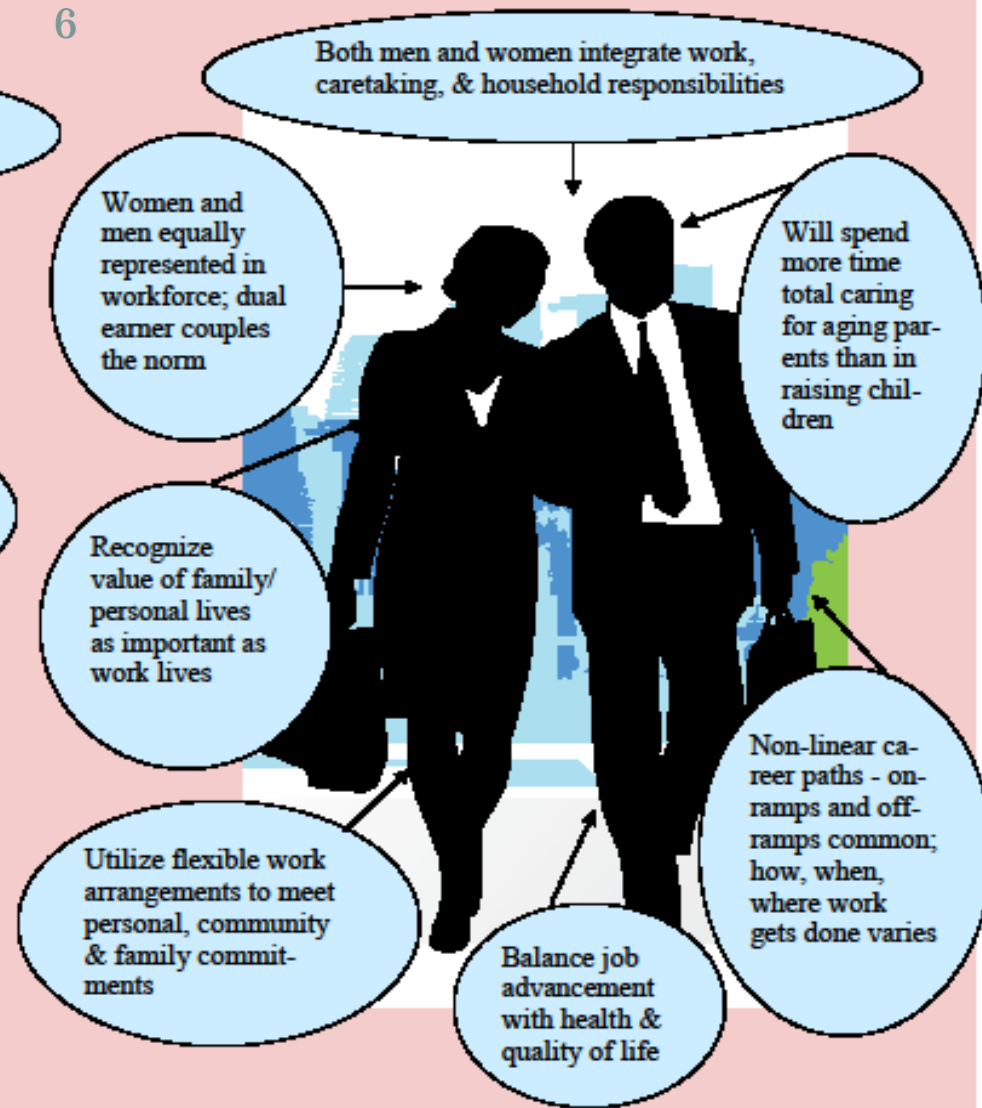- Ideal Worker Norm
- Institution of work versus the institution of family
  - Both are vital and interdependent
  - Both are linked to economic vitality
- A structural, societal issue, not a personal issue
  - Next generation of workers
  - Example: the "opt-out revolution" myth
  - Example: National breastfeeding movement

Traditional Ideal Worker

New Ideal Worker

Available to work 24/7

No caretaking or household responsibilities

Being at the job ("face time") was crucial

Breadwinner/caretaker family model

Linear career path - steady employment from age 22-65

Co-workers were mostly men

Work was a priority—long hours and total commitment was the norm for advancement

Both men and women integrate work, caretaking, & household responsibilities

Women and men equally represented in workforce; dual earner couples the norm

Will spend more time total caring for aging parents than in raising children

Recognize value of family/personal lives as important as work lives

Non-linear career paths - on-ramps and off-ramps common; how, when, where work gets done varies

Utilize flexible work arrangements to meet personal, community & family commitments

Balance job advancement with health & quality of life

Why is Work-Life a Diversity Issue?

- **Class**
  - Low wage women much more likely to be single mothers
  - Low wage earners much more likely to depend on relatives or friends for child care
  - More likely to provide unpaid assistance to elderly and disabled
  - Low wage earners spend 22% of their income on child care, versus 9% middle wage earners, and 6% high wage earners
  - Less job flexibility (78%), health insurance, paid sick days, standard daytime working hours
  - Lack of public transportation, health insurance
  - More likely to have mandatory overtime

From Williams, J. (2010) Reshaping the Work-Family Debate (2010); Gornick & Meyers (2003) Families that Work

- ## Gender
  - Highly educated women more likely than others to seek a "part-time" 40-hour /week schedule
  - Part-time work is devalued and pays less: women working 45 hours/week earn twice what those working 35 hrs/week earn
  - Economically vulnerable if divorced (tag team families 3-6x more likely)
  - Maternal Wall – mothers are 79% less likely to be hired than non-mothers and 100% less likely to be promoted (Correll, Bernard, & Paik, 2007)
  - Family Responsibilities Discrimination
  - Men are compelled to achieve the ideal worker norm and retain "breadwinner" as a primary identity
  - As men take on more and more caregiving and household responsibilities, their work-life stress has increased significantly more than women's
  - Tenure-track coincides with parent-track

Source: Joan Williams, One Sick Child Away from Being Fired

The Workplace Flexibility Movement

- Department of Labor Women's Bureau Workplace Flexibility Forum 2010
- National Dialogue on Workplace Flexibility – ongoing – upcoming Boston May – "Higher Education"
- Families and Work Institute and many other organizations, such as CUWFA
- Corporate leadership
- Academic Institutions

BENEFITS TO THE EMPLOYEE

Increased:

- Job Satisfaction
- Intention to Stay
- Job Commitment
- Physical Health
- Emotional Health
- Family Health
- Community & Personal Care Needs
- Time Management
- Energy Savings

Decreased:

- Stress
- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism

BENEFITS TO THE EMPLOYER

Increased:

- Productivity
- Efficiency
- Bottom Line
- Energy Efficiency
- Engagement
- Loyalty
- Morale
- Retention
- Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Decreased:

- Absenteeism
- Employee Resentment
- Attrition

Figure 8
Average Absence Rates With and Without Flexible Work Scheduling
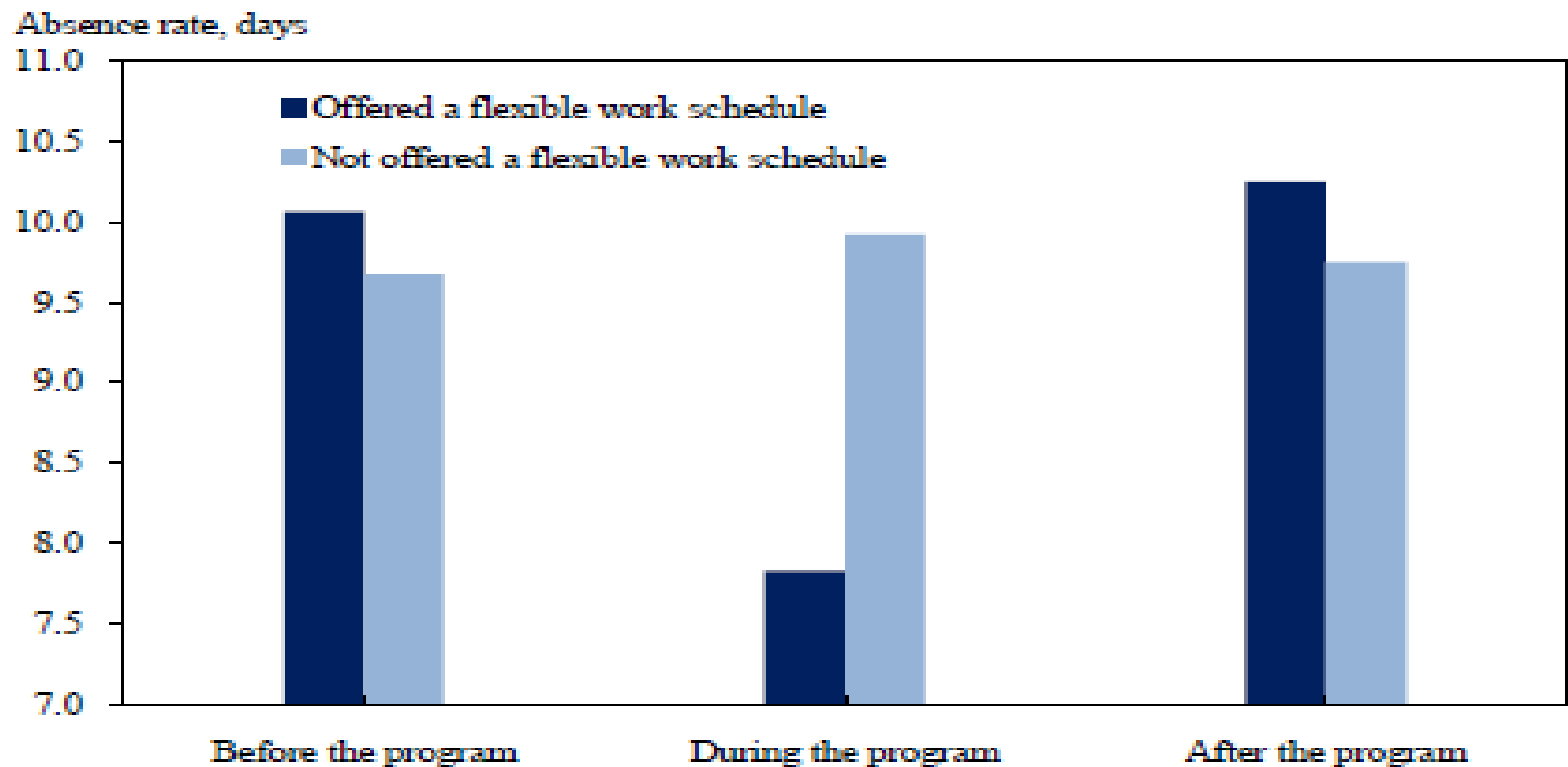
Sources: Dalton and Mesch (1990); CEA estimates.

Work-Life in the Academy

- Often 60-80+ hour work weeks
- Path to tenure coincides with parent track
- Women on highly competitive academic tracks are less likely to marry and have children than men or women in lower posts
- More disciplinary endogamy (both partners in same discipline) in academia, especially sciences
- Water-cooler culture and lack of "fit" for some
- Ideal worker norm – highly competitive – both men and women who take caregiving leaves receive fewer rewards and lower performance ratings
- Married mothers 50% less likely to gain faculty positions than married fathers or single women (Mason & Goulden (2004)

Components of Work-Life Integration
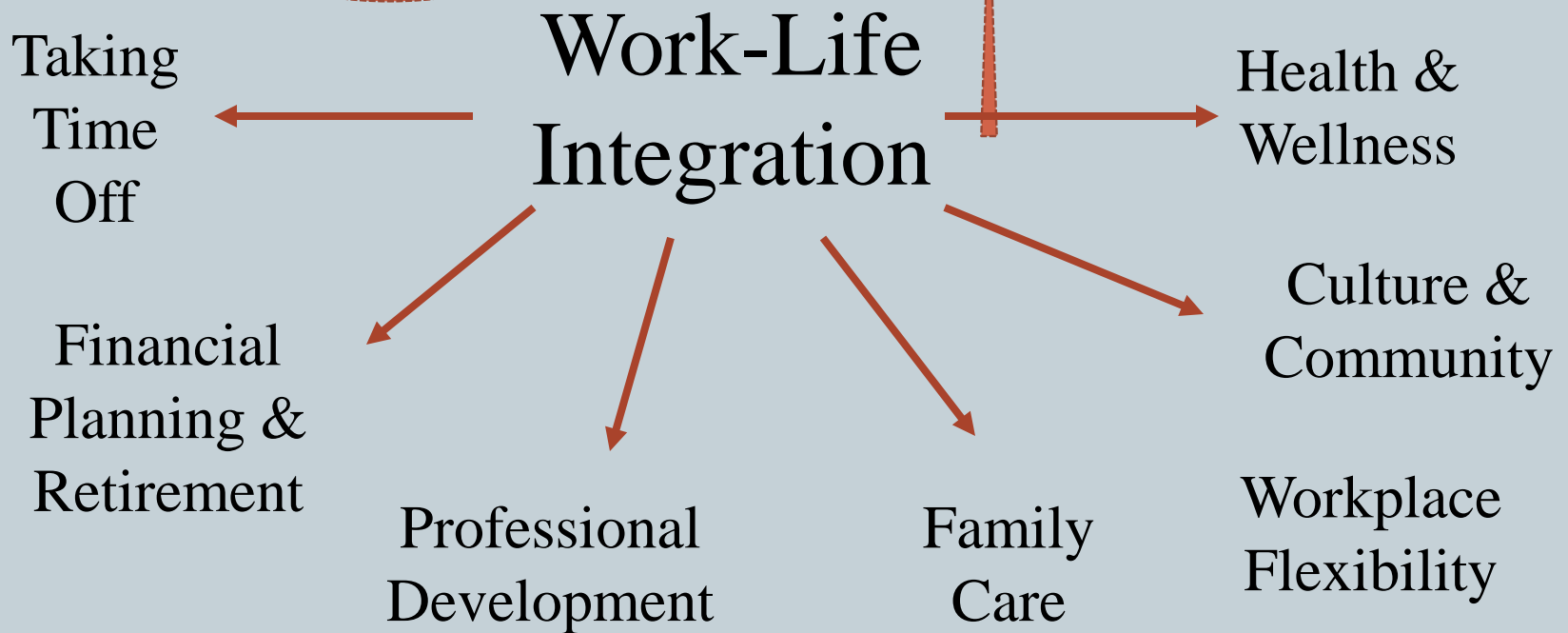
Work-Life Integration

Taking Time Off

Health & Wellness

Financial Planning & Retirement

Professional Development

Family Care

Culture & Community

Workplace Flexibility

www.uri.edu/worklife

A Simple Model

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1. Formal Policies ──┐
                     │
2. Supportive        ├──→ Awareness and Use of Options ──→ Work-Life Fit ──→ Work, Health, Family Outcomes
   Informal Culture ─┤
                     │
3. Supervisory      ─┘
   Support
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1. What Do Faculty Need?
Formal Policies and Programs

- Flexibility & broadening of hiring protocols and standards
- Flexibility about what faculty do (split positions, teaching professorships, etc.)
- Dual career hiring assistance
- Paid parental leave
- Active service, modified duties
- Opt out tenure clock stops
- Sick leave usable for family members
- Child/elder care assistance/subsidies
- Transitional support programs
- Tenure and promotion review
- On-ramps and off-ramps
- Phased retirement

What Do Faculty Need?
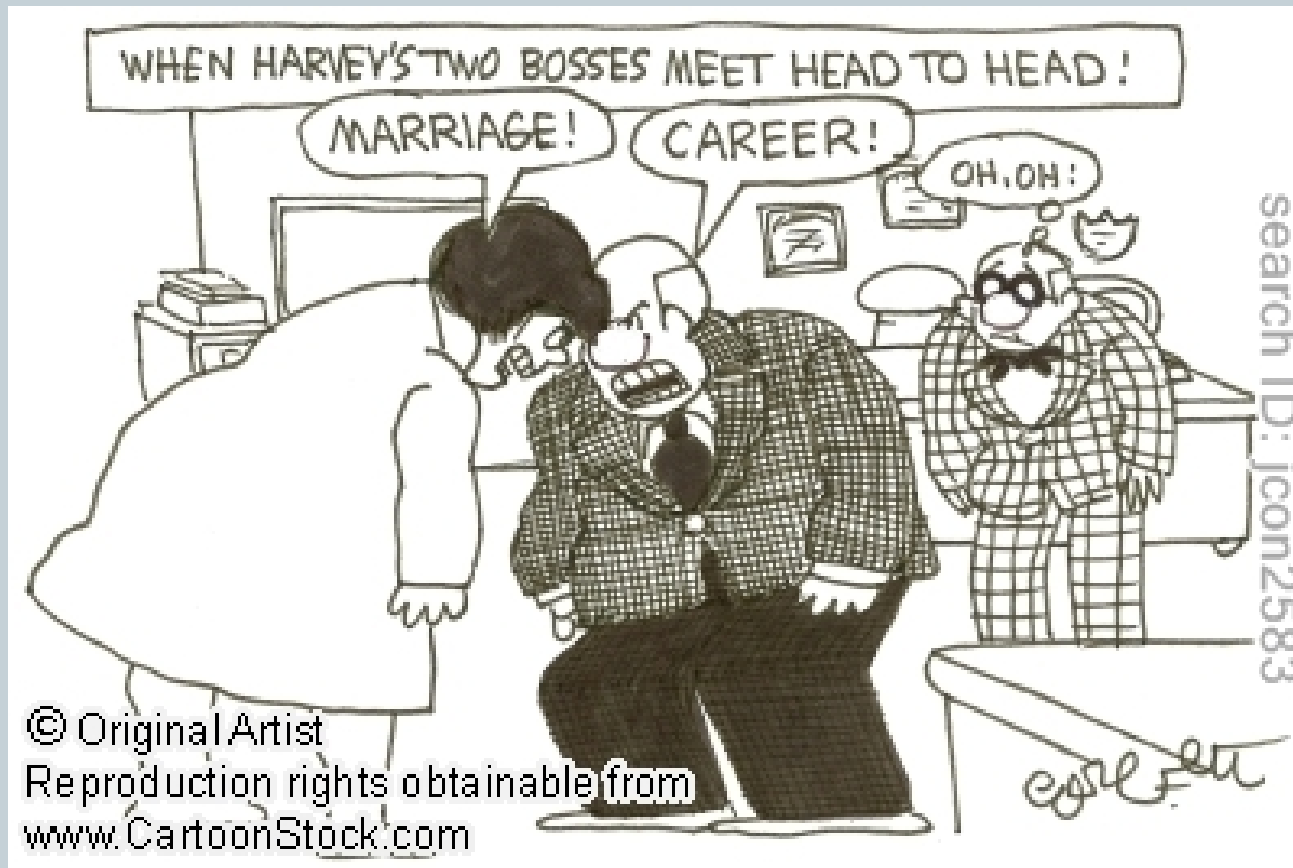## *A Supportive Informal Work Culture*

- Know the Culture – is it warm? Open? Family-friendly?

- Promote a Culture of Coverage

- Discourage Bias Avoidance Behaviors

- Provide Mentors who are aware of WL issues

- Broaden awareness – do you know what is available to you? Why not?

- Reward flexibility initiatives

Gatekeepers: Where the rubber meets the road

Supervisors (chairs, heads, deans, etc.)

- Interactional dynamics → passive resistance
- Promote use of policies without negative career repercussions or promote bias avoidance behaviors?
- Managerial "allowance decisions" factors?
- Doubt about the
  business case?

Supervisory support ?

- asking about employee's family (+)
- scheduling late-day meetings (-)
- disseminating new WL policy info (+)
- added workload after a leave (-)
- promotion denial because of flexwork (-)
- helping to solve a work-life challenge (+)
- Embracing ideal worker norm (face-time) (-)

Social Perception Bias: Assessments of Positive Efforts by Supervisors
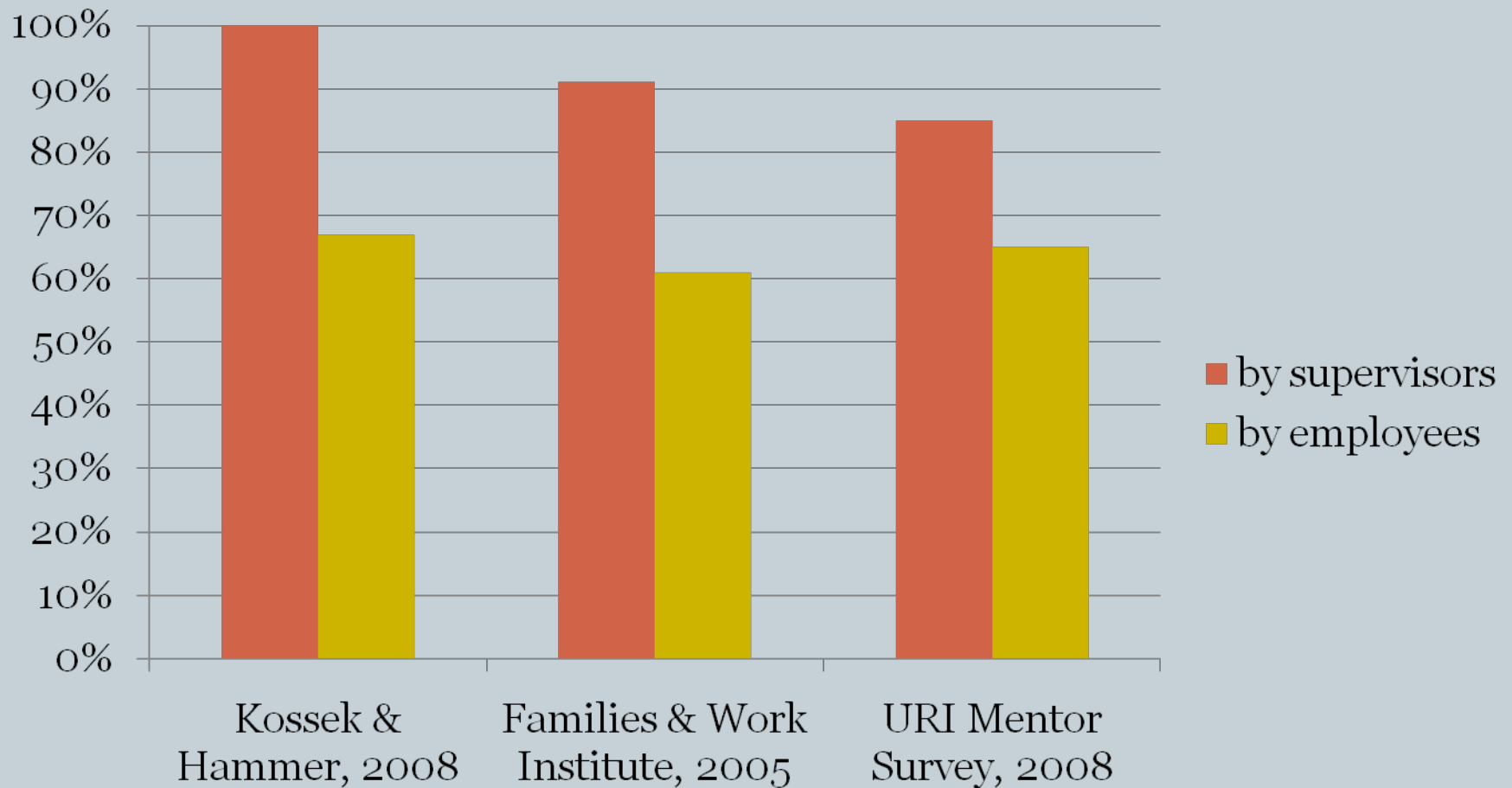
3-Level Model of Barriers to Change

INSTITUTIONAL

Are administrative offices in support of policy?
Do administrative offices provide resources for implementation?

INTERACTIONAL

Do Chairs, HR, etc., offer information and help proactively?
Does a *culture of coverage* exist among colleagues?

INDIVIDUAL

Are employees using the policy openly and without fear of negative repercussions?
Do non-user colleagues endorse the policy?

Mentoring Early Stage Faculty

- Today, it is impossible to responsibly mentor early stage faculty without taking into consideration their life/family responsibilities and challenges

- Talk about family and life outside the university

- Assess your own attitudes (traditional or not?)about workplace flexibility and accommodating life and family needs in the workplace

- Evaluate your assumptions and stereotypes, e.g., about gender, age, combining parenting, or other life interest, and career, etc.

- Mentors can't be all things – find an additional mentor who is comfortable discussing work-life issues if you are not

- Know and share the policies & practices – formal and informal – at the university and in mentee's department
- Younger faculty can be more outspoken about these issues, more resentful if they are not respected, and more likely to leave for another institution that offers a more life/family-friendly environment
- Be wary of unfair evaluations due to intervening work-life challenges and be prepared to advocate for extensions, etc.
- Connect mentees with other similar faculty
- Be on the lookout for bias avoidance behaviors
- Silence doesn't mean there aren't issues – be proactive

Thank you!
Questions?

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