

Defining the Millennial Superwoman: Strategies for Work-Life Integration

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ABSTRACT

Defining the Millennial Superwoman: Strategies for Work-Life Integration uncovers the perceptions of millennial females and contrasts them with the perceptions of working women in other generations. This research determines how millennial females are different in their search for work-life integration – the act of mixing work and personal life – and explains what this difference means for companies in the upcoming years. Historically, there has been much literature focused on women fighting for equality to get into the workforce, as well as why highly educated and successful women began taking themselves out of the workforce. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding why and how millennial women are different from their past counterparts, as well as what this discrepancy means for companies. This capstone includes a research paper and short film which highlights why women perceive work-life integration differently across generations; additionally, it offers insight into what strategies will best suit millennial women in their search for work-life integration.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the past sixty years there has been an increase of females in the workplace. This surge of females entering the workforce rather than staying at home with their kids has amplified the discussion of what roles are expected from females, as well as how much time they should be putting in at home versus at work. This central question of how women should be dividing their time between work and home life has been a controversial topic throughout recent history. This topic has continued to be a subject of contention throughout the females of the millennial generation who are currently stepping into the workforce (Belkin, 2003). These millennial females, born between 1980 and 2000, constitute the largest generation in United States history with approximately 92 million millennials alive today (Goldman Sachs, 2012). Therefore, a general concern within the minds of millennials is how they are actually going to integrate their work and personal lives; they have seen prior generations attempt to “have it all,” but they are not sure they want the same things that past generations have wanted.

Work-life integration is the combination and assimilation of an individual’s work responsibilities and personal obligations or duties (Grady & McCarthy, 2008). For many individuals, work-life integration means incorporating their desires to succeed in work with their wishes to prosper in raising or taking care of a family. This study aims to understand how millennials view work-life integration versus other generations in the workforce. This topic is highly important because it demonstrates that millennial females value and perceive success differently than their female predecessors in the workplace. By determining how millennials view work-life integration, and how their views differ from past generations, predictions can be made about how cultures and norms at work may change for the next generation. Additionally, this study is able to look at how companies will be able to best attract and retain millennials as they will soon be the largest generation ever to exist in the workforce (Goldman Sachs, 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout recent history there has been varying views about how integrating work and life should be handled. Throughout this time period, the major generations – Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials – have considered different meanings of work versus life and have relied on highly differentiated ways to achieve their ideal concept of how to best mix work and life (Favero & Heath, 2012). Although the topic of how to best manage work and life has always been a factor, the way in which it has been perceived has differed across generations. According to the Generational Cohort Theory, studied by Edmunds and Turner in 2005, these generational perspective changes occur because important historical or social events can alter or affect the values, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of individuals. For example, an individual who was a child during the great depression would put greater importance on living a stable life with a stable career and income stream as an adult. Therefore, as Favero and Heath (2012) state, the generational cohort theory explains why women in different generations have different perspectives on work-life balance.

Applying generational cohort theory to the context of this study, Favero and Health (2010) would suggest that women of prior generations perception of work-life integration has impacted the women of the subsequent generations. For example, the women of the Traditionalist generation were highly focused on their family while facing inequality. Therefore, the Baby Boomer generation saw this lack of female equality and opportunity when they were children and subsequently placed high importance on excelling in the workplace so they could find better equality. Additionally, because of the high importance Baby Boomers placed on work and growing careers, their children, members of Generation X and the Millennial generation, felt a lack of family time which caused them to place a much higher importance on family than work as they became adults. Therefore, due to the importance which Generation Xers and Millennials placed on family, they each called for better work-life integration and flexibility. The following discussion will speak more about the generational differences between the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials.

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The Traditionalists generation (born before 1946) desired “dependable employment, marriage, family, and owning their own home in which case nine-to-five workdays with occasional overtime constituted work/life balance” (Favero & Heath, 2012, p. 336). Traditionalist women typically stayed home and spent their time taking care of the house and children while their husbands were the primary bread-winners. There was little thought towards work-life integration as the average American woman was not working outside of the home, therefore, child-rearing was considered the most important job. Because of these views, women in the Traditionalist generation were not concerned about attempting to balance or integrate a job and family as these potential aspects of their lives did not exist.

In contrast to the Traditionalist generation was the Baby Boomer generation. Members of the Baby Boomer generation were born between 1946 and 1964 and they consisted of the first generation to really “want it all.” Baby Boomers wanted to become wealthy, successful, and raise a family; so they “invented the supermom role, in which women experience it all—a good career and a family” (Favero & Heath, 2012, p. 336). However, this new perspective caused the Boomers to place high importance on work, which was at odds with the high importance on family that the Traditionalists had. Therefore, Baby-boomer females typically did not “balance” work and life but instead spent many hours working hard to rise through a company’s corporate ladder to find success in their careers.

The Baby Boomer generation championed much change for women in the workplace and took pride in their accomplishments. The females of this generation fought to be in the workplace, fought for equal pay for equal work, and fought to break the glass ceiling. Additionally, they were determined to decimate the stigmas against women. These stigmas were outlined by Eagly and Carli (2007) who argue that it is more difficult for women to get promoted than men because women are perceived as less dedicated and focused if they want to have a successful personal life. Furthermore, the authors state there is a stigma that women do not possess the same qualities which make men great leaders. Ultimately, these Baby Boomer women worked to smash these stigmas and paved the way for women following them to rise to power in the workforce while attempting to “have it all.”

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From the building blocks of the Baby Boomer generation came Generation Xers who were born between 1965 and 1980. Generation X individuals benefited greatly from the work which the Baby Boomer females had accomplished to move forward in the workforce. However, unlike the females of the Traditionalist generation who were mainly focused on family, as well as the women of the Baby Boomer generation who were highly focused on work, Generation X were the first women who discussed their desire for a better balance between work and life. In the article by Favero and Heath, the authors deliberate that this mindset of wanting a more integrated work-life equilibrium caused Generation X women to “challenge the supermom role by giving up high-powered careers or cutting back on work hours at the peak of career advancement in order to raise their children” (p. 337). Because more women were looking for a better balance of work and life, many females began dropping out of the workforce to spend more time with their families; even though they may have spent the past seven to ten years focused on building up their careers.

This desire to have a “balanced” or integrated personal life, rather than a life solely dedicated to their careers, quickly became the largest factor to pull the Generation X women out of the workforce (e.g. Carbrera, 2007; Ely, Stone, and Ammerman, 2014; Hewlett, 2002). From the changing desires of the Generation X women, many females determined that they would prefer to take time off from their careers to further grow their families instead of attempting to continue their career path while having children. Additionally, women report that they do not always feel that they are being pushed out of the workforce, but instead feel that they would rather give up some of their workplace equality so that they can achieve more in their personal lives (e.g. Boushey, 2005; Hewlett & Luce, 2007). The literature goes on to state that most of these women who take some period of time off from their careers also want to go back into the workforce later in life. However, when women do go back into the workforce, they often find it much more difficult to get back onto the same career path they may have been on when they left (e.g. Cabrera, 2006; Lovejoy and Stone, 2012).

This difficulty found when attempting to go back onto the same career path occurs because women’s career paths became unclear once they take extended periods of time off. Therefore, the literature supplies the metaphor of a “labyrinth” to describe female’s careers

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(Eagly and Carli, 2007). In the labyrinth women may be able to see their ultimate goal of having a chief position (CEO, CFO, COO, etc.) but there is a disconnect or blockade between their current job positions and the path needed to reach the end goal. This disconnect makes it extremely difficult for women to continue rising up, even after the work that the Baby Boomer generation had done. Additionally, women found that the longer they stayed out of the workforce, the harder it was for them to rejoin. This difficulty of rejoining became one of the factors which keep women from rising to the same status as males in the workforce (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012).

This discussion of females leaving the workforce began the conversation of the “opt-out” revolution in which women leave the workforce to raise a family after working hard to get to their position. “Opting out” was highlighted by Cheryl Sandburg who argued that women aren’t satisfied when they “opt-out” or leave the workforce. However, she also states that women have begun taking themselves out of the workforce prematurely because they do not want to attempt to go for the next promotion or big project due to their worry about how it may interfere with their plans to have children in the next couple years. Sandburg argues that opting out negatively impacts organizations because women are needed in the workplace. However, the trend continues due to the high importance Generation X members place on their personal and family lives (Sandburg, 2013).

This Millennial generation, born between 1980 and 2000, is currently moving into the workforce and is highly focused on how they can best integrate their work and personal lives. Millennials attempt to spend the most amount of time with their families and friends as possible while focusing on keeping themselves healthy and happy rather than worrying about workplace gender equality. Additionally, Millennials differ from their Generation X counterparts because Millennials desire and demand work-life integration from the beginning of their careers, regardless of their situation outside of work. Generation Xers, in contrast, feel you must earn your ability to take time off from work to focus on your family (Smith, 2010). Ultimately, millennial females are the most contradictory generation from the Baby Boomers as they are less concerned with workplace equality or power than the Baby Boomers are.

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Instead the Millennial females focus on finding best practices to cohesively integrate their work and family lives so they feel satisfaction in their personal lives (Johnson, 2015).

Overall, Millennials are increasingly concerned with getting the most out of life, being healthy, enjoying their jobs, and creating happiness outside of their work while delaying settling down to start a family (Smith, 2010). This generational need for life fulfillment outside of work, paired with waiting to have children, has changed the views of this generation. Many millennial women believe in addition to pursuing successful careers, they want to focus both on raising a family as well as their own personal lives outside of work. Additionally, millennial females today believe that, even though the corner office and prestigious position are still important, they are much more likely to interrupt their career to focus on their personal lives than the generation before them (e.g. Belkin, 2003; Grady and McCarthy, 2008; Robin et al,2015; Smith 2010).

Because of millennials' strong view on work-life integration, more millennials are searching for jobs which offer them the most flexibility to work from home or to come in and out of the office when they please (Smith, 2010). One way young women in the workplace have looked for this work-life flexibility is through flexible work schedules. Flexible work schedules have proven to be one tool which enables women to best integrate their work and personal lives as they allow women to work through telecommuting or adjust their work schedule to their personal schedule. By allowing women to adjust their work schedule based on their personal requirements and obligations, workplaces enable women to come in to the office at different times of the day throughout the week so that they can manage all of their in and out-of-work duties. In a study done by Jeremy Hayman, it was found that flexible work policies reduce the "Negative impact of work conflicting on personal life and personal life interfering with work" (Hayman, 2010, p. 83). Therefore, individuals were able to accomplish more in both their work and personal lives which allowed them to be more effective and met with the desires of the Gen X, Gen Y, and Millennial cohorts because all three are searching for this beneficial work-life integration.

In addition to these flexible work schedules, the literature also discusses what companies can do to keep more of the female talent. The literature argues that norms and

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policies need to change before women can achieve true equality and success in their personal and professional lives (e.g. Kuperberg and Stone, 2008; Sandberg, 2013). Some of these policies include offering flexible work hours, work from home, and supportive daycare services, however, the literature argues that true equality cannot occur without a change in norms and expectations (Luscombe, 2013). Ultimately, female talent has been leaving and will continue to leave organizations to raise families as long as workplace practices remain uncondusive to working full time and raising a family or pursuing a more integrated life.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From this literature review it has been determined that research on what female millennials are looking for and how they want to integrate work and life differently than past generations has not been fully explored. To expand this field of research, five research questions were developed. These research questions include:

1. Is it possible for women across generations to achieve work-life integration in which they feel successful in both areas? How is success defined within these generations?
2. How are women across generations currently obtaining success within their careers and personal life?
3. What does work-life integration mean, and how can women across all of the generations more fully achieve this idea of integration?
4. Do millennial women perceive work-life integration a possibility when pursuing a career?
5. How are millennial women preparing for work-life integration? How is it different from women in different generations?

METHODOLOGY

To study these questions, this study was based on qualitative interviews. These qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 women; five females in their junior or senior year of college, five females who had entered the workforce recently within the past ten years, and five females who had been in the workforce for more than ten years and had

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children. The number of women chosen to participate (15) though a small sample size, allowed for in-depth interviewing and probing to glean greater insight and understanding, paralleling the work of Grady and McCarthy (2008) and Anderson, Vinnicombe and Singh (2010). The following describes each of the three groups within this study:

- “Students” – women in their junior or senior year of college; all five women were millennials
- “Young Professionals” – women who had less than ten years of working experience; all five women were millennials
- “Executive Level” – women who had more than ten years of working experience; two of the women were baby boomers and three were generation Xers

The sample of participants was sourced through a convenience sample in which women who met the above criteria with connections to Bryant University, as well as connections to the researchers of this study, were asked to participate. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and allowed for the participant to offer deep and contextual detail about their beliefs, perceptions, and practices. Additionally, the interviews allowed the researchers to ask meaningful follow-up questions of participants. Each interview began with questions of what the individual did for work as well as what they were involved in or their interests depending on what group the individual was part of. The questions then moved to family and individuals’ perceptions of work-life integration. The interviews were ended once the researchers felt they had found the information they were looking for. All of the interviews were video and audio taped and then transcribed by the researchers. The transcription process allowed the researchers to summarize information that was not central to the study and then exactly transcribe comments which were relevant; an example of these transcriptions are attached in Appendix 1. Table 1 presents sample questions for each group which were used to explore the research questions. These questions were adapted from the work conducted by Grady and McCarthy (2008) and Ely (2015).

To analyze the data collected, content analysis was used. Content analysis is a way to categorize and analyze qualitative data and is appropriate for this study because of the large

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amounts of qualitative data collected. The responses from the women were collected and categorized by group and then by theme; the themes emerged throughout the analysis of the transcriptions. From these main themes within each group there appeared common and/or opposing ideas between the groups. These common and opposing ideas between groups were transposed into a “Video Story Board” (Appendix 2), which was used as the basis of the accompanying documentary film. The documentary highlights the major themes and findings of this study. The researchers decided to create this short film because it was determined that it would best explain the ideas of this study while reaching the broadest audience and appealing to the way which millennials consume information.

Sample Questions – Table 1

Group(s)	Sample Question
All Groups	What is your perception of work-life integration?
All Groups	Do you have any concerns or worries about your future work-life integration?
All Groups	Do you ever consider giving up work to stay at home full time?
Young & Executive Professionals	Have you ever stopped working to stay at home full time?
All Groups	Do you have mentors or role models who guided or impacted your view of work-life integration? If so, how have they impacted you?
All Groups	Can you describe your expectations about work-life integration?
Student	Do you think about working and having a family while you are in college? If so, why are you thinking about this already?
Young Professional	Do you think about working and having a family while you are starting your career? If so, why are you thinking about this already?
Young & Executive Professionals	Did you think about work life integration when you were in college? Why or why didn't you think about this topic in college?
Young & Executive Professionals	What has been the importance in your life of having a spouse or team at home to help take care of the kids and family life?

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Young & Executive Professionals	Can you describe your realities of work-life integration?
Young & Executive Professionals	Do your assumptions of work-life integration still hold true
Executive Professionals	What advice could you give to someone trying to integrate their work and family lives?
All Groups	Do you believe it's possible to "have it all?"
Young & Executive Professionals	How do you attempt to "have it all?"

FINDINGS:

Students

Within the student group there was a clear trend of women who knew they wanted to have children in the future. Despite none of the students being engaged or married, each of the five individuals within the student group stated that they had considered having children in the future as well as what having children would mean for their careers. In fact, three students stated that they were already planning on when they would want to have children. The following statements describe the attitudes expressed by the interviewees:

"I want a family and I know my family now is what's very important to me and without that there is no point in working. Or like, what other life goals are better than having like people to spend time with and share your successes with."

"I want to look into possibilities of either part time working or working from home 'cause thinking of getting married and having kids, I really want to be around my kids."

These statements reflect how important it is to millennial students to have their family highly integrated into their lives. The idea that there is no point in working if there is no family to share your life with is one which shows the students' acknowledgement that they will not be satisfied with only finding success at work. Instead, these students know that they will desire more out of life to find happiness.

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With this decisive stance on having children, the students also recognize they want to work hard and build up their careers. All of the women described themselves as hard workers and involved individuals on campus. Therefore, the students' desire to build up a future career was juxtaposed by their desire to also be highly dedicated to their families. The following quotes outline this juxtaposition:

"I know I want a family and a lot of women my age know they want a family and they want it as soon as they can, but [they] are also career focused."

"I think that the work necessarily doesn't stop as soon as the day ends, like 5:00 hits. I think that especially in this day and age where you want to stay competitive and on top of everything, and you know, make yourself stand out from the crowd, that if you get an email or an assignment, I think that it's OK to look at it after 5:00."

"I think that it's a new generation of women in the workforce who don't necessarily want to be the ones who take care of the family, they want to have careers, and I find myself in that position."

This desire to grow professionally was highlighted by all of the students, which shows that millennial females are not opposed to working hard, but instead have strong desires to succeed in many different facets of their lives. This strong desire to work and be engaged within their careers confirms that this student group of millennials wants to rise up in their careers and find achievement. This desire for achievement is the same desire which has been expressed by women of past generations including the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers; demonstrating that millennials have no intention of becoming indolent or unaccomplished in their careers. Instead, this group of millennial students know that they will need assistance from their spouse, family, and workplace to be able to integrate both work and life.

In addition to these students' desire to work and grow professionally, they are also highly concerned with being able to stay career focused while they are starting a family. However, they are also considering what changes are going to occur once they have children. The subsequent quotes outline this desire:

"Having kids isn't going to set me back; I hope to be a wonderful mother and I do want to have kids, but I do know I want to find the balance between my home life and my work life and not be put down as I am growing farther in my career."

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“I do wonder though... [how] I am going to be able to balance having a family and working; and I constantly wonder how much of a challenge that actually is going to be, because I see so many women who can do it, and I also see people who do struggle with it, and I wonder what it would be like for me if that is the course for me.”

“That’s what my 20s and early 30s are for, is to worry about my career and then get to a point where I can have that balance between work and family when I start to have children.”

These statements highlight the idea that this group of millennial students know they want to continue to stay dedicated to their work after having children. However, the statements also demonstrate that the students are worried about how they can best integrate their future work and life in the way that they believe will be most beneficial for them, their careers, and their family. This high level of consideration about work-life integration at an early point in their lives underscores that work-life integration is an central topic of consideration now, and will continue to be an essential factor to consider for the future; a marked contrast from generations past.

Young Professionals

Within the young professional group there were clear findings of women who, like the student group, also knew they wanted to have children and integrate their families into their careers so that they could find success in both areas. This desire became clear throughout the study as all of the women – even though only one had been engaged or married – had considered how their lives would change once they had children and how these new lives would fit within their current careers. All of them admitted that throughout the positions and responsibilities they had held within their careers, they had considered what having a child would do to these careers and how they would be able to do both. The following quotes highlights this consideration:

“I am so young in my career that when I have to go on like a trip for work or anything, that like excited me, rather than I know in like 10-15 years I’m going to be like ‘ugh I don’t want to go on this business trip right now um, because my kid has their soccer game this weekend,’ or whatever the situation is.”

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“It’s something that pops into your head every once in a while. It’s not because I’m ready to have a family or am married or even close to doing any of that, but you kind of look and observe what your situation is in each job that you’ve had, and you’re like ‘alright, well at this place I could have done that, and at this place I can’t,’ and like, ‘do I want to be here at this company when I am ready to take that step in life?’”

“You work 40 hours a week now, or at least I do, and then all of a sudden you have a family down the line that has to take up at least 30 hours. So I feel like I’m almost just going to get thrown right back in to the 70 hour work week that I had for a couple months. And I’m wondering how that’s all going to work out. How are you going to deal with that? And at that point you’re married and you’re trying to maintain a marriage.”

“Doing it in my 20s is fine and I could probably keep doing it for a couple years, but when you think ahead to like ‘ok what if I ever want to have a family.’ Like these women that I am working with don’t see their kids. If their kids are in school they see their kids before they go to school at 6:00 in the morning and then they see them on their off days, but that’s it... what’s the point of having a husband and kids if you’re not going to see them ever?”

These themes were reiterated by all of the women in the young professional group which points to the fact that these women had greatly considered having children even though four out of five of them admitted they were not ready to have children within the immediate future. Additionally, these themes show that young women in the workplace are observing how their peers and colleagues are handling work-life integration and are already preparing themselves for how they will integrate their own work and life in the future. Lastly, these statements indicate that women have resounding beliefs of what work-life integration may be like in the future when they are attempting to handle both having a family and their careers. From these thoughts of work-life integration, there was also the idea throughout the young professional group that being a ‘stay at home’ mom was not desirable. All of the women in this group agreed that they would not want to be a stay at home mom full time. This thought was highlighted by the statement:

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“I’m so career oriented and I want to make something of my life, and I don’t want to be that person who is just a stay at home mom. Not that that’s a bad role, I mean [laughs] all the power to you if you can do that, but I don’t want that for me.”

This was an interesting and profound statement because in past generations there was a stigma that said if you did not stay at home with your child for at least the first few years of their lives, then you were a bad parent. However, the young professional group felt more stigmas from leaving their careers than they felt from not being a stay at home mom. This stigma was also seen from the one young professional who had an infant. This woman was the only individual within the young professionals group to have a child. However, she maintained the notion that being a stay at home mom was undesirable, even though she had decided to quit her job to run an accounting business out of her home so she could be with her infant son all day. The following statements highlight her beliefs on being a stay at home mom, as well as her decision to quit her corporate job:

“I don’t really want to be a stay at home mom, I want to use my education, I want to use my motivation, my, you know, my driven personality, and I do want to work. I want to make a difference and I want to use my brain! So how can I be a mom, be a good wife, and be a good worker at the same time?”

After having the baby... it just changed for me, um having the commute, the traffic and things like that, it really just changed my work life balance at that point. Prior to having children I didn’t need to, I didn’t have to, leave at a certain time because I didn’t have to get home to a baby that needed me. I’m forfeiting my career for my family, but at the end of the day I think that’s the best decision.”

This juxtaposition between her status as a “stay at home” mom as well as her desire not to consider herself in that way points to the idea that stigmas surrounding staying at home with children have shifted; instead of being expected to stay at home with kids, young women are now more expected to continue their careers. Additionally, even though two of the students felt that they also would never want to be a stay at home mom, three of the students did not feel any attached stigma about being a stay at home mom.

Beyond the conversation about work and family, the young professional group had other interesting findings. These findings included believing they would have more time for

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themselves after graduation. Four of the young professional females believed that they would have an easier time of integrating work and life after graduating from college. These women thought that they would have more free time if they were only working eight hours a day and having the weekends off. However, all of the women agreed that trying to integrate work and personal life became harder after working full time. The following statements showcase these beliefs:

“My perception was that I actually wanted my life to continue that fast paced, so um, as soon as I started working it took me a few weeks to realize how different it is to work eight hours than to be running all day on campus. Because you would think that being on campus and going all day would make you more exhausted, but for some god given reason for the first like three weeks of work every day I would come home and pass out for like four hours.”

“Even if someone could have just looked at me and said ‘at the end of your 8 hour day you’ll feel more tired and more drained,’ and depressed is a hard word but, like more defeated after an 8 hour work day than you did after a 14, 15, 16 hour college day. You think you know what life is going to be like but you don’t. Until you’re there. And I think it’s different for everybody.”

“I was in the office 7 days a week, um, for at least 10 hours a day, it just wasn’t conducive to anything. I didn’t see my parents, my grandparents, my family, for like 6 months; and that’s how long I was there.”

“There was no work life balance... that was a big reason why I started kind of looking into other opportunities and what else I could do that would keep me in the industry but would allow me to still see my parents and see my sister. ”

As these statements illustrate, all of the women found that work-life integration after college was more difficult than expected. Additionally, two of the five young professional women quit their jobs because they felt they did not have *any* work-life integration. This decisive move to quit confirms the idea that young women today are not afraid to quit if they are unhappy with their lack of work-life integration.

Finally, all of the women agreed that flexibility in the workplace was key in being able to “have it all.” Flexibility in being able to work from home or ‘flux’ ones’ hours so that they

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could best integrate their work and family was believed to be the most effective and necessary tool required to maintain a growing career and family. The statement which best illustrates this need states:

“I think flexibility is a huge huge proponent of what women need in the workplace; and even men. I mean I’ll be damned if the day comes when I have a husband and a child, and the child’s sick and my husband tells me that I’m the only one who like has to stay home. That’s not going to happen. That’ll be divorce number one right there.”

This idea states that flexibility is critical for both women and men because women cannot be expected to be the only ones to stay at home for their children. Additionally, the theme that women expect their husbands to take time off from their work to take care of the kids is one which points to changing cultural beliefs and norms surrounding parenting so that women are able to “have it all.”

Executive Professionals

From the findings within the student and young professional groups, the executive professional group was most realistic in terms of actual work-life integration because all five of the women interviewed had children and had been in the workforce for more than ten years. All of the women in the executive professional group agreed that their life changed significantly after starting a family. Additionally, they all agreed that trying to integrate work and family life was harder than expected. The following quotes speak to these beliefs:

“Once you get pregnant, and you know you’re already seen as a person that is such a work-horse, but when you get pregnant they start to visualize you and see you a little differently, and so I wanted to get all that ‘climbing’ done beforehand.”

“I had to learn that I can’t do everything the moment everybody wants me to do everything. And I think the key thing is prioritizing; and it sounds basic and it’s something I have always done, but I’ve got to get even better at it, and continue to do that. And you’ve got to learn to say no. And that’s been hard for me because I’ve always been an individual, that you know, I want to be, I want to do everything.”

“Don’t have any opinions about being a mom, or how it’s all going to work, because once it happens it’s total game over.”

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“It was a lot harder than I thought; I knew that when I came back my life would be different in a personal way, but I didn’t realize it would change in a professional way as well... I couldn’t work the same late hours any more or travel on the weekends.”

As the executive professional women found, it was more difficult than they expected to continue putting the same effort towards their careers after having children. However, all of the women agreed that they wanted to continue working and rising up in their careers while having children so that they could find satisfaction within their careers and family lives. In addition, three of the women waited until after their mid to late thirties to start having children. The three women who waited all agreed that they waited because they wanted to work on growing their careers before settling down to have families. Additionally, the women wanted to make sure they had accomplished many of their career goals before looking to accomplish personal and family goals. The following quotes best highlight this desire to wait so that they could be in a good position to have children:

“My first daughter was born when I was 37 years old and for me the path fit perfectly. I was able to get where I wanted to with my career, I was able to know that medically it’s safe to have children at this age, that there is still a future if I want more children... so I think it all worked out perfectly and it’s probably because I didn’t put a lot of stress on it.”

“I waited to get married and I waited to have kids, and it’s scary how more women are doing that because it puts you in a place of jeopardy because you have until you’re 35 before they say you might have some problems with pregnancy.”

These two quotes show the conflicting beliefs that women who wait until their mid to late thirties to have children are in danger of not being able to have kids versus still perfectly fine having kids. There is the resounding belief which states that having children becomes more difficult after a woman passes into her thirties. However, both of these women were still able to become pregnant and have children, which suggests more women are pushing the boundaries of their most fertile years so that they can focus on their careers and grow their jobs before having children.

A third finding was that all of the women agreed that having a spouse available to help with family duties enabled them to continue work after having children. Spousal duties are

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shown to be highly important in being able to have full integration between work and life.

One quote which best speaks to this importance states:

“My husband is the primary conduit for me to have been able to do what I do because I am a work-a-holic. Um, not gonna lie, I love it, I get lost in it, and um when I am [at work] I am 100% on, and when I am home I am 100% off. Um, so, that’s always been difficult for me to balance in terms of being able to be that person who is a little bit work, a little bit with the kids, a little bit work, a little bit with the kids, so I tend to work a little longer in the day, but then when I shut down, I shut down completely.”

This strong reliance on her husband to help with work-life integration shows the importance of having a team at home to get everything that needed to be done accomplished. Additionally, without the strong team at home it would be very difficult for these women to find success in both their work and family lives.

Another interesting finding was that none of the executive professional women had considered future work-life integration while they were students in college. This finding is very different from current students, who all agreed that they were currently considering work-life integration for their future. The following quotes explain why these executive professional women had not considered work life integration when they were in college:

“No, I wasn’t [thinking about work-life integration], I set some personal career goals and wanted to make it all happen. My focus right after school was to put my degree to use.”

“I’m honestly sure I never even thought about [work-life integration]. It was not a topic of conversation or news back then, I mean, we’re talking 25-30 years ago, and life-work balance wasn’t really a discussion point. You just did it. You know? You went to work, and you did it, and um, I definitely didn’t have any preconceived plans associated with it.”

“You either had a career or stayed home and had a family. You didn’t have both. Which I totally ignored.”

This difference in beliefs about work-life integration between the executive women when they were in college versus the current students in college shows that the discussion about work life integration has changed. Work-life integration was not a popular topic 15 or

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more years ago to be discussed among professional women or women heading into professional careers. Therefore, this increase in discussion among women highlights how education has increased about best work-life integration practices.

Another idea which all of the professional executive spoke of was the idea of “having it all.” The women agreed that they desired to have success in their work and life. However, they disagreed about how easy it was to be able to have it all. One of the women stated:

“I remember thinking like ‘I want it all, I want everything. I want to be able to climb the ladder, corporate ladder, I want to be able to be a mom. I want to be able to maybe coach some sports on the side,’ and you know, so I’ve always been a big believer that if you can time manage the right way, and prioritize in your life, then you can kind of have bits and pieces of everything.”

“You can have it all... it’s all week by week, day by day... I have the mentality that my family is absolutely first. Being a mom to a 17 month old is, I mean that’s my first priority, it’s what drives me every day at work to do well and to succeed within my career. But like I’ve said, I’ve gotten myself to a point in my career where I can do that. I can be an executive leader and a wonderful mom at the same time with the support of the people around me.”

These first few quotes show that some women feel very positive and energetic about their abilities to integrate their work and life. However, many other women from the executive professional group believe it is very challenging to have it all and feel satisfied with ones’ decisions. The following quotes show this challenge:

“It’s tough to want to have it all... it’s becoming rare to see someone who has it all. You can’t give to other people, give to yourself, have a family, have a, you know, an excellent career, have a huge house, drive a nice car, go on fancy vacations, like all those things are fabulous, but you can’t always have, all of them, all the time.”

“I accepted early on that I’m not going to make the big bucks at the big firm because I’m choosing to have a 40 hour work week and have a salary, but I still get to do the law... those are the kind of tradeoffs you make.”

These three quotes demonstrate that women have found it difficult to integrate their work and personal lives and expect to continue to find difficulties when attempting to

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integrate. These quotes also show that it has been difficult for women to integrate in the past and stipulates that norms surrounding work and family culture will need to change before it will become easier to integrate.

The last overarching theme found was the idea of speaking with other women in your organization to see what they have done. By speaking with other women in your organization who have already gone through the difficulties of trying to integrate work and family, it becomes easier to plan your own work life integration. This theme allowed for women to see what their peers and coworkers have been doing which gave them a better sense of what they might do when they had a family. The following quote speaks to the importance of communication between women in the organization and throughout an individual's life:

“My advice is to have as many open conversations with the people around you [friends, family members, etc.] to see what they have done.”

“Talk with other women who are within your organization, reach out to your different resources, see what your options are and what the women around you have done.”

This advice to speak with other women in the organization is important and unique to females because females often look to others for support and guidance. Therefore, by asking others what they have done to integrate their work and family lives as well as “have it all,” the women within the executive professional group have enabled themselves to grow together and use each other's experience to succeed within their own lives.

Overarching Themes

Students

- Three of the students said they would consider taking time off from work or working part time to be with their kids while two didn't think they would ever take time off from work
- All of the students had considered their future integration between work and family
- All of the students expected to spend the first years after graduation traveling and growing their careers before having kids and settling down

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- Four of the students said watching their parents influenced their own views on how they would or would not like to integrate their future work and families

Young Professionals

- Four of the women believed they'd have more time for themselves after graduation
- Three of the women said trying to integrate work and personal life became harder after working full time
- All of the women had considered how their lives would change once they had children and how these new lives would fit with their current careers
- All of the women agreed that flexibility was key in being able to "have it all"
- Only one of the females felt that her gender was a disadvantage in her first job

Executive Professionals

- All of the women agreed their life changed after starting a family and agreed that trying to integrate work and family was harder than expected
- Four of the women said talking with other women in their organization gave them expectations of how they could best integrate their work and family lives
- Three of the women waited until after their 30s to start having children
- All of the women agreed that having a spouse available to help with family duties enabled them to continue work after having children
- None of the women considered future work-life integration while they were students in college
- None of the women thought they would ever take time off from work to stay at home

CONCLUSIONS

Over the course of this study it was determined that the major findings were consistent with the existing literature. The ideologies and beliefs surrounding each generation within this study maintained accuracy with the literature reviewed; this enabled the researchers to answer their five research questions:

1. *Is it possible for women across all generations to achieve work-life integration in which they feel successful in both areas? How is success defined between these generations?*

The women throughout this study felt conflicted when it came to whether they could actually “have it all” and achieve work-life integration in which they felt successful in both areas. All of the members of the student and young professional group who did not have any children felt that it was possible to have it all, and expected to have it all in their futures. However, out of the executive professional group, as well as the one female from the young professional group who had a child, there was a belief that it was hard to have it all. From this group of women who had children, only one believed she was able to find satisfying success in both her career and personal life while the rest of the women felt it was more realistic to expect that they wouldn’t be able to achieve success in both areas all the time. Additionally, each of the woman gave different ideas and definitions of what success means to them which points to the literature which claims that millennials are defining career success differently and less linearly than previous generations of women. Therefore, more educated, working young women are expecting career and family priorities to shift (Miller, 2015).

2. *How are women across generations currently obtaining success within their careers and personal life?*

Through this study it was determined that woman are doing many different things to obtain success within their careers and personal lives. Some of the ways to find success which the executive professional women agreed on are things which the females of the millennial generation should consider; the following themes make up this advice. One theme which arose was that once your children past infancy you realize there are avenues that allow you to

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integrate your career and family. This theme speaks to the belief that life does offer different “avenues” to achieve success, and once you get past the initial stages of your child’s infancy, females will want to continue rising up in their careers. This advice aligns with the belief that women will fight to continue rising up in their careers after they settle into normal routines.

A second theme of advice which came from the executive female group is that everything will work out if you have a supportive team at home and at work. This supportive team could consist of a spouse or family members helping out at home along with coworkers, peers, mentors, or managers providing understanding and assistance at work. This culture for a supportive team at home is believed to improve over the upcoming years as men’s attitudes towards home life have been changing and expect to share more responsibilities (Miller, 2015; Sandburg, 2013).

3. What does work-life integration mean, and how can women across all generations more fully achieve this idea of integration?

Within this study each group of individuals interviewed agreed that work-life integration was important. But the degree to which each group was willing to sacrifice time spent with family or at their careers. These differences in the desired amount of time spent in either work or life differed between the generations which agrees with the literature that says the definition of work-life balance keeps changing (Miller, 2015). One example of these differences is seen in the literature as millennials feel that working 55-70 hours a week is too much while boomer managers feel that the long work hours are necessary and expected (Favero & Heath, 2012). This statement of appropriate work hours was proven true in this study as the young professionals and students expected to have 40 to 50 hour work weeks while the executive group expected longer work weeks.

Lastly, women can more fully achieve work-life integration by finding jobs which offer flexibility to work from home or to come in and out of the office when they please. This flexibility is extremely important for women in the future as it allows for women to incorporate their work and personal lives in the most beneficial way for themselves, their families, and their careers. This topic of flexibility was highly discussed in this study as well as in the literature. All of the executive and young professional women agreed that flexibility

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was the key aspect in having it all which Smith (2010) agreed with in her article *Work Life Balance Perspectives of Marketing Professionals in Generation Y*.

4. *Do women millennial perceive work-life integration a possibility when pursuing a career?*

Yes, millennial females do consider and perceive work-life integration a possibility when pursuing a career. All of the students felt very positive about their future of integrating their work and personal lives. All of the women in the student and young professional groups felt that they could easily go in and out of the workforce so they could focus on their careers or their families at different times. This belief that they could take time out from work to focus on their family and then return is uniquely distinct for millennials and matches with literature by Favero & Heath in 2012. Therefore, females about to enter into their careers currently believe work-life integration is possible and will continue to expect work-life integration.

5. *How are millennial women preparing for work-life integration? How is it different from women in different generations?*

Millennial females were found to have prepared for work-life integration differently than any other generational group. Out of the five females in the student group who were interviewed, all of them stated that they had considered their future work-life integration and what having children would do to their careers. These considerations match with the literature because millennials have been called the planning generation (Miller, 2015). The fact that young millennial females are already planning for their future family shows that they place high importance on being able to have a family. Additionally, these findings have shown that millennials know that they want to be highly committed to their family, friends, and community in the future rather than focus on money or prestige which were motivators in the Baby Boomer generation (e.g. Smith, 2010; Favero & Heath, 2012).

Additionally, these findings also point to the fact that millennials still want to have great careers, yet they believe there is more to success than having successful careers. This finding was seen as all of the millennial students interviewed were leaders on campus who worked hard and dedicated themselves to their work. All of these students talked about their desire to have reputable careers from which they could grow to achieve some higher status in

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their organization which agreed with the 2010 literature from Smith. However, integrating a successful family into this successful career is equally, if not more, important to the millennial females which is different from past generations who greatly desired career success and equality.

Lastly, females within the millennial generation believe they will interrupt their careers to find better work-life integration (e.g. Belkin, 2003; Grady and McCarthy, 2008; Robin et al, 2015). This finding which is highly supported by literature was true across three of the five millennial students interviewed for this study. This prevalence within the student population substantiates the belief that females will interrupt their careers for their family and shows that millennials are not afraid to do so.

Contributions to the Literature

From the research conducted throughout this study as well as the though the extensive literature review, there have been some major takeaways determined from this study about what organizations must learn specifically about millennial females. These major takeaways include:

1. Millennials will still be dedicated to their careers and companies, but they will be looking for more than good compensation and benefits packages
2. Millennials will work hard but require flexibility so they can enjoy their careers while also focusing on family
3. Millennial females are not afraid to take time off from work once they have a family
4. Millennial females are thinking about their ability to integrate work and life as soon as they enter the workforce

What Organizations can do to Attract and Retain Millennial Female Talent:

1. Offer flexibility and options to work from home

Both the literature and the findings from this study agree that policies and flexibility options need to change before women can achieve true equality, success, and happiness in their personal and professional lives (e.g. Kuperberg and Stone, 2008; Sandberg, 2013;

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Luscombe, 2013). Therefore, organizations must offer options to females such as flexible work hours, opportunities to work from home, and supportive daycare services. By offering these options, organizations will be able to attract and retain millennial females through any stage of their personal lives or careers.

2. Offer programs to help integrate women back into the organization slowly after they have children

One topic which all of the new mothers discussed, whether they were from the young professional or executive professional group, was the amount of maternity leave they had and how difficult it was for them to come back to the working world. It was so difficult for the young professional woman who had a child that she decided to leave her current job. Therefore, organizations should focus on what they can do to ease the transition from maternity leave back to work. Some things which many companies are doing already is offering extended maternity leave, part time work options, or gradually increasing the amount of time they are expected to be at work each week. By having these programs to help acclimate and integrate females back into the workplace after the life changing event of having a child, organizations will see happier and more engaged workers who want to continue working and putting forward their best effort.

3. Offer continued education and facilitate mentor relationships around work-life integration

Another topic which the executive professional women discussed within this study but is not highly discussed in the literature is work-life mentors. The executive professional women in this study all admitted that they sought out the advice, support and experience of their peers and colleagues on how to integrate work and personal life within their specific organization. Therefore, companies should offer mentors or programs which can discuss the realities of attempting to integrate work and personal life. By offering these programs women will have a more supportive work environment which will enable them to continue to “have it all” rather than drop out of the workforce to take care of their kids.

LIMITATIONS

Although beneficial conclusions were developed from this study, there were many limitations to the research. One limitation was the small sample size. Although many other studies, including Grady and McCarthy (2008), had used a small sample size when collecting data, interviewing only 15 women made it difficult to generalize trends across the entire population. Another limitation was the use of a convenience sample to select these 15 women. Although a random sample would be beneficial to collect unbiased information, due to the nature of this study it was impossible to find a random sampling. Instead the researchers focused on networking with other women to find subjects who fit the profile. A third limiting factor was the lack of diversity in race and geographic location throughout the subjects. All of the subjects currently lived in Rhode Island or Massachusetts and were either African-American or white with no other races considered. A fourth limiting factor was that only individuals who were both born as female (“gendered”) and identified as females were studied. Therefore, both males and transgender individuals were not studied. A final limiting factor was that only professional business women were interviewed and no females from scientific or academic fields were interviewed.

FURTHER RESEARCH

From these limitations comes further research which can be conducted to consider and complement the missing research from this study. One further research topic which would be beneficial to learning more about millennials in the workplaces is looking into how millennial males view work-life integration and how this compares to millennial females. By recreating this study with millennial males it would be possible to see how male perceptions have changed over time as well as what they expect out of their own work-life integration. Additionally, studying millennial males will supplement the research done on millennial females and will allow a broader picture to be created of how millennial parents will handle their work and family lives. Recreating this study with millennial males could also be done by recreating this study with transgendered individuals who identify as male, female, or are unidentified but are gendered differently than their identification.

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Another study which can be done is a longitudinal study discerning the changing culture around millennials in the workplace. By conducting a study which follows millennials from college age through the first 10 to 20 years of their careers more information can be uncovered on how millennials actually integrated their work and family lives versus how they expected to. This study could be done with both males and females.

APPENDIX 1: TRANSCRIPTIONS

Italicized font are the questions asked by the researchers; in some instances short hand or slang was used to record responses. Some information reported by the women were summarized if the response was not directly related to the research being conducted. Additionally, many of the transcriptions are broken into “video 1” or “video 2” etc.. This is done for the researchers to know which film file the transcriptions came from.

Kendra S (Executive Professional)

Video 1:

(0:01) Could you tell me about your job?

- Financial manager

(0:40) What does a typical week look like?

- 40-45 hours a week with one day working at home

- I don't have to travel, I could but I don't have to because it works with my family life

(1:10) How do you integrate your home life along with your work life?

- It's not always easy; work has its own demands and timelines and so does your family and sometimes they don't match up

- having to do the scramble of having to stay home or does my husband stay home if our daughter is sick

- (1:51) “It's a good thing that my manager is actually a working mom as well, and so she's been through the ringer with that aspect of it and she tends to be very understanding. (2:02) But I do know of other friends and colleagues whose bosses aren't as understanding and will say ‘no you can't telework, you need to get to work, and it becomes into a big struggle of do you pick your family, or do you go to work and get this deadline done’”

- it's a balancing act with a lot of communication and quick acts

(2:34) Do you have a rule of thumb when pick what is most important between family and work?

- family first; I haven't always been that way because I used to bring the kids to daycare

- I've learned that if you do that all the time your coworkers begin to expect you to always choose work regardless so I had to switch it

(3:58) Have you had managers in the past who haven't been as understanding?

- (4:18) “There are many men, and not all men, but there are many men that are bosses right now that are from the Baby Boomer generation and their wives didn't have to work, they were stay at home moms. They never had to have to think about ‘do I need to stay home with the kids,’ It was never a thought. So to have us as young women, you know, coming into the workforce trying to have it all, trying to have that superwoman mindset, which is fair, but it's difficult because it's your mindset but it's not the perceptions of others. So when they would look and say, you know, ‘why are you here?’”

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(5:25) Do you think there are any ways that view can be shifted? As far as the older baby boomer generation?

- Yah, with more of us coming into the workforce but it's going to take a long time
- I waited to get married and I waited to have kids, and it's scary how more women are doing that because it puts you in a place of jeopardy because you have until you're 35 before they say you might have some problems with pregnancy
- (6:35) people wait for the perfect place in our job, and the perfect boss and enough money but there will never be a perfect time to have kids
- people need to see that we can do this, when I look at the executives at the top of companies there are very few (women) who have kids
- you can change a mindset it's just going to take more of us

(8:00) Why did you decide to wait to have kids?

- I wanted to be married but I made a deadline with myself that I wanted to have a house before I was married, so I told myself, have the house and set up my life, travel as much as I want, and I told myself I had to be a 'grown-up' by the time I was 30
- I had my 5, 6, 7 years of fun and then I got married when I was 30
- with everything going on in my life I decided to wait a year, and then it became another year, and then a job opportunity came up and I decided to wait another year
- (10:13) "Once you get pregnant, and you know you're already seen as a person that is such a work-horse, but when you get pregnant they start to visualize you and see you a little differently, and so I wanted to get all that 'climbing' done beforehand"
- (11:00) "I didn't have to compromise [by waiting]"
- (11:15) My advice to her was "before you have kids, before you get married, travel. Travel! You don't have to compromise. There's no 'Oh I gotta worry about this,' or 'am I able to do that,' or 'do you want to do this too?' You know, there's no real conversation, about it, it's just *do*"
- I Don't have any regrets, I had a great time and now I am ready to settle down

(12:12) How do you have work-life integration now versus back then?

- I laughed because I thought about where I was at your age
- (12:46) "I was a work horse, I was a work-oholic, I was a person that lived to work, absolutely lived to work. Even to this day having my baby I work two jobs... [But when I saw my baby daughter], and I can't believe it, but I actually changed."
- (14:19) "I'm still a go-getter, I still love to work, I still want to climb that ladder, I still want to break through that concrete ceiling, laugh at the class, you know I still want all that, but I just don't care about it right now. And it's scary because you know, when I was pregnant I went for this promotion and I knew I didn't get the position... because I was pregnant and they didn't know what to expect from me... and I was angry about it but it was the best blessing I could have ever ask for, because now I understand why women so high up have a baby and just say 'I'm out'... I get it. It's such a connection with the baby and you know, you want to spend all your time with them. It just changes your focus a little"
- Breastfeeding adds another layer to your day but you do it because it's best for your baby
- I'm the only "psycho" that came back full time. Other women came back part time because they want to spend more time with their baby

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(17:05) Do you think that is something you would do? Work part time instead of full time?

- it's something I am actually thinking about but it's not in my DNA
- it's just not in me, I haven't even imagined being part time because I've been working so long; I had my first job when I was 12 and I don't know life without my full time job
- maybe for the next child I might consider going part time

(18:20) When you were in college or just starting your career did you ever think you would even consider going part time or take time off?

- Never! I was that person that went to school full time, had a part time job, and lead a dance team while at college
- I've always been busy; I'm that person that over works
- jobs now a days is trying to make it better

Video 2:

...cont. questions

- Companies are making it better because 3 months of maternity time are just not enough and they are lengthening it
- I think if it was anywhere other than my daycare I wouldn't work full time

(1:15) If you had the opportunity would you work from home more often?

- I guess for my job because I support so many people that requires me to be in meetings, I don't think I would be as effective if I worked from home all the time but it would be tough to do more because of my type of job, so no I guess I couldn't

(2:10) Do you feel that having your husband available to take care of the kids, pick them up, do whatever needs to be done, is essential to you being able to go back to work and do everything you need and want to do?

- Yes, absolutely!
- When I was younger I said I was going to have a stay at home husband because I did not want to
- I couldn't imagine doing everything as a single parent, it's a lot! I Wouldn't be able to do a full day if I was a single parent. My husband brings our daughter to day care and I deal with our son going off to the bus stop and then my husband picks them both up and I am able to work a full 8 hour day.
- Without him it wouldn't be possible

(4:15) Do you have any concerns or thoughts about how you are going to have it all in the future?

- I realize there is a time and a season for everything which I didn't realize before
- Everything has completely changed since having my daughter
- There is a reason why you see senior leadership in their 50s. I didn't understand it, but the ones that have kids, they took their time to be parents and they progressed gradually so that they didn't miss out on the soccer games and dance recitals

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- (7:00) When I was a kid my dad wasn't around very often, and my brother and I used to say that we weren't going to be like that when we were parents, we were going to be very present; they took the gradual route so they wouldn't miss the important moments
- (8:08) "I do want to progress, I do want to climb that ladder, I wanna break down that ceiling, I just don't care about it right now"
- (8:38) "You can't say family first if you're not present"
- I had a friend who climbed the ladder and she was focused and she did her thing, but when she got there she was 40 without a husband or kids and she told me she was very lonely and wouldn't make those decisions again

Video 3:

... Cont. Question

- She told me 'it's ok to climb the ladder but make sure your life is full'
- (0:40) "I didn't want to wake up and make it to the top and be alone"

(1:00) Do you have any mentors or role models who guided your view of work-life integration?

- plenty, lots of role models and mentors, both genders and all races; it goes across the spectrum for me
- you tend to have more friends that are similar to your who push you to progress and push me to stop and smell the roses so I don't miss anything
- talked about not blinking (Kathy Michaels)... keep your eyes open! Don't blink because it will go by too fast... be there in the moment, be there for the games; don't blink... spend the time with your families... before you know it they are gone and all you have is your careers
- (4:45) Twice a year I reevaluate everything and I look to see if I am still happy

APPENDIX 2: VIDEO OUTLINE AND MAJOR THEMES

Being a “Work-a-Holic”

Katie C (Young Professional) “I kind of thought I would be a workaholic my entire life... I want to be a CEO someday, I want to own my own company, like I’m okay with that. I could never be a stay at home mom because I would just go crazy; like, I would love spending time with kids and stuff, but I couldn’t do it 24-7. Um, so I think that when I was in college I thought like all I would want to do is work all the time, that’s why I never thought twice about it. I was like, I just want to work, I want to get to the top as fast as I can, um, and now that I am in it I’m like I do want to go have dinner with my boyfriend or like I do want to go see my parents on the weekend, or I do want to go play golf every now and then, um so I think for me it was just realizing that that balance does need to exist... like I could still be a CEO and have time to spend with my family, like you don’t have to pick one or the other”

Ashley C (Student) “I think that the work necessarily doesn’t stop as soon as the day ends, like 5:00 hits. I think that especially in this day and age where you want to stay competitive and on top of everything, and you know, make yourself stand out from the crowd, that if you get an email or an assignment, I think that it’s OK to look at it after 5:00.”

Rebecca D (Student) “That’s what my 20s and early 30s are for, is to worry about my career and then get to a point where I can have that balance between work and family when I start to have children”

Kendra S (Executive Professional) “I was a work horse, I was a work-oholic, I was a person that lived to work, absolutely lived to work. Even to this day having my baby I work two jobs... [But when I saw my baby daughter], and I can’t believe it, but I actually changed.”

Young Professionals Going into the working world

Jessica K (Young Professional) “My expectations heading into the real world per se, was that I have handled being able to like constantly go for the past four years, and I’m still young enough that I should be able to keep going, so my perception was that I actually wanted my life to continue that fast paced, so um, as soon as I started working it took me a few weeks to realize how different it is to work eight hours than to be running all day on campus. Because you would think that being on campus and going all day would make you more exhausted, but for some god given reason for the first like three weeks of work every day I would come home and pass out for like four hours”

Kelsey N (Young Professional) “I was working well over 70 hours a week, um my best friend asked if we were still friends at one point, and I was living with her... that was a lot; I had no personal life, I was in the office 7 days a week, um, for at least 10 hours a day, it just wasn’t conducive to anything. I didn’t see my parents, my grandparents, my family, for like 6

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months; and that's how long I was there... Even if someone could have just looked at me and said 'at the end of your 8 hour day you'll feel more tired and more drained,' and depressed is a hard word but, like more defeated after an 8 hour work day than you did after a 14, 15, 16 hour college day."

Katie C (Young Professional) "The first couple years when I was working the crazy hours there was no work life balance, you worked and when you wanted life the only people you had to spend time with were the people you worked with... I didn't see my friends a lot... television doesn't stop ever so when people have holidays you don't; and that was hard for me to get used to and that was a big reason why I started kind of looking into other opportunities and what else I could do that would keep me in the industry but would allow me to still see my parents and see my sister"

Linda D (Young Professional) "you think you know what life is going to be like but you don't. Until you're there. And I think it's different for everybody."

Katie C (Young Professional) "doing it in my 20s is fine and I could probably keep doing it for a couple years, but when you think ahead to like ok what if I ever want to have a family, like these women that I am working with don't see their kids if their kids are in school they see their kids before they go to school at 6:00 in the morning and then they see them on their off days, but that's it... what's the point of having a husband and kids if you're not going to see them ever?"

Executive Professionals Thinking About Having a Family When in College

Heather J (Executive Professional) *When you were younger, college age, were you thinking about the future at that point in time to integrate your personal life far in the future?* "No I wasn't, I set some personal career goals and wanted to make it all happen - my focus right after school was to put my degree to use

Kristen C (Executive Professional) "I'm honestly sure I never even thought about it. It was not a topic of conversation or news back then, I mean, we're talking 25-30 years ago, and life-work balance wasn't really a discussion point. You just did it. You know? You went to work, and you did it, and um, I definitely didn't have any preconceived plans associated with it.

Liz S (Executive Professional) "you either had a career or stayed home and had a family. You didn't have both. Which I totally ignored"

Students Thinking About Having a Family

Lexi Z (Student) "I know I want a family and a lot of women my age know want a family and they want it as soon as they can, but are also career focused"

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Brittany S (Student) “I want a family and I know like my family now is what’s very important to me and without that like there is no point in working, or like what other life goals are better than having like people to spend time with and share your successes with...”

Brittany S (Student) “I want to look into possibilities of either part time working or working from home ‘cause thinking of getting married and having kids, I really want to be around my kids”

Rebecca D (Student) “having kids isn’t going to set me back; I hope to be a wonderful mother and I do want to have kids, but I do know I want to find the balance between my home life and my work life and not be put down as I am growing farther in my career”

Young Professionals Thinking about having a family

Jessica K (Young Professional) “I am so young in my career that when I have to go on like a trip for work or anything, that like excited me, rather than I know in like 10-15 years I’m going to be like ‘ugh I don’t want to go on this business trip right now um, because my kid has their soccer game this weekend,’ or whatever the situation is.”

Kelsey N (Young Professional) “It’s something that pops into your head every once in a while. It’s not because I’m ready to have a family or am married or even close to doing any of that, but you kind of look and observe what your situation is in each job that you’ve had, and you’re like ‘alright, well at this place I could have done that, and at this place I can’t,’ and like, ‘do I want to be here at this company when I am ready to take that step in life?’”

Kelsey N (Young Professional) “You work 40 hours a week now, or at least I do, and then all of a sudden you have a family down the line that has to take up at least 30 hours. So I feel like I’m almost just going to get thrown right back in to the 70 hour work week that I had for a couple months. And I’m wondering how that’s all going to work out. How are you going to deal with that? And at that point you’re married and you’re trying to maintain a marriage.”

Linda D (Young Professional) “I’m so career oriented and I want to make something of my life, and I don’t want to be that person who is just a stay at home mom. Not that that’s a bad role, I mean [laughs] all the power to you if you can do that, but I don’t want that for me.”

Working and having a family:

Kristen C (Executive Professional) “My husband is the primary conduit for me to have been able to do what I do because I am a work-a-holic, um, not gonna lie, I love it, I get lost in it, and um when I am there I am 100% on, and when I am home I am 100% off. Um, so, that’s always been difficult for me to balance in terms of being able to be that person who is a little bit work, a little bit with the kids, a little bit work, a little bit with the kids, so I tend to work a

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little longer in the day, but then when I shut down, I shut down completely. And that's healthy for me."

Jessica G (Young Professional) "I don't really want to be a stay at home mom, I want to use my education, I want to use my motivation, my, you know, my driven personality, and I do want to work, I want to make a difference and I want to use my brain, so how can I be a mom, be a good wife, and be a good worker at the same time, which my mom um said 'you can do this Jess, we just have to figure out your options'"

Heather J (Executive Professional) "I had to learn that I can't do everything the moment everybody wants me to do everything. And I think the key thing is prioritizing; and it sounds basic and it's something I have always done, but I've got to get even better at it, and continue to do that. And you've got to learn to say no. And that's been hard for me because I've always been an individual, that you know, I want to be, I want to do everything."

After Having Children

Kendra S (Executive Professional) "Once you get pregnant, and you know you're already seen as a person that is such a work-horse, but when you get pregnant they start to visualize you and see you a little differently, and so I wanted to get all that 'climbing' done beforehand"

Jessica G (Young Professional) "After having the baby, like I said, it just changed for me, um having the commute, the traffic and things like that, it really just changed my work life balance at that point, prior to having children, I didn't need to, I didn't have to, leave at a certain time because I didn't have to get home to a baby that needed me, um so I was able to stay late"

Nicki M (Executive Professional) "Don't have any opinions about being a mom, or how it's all going to work, because once it happens it's total game over"

Kendra (Executive Professional) "I'm still a go-getter, I still love to work, I still want to climb that ladder, I still want to break through that concrete ceiling, laugh at the class, you know I still want all that, but I just don't care about it right now."

Career Path

Nicki M (Executive Professional) "my first daughter was born when I was 37 years old and for me the path fit perfectly. I was able to get where I wanted to with my career, I was able to know that medically it's safe to have children at this age, that there is still a future if I want more children, um, so I think it all worked out perfectly and it's probably because I didn't put a lot of stress on it"

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Kendra S (Executive Professional) “I waited to get married and I waited to have kids, and it’s scary how more women are doing that because it puts you in a place of jeopardy because you have until you’re 35 before they say you might have some problems with pregnancy”

Jessica G (Young Professional) “I’m forfeiting my career for my family, but at the end of the day I think that’s the best decision”

Kristen C (Executive Professional) “We need people to be in the pipeline. This is always the excuse that you hear: ‘Well there is no women on the board because there are no women CEOs, there’s no women CFOs, there’s no women you know, sales leaders, who can take those jobs’ because they have not risen up to that volume within that level of an organization which is primarily how you get to be on the board of a company.”

Flexibility:

Kristen C (Executive Professional) “I truly believe in flexibility for my team, so if they have things or if I have things going on during the day um that requires us to either come in late or leave early, or take time off during the middle of the day, that they have complete flexibility around doing that”

Kelsey N (Young Professional) “If I could kind of like flux my hours around so I could come in at 10:00 and leave at 7:00, come in at 7:00, leave at 4:00, just being able to kind of move and sway... I think flexibility is a huge huge proponent of what women need in the workplace; and even men. I mean I’ll be damned if the day comes when I have a husband and a child, and the child’s sick and my husband tells me that I’m the only one who like has to stay home. That’s not going to happen. That’ll be divorce number one right there”

Linda D (Young Professional) “I always wonder you know, what if I have a child, who is going to be the one to take a day off when the child’s sick. Or my kid’s going to have to be in daycare from the time they are pretty much born. And you know, those are things that I struggle with.”

Liz S (Executive Professional) “I started out in a big firm, I could do everything they could do, but I chose to work for a place where there was a salary which gave me more flexibility... and if I needed time off to do things with my kids I could do it. And I think that’s important if you are choosing to have both kids and a career. Then you’ve got to make spaces”

Heather J (Executive Professional) “I have members of my team that have flexible schedules... and I’ll tell you, I think folks work harder! I think individuals um, you know, want to be able to maximize the time that they have when they’re at work and when they’re with their families, and I see them put more time in. And I have some folks on flexible schedules that I get the best outputs from!”

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Having it all and making it work

Kendra (Executive Professional) “It’s tough to want to have it all... it’s becoming rare to see someone who has it all”

Nicki M (Executive Professional) “you can have it all... it’s all week by week, day by day... I have the mentality that my family is absolutely first. Being a mom to a 17 month old is, I mean that’s my first priority, it’s what drives me every day at work to do well and to succeed within my career. But like I’ve said I’ve gotten myself to a point in my career where I can do that. I can be an executive leader and a wonderful mom at the same time with the support of the people around me”

Kristen C (Executive Professional) “You can’t give to other people, give to yourself, have a family, have a, you know, an excellent career, have a huge house, drive a nice car, go on fancy vacations, like all those things are fabulous, but you can’t always have, all of them, all the time.”

Liz S (Executive Professional) “I accepted early on that I’m not going to make the big bucks at the big firm because I’m choosing to have a 40 hour work week and have a salary, but I still get to do the law... those are the kind of tradeoffs you make”

Heather J (Executive Professional) “Remember that everything is not forever. I know a lot of women that have decided, you know, they’ve been home and they’ve decided to go back to work, and maybe they’ve gone back part time, um versus full time.”

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