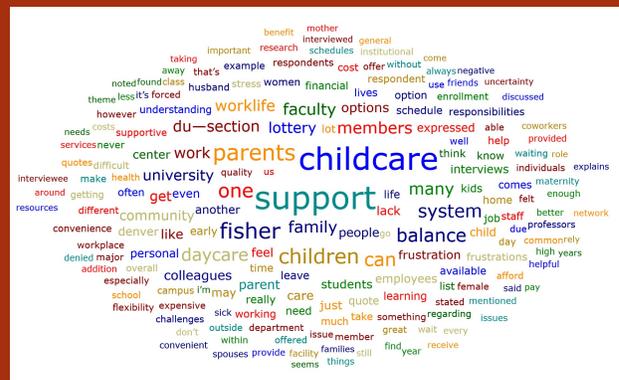
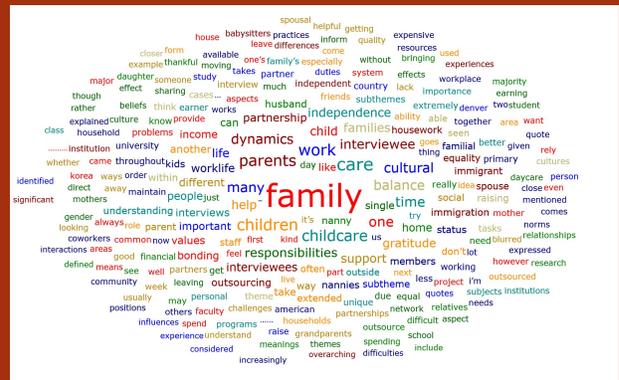
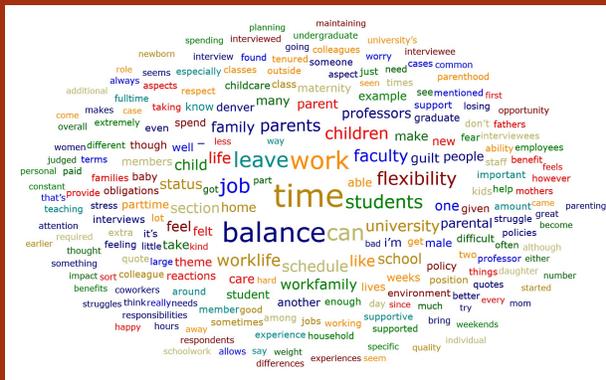


# PERCEPTIONS ABOUT WORK/LIFE BALANCE AMONG DU COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN -SUMMARY REPORT-



## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the faculty, staff, and students at the University of Denver for sharing their thoughts, opinions, and experiences through their interview responses.

The study was designed and coordinated by Winter 2017 Cultural Anthropology's Graduate Teaching Assistants Elinor Brereton, Samantha Hagan, Kristen Hall and Cathryn Perreira, under the direction of Alejandro Cerón, course instructor. Data collection, analysis and report writing was carried out by the sixty-six undergraduate students who took the class, as part of the course requirements.

This summary report was prepared by Sarah Beck, Alexander Brewer-Fong, Samuel Churches, Kyle Cook, Emma Crisman, Dominique Italiano, Melissa Jackels, Elizabeth Rolfs, Julia Uchiyama and Nathan Weinberg, under the supervision of Alejandro Cerón.

The summary report is based on the following four reports that include more detailed findings:

The report for "Section 1: Work/life balance" was prepared by Isaac Auerbacher, Sarah Beck, Mckenna Benson, Maria Chavez, Emma Crisman, Harriet Dorion, Liana Franklin, Harrison Hardig, Jesse Jhan-Jing Hu, Sabrina Jain, Victoria Lang, Daisy Leach, Marcus Merritt, Evan Morsch, Tommie Walsh, Nathan Weinberg, Harry Zakarian, under the supervision of Cathryn Perreira.

The report for "Section 2: Family dynamics" was prepared by Sarah Alsharqi, Ryan Bell, Alexander Brewer-Fong, William Cassato, Kyle Cook, William Curry, Dominique Italiano, Matthew Marletta, Hanna Mikols, Katharine Paterson, Douglas Peterson, Nicholas Riggs, Connor Smith, Annie Vellon, Queen Wilkes, Natalie Wuertz, under the supervision of Elinor Brereton.

The report for "Section 3: Personal challenges" was prepared by Tristan Andersen, Logan Bell, William Buchman, Taylor Chinitz, Samuel Churches, Piper Friedman, Elizabeth Hamilton, Henry Hardy, Melissa Jackels, Mckenna Medina, Braden Neihart, Angelica Pacheco, Samuel Rickenbaugh, Jonathan Rohr, Stormer Santana, Jenni Sides, Caitlin Smith, Justin Wilhelm, under the supervision of Samantha Hagan.

The report for "Section 4: Support" was prepared by Tess Alphas, Zoe Briggs, Monique Domme, Mayra Espinosa, Ashley Gerken, Hanna Ko, J. P. Lawrence, Nicholas Lippman, Yvonne Maina, Gabriela Ortega, Traci Reese, Heidy Rios-Carmona, Erin Rissler, Eliza Rolfs, Julia Uchiyama, and Harry Wynn, under the supervision of Kristen Hall.

The full report is available at:

[https://digitalcommons.du.edu/anthropology\\_student/1/](https://digitalcommons.du.edu/anthropology_student/1/)

## Executive Summary

**Background:** In the past fifty years, families in the USA have changed in configuration, size and dynamics. The percentage of families that do not conform to the traditional family unit (married mother and father with children) has increased as there are more single-parent families, LGBTQ families and interracial families. The proportion of unmarried or divorced families has also increased, as it has the number of married and unmarried couples that opt to not have children and, additionally, more couples are opting for adoption and foster parenting (Pew Research Center 2010). Furthermore, the percentage of households where all the adults work has increased, which impacts the amount and quality of time available for family activities and household chores (Bianchi, Robinson and Milkie 2006). These and other trends have led to the identification of “work-family balance” as an important challenge of our times, one that families have been facing for decades and that institutions are only starting to pay attention to (Hochschild 2013). Although there are many aspects of family life that are challenging to balance with workplace demands, childcare has been specifically identified as one that needs attention (Desilver 2014).

**Methods:** *Study goal:* To describe the perceptions that some DU community members with children have about work-family balance with attention to challenges, difficulties and institutional responses. *Study design:* Descriptive, cross-sectional, qualitative study. *Population and sample:* We recruited 63 University of Denver students (13), staff (14) and faculty (36) who are responsible of parenting at least one child under 10 years of age. We used purposive sampling, which consists in actively finding individuals who meet the criteria. *Data collection:* Semi structured interviews (January 23-February 8, 2017), in person, audio recorded and transcribed within one week. Participants’ autonomy, confidentiality and anonymity were protected throughout the process. *Data analysis:* Thematic analysis, which consists in the systematic identification of themes in the interview transcripts, followed by their conceptual organization and hierarchization. *Research team:* sixty-six undergraduate students taking Cultural Anthropology (ANTH 2010) in winter 2017, four graduate teaching assistants and one course instructor.

**Findings:** Student participants portrayed work/life balance as set of interconnected situations and relations that go from the deeply personal to the interpersonal, communal and institutional. Aiming at capturing such complexity, we organized our findings in four themes: work/life balance, family dynamics, personal challenges and support. Participants told us about their struggles when negotiating work and life responsibilities which often lead to feelings of guilt, which are mediated by their colleagues’ reactions, schedule flexibility, their job situation and the presence or absence of maternity leave. Family dynamics reflected a tension between a narrative of independence and one of dependence in raising children, highlighting the importance of social networks, both of which are also affected by immigration status and intra-household negotiations particularly,

with their partners. Personal challenges relate primarily with time management and establishing clear boundaries between work and family, which related to managing emails, organization and scheduling of activities, maintaining a financial balance, and solving transportation needs, all of which were mediated the ability parents have of controlling a flexible work schedule, an ability greatly diminished among students. Support parents need related to child care goes from the one that happens in interpersonal interactions with neighbors, friends, relatives and colleagues, to the institutionalized forms of support, where participants expressed their frustration for the insufficiency of accessible options in Denver, the lack of options at DU, and the inaccessibility of DU's Fisher Early Learning Center.

**Conclusions and recommendations:** Participant's ability to control their schedules together with their financial and social capital seem to shape important differences in the ability that parents have for balancing work and life. Students, single parents and recent immigrants seem to have a combination of elements that add to the challenges. At the interpersonal level, simple acts of kindness, sympathy and empathy in the everyday interactions seem to make an important difference to parents. The perception that many of the student participants expressed about the academy not being comfortable with children, families or parents could be addressed by making it normal to talk about all these aspects of life. At the institutional level, efforts could be made at reaching out to parents, especially students and single parents, to offer them guidance and support that is already in place at DU, such as counselling and wellbeing resources, as well as orientation related to institutional policies. Policies related to maternity and paternity leave should be refined to ensure that they do not negatively affect those they are supposed to support. Convenient, affordable and sustainable on-campus child care options should be seriously considered given that they would enhance the possibilities for parents to participate in activities at DU. Events should be organized where members of the DU community have the opportunity to share not as students, staff or faculty, but as members of families.