

What is a Family-Friendly University Campus? A Pilot Study to Develop Student Research and Provide Practical Results

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on an experiential graduate-level qualitative research course and a practical study to understand how family-friendliness is conceptualized at an international expatriate university in Kazakhstan. Student researchers worked collaboratively to reflect and engage in a research process including developing interview protocols, transcription, coding, and analysis. From this work, students developed research capacity and uncovered four key components to family friendliness: safety, financial support, infrastructure and facilities, and sense of community. These were re-analyzed through Clark's (2000) border theory resulting in two major themes: safe, simple life on campus (physical borders) and sense of support (psychological borders). This study provided three important outcomes: (1) engaging students within a graduate level course in creating and conducting a collaborative exploratory qualitative research study, (2) uncovering results about the importance of family-friendliness on campus for international parents/faculty, and (3) providing recommendations to develop family-friendliness to support recruitment and retention in higher education institutions. For students studying higher education leadership for future careers as administrators, academics, and researchers, understanding these experiences and results provide insights to develop equitable university environments.

KEYWORDS: Teaching Qualitative Research; Developing Graduate Student Research Capacity; Family-Friendly Campus; Work-Life Balance; Border Theory

Introduction

What is family-friendliness at a university campus? How can we study it? And why would we want to? In this article, we discuss the development of a collaborative study to explore the concept of family-friendliness at an international expatriate university in Kazakhstan. The study guided the structure of the graduate-level qualitative research course for those studying higher education leadership. The project was experiential (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2017), practical (Roulston, McClendon, Thomas, Tuff, Williams, & Healy, 2008), and relevant to graduate students and the context of their current and future lives (CohenMiller, Merrill, Shamatov, 2018).

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We considered family-friendliness to be an aspect of work-life balance, assuming that a greater level of family-friendliness would increase a faculty member's and their family's sense of work-life balance and the likelihood for recruitment and retention for faculty with families. As such, the research methods course provided both practical methodological approaches and insights into an important and relevant equity issue in higher education. In this article, we use a two-pronged approach to address both research capacity development and the findings relating to university-level family-friendliness. While separate articles could provide more detailed evidence into the research process and/or findings, we believe this article provides a useful platform to demonstrate how researching with students can create meaningful research. As such, the following sections fluctuate between explaining these components, speaking about the process of becoming a researcher and the results of exploring faculty and stay-at-home parents' conceptualization of academic family-friendliness.

The University context. We conducted this research at Nazarbayev University, which is an emerging research higher education institution in Central Asia. It is a young university that opened its doors in 2010 and is the first of its kind in the region. Being focused on research and academic excellence, the university has a challenge to support the growing community living on campus. As the majority of faculty relocate from around the globe, and the international community of the University is gradually expanding, the concept of family-friendliness becomes particularly vital when moving not only oneself but also an entire family to a foreign context. This means that both international and local faculty from Kazakhstan fill the halls and campus residences. As explained in the Handbook for Faculty (2016), the University is a multicultural environment represented by expatriates from around the globe. According to a manager of the faculty residential halls, there are approximately 70 families living on campus. At the time of the research, there were approximately 4200 students and just under 450 faculty, of which 78.5% were international from over 50 countries (*NU at a glance*).

Families, living and working on campus, have informally discussed the benefits and challenges of living so close to work. These informal discussions can occur in hallways, in family get-togethers, or in online spaces. It is common to see requests by parents looking for English language services (e.g., schools, doctors, dentists) and products (e.g., gluten-free and organic food, art and educational materials). On the other hand, families often share excitement about new services on and around campus, such as a new grocery store, coffee shop, and the potential for an expanded children's library. However, despite these commonly heard conversations, there has yet to be any empirical study exploring the topic. Therefore, this study provides understanding to the dual nature of creating both a friendly atmosphere for faculty members and for their families, providing valuable practical directions for campus life at this University, as well as insight for others.

Theoretical Background: Border Theory (Clark, 2000)

Select students (co-authors) explored potential theories to analyze and interpret the results. We determined the fit of Clark's (2000) work/family border theory to explain the domains of "work" and "family" as well as the borders which exist between them. Drawing from Clark's (2000) definition of balance as related to satisfaction and positive functioning in both domains (p. 751), we discuss family-friendliness as part of work/family balance. The theory presents the list of central concepts which include: domains (work and family), borders between the two domains,

border-crossers (employees), and border-keepers (domain members). Clark (2000) distinguishes different border forms for those who are “border-crossers” and “border-keepers,” those who integrate the lives of work and home, and those who keep them more separate, respectively. Additionally, there is a distinction between physical, temporal, and psychological forms the borders may take (Clark, 2000; Hall & Quinn, 2014). Building on these concepts, the theory attempts to cover the variety of work and family situations from the theoretical perspective and derive propositions which will be useful to achieve greater work and family balance. For this study, we used this theory to help guide the analysis and description of findings.

Family-Friendliness on University Campuses: Policies and Practices

To encourage family-friendly campuses, universities have taken different steps, such as supporting flex time, instituting parental leave, and developing committees to address the needs of the community. There have been several attempts to understand what is meant by family-friendliness within the workplace. Family-friendliness can be interpreted as having a flexible schedule as well as social and financial guarantees to women with young children (Houdyshell & Kirk, 2018; Strazdins, Shipley, & Broom, 2007). Strazdins, Shipley, and Broom (2007) explain that work conditions and practices, which help employees to balance work and family, must be taken into consideration when defining family-friendliness. Moreover, they note that well-being and time are essential when balancing work and family lives and should also be incorporated into the definition. While Strazdins’ et al. (2007) define family-friendliness in the workplace at large, Lester and Sallee (2009) narrow their focus to family-friendliness on university campuses, linking it to the flexibility of faculty at work. They emphasize the importance of considering the life cycle of faculty members and describe multiple tangible practices as well as policies aimed at addressing work-life balance issues (e.g. provision of leave for family-related reasons, adjusting tenure due to childbirth, reduced duties to care after a newborn or adoption).

Family-friendliness can also be linked to policies, such as those demonstrating the importance for recruitment of new faculty and promotion and retention of senior faculty (Villablanca, Beckett, Nettiksimmons, & Howell, 2011). Faculty members have found support systems for family-friendliness through various types of housing, including residences on permanent and temporary bases. In the United States, for instance, to allow faculty members to adapt to the new environment at the University of Minnesota, the University created a special transitional family complex where new faculty members are encouraged to reside while looking for the most suitable permanent residence (“Faculty Housing, UMN,” 2017).

Although whether to live on- or off-campus is a matter of faculty’s personal choice, at Vassar College (New York, USA) for instance, faculty are encouraged to opt for residences located near the campus to promote their interactions with students within informal settings and raise participation in campus-based activities (“Faculty Housing, Vassar,” n.d.). The impact of faculty living on campus and the associated potential benefits for learning and teaching have informed the development of faculty-in-residence programs. The experiences of faculty residing on campus can be seen through the prism of faculty-in-residence programs as a means to enrich students’ learning, engage faculty in student life, and expand student-faculty interactions within informal environments (James, 2018; Sriram et al., 2011; Humphrey et al., 2015; Healea, Scott, & Dhilla, 2015; Sriram, 2015). For example, outcomes of faculty-in-residence programs have shown expanded learning opportunities for students and increased faculty understanding about the

complexity of student life and reconsidering their views of student learning. For example, at Georgetown University (Washington DC, USA), there is an emphasis on faculty-in-residence programs to enable faculty to understand student experiences and adjust teaching approaches (“Faculty-in-residence,” n.d.). Likewise, there was a study at Baylor University (Texas, USA), a case study of the faculty-in-residence programs aimed at improving students’ experiences at the university by connecting students and faculty outside the classroom (Sriram, 2015). Findings showed that the implementation of these programs contributed to the positive change in the “philosophy of residential education” of the university (Sriram, 2015, p. 518).

While studies have explored how faculty living on campus might affect student-teacher interactions, benefiting the educational process (Sriram, Shushok, Perkins, & Scales, 2011; Sriram, 2015), the perspectives of the professoriate and the challenges they might face have not been fully investigated (Humphrey, Callahan, & Harrison, 2015). Likewise, studies have addressed issues of family-friendly policies (Prentice & Pankratz, 2003; Lester & Sallee, 2009; Su & Bozeman, 2016), organizational culture for parenting students (Nichols, Biederman, & Gringle, 2017; Yigit, 2017), unique needs of doctoral family students (Lester, 2013), faculty-in-residence programs (Sriram, 2015), and expatriate academic experiences (Lauring & Selmer, 2009; Cho, Hutchings, & Marchant, 2013; Danisman, 2016; Kilinc, Tarman, & Aydin, 2018). Yet scarce research has been devoted to the opinions of faculty and their families and how they experience combining professional and personal lives at the university. As such, this study speaks to the need to hear faculty and family voices, describing a conceptualization of university family-friendliness.

Research Design in Practice

Teaching and conducting research with students can be considered as a three-step process (Goussinsky, Reshef, Yanay-Ventura, & Yassour-Borochowitz, 2011), involving “opening students’ eyes to qualitative research” (p. 130), confronting the “dilemmas in teaching qualitative research” (p. 132), and “experiencing qualitative field research” (p. 136). We focused on conducting research which could inform the current discussion on campus about family-friendliness, such as through presenting the findings internationally (CohenMiller, Tslenko, Ogay, Sagitova, Shakhmanova, & Saburova, 2017). As preparation for the course, the faculty instructor received ethics approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University. Readings were framed by Leavy's (2017) research methods text in addition to research studies from a range of educational topics.

Students practiced hands-on research as a form of experiential learning within the course, seeing first-hand how to conduct research (Machtmes, et al., 2009; Orange, 2016). Following such work as Roulston et al. (2008) who examined the use of a collaborative research study within a graduate course to help students understand the practical application of methods and reflect on the process, this study engaged students in practical community work relevant to their lives. Thus, the experiential classwork study was designed to be directly relevant to students’ academic lives as members of the University campus and future academicians. As a class, students were guided through designing and conducting the study on family-friendliness at the University. Through class discussion and reflection, the primary research question was developed to understand how family-friendliness is conceptualized and understood for those living and working on campus.

Collaborative development of interview protocols. Because of the limited time frame during the class, it was necessary to confirm all participants before the semester began. The faculty instructor sought to include participants from across the University and campus. Sampling emphasized variation such as across departments, ethnicity, length of stay at the University, the age of children, and gender. Participants were intended to represent varied perspectives by working at different departments or being a stay-at-home-parent, identifying as male or female, being international or local, having different numbers of children, and having a range of years living and working at the University. Therefore, while the faculty instructor chose the overall six participants, the student research teams selected amongst that set. There was a total of six participants interviewed. While it is common to include a set of demographics for participants, because our University is easily identifiable in the region with a community that integrates home and work, detailed information about each individual was removed for the article to protect confidentiality. The following provides generalized descriptions of the participants:

- Two of the parents stayed-at-home (border-keepers) with full-time working spouses;
- Four parents worked full-time as faculty (border-crossers);
- Participants worked within three different departments;
- Participants identified their home country including, Canada, China, Kazakhstan, and the United Kingdom;
- Children ranged in age from 4 to 15 (one parent has adult children living abroad)
- Participants had lived on campus ranging from 2 to 5 years.

In two research teams, students developed interview protocols and worked through the differences in structured, semi-structured, and unstructured protocols. Each team ended up choosing to create and use semi-structured interviews to best answer their research question. This decision related to their desire to have a general framework for questions to ask with the flexibility to adjust questions when needed (see the Appendix for sample interview questions). Each student researcher conducted at least one interview, transcribed, analyzed, and presented findings. Then each team presented their results and as a class we consolidated the findings. The teams selected and interviewed three participants.

The interviews were recorded (except for one in which the participant chose not to be recorded), transcribed, and coded. We used open, axial and thematic coding to provide a coding framework and step-by-step process, alongside constant comparison of transcripts across research teams (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne, 2006). Students analyzed the transcripts by hand, providing a foundation for potential future coding and analysis via computer software (see Paulus & Bennet, 2017, for an example software analysis for graduate research methods courses). Coded transcripts of interviews were analyzed to find answers for defined research questions, *How is the term “family-friendly campus” contextualized and defined at NU?* The results of coding were shared among the group and analyzed. For the participant who refused to be audio recorded, the student-researcher took notes during the interview by hand to share with the team and class.

Findings and Discussion: Conceptualizing Family-Friendliness

Analyzing the data inductively, coding interviews one-by-one, iteratively, we developed the following categories regarding the conceptualization of family-friendliness on campus: safety, financial support, infrastructure and facilities, and sense of community (see Figure 1):

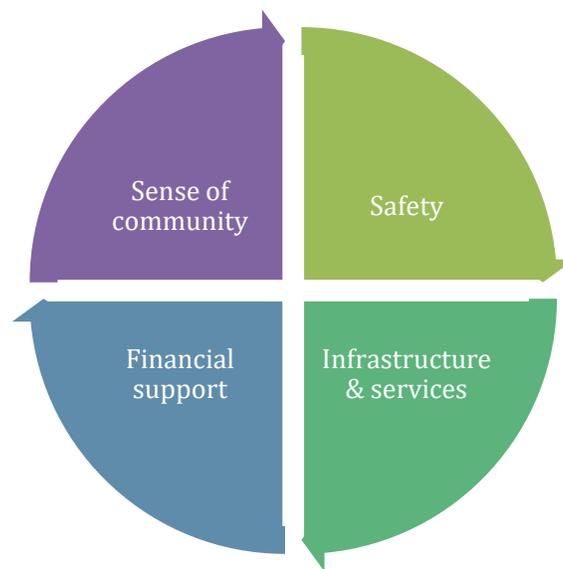


Figure 1: Four key components for conceptualizing family-friendliness on a university campus

When examining these aspects, we adapted them to Clark's (2000) border theory and found another way to conceptualize these findings within the borders of physical, psychological, and temporal. The first concept of safety together with the concept of infrastructure and facilities are directly linked to Clark's explanation of *physical borders*. In the case of this University, where faculty live in close proximity to work, physical borders merge and not surprisingly, faculty members place great importance on improving their physical surrounding and ensuring safety on campus for the whole family. As a result, safety together with infrastructure and facilities are associated with family-friendliness.

In a similar vein, sense of community can be directly linked to Clark's (2000) discussion of *psychological borders*. Living in rent-free apartments which are in proximity to each other and by having common open space for community building, not only allows parents and faculty members to get to know each other closely but also supports children and spouses to build close

relationships. This results in “weak psychological borders” between work and home. For those interviewed, seeing the same people in the work and home spaces at the University did not add stress, but surprisingly appeared to support a reduction in stress as a result of feeling a sense of community. The importance of community, then, could be unique (or particularly important) for universities with a majority expatriate faculty, where the benefits provide essential comfort and cohesion. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the participants associated family-friendliness with a *feeling* of community, which appeared to help participants to achieve balance.

In terms of *temporal borders*, the findings of the present research deviate slightly from Clark's (2000) theory. Among six participants, only one mentioned time constraints as influencing work and life balance related to more flexible working hours to care of her children. Specifically, as the primary caretaker, there were conflicts between scheduled meetings and picking up children from school. Most participants reported that physical proximity of the work and home places mitigate time-related issues, as living on campus allows them to quickly respond to the needs of their families, at least for those who are not the primary caretakers, by simply walking from university to faculty's block. However, as our study did not fully expand upon who was the primary caretaker of children; it is possible other full-time working parents juggling these two roles also have noted this issue of temporal borders.

Lastly, the concept of financial support, which was brought up by all participants, did not initially appear to fit within Clark's (2000) border theory. While some components could be merged within other themes, for example rent-free apartments in a common geographic space could relate to psychological borders (or lack thereof), there are other parts that may not fit as well. We found other financial supports such as educational reimbursements and University-covered flights to travel to a home country played a major role in participants' sense of family-friendliness of campus life in general. The first aspect provides an ease of supporting children's educational needs, while the latter addresses a crossover between work and home in Kazakhstan and home in another country. Therefore, University-covered flights to a home country became an example of Clark's (2000) description of those who are border-crossers, bridging the gap between work and home, and appeared to be situated within the psychological border theme.

These four categories were then consolidated into two themes: Safe, Simplified Life on Campus, which relates to Clark's (2000) description of physical borders, and Sense of Support, which relates to Clark's (2000) description of psychological borders. The following sections detail these two themes, providing insight to how parent participants describe and experience family-friendliness on campus.

Theme One: Safe, Simplified Life on Campus (*physical borders*)

The first theme emphasized the central concept of feeling safe while having access to what feels important. Despite the potential for these concepts to be considered as falling within a different category, we referred them to Clark's (2000) description of physical borders as the participants associated feelings of safety and access with physical objects such as construction areas, stop signs, safety of pedestrians and gathering areas, and overall campus environment.

Safety: A developing process. Participants all prioritized safety as necessary for a family-friendly campus. As noted, they discussed such issues as safe construction areas, speed limits,

speeding cars, and an overall safe environment. One of the interviewees pointed out that “when other vehicles are coming, there should be some signs, like stop signs so that kids and parents [are] taken care of, trucks and cars should not speed up too much, so that there won’t be any traffic accidents” (Parent 5). At times participants would both mention parts of campus life they felt particularly secure for their family, and then also discuss their concerns. For example, Parent 4 explained his overall feeling of family-friendliness on campus as a positive one, “Well, to be short. It’s a campus where I feel security for my family. And I feel that they have access to various services which they need. For children mostly,” and then he continued later in the interview to mention specifics of safety he wished would be improved,

We didn’t have any problems actually yet. But there are issues causing a threat to children. For instance, [there] were cars sometimes accelerat[ing]. So, issues such as speeding cars. And construction which is going on all is not safe to walk sometimes. Sometimes they [construction workers] drop things.

Others similarly prioritized kids’ safety as the primary focus when considering family-friendliness. Thus, Parent 6 observes, “What they lack is [a] smooth area they can do rollerblading or skateboarding or have scooters on...[right now, it] is [a] health hazard both to the kids and to the people walking around there.” Likewise, Parent 2 believes, “I mean, we have a lot of kids running around and, and lobby, it is great! Problem is, er, it’s, it’s not necessarily the safest for kids because it is marble, so if they fall like and [clap].”

For others, safety was related to the community on campus. One faculty parent explained how having overlap of work and home meant a potential reduction of safety concerns, (Parent 4)

[An]other advantage is that most of our colleagues have children; our children can interact with them. And this is a little more secure. As you know them. And we know with whom...our children play. And that is an advantage I guess...The campus is sort of closed territory. And we feel more security. People who coming into the campus are checked. They have records, cameras, etc. so we have [a] feeling of security from bad behaving people.

Throughout the interviews, safety was a primary concern and the topic was repeatedly mentioned as central, highlighting how faculty and parents felt about their family life at the University and its family-friendliness.

Infrastructure and services: An evolution to address family needs. Across parent participants, the availability and access to adequate facilities and services were essential for feeling that the campus environment was one that welcomed and supported families and hence *felt* family-friendly. For example, one faculty parent (Parent 4) explained the advantage of the proximity of the two domains of work and home: “Where we live and where we work is pretty close. If I am needed at home I can go there and be there in two minutes.” Similarly, another participant (Parent 6) highlighted the ease of border crossing between work and home: “Other than being convenient going to and from work, if you forgot something you can go home and get back to (the) department, it is easy to do. Or you need to get [pick up your] a passport today, I can run home and get that easily.” By having work and home within easy walking distance, parent participants found an ease of life that supported a general sense of family-friendliness.

While the vast majority of faculty lives on campus, there is a handful who live closer to the city center, as well as those who lived both in the city center and on campus. Thus, Parent 1 compares, “when we first come here, I was living [off-campus]...So later [when] we moved here... we [were] so happy, yeah I met a lot of friends, yes so we can talk about...education for the kids, we talk about our life and our husband [interjection of laughing and smiling],...and some kids, that's so nice for me, it is better than [living off campus].”

In addition, most of the participants referred to the opportunities for socialization and sufficient facilities as key factors contributing to the family-friendliness of campus life. Others highlighted struggles with long winters (i.e. winters lasting six months and dipping down to -40C/-40F). Thus, the uniqueness of the climate in Astana was found to be linked to the living conditions on campus. For instance, a parent participant highlighted the struggles children experience during the winter, stressing that “more facilities should be provided especially for winter period” (Parent 3), and others specifically mentioned the need to improve and increase the number of indoor and outdoor play structures.

Another concern which participants mentioned was a lack of options in children’s educational facilities on campus: “There are many issues, such as issues of children activity. There is one kindergarten here, which we don’t like. For some reasons, it is hard to bring an alternative. Another kindergarten or preschool” (Parent 1). In this way, children’s facilities were both considered as important in terms of availability on campus as well as later discussed as a key feature for financial support.

Other infrastructure needs unique to living and working on campus are access to basic needs, such as food. Participants mentioned the integral nature of access to quality food on campus as part of their sense of family-friendliness, (Parent 4)

...they’ve recently opened another shop here [a small grocery store]. Which is pretty ok. But it’s not... I mean you can’t get everything there. Some goods are there. But mostly goods oriented for...If it’s food it’s unhealthy food, or fast-food sort of thing, or semi-cooked things. You can’t get organic fresh vegetables.

Overall, participants explained a family-friendly campus includes infrastructure and facilities, such as easy access to a well-stocked grocery store with quality food, high-quality educational options on campus, and facilities to support health and well-being of children in the winter months.

Theme Two: Sense of Support (*psychological borders*)

The second important theme was participants’ focus on the sense of support. These supports appeared to be associated with psychological borders (Clark, 2000) and emphasized financial security and community life.

Financial support: An emotional and practical component. Depending on the school the parent participant was associated with, there was a varied amount of support, with some departments excelling at support and others being less supportive. Yet overall, parent participants highlighted consistent University-wide financial support as important for family-friendliness, such

as a place to live, ease of returning to one's home country for holidays, and an ability to pay for children's tuition. In Kazakhstan, the public schools use Russian or Kazakh as the language of instruction, while the options for English speakers are limited from mid- to high-cost private schools. One participant (Parent 3) mentioned how the family found it challenging to pay for multiple children to attend private school, "a larger allowance [for tuition reimbursement] is desired, because schools are rather expensive, especially if you have two or more children." Participants varied in how they felt about the tuition reimbursement. However, whether parent participants easily covered their children's tuition or struggled, they all found the inclusion of financial support to address this aspect of their home life an important contributor to family-friendliness.

Although some people felt the financial support was adequate and others felt greater support was needed, overall it was clear how finances were one of the factors which contribute to recruitment and retention of the faculty members. Financial support appeared to impact the feeling of family-friendliness, whether in a direct manner such as reimbursement for tuition, or in an indirect manner, such covering costs of accommodations, medical insurance and round-trip tickets. For instance, Parent 4 shares, "from the very beginning they told us that we are totally family friendly. For instance, they pay for our schools," and then she continued:

Medical insurance covers the whole family regardless of how many children you have. For foreign colleagues, [the University] pays round-trip tickets twice a year so they can go home for winter and summer holidays. Since I am local it is not for me.

Therefore, financial support appeared to directly influence the feeling of family-friendliness, especially if the study participant felt that support was missing. Whether or not some participants felt financial support was adequate, it was clear how economics played a major role in conceptualizing family-friendliness and related to the recruitment and retention of faculty.

Sense of community: Feeling like home. With approximately 80% of the faculty moving to the University from other countries, it is not surprising to find that a strong sense of community was essential for describing a family-friendly campus. The parent participant of three children explained that the University "has become home for us." Continuing, the participant itemized the multiple aspects she values about socialization and the support network on campus:

One, I have a lot of friends here; we can have coffee or tea together. And [a] second one, my kids also [have a] lot of friends here. They can play alone here. (...) There is [a] very international [community]; most people come from overseas, come from other countr[ies],...so we normally speak English to each other, and everybody likes each other; try[ing] to help each other. (Parent 1)

The example illustrates the importance of connection and building relationships with others living on campus.

Similarly, another participant, when asked if returning to campus after a vacation felt like home or like a temporary place to stay until he could leave again, clearly articulated:

Yeah, this is home. Home is for the heart. I am happy to come back. We are happy to be here. We enjoy the campus. We enjoy Kazakhstan. I just wish I had enough energy to learn a language that I could use here. In comparison to a place that I lived, this is the most fun and the best facilities that we have. (Parent 6)

However, for others feeling at home on campus led to discomfort in the cross-over of domains—of family and of work—meaning there was no escape or privacy:

I think there are advantages and disadvantages. It is easy to walk to work, especially in winter; on the other hand... We try to get away from campus because my husband gets tired and we go to other places. We do not normally care if his students see us, but faculty members and students should live in separate buildings as there should be some distance between students and faculty members, there should be some privacy. (Parent 5)

Meanwhile, for some parent participants, the support of colleagues at work appeared to help them feel integrated and experience a more comfortable crossing-over between work and home. For instance, one faculty parent commented on how colleagues supported him as a parent: “My colleagues understand the situation. So, in this sense, I do have full support...which allows for moving a meeting or coming late, people understand” (Parent 4). He explained how this translates into his awareness of the border-crossing for other faculty: “When colleagues bring children to the workplace, it does not bother me, I feel sympathetic.” Therefore, the presence of children in the workplace provides evidence to a sense of family-friendliness at the campus.

Parent 2 raised the importance of bringing people together within the home domain. She pointed out that the University lacks common areas that could support the community; the University is “...missing a common room or common kitchen, where people can, you know, cook together, celebrate things together [but there is a] supportive community environment.” While the participant spoke about a particular facility that could be included, a common room or common kitchen, the feeling relates to a sense of connection, community, and home. As suggested by the participant, parents living at the University want the campus to be family-friendly as seen through time and space to come together and socialize. She proposed types of activities that could support the community: “So, having a kind of monthly social events, like a movie night or just some activity that people can do things together, it would be nice.”

Therefore, we see that having an opportunity to gather together, to develop relationships with families and those supportive of families at work, at home, and in other shared spaces assists in providing a sense of community and “home” important to family-friendliness on campus. Along with the theme of a Safe, Simple Life on Campus, having a Sense of Support provides an overarching conceptualization of a family-friendly campus (see Figure 2).



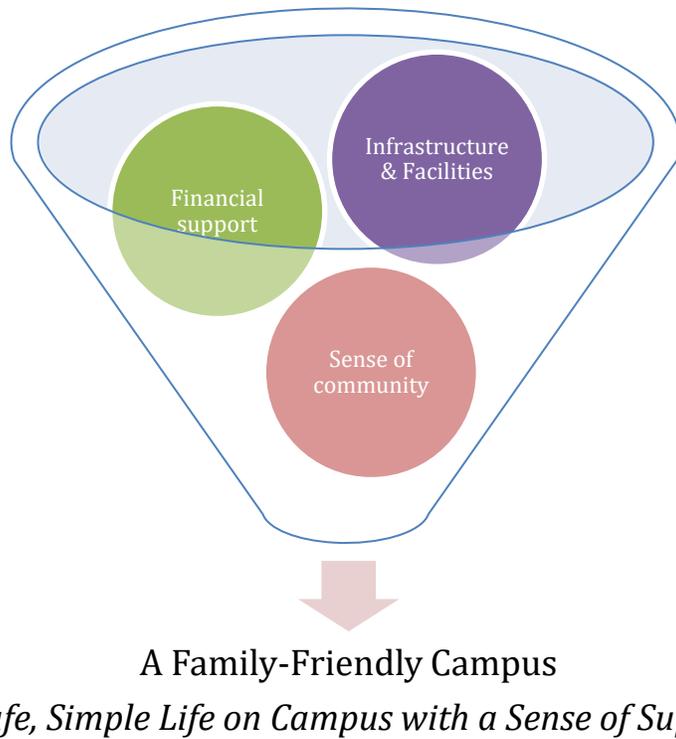


Figure 2: A family-friendly campus. Key components needed to create the major themes of a safe, simple life on campus and a sense of support.

Conclusion

This study provided three important outcomes: (1) engaging students within a graduate level course in creating and conducting a collaborative exploratory qualitative research study, (2) uncovering results about the importance of family-friendliness on campus for international parents/faculty, and (3) providing recommendations to develop family-friendliness to support recruitment and retention of faculty and their families. In coming to a set of findings, graduate students were actively involved in project-based learning, which proved valuable for their understanding of qualitative research. For these students who are studying higher education leadership for future careers as administrators, academics, and researchers, understanding these experiences can provide important insights into relevant policy and practices for supportive university environments.

This study showed that international faculty and families living and working at the University campus face unique challenges, but at the same time the research provides insights into how to support the campus community. Findings demonstrated that a family-friendly campus, as perceived by the parent participants, should include four parts: safety, financial support, infrastructure and services, and an overall sense of community. These were grouped into two broader themes of (1) safe and simple access to living on campus and (2) sense of support. These relate directly to the Clark's (2000) border theory which distinguishes between physical and

psychological borders of work and home. Unlike other studies examining work-life balance (Cannizzo & Osbaldiston, 2016; Martinez, Ordu, Della Sala, & McFarlane, 2013; Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011; Williams, Berdahl, & Vandello, 2016), this study sought to not only understand the concept of family-friendliness as an aspect of work-life balance for full-time academic parents but also for stay-at-home parents living on the university campus.

The geographic proximity of work and home implies there is an automatic permeability of borders between family and work. It is a place for faculty and parents to walk through campus after hours and not only see students they may teach in class, but also the Provost or President of the University. The result of these shared spaces leads to the inability to physically create a border between family and work, a regular border-crossing. As pointed out by Clark (2000), “people are border-crossers who make daily transitions between the two worlds - the world of work and the world of family. People shape these worlds, mold the borders between them, and determine the border-crossers relationship to the world and its members. Though people shape their environments, they are, in turn, shaped by them” (p. 748). In other words, both family and work affect one another. Yet overall, the University campus did become (and is) home for an entire community of students, faculty, and staff. It is a safe haven, a place where children play with one another and families feel secure in their living arrangements, even when additional improvements would further strengthen safety and family-friendliness.

In highlighting feeling like a home on campus, parent participants pointed to a general sense of well-being, with some people feeling autonomy and flexibility at work. In this way, family-friendliness was connected to well-being and ease of time spent traversing work and family life (Strazdins, Shipley, & Broom, 2007). Likewise, faculty parents mentioned the simplicity of returning home and attending to the needs of their families, a concept which can be considered similar to the recommendation of Lester and Sallee (2009) for family-friendliness to address the life cycle of faculty members. These responses echo the finding of Strazdins, Shipley, and Broom (2007) and Sameera and Khokher (2014) who highlighted the importance of flexible hours as it related to childcare. The overlap of work and family is clear. As Clark (2000) explains, “...work and family life influence each other, and so employers, societies and individuals cannot ignore one sphere without potential peril to the other” (p. 749). The spillover effect from either a particularly supportive or non-supportive school would influence the faculty member’s feelings at home, especially while living in the same geographic space as the workplace.

Yet experiences can vary by school within the University, where some faculty felt particularly autonomous and flexible in their lives and others felt more constrained. For instance, while one school may allow a parent to leave a meeting early to pick up a child, another may view this behavior as unacceptable. A recommendation to support family-friendliness on campus could address this disparity in workplace practice and schedule meetings between the hours when parents would not be responsible for dropping off or picking up their children (e.g., 10 am - 3 pm). Additionally, departmental activities, such as social get-togethers should either allow for the inclusion of families or should take place during the workday instead of in the evenings. In particular, the second recommendation supports those who may be the primary caretakers for family, whether as a solo-parent or in another role.

Limitations. There were a few limitations to this study. Due to the restricted time within the class, in-depth practice prior to going into the field was not possible. This led to some student

research groups being more comfortable than others with interviewing and some differences in the data collected. For future experiential research, a structured interview format would provide more consistency across all interviews. Under ideal circumstances, there would have been additional parent participants and longer interviews to allow for a greater depth of understanding, as well as an application of the theoretical framework from the beginning of the study to integrate all students into its application

Next steps. For those universities which have faculty and student families on campus, addressing family-friendliness is a central component for supporting the balance and integration of work and family. Given the array of individuals constituting the University body and their unique perspectives, the development of studies as integrated within graduate research courses provides a useful approach to support both teachings in higher education, and in this case, direct insight to improve equity and family-friendliness at international campuses.

The topic of faculty and families living on campus at an international university remains a highly relevant and pivotal one, especially, for international faculty with families who are trying to decide whether to move abroad. An examination into other universities and differences between schools and departments could be explored as a way to uncover practices and policies that could be universally implemented to create a family-friendly campus. While this study explored faculty and spouse experiences and perceptions, future research could consider the growing number of graduate students with families and the ways in which they have been incorporated into international campuses. Lastly, our findings suggest the need to delve deeper into understanding the well-being of those living and working on university campuses as a means to support faculty recruitment and retention.

This research suggests the *essential nature of involving families in the planning and implementation of services, structures, and policies* when seeking to create a university campus that is family-friendly. Simple steps, such as surveys to assess the needs of family residents or creation of a campus family-friendly task force that includes equitable representation (e.g., gender, full-time faculty, spouses, varied ages of children), can create a lasting sense of community and safety. As universities create person-centered campuses (e.g., including pedestrian paths through campus and educational services), faculties and their families will have greater reason to join and remain on-site. The findings from this study can provide a framework for taking the next steps in creating a safe, supportive university environment. Ultimately, if the goal is to create an environment on campus supporting recruitment and retention of faculty, who in large part move from abroad, institutions of higher education should focus both on including family-friendly work-place *policies* and also a family-friendly campus *home*.

Appendix A

Recent University Changes

Since the time of the study, the University has provided multiple changes which directly relate to the data collected and analyzed regarding participants' suggestions about needs regarding family-friendliness. These changes mirror the findings uncovered by graduate students in the qualitative research methods course. Considering the University is less than a decade old, changes are common and can provide major improvements to work and life, and family-friendliness on

campus. Since the completion of the study, there have been multiple changes which have addressed many aspects suggested by participants. For example, although concerns about safety in walking through campus persist, they appear to have been reduced over time with the addition of speed bumps and signs, indicating speed limits and children-at-play. Discussions about the safety of visitors continue today, especially as the University considers ways to open itself to the city, such as through removing fences around the campus and installing additional security checks within the buildings.

Other changes have addressed school tuition, including continuing discussions about the possibility for reduction of fees at various schools as well as increasing the tuition reimbursement. However, no changes have been made yet. There have also been changes to the infrastructure and facilities, including structures to facilitate living through half the year in winter weather. These have included the addition of indoor skywalks between buildings, creating a literal connection between home and workspaces. However, facilities to support children's movement and play during the winters have yet to be addressed (e.g., indoor play spaces).

Another major change which occurred was the opening of an English language Montessori facility for children 2-6, the first of its kind in Kazakhstan. Today, the school is at capacity with regular requests from current and potential faculty to expand the space for additional children and ages. In the last year, there has also been an evolving set of facilities on campus. Concerns about the availability of quality food have been addressed with the addition of a large grocery store chain across the street from the University and multiple reliable grocery delivery services becoming popular amongst the campus community.

Lastly, a key addition for many families which has helped ease community strain and support cross-cultural celebrations has been the opening of a gathering space. Prior to opening this space, families used other common areas for celebrations but were often confronted with agitation by other community members who did not appreciate the celebratory noises. Therefore, opening a dedicated space separate from the living quarters has allowed families (and others) to gather, celebrate, and interact without disturbing others. However, it is unclear if everyone on campus knows this space is available, particularly those family members less connected to the campus or social media announcements, suggesting continuing examination and addressing the needs of the diverse community living and working at the University.

Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions

- What comes to your mind first when you think of a family-friendly campus?
- Could you tell us about your experience of living on campus with your family?
- How do you feel when bringing your children with you to your workplace?

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Acknowledgments: An earlier version of this article was presented at the Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2017. We would like to thank the Editor in Chief, Dr. Hasan Aydin, and the anonymous reviewers at the *American Journal of Qualitative Research* for their feedback which enhanced the quality of this article.

Manuscript received October 22, 2018

Final revision received December 18, 2018

Accepted December 24, 2018