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Getting into the Game

Should women get special conditions? I come from a European country with a lot of protection for mothers. What's the effect? Impossible to get hired, unless you put your uterus in a jar of alcohol on the desk.

–A forum post at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*

Perhaps the most important turning point in a young scholar's life is the decision to pursue employment after graduate school. Given that the average doctoral student takes eight years to finish, this decision is a long time coming.[1] As we saw in the previous chapter, many doctoral students, women more often than men, decide during their student years that a research professor's life is not for them. Both men and women worry about having balanced lives in the academy, but for women, concern about combining a family with the demanding life of a tenure-track professorship is the overriding factor. Nevertheless, many students will view a tenure-track job as the normal outcome of doctoral training, the goal expected by their advisors and many of their peers, if not always the most common result (about one in three graduate students gets a tenure-track position after graduate school and, sometimes, a postdoc).[2]

Those who do seek tenure-track employment will find that the job hunt is an involved process. An aspiring professor must assemble an application dossier, typically comprising a cover letter, a vita, sample dissertation chapters or publications, and letters of recommendation from several faculty mentors. The job seeker then embarks on a national search—only the hottest candidates can be choosy about location—that culminates in a move to an unfamiliar town or city. This geographical upheaval occurs in few other professions. But first the candidate must likely pass a preliminary screening at the annual meeting of a professional association (this varies by field), and in all cases undergo an on-campus interview. The academic interview is a uniquely protracted affair, generally lasting at least one and a half days. In a few fields, job candidates will have to make more than one visit. If all goes well, the applicant will be offered a job that he or she could potentially hold until retirement.

Getting into the academic game is a complex process that bears little similarity to job searches outside the ivory tower. As we will see, the outcome of this critical professional transition is strongly influenced by gender, marriage, and children. This chapter also considers which young scholars fall into the second tier of contingent professorships, and whether faculty in this second tier manage to make it back to the tenure track.

The experience of Anna Westerstahl Stenport, the Swedish humanities scholar introduced in the previous chapter, illustrates some of the issues women confront when seeking their first academic position.[3] Despite an extensive track record of publications, Anna declined to wear her wedding band while interviewing for faculty positions at an academic meeting—she didn't want to signal to prospective employers that her family relationships might compromise her ability to relocate, or to perform once hired. By the time she was ready for on-campus interviews, she was visibly pregnant with her second child. This was ultimately not held against her, and she landed a tenure-track faculty position at a good school.

Anna, as we will see, was fortunate. She had a few busy years combining motherhood with graduate school and, later on, her assistant professorship. Many married women, especially mothers, never get that far. Jackie faces a less certain future in academia.[4] Like Anna, she obtained her Ph.D. from a top research university. Jackie's degree is in the life sciences. Her husband, Grayson, has a Ph.D. in the same field and the two are now postdoctoral fellows together. Two years into her postdoc, Jackie is weeks away from giving birth to her first child. A couple of years down the road, she will confront the academic job market with a toddler. Perhaps more daunting, Jackie and Grayson face the "two body" problem: having to get two academic jobs in the same metropolitan area.[5] As the mother, Jackie will probably spend more time caring for their child. This will make it difficult for her to travel to job interviews. Unless she and Grayson are lucky enough to land two jobs in the same region, one of them will likely leave academia, or at least forego a tenure-track position. Despite changing attitudes toward working mothers, stay-at-home moms still vastly outnumber stay-at-home dads.[6] This means that Grayson will probably get the coveted tenure-track job while Jackie cares for their child. Perhaps she will teach a class or two as an adjunct faculty member. Because she will lack a laboratory and the other perquisites of a tenure-stream position, her research will suffer, ultimately making it harder to get back into the game as a tenure-track professor. When she says, somewhat nervously, "I don't know what to expect," she could easily be talking about either incipient motherhood or her professional prospects. With a young child in the picture she may have to chart a new career course, more than likely one that will take her off the tenure track.

How Marriage and Children Affect Academic Hiring out of Graduate School

In this book we describe two kinds of family formation: marriage and children. Family formation has the largest effects at the beginning of academic careers, when young scholars are first trying to secure postdoctoral employment—and often, at the same time, starting families. Marriage and children present different challenges for male and female academics. The age of the children in question also makes a difference.

Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR) data based on all academic disciplines indicate that women in general are 7 percent less likely to obtain tenure-track assistant professorships in comparison with men.[7] This predictable finding accords with previous scholarship on the career prospects of men and women doctorate recipients.[8] However, this overall gender difference conceals even greater disparities: both marriage and children have substantial negative effects on women's job market prospects. Compared with her childless female counterpart, a woman with a child under six is 21 percent less likely to land a tenure-track position. This same mother is 16 percent less likely to get a tenure-track job than is an otherwise comparable father. As we will see, young children make it extremely difficult for women to go on the academic job market. Many mothers forego tenure-track positions and the arduous probationary periods they entail for less demanding employment.

Marriage has a smaller but still noteworthy adverse effect on women's job market prospects. A married woman is 17 percent less likely to get a tenure-track job than is her unmarried female peer. Compared with a married man, a married woman has 12 percent lower odds of getting a tenure-track job.[9] The effects of marriage and children are independent of each other; each separately reduces the likelihood that women obtain tenure-track employment. Married women with children do not pay an exponentially heavier penalty when seeking an academic job.

Having a family also makes women less likely to get tenure-track jobs, according to our analysis based only on academics in the sciences (including the social sciences).[10] However, the negative effects of marriage and children function somewhat differently. Married childless women are 7 percent less likely to get tenure-track positions compared with their unmarried female colleagues. Single mothers of children under age six are 6 percent more likely than their childless unmarried same-sex colleagues to get tenure-track jobs (but 14 percent less likely to get jobs compared with men who are single parents of young children). These effects are all smaller than they are for the data that include the humanities. In the sciences, the heavy penalties accrue to only women who are both married *and* the parents of young children. Such married mothers are 35 percent less likely to get tenure-track jobs compared with married fathers of

young children. The same women are 33 percent less likely to get jobs compared with unmarried women who aren't the parents of young children.[11]

These results explain the disadvantage women face on the academic job market. Recall that women in general are 7 percent less likely to get tenure-track jobs than are men. This global gender penalty disappears after accounting for the effects of marriage and children. Indeed, single women without children are 16 percent more likely to get jobs than are unmarried childless men in the analysis based on all fields; the comparable figure for analysis based only on the sciences is 4 percent. Thus women suffer at the beginning of their academic careers because they marry and have children, not because they are women.

Older children, ages six to eighteen, have no negative effect on the likelihood of obtaining a tenure-track job for either men or women. In fact, based on data that include the humanities, mothers with older children, irrespective of marital status, are 11 percent more likely to secure tenure-track employment than are childless women. Children between six and eighteen provide no such benefit for men. It's therefore unlikely that older children are signaling to employers that a candidate is more settled into adulthood and responsibility—if that were true, men would enjoy a similar boost. Instead, women with children over five are likely at a better stage in their lives to pursue tenure-track professorships; unlike women with younger children, they aren't saddled with the burden of caring for infants. It's also possible that older children indicate to a hiring committee that a female candidate is done with having children, which will mean fewer career distractions after she is hired.

Simply having kids appears to be the deciding factor here. Numbers of children—above and beyond the mere presence of younger or older kids—do not affect the likelihood that women get tenure-track jobs.

Why do marriage and children have such strong effects on women's academic careers? The next pages are devoted to this question. Although we cannot know for sure, a host of factors are probably responsible. The answer likely reflects both direct causation (marriage and young children make it more difficult to get tenure-track jobs) and selection (married women and mothers—and future mothers—feel discouraged from pursuing tenure-track employment after graduate school).

The Two-Body Problem

For academics, marriage often produces the two-body problem. Our survey of doctoral students at the University of California found that 51 percent of women and 44 percent of men are married or partnered. Nationally, 52 percent of recent doctorate recipients are married, including 49 percent of women and 54 percent of men; an additional 6 percent are living with their partners in marriage-like

relationships.[12] For postdocs the numbers are even higher: 71 percent of the men and 66 percent of the women are either married or partnered.[13] Since young scholars must almost always relocate to obtain tenure-track employment, a job search typically involves finding two jobs in a new location. One body must defer, and that body is likely to be hers. Fifty-six percent of male faculty members have spouses who are employed full time, compared with 89 percent of female faculty members.[14] Sometimes the problem is even more complicated: female academics are more likely to be married to male academics (18 percent) than vice versa (13 percent).[15]

Men have traditionally been the primary wage-earners in America, including in academic couples (this male breadwinner ideal persists even though it is no longer the case for a notable minority of families.)[16] Married women may therefore forsake academic careers if pursuing them imperils their husbands' careers.[17] SDR data show that only 14 percent of unmarried and childless female science doctorates acknowledge that spousal career concerns affected their search for a permanent job (presumably these 14 percent represent women pondering marriage to nonportable partners). Thirty-eight percent of married fathers indicated such concerns, compared with about 65 percent of married women.[18] These dual-career issues often push female graduate students out of academia. For one woman in the biological sciences at the University of California, her husband's job seemed to be the final straw: "My husband has a job he loves, but it will require that we don't move; this limits my postdoc and career options so significantly. I think the chances of staying in the same city throughout the career and finding a tenure track position are almost nonexistent. However, I am not sure how much I care anymore."

Even if they are able and willing to relocate, married women may provoke resistance from academic search committees. Some committee members, particularly if older, may be skeptical of a husband's willingness to relocate for his wife's career.[19] *Ms. Mentor's Impeccable Advice for Women in Academia* goes so far as to advise women job candidates to tell search committee members that their husbands are employed as freelance writers.[20] More sensible is the advice that women do not volunteer information on marital status while on job talks (keeping in mind that it is illegal to ask about it).[21]

The question of spousal employment is famously difficult when both spouses are academics. Although some universities offer "split lines" (tenure-track jobs divided between spouses) and other accommodations for faculty couples, these arrangements are the exception rather than the rule.[22] Accordingly, women in these academic couples may be more likely to forsake their academic careers, or at least lower their professional aspirations.[23] If both spouses are equally qualified to be successful academics, the woman is the traditional choice to stay at home and care for children. Alternately, she may pursue lower-status

employment such as an adjunct professorship, which does not require an arduous "publish or perish" probationary period.[24] We will return to this topic later in the chapter.

Many female graduate students participating in our University of California survey voiced concerns related to their partners' academic careers. One such student in the physical sciences at the University of California justified her decision not to pursue a tenure-track professorship by invoking her perception of the academic job market: "I am currently in a relationship with a person who does want to pursue a career in . . . academia in the same field as myself, leading to the near-impossibility of finding two academic jobs in the same area." Another woman scientist appeared to acknowledge tacitly that her husband's academic career would come first: "I think it will be nearly impossible for me to get a job as a professor at a research institution due to the fact that my future spouse is also in academia and we will have to get jobs together. There are more teaching opportunities than research opportunities. I like teaching, but I also like research, and I am unhappy that it seems like I won't be given an opportunity to do both."

Concerns about spousal employment may dictate where academic women will choose to accept a job.[25] Sociologists Steven Kulis and Diane Sicotte found that female academics are more likely than their male counterparts to reside in large cities and other areas with clusters of colleges and universities.[26] This suggests that women take jobs in areas where it will be easier for their husbands to find a job, whether in academia or the private sector. Unmarried women may be perceived as loath to move to a smaller town, where dating opportunities can be limited.[27] One of the coauthors of this book has an acquaintance who left a tenure-track position at an elite university in a small midwestern town because, in her own words, "I had dated everyone there that there was to date." Thus women academics are caught in a Catch-22. If they have spouses, they may be unwilling, or perceived as unwilling, to relocate; if single, they may be reluctant to move somewhere where it will be difficult to find a spouse. One woman made this point in a post on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* online forum by humorously enumerating the options women have when describing their family situations to a search committee from a small-town college or university:

> Telling them you are married to a relocate-able spouse, though, is an entirely different question. The fact is that women often get screwed in this business no matter what their status is. The way a male-dominated committee will see it, there are four possibilities:
>
> 1. You're single. How will you find a decent mate in Podunk? Surely you will leave soon.

2. You're gay. Surely you and your partner will be unhappy in Podunk and leave soon. And possibly Jesus doesn't like you anyway.
3. You're married to a not easily relocated spouse. Surely hubby will take charge and prevent you from taking the job, or will whine so much when you move here that you leave soon to placate him.
4. You're married to an easily relocated spouse. You still might get sick of Podunk and leave, but perhaps it's less likely. Probably the best option.[28]

Marriage to a portable spouse generally creates the fewest problems, but this is a luxury many academics do not have.

Babies on the Academic Job Market

Sociologist Shelley Correll and her colleagues have shown that employers discriminate against mothers in numerous ways.[29] Maternal discrimination—or, indeed, discrimination of any kind—is notoriously difficult to prove, so it is hard to know its extent within academia, traditionally heralded as more progressive and open-minded than the private sector. Yet there is considerable anecdotal evidence of discrimination occurring on academic hiring committees, which are sometimes reluctant to offer jobs to women on the "mommy track," candidates perceived to be more committed to motherhood than to scholarship. Cognizant of discrimination toward mothers, many women go to extraordinary lengths to conceal their maternal intentions while on academic job talks. Prejudice against mothers (and future mothers) probably helps accounts for the lower rate at which women get tenure-track jobs, as legal scholar Joan Williams has suggested.[30]

Mothers on the academic job market contend with the difficulties presented by children even before embarking on interviews.[31] Having children sometimes leaves awkward gaps on their curriculum vitae. How should these gaps be explained? As accounts from academic hiring committees make clear, the wrong answer could spell professional doom. One search committee member simply wanted a straight answer about motherhood when screening job applications:

> We've certainly never disapproved of applications in which the letter said plainly and briefly something on the order of "after being away from teaching for three years to finish my dissertation while looking after two children, I am now . . . [ellipses in original]"—but we have stewed over the applications with gaps that we were fairly sure said "here she followed her husband, here her first child was born, here they moved again, was there another baby?" but had no letters of any kind to cover the three

> or four years with only an occasional adjunct class, always at a different school. . . . There are much darker narratives that would also explain that latter c.v., and we'd have to ask illegal questions to get answers that are not, on the other hand, illegal for you to volunteer.[32]

This account illustrates the dilemma that mothers on the academic job market often face: if they volunteer information about parenting responsibilities, they're at risk of being perceived as uncommitted or distracted; if they don't, they're suspected of covering up "darker narratives."

This question—whether to disclose a past detour onto the mommy track—appears to cause candidates a fair amount of consternation. As one mother recounted:

> I too have various "gaps" of less productive periods in my past around having kids. I'm new to academia (after realizing that I would have to start all over again in my former field, and discovering that I love the academy!).
>
> Was "search committee member" implying that it is a blanket negative to have taken a "mommy track," or reiterating that as long as you explain any gaps, nobody needs to assume the worst or ask illegal questions?
>
> I'm freaking out here. I thought I'd be able to start over with a clean slate in a new and wonderful career . . . is it hopeless?[33]

A woman's maternal status is much more likely to come up during an on-campus interview than in a job application. These interviews typically include socializing over meals, times when questions about children can be casually, albeit illegally, asked. Presumably lying is not a viable option, since the truth would emerge when the new hire showed up for her assistant professorship with kids in tow. Her trustworthiness as a colleague would be undermined from the start, which would ultimately compromise her chances for tenure. Still, a woman need not bring up the topic of children, as one job candidate learned from her on-campus interviews:

> I learned a lot from my mistakes on the job market, and based on personal experience, I decided not to talk about my child in interviews. If asked point blank, I would have answered, but no one did, I just didn't bring it up casually. I got the job. And then afterwards, I was told that the child-bearing issue was fervently discussed in regard to my hire.
>
> I also had an experience of being in an interview, mentioning my child, and seeing the SC's [search committee head's] face fall, and that was the end of that job. Although of course there could have been a million other reasons, there is no doubt that having a child did not help my candidacy in that case.[34]

Another job candidate felt free to discuss her children to prospective employers who appeared family friendly. She later came to rue her decision:

> I had two on campus interviews. At one (a more formal, less family-oriented school), I did mention my spouse but did not mention our children. At the second (a school that seemed to, from the first contact, be very proud of its family-friendliness), I mentioned both spouse and children. Second school encouraged discussion of family throughout the interview. . . . I left the interview feeling completely comfortable with having discussed my family. In the end, however, I got an offer from the first school and not from the second. . . .
>
> My sense based on these emails is that, though many people in the department (especially the younger faculty with children of their own at home) didn't have any problem with me having a family, the more senior faculty did. It's unjustified (and, really, completely outdated), but it's been suggested that these senior faculty members subscribe to the traditional line of thinking that hiring a woman with a family is a risk, and so they voted against me as a candidate. . . . At any rate, for what it's worth, in future interviews I don't think I'll mention my kids.[35]

Of course there is no way of knowing for sure whether motherhood was an issue in this candidate's job market experiences. We do know that employers in general discriminate against mothers and that many women report that the disclosure of children creates problems during academic job interviews. In all likelihood, this is just one of several reasons why women with children get academic jobs less often than do childless women, or fathers. Marriage is the most obvious other explanation. Combined, marriage and motherhood may present a whole new Catch-22 for female job candidates. If married, women with children have to contend with spousal relocation. If single, their productivity may be called into question—how will they be able to handle the workload of an assistant professor while simultaneously caring for children all by themselves? Impressions are important, as one woman learned: "I will say that they came right out and asked me if I had children (yes), and because I don't wear a wedding ring I think they assumed I'm a single mother—and to them that spelled trouble with a capital T."[36]

The very nature of the job application process poses more problems for mothers than for childless women. Candidates generally need to fly across the country to spend one or more (and occasionally several) days with a search committee, which creates child care challenges. Keep in mind that female academics are much more likely to have employed husbands than vice versa. More promising candidates will have several interviews, compounding the child care problem. Predictably, the mothers of infants have the most trouble with job interviews. Much of the online discussion regarding interviewing as the mother

of an infant concerns the difficulties of breastfeeding. One mother explained how she managed multiple job interviews while caring for an infant: "Four day campus visits all over the country, and I was expected to leave my breastfed child home? I pumped, froze [some breast milk,] and dumped some, I took him and my husband along for some, and kept them well-hidden in the hotel. Six campus visits in a two month period with a tiny baby in the house was pretty damn rough on all of us, but I managed it, and found a decent job. I knew then, though, that I cared more about having a second child than I cared about getting tenure, and if she was the cost of tenure, well, so be it."[37] Another mother recalled leaving her infant at home but nevertheless needing time during the interview to pump milk: "I interviewed while also the mother of a four month old. I had one week notice for one interview, pumped like crazy to store up milk, brought along the breast pump, pumped in airports, had two twenty minute breaks during the interview to pump, and everything was fine. Cheaper than paying for a plane ticket for husband or baby sitter . . . [ellipses in original] Just a suggestion. . . . I know some people don't want to give their babies bottles, but if you are ok with bottles I highly recommend the breast pump route!"[38]

Young children clearly present numerous difficulties for women on the academic job market. They present far fewer hardships for men. Compared with women, academic men are much more likely to have stay-at-home spouses to assist with child care. There are no bulging bellies or wet blouses to reveal incipient or new fathers. Male graduate students are surrounded by successful academic fathers who can serve as role models.[39] Indeed, married men fare better on the job market. According to the SDR, they are 9 percent more likely to secure tenure-track employment than are their unmarried counterparts. Perhaps marriage signifies to academic hiring committees, or even to the job candidates themselves, that men have assumed stable, adult roles.[40] Such men might be better bets as long-term employees; indeed, there may be advantages for husbands and fathers who represent themselves as family men. However, at least one academic hiring committee member has been put off by job candidates who sought to make a better impression by touting themselves as devoted fathers: "I am not impressed when a candidate brings up his two children within three minutes of meeting me (as one candidate did), because no matter what he intended, it looked a lot like he was trying to capitalize on the privileges of being a 'family man.' I will quickly assume that he is someone who either does not recognize the significance of what he was doing or, even worse, was making a deliberate appeal to discrimination. Either way, I would prefer to hire a colleague who will join me in trying to create a department that hires people without regard to gender, race, or family status."[41]

At the very least children present no great hindrance to men on the academic job market. For women, children cause numerous problems. They make

it harder to go on job interviews. Search committees may question whether mothers are sufficiently committed to their academic careers. For these reasons, female doctorate recipients with young children may opt for career paths other than tenure-track professorships.

Academic Sharecroppers

Aside from gender equity, few issues are more frequently debated in the academy than the proliferation of contingent professorships.[42] In 1975, instructors off the tenure-track composed 43 percent of American faculty. By 2007, about 69 percent were neither tenured nor tenure-track.[43] The majority of recent full-time academic hires have been off the tenure track.[44]

Gender equity and the proliferation of adjunct faculty are inextricably linked. Instructors, lecturers, and other unranked faculty compose 22 percent of all female full-time faculty, but only 11 percent of male faculty.[45] Indeed, the proportion of contingent faculty increased over the same years as did the proportion of women in academia.[46] Although an increasing number of women now hold tenure-track professorships, they remain overrepresented among contingent faculty.[47] Social scientists speak of the "feminization of poverty," given the numbers of mother-headed families in the contemporary United States and their disproportionate likelihood of poverty.[48] The proliferation of female faculty in contingent positions can be thought of in the same way: the relegation of female scholars to second-tier positions in the academy.

In some cases contingent faculty supplement part-time teaching with a well-paying, stable outside job.[49] For these individuals, teaching provides intellectual stimulation and extra income. However, they represent a minority. For the majority of non-tenure-track faculty, teaching is a full-time profession and their primary source of income; about half work over fifty hours a week.[50] Contingent faculty are second-class citizens in almost every respect; one need only invoke the title of Wendell Fountain's 2005 book, *Academic Sharecroppers*, to make this point.[51] They are paid 26 percent less than comparable tenure-track assistant professors.[52] Contingent instructors are less likely to get the offices, computers, and other resources that ladder-rank faculty routinely receive. They are unlikely to advise students. Finally, the proliferation of adjunct professorships compromises the basic mission of American higher education. Because contingent faculty are not subject to the same scrutiny as tenure-track professors, student learning may suffer.[53] Many contingent faculty are excellent teachers, but there are rarely mechanisms in place to prevent inferior instructors from joining their ranks. The other component of higher education to suffer is academic freedom: lacking both the security of tenure and a greater stake in the academic system, contingent instructors have less protection and less

incentive to defend unpopular points of view and the free exchange of ideas, both of which are central to the academic enterprise.[54] Leslie Zwillinger, a psychologist, has spent her career teaching at the same large state university as a lecturer. Her assessment of the contingent faculty life is predictably negative: "The majority of part timers are women and . . . their job is very insecure and very uncomfortable. One part timer just retired because after 20 years of teaching, the schedule came out and her name just was not there. No one talked to her or discussed anything."[55]

As Leslie's comments illustrate, we have a two-tiered system in which a large portion of the labor pool cannot be integrated, for a variety of reasons, into the tenure track as it currently exists. For many scholars, contingent professorships represent the academic graveyard, the place to go when all dreams of a tenure-track position have been extinguished.

Alternative Employment

As previously noted, about a third of Ph.D. recipients get tenure-track jobs after graduate school and, sometimes, a postdoc. How often do the rest end up in contingent teaching positions? And how do marriage and children affect the career paths of Ph.D.s who do not go straight into tenure-track employment? As with the other important professional transitions considered so far in the book, our results show noteworthy gender differences in the careers of Ph.D. recipients who don't take tenure-track jobs right out of graduate school.

Since family formation accounts for the lower rate of women in tenure-track professorships, can it also explain why they are more likely to become contingent faculty? Indeed, contingent positions may offer various benefits to female doctorates that are unavailable in tenure-track jobs. First, they provide the option of part-time employment, something very rarely found in a tenure-track position.[56] Besides the possibility of a shorter workweek and lighter teaching loads, these positions do not require burdensome work hours during a pre-tenure probationary period. Second, contingent professorships are more readily available and therefore may be sought out by married women, whose geographic mobility is frequently constrained by their husbands' careers. Relying on their husbands' incomes, married women Ph.D.s may be able to make do with the lower salary of a contingent appointment. Many of these factors apparently contributed to one woman's enthusiasm for her contingent teaching job: "I love it. This is the perfect job for me. I am full time, with benefits, but I don't have to write grants, and publishing is nice, but not a 'do or die' proposition. I don't have to supervise grad students, I get to facilitate both undergrad and grad level research, which is very satisfying. I have control over the lab course I teach. I don't travel nearly as much as my tenure track colleagues, which I like

because I have 2 young kids and hate traveling. . . . I make enough to pay the bills, together with my husband's consulting money, I can occasionally leave early when kid events happen, etc."[57] For the reasons suggested by this faculty member, we anticipate that women will be more likely to be employed in contingent professorships rather than tenure-track jobs subsequent to graduate school; this should hold especially true for married women and women with young children.

Earlier in this chapter we established that women are less likely than men to get tenure-track academic appointments. Our SDR data shed light on their other career paths. Figure 2.1 shows how gender affects the likelihood of various career outcomes relative to the chances of getting a tenure-track professorship.[58] Compared with men, women who do not secure ladder-rank appointments are more likely to stay in academia, either as contingent instructors or in nonteaching positions, and are less likely to be working in nonacademic jobs. Moreover, women are more than twice as likely as men to leave the paid labor force following Ph.D. receipt.

Marriage and children have very different effects on men and women's career choices. Two employment patterns are especially common among women with families. First, women with children under six are disproportionately likely to be employed in contingent professorships. Compared with her childless counterpart, a woman with a child under six is 26 percent more likely to be employed as contingent faculty rather than a tenure-track position. Compared with a man with a young child, she is 132 percent more likely to be working in a contingent position. Conversely, a male Ph.D. with a young child is 36 percent less likely to become a contingent faculty member instead of a tenure-track professor. Children seem to have different consequences for the career paths of

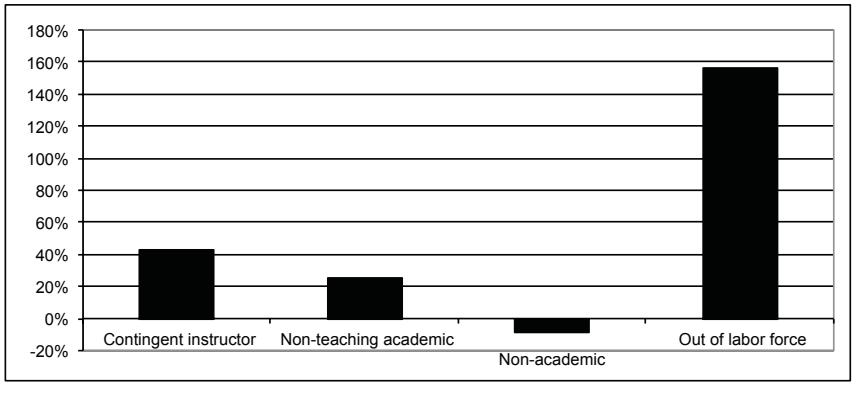

FIGURE 2.1 Chances of Women Pursuing Other Career Paths Compared to the Likelihood of a Tenure-Track Job

Source: Survey of Doctorate Recipients, National Science Foundation, 1983–1995.
N = 16,049

male and female parents after graduate school. For men, young children push them to obtain more lucrative and potentially secure employment, either via tenure-track positions or outside academia altogether. In contrast, young children lead female doctorate recipients to work in less demanding, more flexible, but lower-status and lower-income contingent professorships.

Predictably, the other common career path for female Ph.D.s with young children is to leave the paid labor force. Women with children under six are almost four times as likely to leave the labor force in lieu of a ladder-rank professorship in comparison with women without young children. Male parents with young children do not exit the paid labor force in such numbers. Marriage also leads women to leave the labor force. Compared with an unwed woman, her married counterpart is 28 percent more likely to not work. Neither marriage nor young children have any such effect for men; indeed, both increase the likelihood of taking a tenure-track job over departing the labor force. Presumably unemployment isn't an option for men with families to support. As we have suggested, marriage and fatherhood may also signify to academic search committees that men have assumed adult roles, that they are ready to become stable, productive employees.

Together, marriage and childbirth largely account for why female doctorate recipients exit the labor force. A single woman without children under six is only 10 percent less likely to be unemployed right out of graduate school than she is likely to have a tenure-stream job. The same holds true for the likelihood that she gets a contingent rather than tenure-track position. Recall that women in general are 45 percent more likely to land in contingent positions. However, a single woman without young children is only 17 percent more likely to have a second-tier job. Earlier in this chapter we established that family formation can account for the lower rate at which women become tenure-track faculty members. We now know where they go instead: contingent professorships and out of the paid labor force.

Getting Back in the Game

Academia has traditionally been conceptualized as a pipeline. The pipeline model, applied frequently to the careers of bench scientists, implies a lockstep sequence of events that can begin as early as high school.[59] At this stage, women may be underrepresented in the courses that might ultimately prepare them for scientific careers. More often, the pipeline to academic success is said to begin in graduate school. An academic job requires a doctorate; scholars cannot normally become full professors without first serving as assistants and then associates.

Some researchers have critiqued the pipeline model for failing to capture the reality of modern academic careers.[60] The pipeline model fails in at least

two ways. First, it makes no allowance for life events that affect professional progress. As we have already observed, this is a serious liability. The second criticism, strongly related to the first, concerns the inability of the pipeline to account for nonstandard career trajectories. In particular, there is no mechanism for reentering the pipeline after "leaking out." This is a special problem for women who take time out of their academic careers to have children. Sociologist Phyllis Moen accordingly suggested that the linear, lockstep career model was an outdated notion.[61] Education experts Jack Schuster and Martin Finkelstein have recently claimed that time off the tenure track is a "new rung" in the academic career ladder, a common halfway point between graduate school and a tenure-track position.[62] Other scholars have called for a "revolving door" model of women's entrance into male-dominated professions and more "on-ramps," means by which women could return to the workplace after the "off-ramps" of pregnancy and childrearing.[63]

We have already seen that most Ph.D. recipients do not take tenure-track jobs immediately out of graduate school (or immediately subsequent to postdocs). In particular, married women and mothers of young children are especially likely to get out of the game, either by taking contingent positions or by leaving the paid labor force entirely. How many scholars make it back? Figure 2.2 shows how many people get tenure-track jobs after first taking a different kind of position (or leaving the paid labor force for at least two years). Overall, only one out of four people who don't take tenure-track jobs out of graduate school end up getting one later on. But this figure conceals considerable variation by type of postdoctoral employment. Over half of all Ph.D.s employed as contingent faculty right after graduate school manage to get tenure-track jobs within ten years. Reentry rates are also relatively high for people employed at colleges and universities in jobs that do not involve teaching—academic administrators, research staff, and the like. In contrast, Ph.D.s unemployed after graduate school subsequently enter the tenure track at a lower rate; the lowest, at about 10 percent, is reserved for people employed outside academia. The implication of these results is straightforward: the rigid pipeline model no longer fits academia. Many people who exit the academic pipeline will subsequently reenter it. In particular, people remaining involved with higher education are much more likely to get tenure-track jobs down the road. Taking a contingent teaching position after graduate school does not ruin one's prospects for a tenured academic career. However, as time goes by people are decreasingly likely to get tenure-track jobs.[64]

We cannot know the extent to which this association is causal. Do people who fail to get ladder-rank professorships the first time around intentionally work in contingent jobs in order to stay involved in academia? Or are these jobs the natural second choice for otherwise unemployed doctorate recipients?

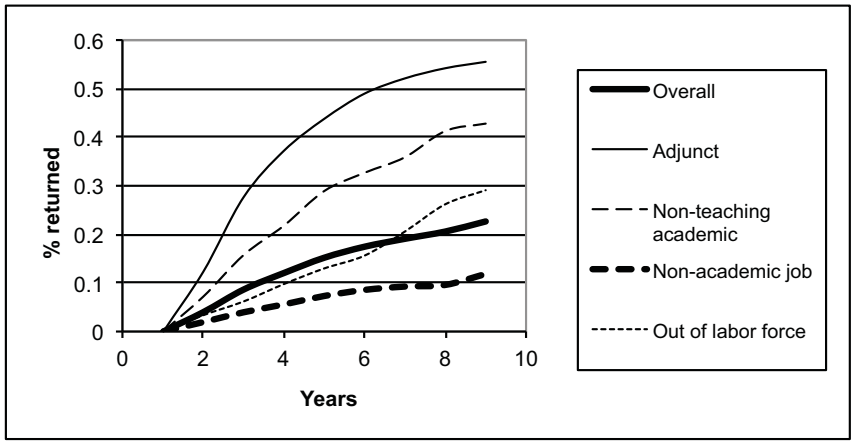

FIGURE 2.2 Reentry Rates for Ladder-Rank Employment after Time off the Tenure Track

Source: Survey of Doctorate Recipients, National Science Foundation, 1983–1995. © Nicholas H. Wolfinger, Mary Ann Mason, and Marc Goulden, "Stay in the Game: Gender, Family Formation, and Alternative Trajectories in the Academic Life Course," *Social Forces* 87, no. 3 (2009): 1607, figure 2, reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

N = 6,501

Either way, academic positions off the tenure track may facilitate reentry, in much the same manner that community colleges allow many students to progress to four-year schools. As we have observed, non-tenure-track academic positions can provide teaching and research experience that fill out curriculum vitae and increase one's attractiveness to academic hiring committees. Sometimes these jobs are part time, which may give scholars the opportunity to conduct research (albeit without the institutional resources available to tenure-stream faculty). They can provide professional contacts and socialization. Finally, contingent positions afford multiple years on the academic job market and therefore increase the likelihood of finding the right job: a position that's a good fit between applicant and hiring committee. For all these reasons, it may not be a professional death sentence for young doctorates to take contingent teaching positions if they cannot land the coveted tenure-track professorship (Still, we should stress that being a contingent faculty member doesn't automatically make it easy to get a permanent job.)

Recent posts to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* online forums echo these ideas. When one participant pondered taking a job in publishing, others advised him or her to keep a foot in the academic door: "Think that in competitive fields, committees will understand that candidates end up in all sorts of temporary gigs, and you might even be able to spin the publishing experience in positive ways. If the alternative is adjuncting, I don't see either one helping or hurting your chances on the job market. One option you don't mention would

be to try to pick up a class on the side, giving you an academic affiliation and some additional experience in the classroom, while allowing you to have full time employment in publishing."[65] Another forum participant felt that a contingent position actually put her at an advantage when she finally secured a tenure-track job:

> I got to focus on my teaching and get my courses set without having research pressure.
>
> I got to do a lot of prep work on research, which should pay dividends in the next 2–3 years.
>
> While I did some service, it was not the level I will be expected to perform as a TT [tenure-track] prof[essor].
>
> All in all, these two years have given me a tremendous advantage over those who start directly into a TT position.[66]

It is worth noting that not all contingent faculty think this way. Many despair of ever finding a tenure-track position. One contingent professor at the University of California noted: "I wanted to be a tenure track professor but without having any access to research subjects or money to pursue research that goal became more and more difficult over time. I still do publish but not at the rate that is necessary to be a tenured employee. I also do not have any opportunities to collaborate with other faculty."

Aside from staying in the game, what else helps academics get back to the tenure track? We have already noted that women with children under six are disproportionately likely to take contingent positions in lieu of tenure-track jobs. Once off the tenure track, these women are 24 percent less likely to return in comparison with women without young children—and 66 percent less likely to return than are otherwise comparable fathers.[67] However, the story changes once these children reach school age. Women with children over five are 65 percent more likely to get tenure-track jobs than are their childless counterparts. Other things being equal, men and women are equally likely to return.[68]

The other major gender difference concerns people whose first postdoctoral employment lies outside academe. As we saw in figure 2.2, the people least likely to get tenure-track jobs are those who take employment outside higher education. Further analysis shows that this holds true only for men. Once ensconced in careers outside academia, they tend to stay outside. But women employed outside academia get tenure-track jobs at only 10 percent lower rates than do unemployed female doctorate recipients. Some women working in jobs outside academia may be doing so only provisionally, until their children reach school age. In contrast, men who leave academia tend to stay out. More likely to be their family's primary wage earners, these men may hesitate to forsake stable careers outside academia in order to gamble on a position that, in the long

run, depends on securing tenure. Alternately they may have anticipated nonacademic careers all along. It should come as little surprise that male Ph.D.s can usually get better jobs outside the academy than their female colleagues can.[69]

Taken together, these findings offer insight into how men and women who leave the tenure track go about returning. Women often do not work in ladder-rank positions when they have young children (and, perhaps, when planning to have them). They stay off the tenure track, perhaps working as contingent faculty, until their kids reach school age, at which point their rates of reentry increase. Returning is always harder than moving straight through the pipeline to ladder-rank employment after graduate school (or after postdoctoral fellowships, depending on the field). These patterns are reversed for men; they are more likely to get tenure-track positions when they have young children. Presumably their wives or partners will provide child care. Fathers may also be more open to geographical relocation when their children are young and less likely to have their school and social lives disrupted. Conversely, the fathers of older children may be loath to subject their families to the upheaval that taking an academic job may entail.

Conclusion

For many young scholars, their first postgraduate job is a life-changing moment. After many arduous and underpaid years in graduate school, and perhaps a few more in a postdoctoral fellowship, young Ph.D.s find themselves in a much better place professionally. Suddenly their salaries have increased dramatically; their professional status has also seen commensurate gains. These welcome developments often require a cross-country move. Thus the boundary between graduate school and professional employment represents a dramatic transformation—and the point at which women drop out of the academic game.[70] They drop out because an academic job seems incompatible with marriage and children. We know this is the case because unmarried women without young children obtain tenure-track jobs at higher rates than do otherwise comparable men. (Men, presumably less constrained by family considerations, continue to do better overall on the academic job market than do women.)

Traditionally, observers attempted to explain women's underrepresentation in the academy on the basis of discrimination.[71] We do not deny that women still face discrimination in the academy. However, our findings suggest that traditionally conceived gender discrimination no longer seems to account for the lower rate at which women get tenure-track jobs—indeed, if it ever did. It can also no longer be argued that female doctoral recipients eschew academic careers based on differential socialization, given that they fare better than men on the job market when unencumbered by husbands and young children. Yet prejudice against

married women and mothers, as opposed to discrimination toward women in general, apparently continues. Maternal discrimination, as we shall see in the next chapter, is a primary consideration in the lawsuits that women denied tenure have brought under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Marriage and younger children present many difficulties for academic women. This may become apparent as early as graduate school. Female students are unlikely to see many faculty role models who successfully combine career and family. Looking at the academic career path, these students may also see few opportunities to start a family down the road. Unfortunately there is no optimal time. Graduate students may feel too underpaid and overworked; looking ahead to their assistant professor years, they wonder how motherhood can be combined with the publish-or-perish mandate; and after tenure the fertility window may well have closed. As a result of these conflicting pressures, some graduate student women will not pursue careers as tenure-track academics (some men will of course also choose not to pursue academic careers, but their decisions are far less likely to be based on family considerations).

Other women will find that marriage and children make going on the job market more difficult. Female academics are far more likely to have spouses with careers than are men; in particular, female academics are more likely to be married to male academics than vice versa. An employed husband may make geographical relocation more difficult, and academic search committees may well come to the same conclusion. If both spouses are academics, the couple has the "two body" problem. As the traditional child care provider, the woman is more likely to subordinate her career to that of her husband. Pregnancy may signal to search committees that a woman is on the mommy track rather than the tenure track. Young children need full-time supervision, which makes academic job interviews problematic. Mothers who negotiate all these challenges then find themselves divided between demanding careers and taking care of their families.

How do academic women respond to these challenges? A common solution for mothers is to move to the second tier of contingent professorships. A fair number of these mothers will make it back to the tenure track later on. Nevertheless, they remain overrepresented in the second tier of contingent faculty, faculty at junior colleges, and other jobs that fall short of tenured professorships at four-year schools.[72] Furthermore, married women are disproportionately likely to be contingent faculty.[73] This accords with a common stereotype of young academic couples: the husband gets the high-status line appointment and his "trailing spouse" teaches part time.

Contingent teaching appointments may provide the flexibility mothers and wives need, but they represent a substantial sacrifice in terms of pay, prestige, and working conditions. Furthermore, the longer a woman (or man) remains in the second tier, the less likely she is to get a tenure-track job. Our findings

suggest that many women do not intend to remain contingent faculty members for the duration of their careers, but instead use contingent professorships as an improvised solution to a male-oriented career model. Some women will enter the contingent ranks when caring for infants or toddlers, then upgrade to the tenure track once their children reach school age. Does this strategy work? We answer this question with a qualified yes, noting that over one half of people who become contingent faculty within two years of finishing graduate school manage to get tenure-track jobs down the road. However, this is a far from certain career path. In an ideal world there would be better options for female academics who want families.

What can colleges and universities do to get more wives and mothers hired into tenure-track professorships? Wives would probably be most helped by a dedicated commitment to assistance with spousal hiring. Universities often make strenuous efforts to recruit promising job candidates. These efforts need to include up-front assistance with spousal job-hunting. This is a relatively inexpensive measure that could bear great dividends for recruiting female professors. The challenge is much greater when the would-be faculty spouse is also an academic, but even then there are useful steps to be taken. Perhaps the most obvious is a formal policy on spousal hiring that is automatically communicated to all faculty job candidates. One such program, offered by the University of Rhode Island, will be discussed in greater detail in the last chapter of this book.

Making academia more welcoming to mothers requires broader action. As we suggested in the previous chapter, many graduate students are already pessimistic about the prospects of work-family balance in the academy. Were this not the case, many would feel better about going on the academic job market. However, this wouldn't in itself remedy the blatant discrimination toward mothers many women encounter as they search for jobs. Here, too, we need stronger guidelines for academic search committees. Departments conducting faculty searches need to be directly advised about the illegality of using motherhood as a hiring criterion. Academic job postings routinely advise applicants about nondiscrimination with respect to race, ethnicity, and sometimes sexual orientation. Family status should always appear on this list. Moreover, job candidates need to be informed of a university's family-friendly accommodations at the time they interview. These are no-cost interventions that would significantly assist in the recruitment of faculty mothers.