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<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i15/15a00101.htm>**How Babies Alter Careers for Academics****Having children often bumps women off the tenure track, a new study shows**

By ROBIN WILSON

Last year Jenny Spinner, an aspiring English professor, landed four job interviews, a feat that would make any graduate student proud. But as a nursing mother with a 5-month-old son at home, what should have been a happy time turned harrowing.

On each campus trip, Ms. Spinner brought along her curriculum vitae, a suitcase, and a breast pump, which she used every few hours around the clock. She pumped wherever she could -- in a faculty conference room while a secretary guarded the door and in a bathroom stall of a classroom building. Then she kept the milk on ice to take home.

Faculty members arranged dinners for times when, as a new mother, Ms. Spinner would normally have been heading to bed. When she found herself nearly dozing off during an interview with a vice provost one afternoon, she knew something had to change.

"I went home and told my husband: 'That's it. I'm not applying for any more jobs now. It's just too much,'" recalls Ms. Spinner, who got one job offer but turned it down because she says the campus wasn't a good "fit" for her. She is 33 and will earn her doctorate in English from the University of Connecticut next spring.

Her son, Aidan, is now 16 months old and she is starting to cut back on breast-feeding in preparation for a new round of job interviews. But Ms. Spinner's problems negotiating the academic world with a child in tow are just beginning, according to a new study, which says that having children wreaks havoc on the careers of academic women.

The study provides what is believed to be the first national data on how professors with children fare in academe. While having children, particularly early on, can severely damage the job prospects of women, fatherhood is actually a boon to academic men, it found.

Mary Ann Mason, dean of the graduate division at the University of California at Berkeley and the study's director, dubbed her project: "Do Babies Matter?" It is based on data collected until 1999 by the federal government from 160,000 people who earned their doctorates between 1978 and 1984, and continued working in academe.

Ms. Mason completed the study with Marc Goulden, a research analyst at Berkeley. She delivered a paper based on the study at a conference in October, and it will be published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* next year. She says she wanted "to address the question my women graduate students always ask me, Is there a good time to have a baby?"

Kids After Tenure

The worst time for women who pursue careers in academe to have a baby is within five years of earning a Ph.D., the study found. Women who do have babies then are nearly 30 percent less likely than women without babies ever to snag a tenure-track position. And of those women in the study who had babies early on, only 56 percent earned tenure within 14 years after receiving their Ph.D. Of men who became fathers early on, 77 percent earned tenure. Of men who never had babies, 71 percent got tenure.

"Women are doing part-time things, or staying at home for a while, which is quite appropriate when children are small," says Ms. Mason. But jumping back onto the tenure track after a few years off frequently proves impossible, she says.

The study also looked at how putting an academic career first, at least for a while, affected the chances that academic men and women would eventually have a family. "What happens to the men and women who secure that first assistant-professor job before becoming parents?" Ms. Mason asks in her paper. "Will they still have a baby?" The answer, she says, is that "men do, but women don't."

Men who took a university job without children were 70 percent more likely than their female counterparts to become parents, the study found. Only one-third of women who took a university job without children ever became mothers.

Over all, male professors were much more likely to marry and have a family than female professors. Only 44 percent of all the tenured women in the study were married and had children within 12 years of earning their Ph.D.'s. But 70 percent of tenured men married and became fathers during that time period.

About a quarter of tenured women were still single without children 12 years after earning their doctorates. Only 11 percent of men were.

Academic women, says Ms. Mason, are expected to work hardest during their tenure-track years, precisely when their biological clocks are ticking the loudest. "The average age for receiving a Ph.D. is 33," she says. "Many professors do not secure tenure under the age of 40. These busy career-building years are also the most likely reproductive years."

Fathers are more successful in academe than mothers, says Ms. Mason, because they are more likely to have a spouse who stays at home. In 1999, only 48 percent of men who were married and were full professors in the sciences and social sciences had wives who worked full time. But 91 percent of women who were married and were full professors in those disciplines had spouses who worked full time, according to the study.

"We are being made to compete with people who are single and have all the time in the world, or with married men who have a wife at home," says Joline J. Blais, an assistant professor of new media at the University of Maine's Orono campus and the mother of two young children.

Not all academic women struggle with motherhood. Kathryn L. Lynch, a 52-year-old professor of English at Wellesley College, recommends having children early in graduate school. She did, and her son and daughter were school-age by the time she took her first tenure-track job at Wellesley. "I don't think I've had to make disturbing compromises in my career," says Ms. Lynch, who had another son the year she came up for tenure. "I think you can have it all."

Academe certainly isn't the only demanding career that women have trouble negotiating with a family. It is also hard to be a lawyer or a doctor, for example, while raising small children. But those careers do not have an "up or out" point that is as unforgiving as the tenure system. If a woman wants to work in academe but is not within the tenured or tenure-track ranks, she is likely to be an adjunct or lecturer with little job security and meager pay.

"There is only one genuinely legitimate career path in the academy," says Kathleen Christensen, director of the

Workplace, Workforce, and Working Families program at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. "It's very rigid, up or out, and you have to get on and stay on or you're penalized if you deviate."

Joan C. Williams, director of the Program on WorkLife Law at American University, says academe is still based on a model in which men worked and their wives stayed at home with the children. "This is a job structure that systematically excludes mothers," she says. "It shows that so long as we continue to identify the ideal academic worker as someone who works full time, 60 hours a week for 40 years straight -- surprise! -- that will overwhelmingly be men."

The University of California system has started a family-friendly initiative, financed by the Sloan foundation. The effort, Ms. Mason says "is aimed at altering the workplace structure to accommodate families."

Fewer Children

Women trying to combine motherhood and academic careers don't find the study's conclusions particularly surprising. Many, it seems, have their own stories of just how hellish the endeavor can be.

Elizabeth Scala, an associate professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin, earned tenure last year despite giving birth to two daughters in the last six years. After her first daughter, Madeleine, was born in 1997, Ms. Scala regularly rose at 3 a.m. to nurse the baby. She would then stay up, grading papers and working on her book until she left home for her morning classes.

When her second baby, Claire, was born two years later, "I taught on fumes," recalls Ms. Scala, who has posted a picture of herself with her two girls on her university Web site. "I was sleepwalking through teaching *The Canterbury Tales* for the sixth time in a row, and spending all my brain power" on finishing a book in time for tenure review, she says.

Looking back, says Ms. Scala, who is 37 and earned her Ph.D. from Harvard University: "I could have done more work if I didn't have kids. I probably could have written a second book already -- maybe I could have a job at Yale."

Young academic women think a lot about whether they can have it all, and if not, what the trade-offs will be. Lorelei Mitchell is a 35-year-old graduate student in social welfare at Berkeley who has worked with Ms. Mason. She had her daughter, Lydia, 17 months ago, even though she knew the data showed she would be better off waiting until after she had earned tenure. "I wasn't about to wait until I was 42," says Ms. Mitchell.

But she is already wondering whether she and her husband will have another child, and if so, when. Being pregnant on the tenure track won't be easy, she knows. An alternative, says Ms. Mitchell, is to have another baby and forgo a tenure-track job for work as a researcher. For Ms. Mitchell, it comes down to what she wants more -- another baby, or a tenure-track career.

A second study, of 8,700 professors in the University of California system, also by Ms. Mason, shows that Ms. Mitchell is not alone. Thirty-eight percent of the female faculty members in the study said they had fewer children than they wanted.

One female assistant professor at a major research university had considered giving up on the idea of becoming a mother. But at 36 she decided she "wasn't willing to do that," and has just learned she is pregnant.

Still, she's worried. "I'm committing career suicide," she says. She hasn't yet told anyone at the university.

Part of the problem, says the woman, who wanted to remain anonymous, is that while she has several female role models, none of them offer advice on how to manage a baby with a tenure-track career. "You get a lot of

mentorship about how you negotiate for your salary and for course load reductions," she says. "But the questions usually aren't: 'If I'm a woman, and I want to have kids, what do I do?'"

Losing 20 Pounds

Ms. Blais, the assistant professor at Maine, says there is a silence in academe surrounding parenthood. Raising two young children while holding down two academic careers has been demanding for Ms. Blais and her partner, Jon Ippolito, who is also an assistant professor of new media at Maine. They could use some advice, she says.

The couple do much of their scholarly work together, developing teaching strategies that encourage information-sharing over the Internet. They travel frequently to New York and abroad and must scramble to find someone to watch their 3-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son.

Ms. Blais was 40 years old when she gave birth to their daughter, and returned to teaching two months later. A month after that she was scheduled to fly to California for work with Mr. Ippolito. But she found herself too exhausted to travel, and wound up getting pneumonia and losing 20 pounds in three weeks.

Many universities allow female faculty members just six to eight weeks of paid maternity leave, and require young professors to find someone to fill in for them if they give birth during a semester. Some universities, primarily major research institutions, provide a semester's paid leave from teaching.

Micki McGee, a faculty fellow in interdisciplinary studies at New York University, has a 6-year-old daughter. She says the paucity of mothers in academe is higher education's loss. "Academe deprives itself of that kind of robust understanding that parenting provides to people by limiting the number of mothers in the community," she says.

Ms. Spinner, the graduate student who will earn her Ph.D. from Connecticut in May, has put some limitations on her own career. She won't apply for jobs at major research institutions because she believes it would be too hard to manage the kind of work required with a family. Always an overachiever, Ms. Spinner has had to lower her standards.

"I knew I wasn't going to be on my deathbed thinking, 'If only I had written three more articles. If only I had chaired that committee,'" she says. "I had to decide to come to terms with the fact that I may be an A scholar, rather than an A-plus scholar, in order to have a family."

HOW BABIES AFFECT TENURE

A new national study from the University of California at Berkeley looks at the impact of babies on the tenure prospects of men and women and finds women's chances for tenure are greatly reduced if they have children. A second study, of professors in the UC system, looks at the effects of academic work on families.

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