Reject the Fast Track. Retrieved November 29, 2009, from *Academe* (2009). Online: <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2009/JF/Feat/maso.htm?PF=1>.

Mykhalovskiy, E. "Reconsidering Table Talk: Critical Thoughts on the Relationship Between Sociology, Autobiography and Self-Indulgence." *Qualitative Sociology* (1996): 131-151.

Springer, K. W., B. K. Parker and C. Leviten-Reid. *Journal of Family Issues* 30.4 (April 2009): 435-457

Stone, P. *Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Williams, J. *Unbending Gender: Why Work and Family Conflict and What to Do About It*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

6.

"Which June?" What Baby?

The Continued Invisibility of Maternity in Academia

LAURA J. BEARD

I CAN TRACE AN INTEREST IN MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS throughout my academic career, from my undergraduate thesis as an English major on the development of the maternal role in the novels of Jane Austen to a later dissertation proposal on mothers and daughters in the novels of contemporary Latin American, African American, and Native American women writers. (Immediately after the proposal defense, I jettisoned that dissertation as too broad and wrote on another, more focused topic). As a professor, I presented papers on female sexuality from adolescence to maternity, citing such texts as Marianne Hirsch's *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, E. Ann Kaplan's *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*, Nancy Chodorov's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, or *The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation,* edited by Shirley Nelson Garner, Claire Kahane, and Madelon Sprengnether. I wrote on all of these topics as a feminist scholar and as a daughter, but not as mother. Then, after tenure, I got pregnant.

I teach at a large, state university that does not grant paid maternity leave. My university does comply with the federal *Family Medical Leave Act,* which states that "Covered employers must grant an eligible employee up to a total of twelve work weeks of unpaid leave during any twelve-month period" for a variety of reasons, including "for the birth and care of the newborn child of the employee." As it happened, my baby was due in mid-June, so I figured that, if all went well, I could teach both semesters and stay home with the newborn in the summer, then return to teach in the fall, without needing to take the unpaid leave. It was

when asking for a very minor accommodation for the spring semester prior to the birth that I first realized how invisible and incomprehensible maternity still is in academia.

Because I was scheduled to teach classes that required the regular use of films in a building in which most classrooms were not appropriately equipped, I had to push a cart with a TV and VCR/DVD equipment to class. Hoping to avoid that in the latter months of pregnancy, I spoke to my associate chair to request a classroom with video equipment "for medical reasons." He approved it immediately, but for some reason I then had to repeat the request to the department chair, who wanted to know the medical reasons. When I informed him I was pregnant, he wanted to know when the baby was due; when I said, "June," he asked, "which June?"

The department chair's seemingly impossible (or perhaps impossibly hostile) question—how could anyone ask which June? Doesn't everyone know how long the gestation period is for humans?—made it clear to me that maternity remains invisible and incomprehensible in academia. That invisibility was reinforced at the end of that school year when, after classes had ended, I ran into an undergraduate student who had studied with me in both the fall and spring semesters. He asked me what I was going to do in the summer. I said, "Have a baby." Shocked, he immediately looked down at my stomach. This student had been in my classroom three times a week all year, as an active, engaged participant, but he had never noticed that I was pregnant, even at eight months. From these experiences I draw my title: "Which June, what baby?"

While feminist scholars are beginning to focus on the ways in which academia—its structures, its policies, and its insidious assumptions—are built for and by male professors,[2] the topic of academic mothers too often remains both silent and invisible. But that invisibility may not be so surprising, when we consider that at many universities, all members of the upper administration are male and if there are any females, they most likely are childless. This academic scenario mirrors that of other segments of society. As I finish this article in late spring 2010, there exists the possibility that there could be, for the first time in history, three women on the Supreme Court of the United States. If that does become the case, two of the three will be childless women, reminding us all that it is easier to reach the top if you do so without children (see Ashburn).

But for those of us who have chosen to have children, and who have

chosen to do so within the realm of academia, we often find that the path is trickier than expected. Certainly, universities and departments are not allowed to discriminate openly against women who are pregnant, who are nursing, or who have children; but, as in so many areas, it is the subtle discrimination that remains a powerful barrier, as Mary P. Rowe argues in her article "Barriers to Equality: The Power of Subtle Discrimination to Maintain Unequal Opportunity." Rowe focuses on what she calls "discriminatory microinequities," which she defines as

> tiny, damaging characteristics of an environment ... distinguished by the fact that for all practical purposes one cannot do anything about them, one cannot take them to court or file a grievance. They are actions which are unjust toward individuals, when reasonable people would agree the particular treatment of the individual occurs only because of a group characteristic unrelated to creativity and work performance (for example, sex, race, religion, age, or country of origin). (155)

These inequities are, as Rowe notes, "fiendishly efficient in perpetuating unequal opportunity, because they are in the air we breathe, in the books we read, in the television we all watch, and because we cannot change the personal characteristic that leads to the inequity" (155). They are "woven into the threads of our work life and of U.S. education" (155). She calls them micro not because they are trivial but because they are miniature (155). Rowe focuses on discriminatory microinequities around race and gender, but which are the discriminatory microinequities that make the career path more difficult for academic mothers? And what can we do to eliminate them from our career paths? This article begins to address those questions, proposing that to eliminate the microinequities, maternity cannot remain invisible and incomprehensible in academia. Academic mothers need to be visible and recognized as important members of the academy. Making the experiences of academic mothers more visible and recognizable in the academy will make the academy a better workplace for us all.

In exploring these microinequities, I speak in part from my own experiences as an academic mother, in part from the experiences of colleagues, particularly at my own university,[3] and also from the experiences reported in published articles and documents, including the reports from the

Modern Languages Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession. I am interested in exploring the inequities that exist within our academic culture, the ways in which we as women sometimes participate (willingly or unwillingly) in perpetuating those inequities, and the ways in which we might all work to change the academic systems to eliminate those discriminatory inequities.

STANDING STILL

In 2009, the Modern Languages Association published "Standing Still: The Associate Professor Survey," a report from their Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession. In English and the foreign languages, men disproportionately hold positions of higher rank and move through the ranks more rapidly than women do. Such is the case even though more women earn Ph.D.s and get hired as Assistant Professors in these fields. The Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession (CSWP) did a study to understand the causes of this lack of parity at the rank of professor, via an online survey questionnaire developed to provide both quantitative and qualitative information that might help explain the substantial differences in time between men and women in attaining the rank of professor. While the committee members concluded that "no one cause can explain women's status in the profession" (2), one of the many items noted in their report was that "women report they devote a significantly greater amount of time to childcare than do men" (2).[4] In the responses to open-ended questions in the CSWP survey, the time spent on child-rearing and other family obligations was mentioned as a roadblock to career progress.

Correspondingly, the lack of family obligations was cited by both men and women as something that helped them moved forward in their careers:

> As one man put it, "Being single and having time to devote myself obsessively to my writing, teaching and service" was the key to success; another person reported that "living alone and throwing myself into my work after a divorce helped meet requirements for promotion." A woman who is an associate professor at a doctoral institution explained, "The cost of getting ahead professionally has been almost entirely personal. I'm single with no kids; I've

> worked more or less unremittingly for the past six years and my family and friends have not gotten the love and attention from me that they deserve. I'm hoping now that I have the book done I'll be able to spend more time with them...." (13)

Those faculty members who spend all their time working on their research and writing are following the academic path we are all socialized to follow. Deviation from that path is difficult. As Gail M. Simmons wryly notes in "Reproductive Success for Working Scientists," looking back on her experiences of being on the job market in the sciences while pregnant (she got no job offers), "as a society, we have far to go in rethinking how careers for gravid and postpartum academic mammals should proceed. Up to now, all we have really done is modify the protocol followed for decades by the sperm donors" (Simmons).

In following that protocol, in doing our best to minimize the interruptions of our maternity in our academic careers, are we contributing to the invisibility of motherhood in the profession? Are we just accepting (and perhaps internalizing) the microinequities? Planning a due date to coincide with the academic calendar (all those babies born at the end of May!) or returning to work as soon as possible after the birth of a child (a colleague who gave birth to twins in her first year in a tenure-track job at a major state university and returned to work after just a couple weeks, because she didn't know how many days she could take and was afraid to ask in her new job) are examples of how we help to perpetuate the invisibility of maternity by the employment of what are called "bias avoidance strategies" (Colbeck and Drago). As Kelly Ward and Lisa Wolf-Wendel note, this bias avoidance is rooted in fear: "Faculty members, women in particular, are fearful that if they use policies they will face negative repercussions" (2008: 264). This fear can come from the dominant discourses associated with tenure and academic culture but also from the women's need to be seen as legitimate faculty members. Even when departments or colleges have policies that allow women to stop the tenure clock for the birth or adoption of a child or to take time off from work, some faculty mothers are afraid to utilize the policies as they fear that doing so may put their legitimacy as scholars into question.

Other times, the faculty member may not utilize an informal policy within a department, one in which a department chair may offer a professor who has just given birth some time off, because the burden for

arranging for that leave falls entirely on the person who has just given birth. As one untenured assistant professor noted in an exit interview conducted when she left my university:

> With the first chair I had, he said I could take six weeks off but I would have to get someone to cover all of my courses and make sure it was all covered. At the time I was so overwhelmed that I thought I didn't have the energy to orchestrate that. With the second child, there was this kind of mixed message of 'Are you taking maternity leave?'[5] And I'd say I didn't see how I could with this graduate class and this undergraduate class because I didn't see how I could coordinate all of that. The chair said I could take one if I wanted to but I didn't see how it was possible. So it was really difficult. (WS exit interview, August 2006)

Her description of the way in which the situation was handled in her department reveals a number of microinequities. Again, these were "tiny, damaging characteristics of an environment," actions which were unjust toward her, but which were also "distinguished by the fact that for all practical purposes one cannot do anything about them, one cannot take them to court or file a grievance" (Rowe, 155). In cases like this one, to put the responsibility onto the pregnant woman, who in many instances may be new to the university, to find other people to cover all her classes, may not be the best policy for a department to follow. In other instances as well, the lack of a formal policy and the lack of understanding on the part of department chairs and administrators can make it impossible for academic mothers to take advantage of what few policies exist at their universities.

In some cases, women may choose not to look for a job at a research university, or not to stay in a position at a research university, if they wish to have a family, as they perceive that the goals of having a family and achieving tenure within a research university system are incompatible.[6] One woman, who had been three years in a tenure-track position at my university, left for a job at another institution when she became pregnant. She noted that the decision was made "based on lifestyle and personal issues.... I really like the environment at this other school. I'm having a baby in the Spring and I know it would be very difficult ... here with a two or three month old baby and to be able to work at the level that I would need to work" (WS exit interview, Spring 2001). When she shared her reasons with colleagues in the position she was leaving, she was told, "Well, I guess you're not a serious researcher" (WS exit interview, Spring 2001). Making a choice that allows her to keep time for her family puts her identity as a scholar into question. Do women have to choose whether to be serious researchers or to be mothers? Or can we change the structure and the climate at universities, including top research universities, to make it possible for women to be academic mothers, excelling at various facets of their lives?

Many academic mothers have chosen to have successful careers and raise happy, healthy children. But it is hard to make that choice. We all know the guilt that comes when you are trying to be both the successful academic and the good mother. When you are at the office, chatting with someone in the hall who talks about what they did the previous weekend, you feel guilty because you didn't spend your entire weekend working on your research and writing. Talking with other mothers inspires just as much guilt. Two conversations from when my son was younger stick out vividly in my mind. Both were with mothers who had daughters the same age as my son. One was telling me about her daughter's baby teeth. She could name each tooth and knew the date when it came in. I just stared at her as she talked. Was I supposed to know that about my child? Wasn't it enough that he had teeth and could eat? Another summer, a few years later, a different mother told me that her daughter was in a summer program, and that each day, when they got home, they were scrapbooking pages about what they had done. I experienced more instant pangs of maternal guilt. I was not creating a scrapbook with a page for every day of our summer, but I was getting my own book done, the one being published with a university press that would contribute to my promotion to full professor.

MOVING FORWARD

So what can we do, as academic mothers, not just to deal with our own maternal guilt, but more importantly to reduce the invisibility and incomprehensibility of maternity in academia? What changes can we make in our own lives and careers as academic mothers and what changes can we advocate in our institutions to make those institutions more welcoming

places for all those who are working in them, including the academic mothers? What can we do to combat the microinequities? In this section, I make suggestions of changes we might make, depending on our own institutions and our own places in those institutions. Those of us who are tenured, who may be full professors, who may be department chairs, deans or associate deans, or occupy some other position in a college or university administration may have the opportunity to exercise stronger voices than those who are not; but all of us can look to this list and to our own individual lists of what we might do to impact change. Departments need to look at their own policies to see how they impact academic mothers (and parents) across the board. First off, are there policies? Are they clear? Do all members of the faculty and administration understand them properly (not just those who might take advantage of the policies, but also those who might be voting—in tenure and promotion cases—on those who have taken advantage of these policies)? When someone has the tenure clock stopped, her senior faculty colleagues need to understand what that means and cast their next votes accordingly. If external letters are requested for third year reviews or tenure and promotion decisions, then those outside reviewers would need to know that a person has received a year (or more) off the clock as well and be asked to evaluate the dossier accordingly.

A tenure-track assistant professor in the humanities at my university, in her exit interview, wrote that she received a negative annual peer review after her year off the tenure clock (having had a very good review the year previously), because her colleagues thought she had not done enough research: "as if they expected me to do a year or more of research while my clock was stopped.... The comments showed that the faculty members really didn't take that into consideration" (WS exit interview 2001). While this particular faculty member left for a job at another college prior to going up for tenure, she feared that had she remained at the institution where she stopped the tenure clock, having stopped the clock would have hurt her in the long run.

In addition, if a department, college or university has a stop the clock policy for tenure, is it one in which the faculty member has to make the request or is it automatic (one in which the faculty member would have to opt out)? The latter can be the better option, taking the heat off the untenured faculty members who may feel that a department discourages them from utilizing the policy.

Not only do department chairs, deans, and provosts need to have clear policies regarding maternity leaves, the stopping of the tenure clock, the adjustment of workloads, etc. , and ensure that those policies are clearly understood, but they need to be sure they are applied equitably across departments and faculties. When a faculty member in English finds out that faculty members in History get reduced teaching loads but no such accommodations are made available to her in English, the college will have unhappy faculty members.

Other policies should be examined as well to see if they are impacting academic parents. Are faculty meetings held at times that are difficult for faculty members with children? In my department, for many years, faculty meetings have been held Mondays at 3:00 pm; the time when parents have to pick up children from school. In such a case, is it possible to reschedule the meetings for another time that would be more convenient to all the parents of young children in the department yet not inconvenient for faculty members in general? If so, a simple change in meeting time can make a big difference to the academic parents. In the case of my department, the change also benefits the department members who serve on a college committee that meets every other Monday at 3:00 pm. Other faculty members may also be happier with an earlier meeting time, as it allows them to end their day earlier.

Gail Simmons, in her article on "Reproductive Success for Working Scientists," gives advice to department heads and deans about many things they can do to make prospective female faculty members feel welcome as well as to encourage current faculty members who have or are about to have children. Her suggestions include introducing job seekers to faculty members with children so that the ones already on campus can share information about their arrangements; "offer information about family policies to all job candidates. Discuss child-care options, health insurance, leave policies, tenure-clock modifications, part-time possibilities, flexible teaching schedules. Don't wait to be asked, and don't ask whether the candidate intends to take advantage of those options. Just put the information out there" (Simmons); sharing your own experience if you are an academic mother and have been through it yourself; looking for informal solutions to problems; and providing parenting space in your building. Simmons recalls that "one of the simplest accommodations I ever received was from the scheduling officer in my department. She knew that two of us in the department had small children and lived near each

other. So she arranged our teaching schedules so that we taught on different days of the week. That way I could baby-sit her kids if they were ill and could not go to day-care, and she could baby-sit mine. It worked very well" (Simmons).

The options for combining parenting and academia need to be a safe topic of discussion for graduate students who wonder if they really can have children and pursue a job in the academic field. If they look around the department and see no women, or no mothers, or only people working 60-80 hour weeks, they may decide they don't want to go into the fields we have chosen to pursue. Having academic mothers who are department chairs or deans is important, especially if those academic mothers are open to talking about how younger parents or would-be parents might combine careers and families. Some universities have websites or forums to promote these discussions, like the Berkeley Parents Network site, with a section entitled "Is an Academic Career Compatible with Being a Mom?"

We need to think about all the mothers working in our academic departments, not just the faculty members and the graduate students, but also the staff members. Are there ways we can make working in the academic environment more accommodating for the mothers in staff positions? If our office jobs are 8:00–5:00 pm, but we have mothers who need to drop kids at school or daycare, might a flex-time arrangement where someone can get there at 8:15 or 8:30 and take a shorter lunch hour work better for that working mother?

One colleague who is a department chair at another university spoke of a limited time period when one of her staff members brought children to work. The staff person was going to have them in a daycare situation after school and the department chair told her that if they came to office and did homework quietly, then, they could come to work. It worked out; the working mother saved money and was very grateful for the accommodation.

Having more academic mothers in the positions of department chair, dean, provost or university president will help both to address the invisibility and incomprehensibility of maternity in academia and to create and implement better policies and more welcoming environments for academic mothers. It is my hope that with more academic mothers in leadership roles, no other faculty member will be faced with such questions "Which June?"

[1]The university also has, on an informal basis which varies by department and college, other work and family policies that may apply. For example, in many cases, the tenure clock may be stopped for a year after the birth or adoption of a child by an untenured faculty member, in recognition of the time that must be devoted to a new child. This policy recognizes that having a young child may have a negative impact on work productivity during the crucial and finite probationary period of the tenure process. Some department chairs may choose to modify teaching or service duties in response to the birth or adoption of a child, but such modifications are not a university policy and therefore cannot be counted on by the faculty parent.

[2]See Bracken, Allen and Dean; Lester and Sallee for a variety of examples.

[3]In this chapter, I make use of exit interviews that were done with female faculty members who left my university between the years 2000-2006. These interviews were done through the auspices of the Women's Studies Program, and the faculty members interviewed chose to allow their interviews to be made available to researchers, sometimes immediately, sometimes after a period of a year or three years. They could choose to make their interviews available with their names or anonymously; I do not use the names of any individuals in this article.

[4]Women report, on an average and across the different types of institutions included in the MLA report, that they devote 31.6 hours a week to child care, while men report that they devote 14.2 hours per week (12). As pointed out in the survey, that difference alone cannot account for the slower pace for women in attaining the rank of full professor, as only 38.1 percent of the women who responded to the survey had children at home.

[5]There is no paid maternity leave at the university, but faculty members can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave.

[6]See Lisa Wolf-Wendel and Kelly Ward's article "Faculty Work and Family Life: Policy Perspectives from Different Institutional Types," particularly pp. 55-57.

WORKS CITED

Ashburn, Lauren. "Childless: How the Most Ambitious Women Choose Not to Be Sidetracked by Family." Online: <http://www.huffington

post.com/lauren-ashburn/childless-how-the-most-am_b_574249.htm>.

Bracken, Susan J., Jeanie K. Allen, and Diane R. Dean, eds. *The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives in Faculty Roles and Work Lives*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Press, 2006.

Chodorov, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Colbeck, C. L. and R. Drago. "Accept, Avoid, Resist: Faculty Members' Responses to Bias Against Caregiving ... And How Departments Can Help." *Change* 37.6 (2005): 10-17.

Exit interviews with women faculty. Texas Tech University Women's Studies Office.

Family Medical Leave Act. Online: <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/>.

Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

"Is an Academic Career Compatible with Being a Mom?" Berkeley Parents Network. Online: <http://parents.berkeley.edu/advice/allkinds/compatible.html#ray>.

Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Lester, Jaime and Margaret Sallee, eds. *Establishing the Family-Friendly Campus: Models for Effective Practice*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Press, 2009.

Modern Language Association. *Standing Still: The Associate Professor Survey*. Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, Modern Language Association of America, 27 April 2009. Web: <www.mla.org/cswp_report09>.

Nelson Garner, Shirley, Claire Kahane, and Madelon Sprengnether, eds. *The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Rowe, Mary P. "Barriers to Equality: The Power of Subtle Discrimination to Maintain Unequal Opportunity." *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 3.2 (1990): 153-63.

Simmons, Gail M. "Reproductive Success for Working Scientists." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* April 26, 2005. Online: <http://chronicle.com/article/Reproductiv-Success-for/44907>.

Ward, K. and L. Wolf-Wendel. "Choice and Discourse in Faculty Careers:

Feminist Perspectives on Work and Family." *Unfinished Agendas: New and Continuing Gender Challenges in Higher Education*. Ed. by Judith Glazer-Raymo. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. 252-272.

Ward, K. and L. Wolf-Wendel. "Faculty Work and Family Life: Perspectives from Different Institution Types." *The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives in Faculty Roles and Work Lives*. Ed. by Susan J. Bracken, Jeanie K. Allen, and Diane R. Dean. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Press, 2006. 51-72.