

Mothers in Pursuit of Ideal Academic Careers

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Main Findings

- ▷ Women sociologists with children are equally likely to have “ideal” careers as men with children and childless men.
- ▷ Mothers are seven times as likely to have ideal careers as fathers, childless men, and childless women, when provided with departmental resources and when they attended prestigious graduate schools.
- ▷ Mothers are more likely than fathers to use work/family policies.
- ▷ Despite the difficulties faced by women in pursuing the “male model for careers,” mothers in sociology appear to be as successful following an ideal career track as their male colleagues.

We use data from our PhD+10 survey to investigate whether gender and parental status affected the likelihood of obtaining an ideal versus an alternative career during the first 10 years post-PhD. This new brief follows our recent research that examines racial and ethnic differences in obtaining what we call “ideal” versus “alternative” careers (Spalter-Roth, Mayorova, Shin, and White 2011). An ideal career is considered to be the archetype for the profession. In this brief, we define “ideal” as an academic career that 10 years post-PhD is marked by tenure, high scholarly productivity in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles and books in innovative areas of research, external grants, all leading to leadership and recognition in the discipline. Although many do not accept this type of career as ideal and desire alternative careers, the ideal career path is assumed to be the model for graduate training and is the career path into which graduate students are socialized (Keith and Moore 1995; Pescosolido and Aminzade 1999; Golde and Walker 2006; Sweitzer 2009). We find that women with children are equally likely to pursue “ideal” careers than men with children, and more likely to pursue these careers than childless women. In fact, women with children are significantly more likely to pursue ideal careers, if they are provided with resources such as travel money and research assistance.

Much of the literature on work/family issues in academia suggest that women with children have a harder time

maintaining an ideal career because of the difficulty of combining work and family activities, both of which are regarded as “greedy institutions” (Hochschild, 1975). Women are expected to (and often do) take on more childrearing and housework responsibilities. If separated or divorced, women are more likely to be the custodial parent. There is considerable literature that women academics are hampered in their efforts to have an ideal career. According to a report from the Committee on the Status of Women in Sociology (2004):

Women may face serious disadvantages. Careers often are built ... around a model of a worker who has no competing responsibilities to work and is able to devote full attention to (usually his) professional life. Persons who do not conform to this pattern of the unencumbered worker will be disadvantaged in achieving success within the profession.

In a study of doctoral students at the University of California, over 70 percent reported that they considered academic careers at Research I universities unfriendly to family life (Mason 2012). Women with children may be unable to regularly stay late to muse over intellectual questions with colleagues at the office or a local pub, but instead may have to pick up children from school or day care or return home to prepare dinner. In addition, she may sometimes need to bring the baby to class with her (Spalter-Roth and Kennelly 2007). Research suggests that parenting

within the academy is a gendered phenomenon. Mary Ann Mason and Marc Goulden's widely-cited study of a nationally representative sample of PhD recipients between 1973 and 1999 finds that raising children, especially early in one's academic career, has a negative effect on women's but not men's careers (2002).

Given this research, we would expect mothers to be more likely than fathers and more likely than childless men and childless women to have what we labeled as alternative or marginal careers rather than ideal careers. In other words, we would expect them to have lower career expectations with less chance of being central and more chance of being marginal to the discipline than other sub-groups of sociologists. We, however, did not find this to be the case.

DEFINING CAREER TYPES

IDEAL CAREERS. As noted, we define "ideal" academic careers as careers that 10 years post-PhD are marked by tenure, high scholarly productivity in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles and books in innovative areas of research, external grants, and leadership and recognition in the discipline. In this paper, we measure the characteristics through the attainment of or the continued desire to pursue them. This type of career is discipline-focused and probably does not include what has been labeled as public sociology—the creation of dialogues between sociologists and non-academic publics as part of the professional career track (Burawoy 2005).

ALTERNATIVE CAREERS. We define alternative careers as being less research-focused and more teaching-oriented than ideal careers. These faculty are less likely to be found at research-intensive universities and more likely to be at baccalaureate-only and master's comprehensive schools. There may be more interest in "public sociology," and may include dialogues between the sociologists and non-professional publics such as community organizations (Nyden, Hossfeld, and Nyden 2011). Relatively few PhD programs focus on this track (Task Force on Institutionalizing Public Sociology 2005). Rather than articles in peer-reviewed journals, research products in this career type may be reports written for collaborating organizations or articles in the popular press.

MARGINAL CAREERS. In the academy, those in marginal careers tend to be hired as adjunct or contingent faculty without permanent positions within academic departments. These faculty members are less likely

to be attached to disciplinary scholarly networks, may teach sporadically, publish less than average, and may have limited aspirations for leadership roles within the profession.

RESEARCH DESIGN

SAMPLE

In February 1998, the American Sociological Association (ASA) began to survey the universe of sociology PhDs who were awarded their degrees between July 1996 and September 1997. The survey requesting information about graduate school experiences, early career activities, available resources, and family life went into the field in February 1998. We obtained a 72 percent response rate within this universe of 645 new PhDs. Women were more likely to respond to this survey than men, U.S. citizens were more likely to respond than non-citizens, and whites were more likely to respond than people of color. We conducted brief follow-up surveys with cohort members in 1999 and 2001 to ascertain whether they had changed jobs, married, or had children. There was an 80 percent response rate for each of the two follow-up surveys. The 2003 and 2007 surveys were administered online, as opposed to the earlier paper-and-pencil surveys. By 2003, considerable attrition occurred, despite persistent follow-ups in the form of emails, letters, and phone calls. The final 2007 sample included 304 respondents or 47 percent of the original universe. In examining the distribution of the sample of the 2006 and 2010 sample groups, we found that the number of men and women in the sample remained stable. As expected, the percentage of mothers and fathers grew by 14 percent and 10 percent, respectively, while the numbers of childless women and men declined by 10 percent and 8 percent, respectively, as formerly childless respondents became mothers and fathers.

Categorical Analysis

In order to investigate whether mothers in the PhD+10 cohort are less likely to have what we have referred to as ideal careers or more likely to have alternative or marginal careers than fathers or childless men or women, we created and tested a centrality/marginality index using Principal Components Analysis for Categorical Data. As noted, we define an ideal career for those PhDs who 10 years out as being tenured associate or full professors who are ready to move into the next phase of their career with aspirations to publish important books, start new lines of research,

BOX 1. VARIABLES USED FOR CATEGORICAL ANALYSIS

Rank and Tenure Status

- *TENURED ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR.* We assume that 10 years out, an ideal career position would be that of a tenured associate professor or above. Those still at the assistant professor rank, in non-tenure positions, or employed in non-academic positions are in a non-evaluative sense labeled as having non-ideal careers.

Scholarly and Research Activities

- *ABOVE-AVERAGE NUMBER OF PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS.* We used this measure of publications since it is thought to represent the gold standard of publishing in sociology (Calhoun 1998).
- *MORE GRANT MONIES.* With growing pressure in the academy to raise one's own and others' salaries, the desire to seek additional grant monies is considered an important part of academic performance.

Teaching Activities

- Above-average teaching load.

Public Sociology Activities

- *WANTS TO APPEAR IN PRESS OR POPULAR MEDIA.* Although many of the most prestigious sociologists are cited in the mass media, this activity may be a hallmark of a public sociology career.
- *WANTS TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM.* Given the old debate between a value neutral and an activist career, this may be a hallmark of public sociology.

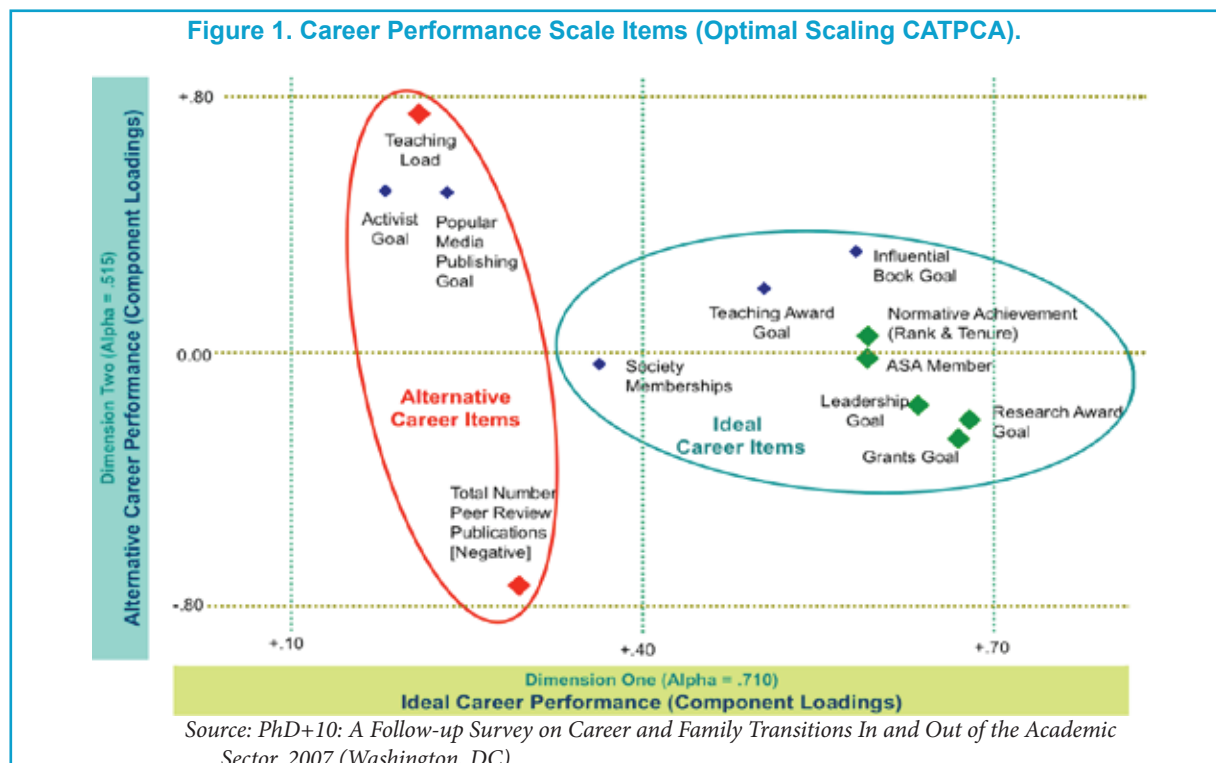
Professional Participation

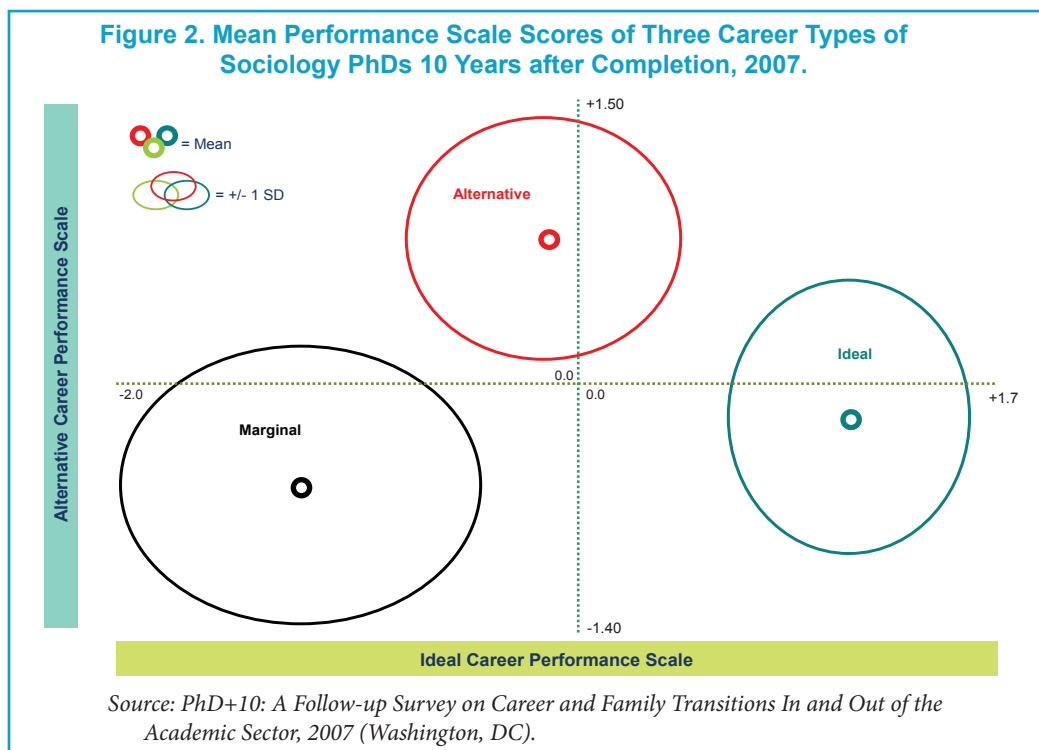
- *BELONGS TO ASA—THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR SOCIOLOGISTS.* We would assume that those who have ideal careers are more likely to belong to the organization, whereas those with alternative and marginal careers are less likely to do so.
- *BELONGS TO OTHER PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.* Many sociologists belong to more than one professional association as part of their careers.

Future Scholarly and Leadership Awards

- *Wants a leadership position in a professional society.* Those who gain leadership positions are generally well-known, successful scholars and have ideal careers.
- *Wants to write influential monograph.* This was one of the stated desires of many new PhDs in the first survey year. We would assume that those with ideal careers have the resources and the connections to scholarly networks that would make this desire a possibility.
- *WANTS TO WIN A TEACHING AWARD.* This award may be more desired by those with heavier teaching loads than those without.
- *WANTS TO WIN A RESEARCH AWARD.* We would expect this to be a modal desire among PhD sociologists, given the emphasis of doing cutting-edge research within the discipline.

Figure 1. Career Performance Scale Items (Optimal Scaling CATPCA).





BOX 2. INDEPENDENT VARIABLES USED FOR ANALYSIS

- JOB LOSS.** This is a measure of a less successful and perhaps more marginal career compared to those did not who experience such an event.
- ILLNESS.** Along with those who are encumbered workers, we expect those who experienced a severe illness will be less likely to have an ideal career.
- PRESTIGE OF PHD DEPARTMENT.** Over the course of the research on this cohort we have found that the prestige of the respondent's PhD department had positive career effects. We therefore expect that the higher the prestige of the department, the greater the likelihood for an ideal career.
- AWARDED RESOURCE: HAVING TEACHING ASSISTANTS.** We hypothesized that this resource allows for less work teaching and would help for the greater number of publications that are part of an ideal career.
- AWARDED RESOURCE: TRAVEL MONEY.** We hypothesized that travel money assists in becoming
- more well-known in the discipline, leading to a greater likelihood of participation in professional organizations—part of an ideal career.
- USED FAMILY POLICY.** We hypothesize that mothers who used family leave were more likely to have ideal careers, whereas fathers who used this policy were more likely to have alternative or marginal careers because there are greater sanctions for their use of leave policy.
- NUMBER OF GRANTS.** Those respondents who obtained four or more grants are more likely to have ideal careers.
- GENDER AS SPECIALTY AREA.** We expect that those who specialized in gender during graduate school are less likely to have ideal careers, since, anecdotally, graduate students are often warned against specializing in this sub-field.

take on professional responsibility, and win awards. We have attempted to make each of these activities operational and have tested whether the variables scaled into different career types reflecting our definitions. See Box 1 for a list of variables used in the analysis.

These variables did form scales that distinguished ideal

from alternative careers, as we suggested. Two sets of scores were derived for each individual respondent from the optimal scaling procedure, which were then used in a two-step cluster analysis to classify faculty members into one of three types of careers. Ideal careers include achieving tenure and at least an associate professor rank, belonging to the ASA and other associations, and

aspiring to write an influential book, become a leader in a disciplinary association, gain more grant monies, and, surprisingly, be awarded for teaching excellence. Alternative careers include heavier teaching loads, fewer publications, and lesser likelihood of tenure and achieving an associate professor rank. Those with alternative careers do appear to have a greater interest in public sociology in that they were more likely to hope to have an activist role outside of the academy and were more likely to speak to publics outside the academy through publishing in the popular media (see Figure 1). Once we found that these variables did form indexes of the centrality (ideal) or alternative careers (Figure 1), we then performed cluster analysis to see whether these career types held up and who fell into each cluster (see Figure 2). By examining the distribution of respondents on these two career types, we discovered a third category—those who were below average or did not answer “yes” on the activities listed in the survey. We refer to this group as being marginal (Figure 2).

DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS: CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Once the categories were developed and tested, we examined a series of cross-tabulations designed to see if there were significant differences between the types

of careers and a series of independent variables. These include gender, gender and parental status, timing of childbirth, and family policy use. Based on our previous work we did not expect that comparisons of gender alone (i.e., male versus female) would result in significant differences (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2006). Rather, we combined gender and parental status to compare mothers, fathers, childless men, and childless women. We were especially interested in seeing whether there were significant differences among these groups. In addition, we examined work/family satisfaction among those in the three types of careers.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Finally, we performed a multinomial logistic regression analysis to find out whether the gender/parental status variable is significantly related to career types when other variables—including career activities, resources, or rewards—were held constant. The multinomial analysis tells us about the variables that are significant for ideal and alternative careers compared to marginal careers. We hypothesize that women with children will be more likely to have alternative or marginal careers than other groups, when other factors are held constant.

The remaining independent variables in this analysis are listed in Box 2.

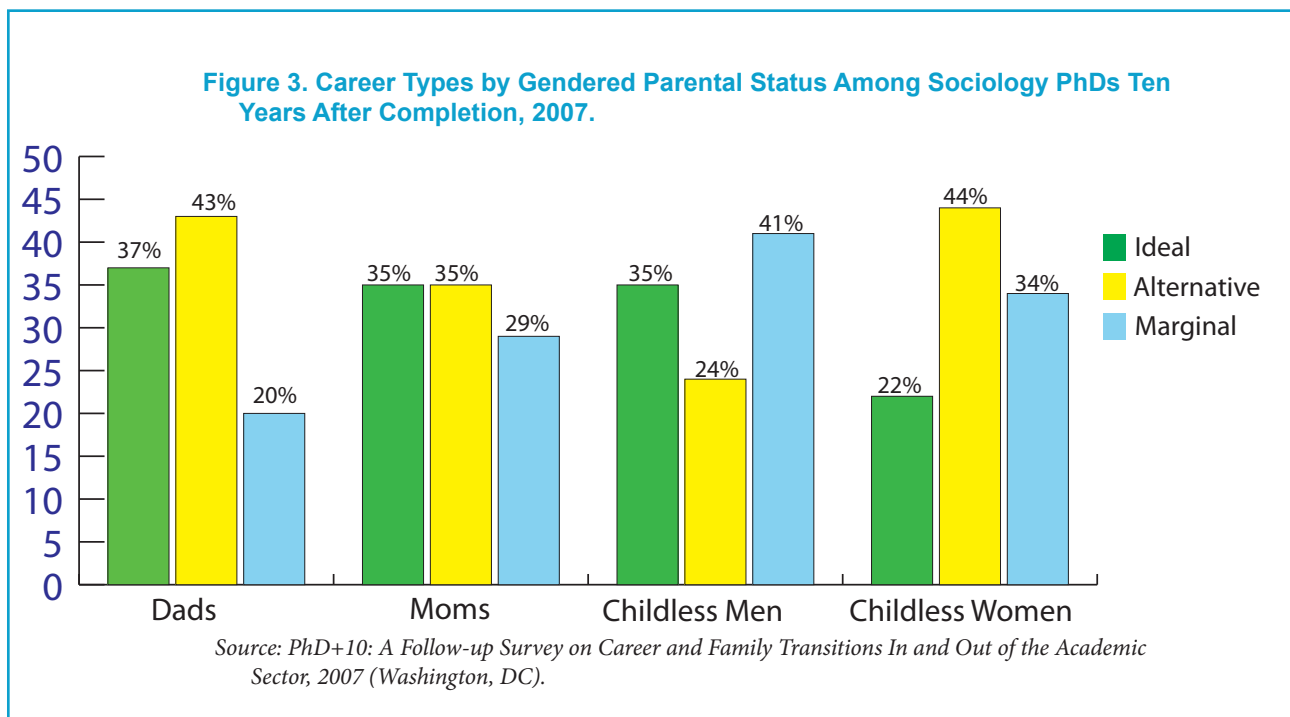


Table 1. Ideal Career Characteristics by Gendered Parental Status (Percent)

	Dads	Moms	Childless Men	Childless Women
<i>Important Book Goal</i> [*]	87.3	63.6	64.6	68.9
<i>Teaching Award</i>	66.2	50.6	48.7	44.4
<i>Research Award</i>	52.1	44.2	32.9	39.1
<i>New Research Goal</i>	56.9	68.8	57.7	53.3
<i>Grant Goal</i>	69.4	74.0	65.8	60.0
<i>ASA Member</i>	46.6	33.8	49.4	44.4
<i>ASA Leadership Goal</i>	35.2	37.2	31.6	32.6
<i>Tenured</i>	77.0	72.0	53.8	66.7

^{*}Statistically significant at chi sq = .005.

Source: *PhD+10: A Follow-up Survey on Career and Family Transitions In and Out of the Academic Sector, 2007* (Washington, DC).

CAREER TYPES

The cluster analysis of career types showed that the largest cluster fell above average on all alternative career characteristics. The PhDs in this cluster can be characterized by heavier teaching loads, fewer than average number of peer-reviewed publications, and the desire for more activist or applied pursuits. About 38 percent of respondents were on this path. The next largest group—about 32 percent of respondents—was on an ideal career path with emphasis on research, and disciplinary responsibility and rewards. Close behind, 30 percent of the respondents could be referred to as having a marginal career, possessing neither alternative nor ideal career characteristics.

There were no statistically significant differences between the type of career (marginal, alternative, and ideal) between men and women, although a smaller percentage of women have ideal careers and ideal career aspirations (28.7% compared to 35.2%). But when we examine gender and parental status, we find that there are significant differences between the percentages of these sub-groups who fall into the different career categories. Somewhat more than one-third of fathers, mothers, and childless men have ideal careers, but less than one-quarter of childless women have this kind of career. Although childless men are as likely as mothers and fathers to have ideal careers, they are significantly more likely to have marginal careers than parents. Mothers and fathers are equally likely to have alternative careers as they are to have ideal careers (35.3% and 43.2% respectively), whereas childless women are most likely to have alternative careers (44.2%; see Figure 3).

ASPECTS OF THE IDEAL CAREER

The ideal career, as we define it, is composed of accomplishments and aspirations. Although, as we have seen, mothers, fathers, and childless men are equally likely to have this kind of career, their specific accomplishments and aspirations are not precisely similar. Table 1 compares aspects of an ideal career by gender and parental status.

RANK AND TENURE. Fathers are more likely to have received tenure and to be associate or full professors than mothers (77.0% versus 72.2%), although the difference between them is not statistically significant. We hypothesized that the lag in mothers' rank and tenure status might be a result of their use of work/family policies such as extending the tenure clock, and, as we will see relatively, about half of mothers did use these policies. Childless men are the least likely group to be tenured (56.4%).

Publishing and Awards. Publishing peer-reviewed articles is a defining characteristic of ideal careers. There was no significant difference in the number of peer-reviewed journal articles published by mothers and fathers, with each sub-group having an average of nine articles 10 years after they received their PhDs. During in-depth interviews, mothers explained time management strategies to explain how their publishing kept pace. When one mother was asked whether having a child affected her productivity, she responded,

You know, to tell you the truth I don't think so. It affected my work only in the sense that I became much more careful about managing my time. My productivity didn't decline I don't think because I worked very hard while I was pregnant to get some things in the pipeline.

Nonetheless, fathers are significantly more likely to have the goal of writing an important book compared to the other two groups (87.3% versus 64% of childless men and 69% of childless women). Fathers are also more likely to desire winning a research award, although the differences are not significant. To our surprise, fathers are also more desirous than the other groups of winning a teaching award. Perhaps fathers feel more pressure or have a greater desire to gain recognition for all their accomplishments. Or, perhaps, fathers are more confident that they will win such awards. Mothers, in contrast to fathers, childless men,

and childless women appear to be more innovative as they are more likely than the other groups to expect to conduct research in new substantive areas instead of only pursuing previous research, and are more likely to want additional grants to do so. These differences are also not statistically significant.

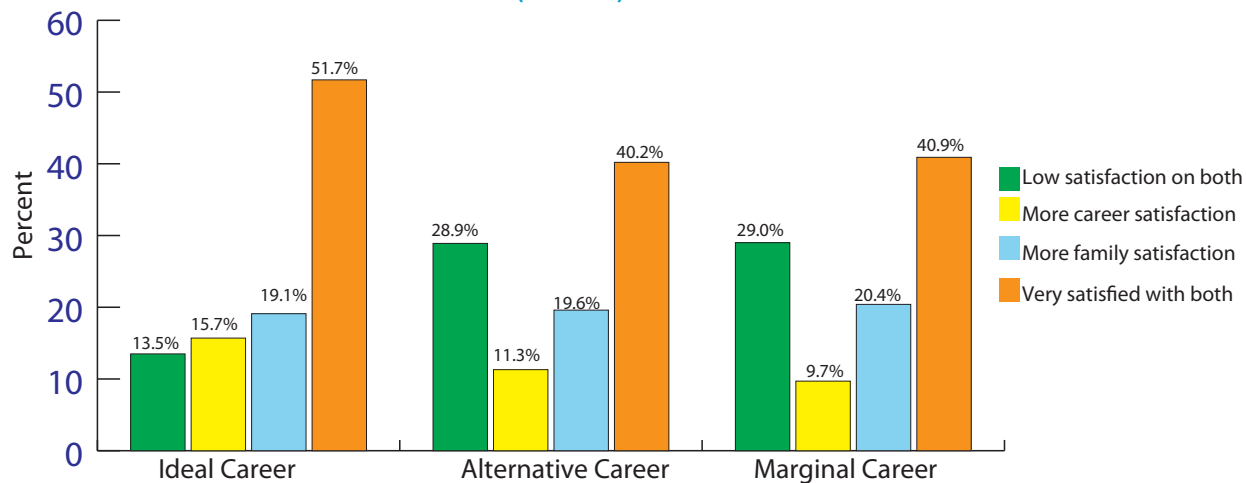
LEADERSHIP. Despite their family responsibilities, mothers are equally likely to aspire taking a leadership role in the disciplinary organization, and are slightly, though not significantly, more likely to report this as one of their career goals (37.2% compared to 35.2% of fathers, 31.6% of childless women, and 32.6% of childless men). By 2008, for the first time, women made up half (50.4%) of ASA's regular members, the principal professional group of the discipline. (Regular membership does not include student members, who receive a substantially lower membership rate.) Mothers are the most likely sub-group to belong to the ASA (about two-thirds of mothers belong compared to 50.6%-55.6% of the other groups), although the results are not significant. Although we do not have the information on section leadership by gender and parental status, we do have these data by gender. As of 2011, men and women were equally like to be a section officer, with 99 men and 100 women in the position of current chair, former chair, incoming chair, and secretary/treasurer. The latest report by the Committee on the Status of Women in Sociology (2009) examined the percentage of women in two

important leadership positions—the ASA Council and the Publications Committee—from 2005 to the present. These two elected bodies have very different sex compositions. The Council has been between 60%-72% female in these recent years, whereas the Publications committee has ranged from 25%-50%, much less than the Council. In addition, they found a dip in the percentage of women on the editorial boards of the discipline's two most prestigious journals, the *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology*. These findings suggest that despite their goal to gain leadership roles in the discipline, mothers (and childless women) may face challenges in some consequential leadership areas.

TIMING OF CHILDBIRTH AND TYPE OF CAREER

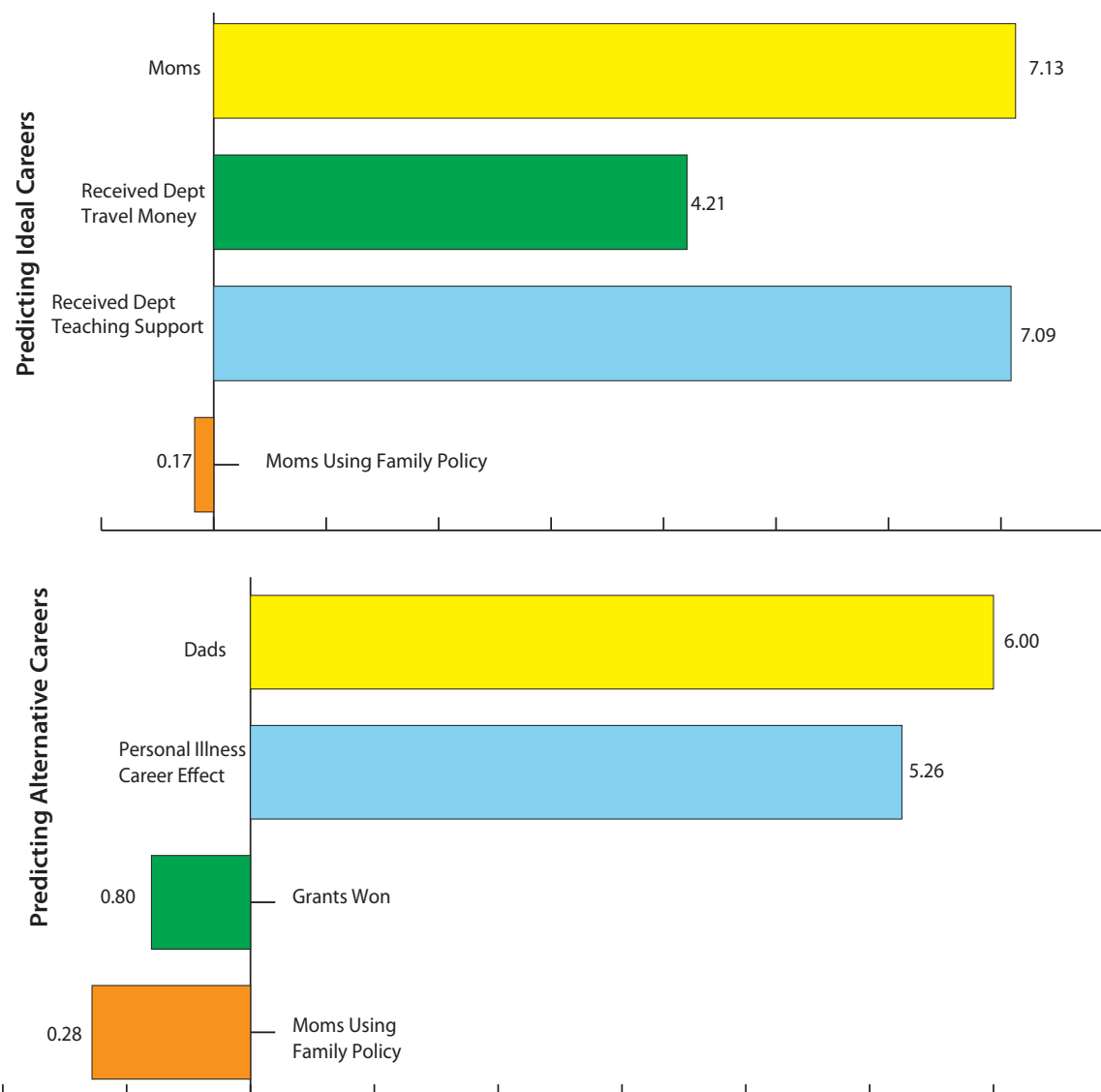
Of the respondents who reported having children, the vast majority (88.2%) had their first child prior to receiving tenure, despite received wisdom that it is best to wait until after tenure. Of those who had their first child prior to gaining tenure, half did so before receiving their PhD. Those respondents who received tenure before the birth or adoption of their first child were more likely to have ideal careers than those who received tenure after their first child (63.6 % compared to 50.0%). The differences are not significant, however, perhaps because such a small number waited until after tenure to have their first child.

Figure 4. How Does Career and Family Satisfaction Differ By Career Type? (Percent)



Source: *PhD+10: A Follow-up Survey on Career and Family Transitions In and Out of the Academic Sector, 2007* (Washington, DC).

Figure 5. Significant Factors Predicting Ideal or Alternative Career Type Among PhD Sociologists Ten Years After Completion, 2007 (Standardized Regression Coefficients)



Source: *PhD+10: A Follow-up Survey on Career and Family Transitions In and Out of the Academic Sector, 2007* (Washington, DC).

WORK-FAMILY POLICY AND TYPE OF CAREER

Only about one-quarter (25.4%) of all respondents reported using work/family policies of any kind. Work/family policies include paid and unpaid family leave, tenure clock breaks, modified teaching loads, part-time tenure-track positions, transitional support programs, and university sponsored child care to faculty who meet the conditions for their use (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2006). However, most institutions do not provide all of these policies. There were statistically significant differences in the use of work/family policies between men and women (18.0% and 32.4%, respectively). When we further disaggregated gender by parental status, we found that mothers were the most

likely group to use work/family policies (about half do), followed by fathers (23.0%). Childless men are the least likely to use this policy (10.6%). These differences are significant.

Those in ideal and marginal careers are the most likely to have used work/family policies (about 35.0%). Those in alternative careers are the least likely to have used work/family policies (29.0%), but the differences are not significant. Those with ideal careers are probably more likely to be teaching at universities and colleges that have the resources to implement these types of policies. Yet, the majority of mothers in ideal careers do not avail themselves of work/family policies. Other researchers suggest this is because they are afraid that

their academic reputation will suffer as a result of a professional culture biased against caregivers (Colbeck and Drago 2005; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004). Our research suggests that mothers who do not take institutionally-approved policies often rely on informal arrangements with the chairs of their departments. For example, one mother described the difference between university and department-level policies:

You know, we have a family friendly department here. But it doesn't mean that the college and the university are that friendly in their policies. No American universities I think have good maternity, paternity policies With my department chair we'd kind of worked [it] out so that I could have the spring semester without teaching and I would still do individual mentoring of students, work with graduate students I was working with, and do my research and then teach an extra class in the summer or in the fall to make up for it.

It is not clear why mothers in marginal careers had access to these policies.

WORK-FAMILY SATISFACTION

Women are less likely to be very satisfied with both work and family than men (40.0% versus 47.4%), although the differences are not significant. Further, there are no statistically significant differences among fathers, mothers, and childless men in being very satisfied with both their families and careers (47.2%, 43.6%, and 46.5%, respectively), with childless women the least likely to be very satisfied with both (36.4%).

Those with marginal and alternative careers are more likely to feel unsatisfied with both careers and families (29.0% of each group), whereas those with ideal careers are the most likely to feel very satisfied with both (51.7%). The ideal group is the most likely to feel more satisfaction with careers than with families, whereas the other groups are slightly more likely to feel more satisfied with their family life (see Figure 4). Although they appear to be more likely to have structured childbirth around career trajectories than vice versa, both mothers and fathers claim that they want to spend more time with their families. This lack of family time may be the reason for their lower satisfaction with family than with careers. In addition, despite efforts to time childbirth, this effort might not be successful and may result in lack of satisfaction with both careers and families.

Achieving balance is somewhat of a myth. I think the idea that somehow men or women make some extraordinary balance between career and family—you just do what the demand is in front of you. And if you wait—you know, that whole thing if you think there's a perfect time to start a family or start a career you're living in fantasy land.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The results of this analysis can be seen in Figure 5.

IDEAL CAREERS

POSITIVE FACTORS. Contrary to our expectations, being a mother significantly increases the likelihood of having an ideal career compared to a marginal career by seven times, according to our regression analysis (see Figure 5). Other factors that increase the likelihood of having a ideal rather than a marginal or an alternative career are receiving teaching support and department travel money at earlier stages of their careers (increasing the likelihood of an ideal career compared to a marginal career by seven times and 4.2 times, respectively). These resources are considered important by junior faculty in a recent study by the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (Trower 2010). As noted in an earlier brief examining this cohort, these general resources available to both men and women appear to help women's careers more than specific women-oriented policies such as family leave (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2006). Ten years after obtaining a PhD, the prestige of the graduate school attended is still significant, increasing the likelihood of an ideal career by 1.021 times, suggesting the long arm of the prestige, rewards, and networks obtained from highly ranked departments (Spalter-Roth, Kennelly, and Erskine 2004).

NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL FACTORS. Those with ideal careers have not had significant experience with job loss or illness. Those who experienced personal illness were less likely to pursue ideal careers, and more likely to pursue alternative careers. Somewhat surprisingly, the number of grants won was not significant. We expected those who specialized in gender studies during graduate school to be more likely to have marginal careers since gender is thought to be viewed negatively by senior faculty who promote and hire (at least according to anecdote). This was not the case. Specializing in gender studies had neither a positive nor a negative impact. We were also surprised that the likelihood of an ideal career was significantly reduced for mothers using

family policy, given that women junior faculty members think that this policy is important (Trower 2010), although others have found negative outcomes for some of these policies (Manchester, Leslie, and Kramer 2011). In other words, the use of family policy did not help in the pursuit of an ideal career, although the use of other resources did (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2005). Our earlier work (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2006) found that six years after the PhD, women who used family leave tended to be high publishers who appeared to be on an ideal career path. Yet, this ideal type career did not materialize.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

An ideal career path is assumed to be the model for the discipline and is promulgated in graduate programs. This career type includes tenured positions, more research and less teaching, receiving grants, writing peer-reviewed publications, as well as the having the willingness to take on leadership roles in the profession. The findings from this study suggest that women with children are equally likely to have ideal careers as men with children and childless men, with no significant differences between these sub-groups in the characteristics of their careers (except that mothers are more likely to use work/family policies). Mothers are seven times as likely to have ideal careers as fathers, childless men, and childless women, when provided with departmental resources such as teaching assistants and travel monies and when they attended prestigious graduate schools. Previous studies, such as the widely cited one by Mason and Goulden (2005), showing that women who have children are more likely than men with children to have marginal or alternative careers, appear not to be the case in sociology. It may be the case that childless women and childless men are less likely to desire an ideal career and may be more desirous of a career that focuses on teaching and public sociology. Perhaps some of the difference can be explained by the fact that an additional 14 percent of the childless women had children between the PhD+6 and the PhD+10 waves of the survey. These may be women who postponed childbirth until they completed the publishing requirements for tenure and promotion. Another puzzling finding is that the use of family policies was negatively related to both ideal and alternative careers, but positively related to marginal careers, despite the stated importance of this type of policy by women junior faculty. Perhaps the use of this kind of leave is still stigmatized, as Colebeck and Drago (2005) have suggested.

Only a small percentage of mothers stated that having children helped their careers (Spalter-Roth and Van Vooren 2008). Yet, the greater likelihood that mothers have ideal careers suggests that they have managed to balance work and family issues and succeed at careers requiring long hours of work and intense commitment. As one mother put it, “So I mean I think in some ways having kids it makes me more efficient because I don’t have time to procrastinate. Like if I have to sit down and write or revise a paper I don’t have time to work my way into it because I just I don’t have time. I just have to sit down and do it.” In fact, mothers with ideal careers are significantly more likely than those with marginal or alternative careers to be satisfied with both aspects

“Being in a tenure-track position at a research university right out of [a] doctoral program was great, but it significantly influenced my decisions about childbearing. I did not feel that it was in my best interest to get pregnant or go on maternity leave before tenure. Thus, I chose to wait until the tenure process was underway before starting trying to get pregnant. My daughter was born approximately 6 months after I received tenure. My decision to have only one child (now 2 and 1/2) is influenced by both the fact that I am now 40 and feel that window of opportunity for additional childbearing has passed me by and awful maternity policy in my college/university. In addition, I feel that if I chose to have another child, I would be giving up any hope of every becoming full. While my department was willing to provide me with additional support and was relatively child friendly, the Dean (a woman) would not support the department’s plan to give me a course off (that I would make up at a later date). So, as a result, I was back at work and teaching right away. Fortunately, I had some good support from graduate teaching assistants and was able to use administrative responsibilities to lighten my teaching load. Having a child did significantly slow down my research productivity. It took about two years to get back up to speed, and that is largely because I have great childcare available to me through a University daycare facility (which is not big enough to serve the needs of the university community and the university has been cutting funds to). Yet, when my daughter is sick, I am the one who has to take off work, schedule someone to cover my classes, etc... Don’t get me wrong, I think that being a parent has made me a better sociologist and a better person. I think that I made the right choices for me and I am not bitter about it. But, I think that there are still tremendous structural constraints for women in Academic Positions, particularly at research universities. I see this with my female colleagues.”

of their lives. Despite this greater satisfaction, some open-ended comments made by mothers responding to this survey suggest that they have paid a heavy price in order to succeed at ideal careers, including having fewer children than they wanted because of lack of structural

supports and husbands' help. The quote above captures that sentiment.

Yet, despite these difficulties in pursuing what some have referred to as the male model for careers that assumes academics are not encumbered with family responsibilities (Golden 2012), mothers in sociology appear to be as successful following an ideal career track as their male colleagues.

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