

## Gendered families, academic work and the 'motherhood penalty'

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### Abstract

Since the 1970s, women's representation among new doctorates and academics has increased dramatically in the English-speaking countries. However, notable differences continue in the work environment, rank, salary, and career development of academic men and women. This paper investigates why the academic gender gap persists, focusing only on the family lives of academics but acknowledging prevailing academic practices and recent university restructuring. Set within a feminist political economy and interpretive framework, the paper draws on two sets of qualitative interviews with academics from Canada in 1973 and New Zealand in 2008 to demonstrate gendered patterns over time in comparable places. Despite improvements in gender equity over the past forty years, I argue that the personal lives of academics continue to substantially differ. Many families still prioritise men's careers and employed mothers are typically 'penalised' in the labour market. These family and personal circumstances, when combined with institutional and academic priorities, help perpetuate the academic gender gap.

### Introduction

Since the 1970s, women's representation among new doctorates and academics has increased dramatically in New Zealand and other English-speaking countries (Auriol 2007, OECD 2008). Over the past forty years, feminists have successfully urged universities to become more cognisant of gender equity issues, expecting that the rise in qualified academic women would dramatically reduce male/female work discrepancies. However, I show in this paper that the academic gender gap persists in terms of disciplinary specialization, work location, job security, rank, salary, job satisfaction and career development, despite broad social and institutional changes.

Although universities have hired more women academics, they have also restructured to focus more on internationalisation, external funding and research productivity (Baker, 2009; Fletcher et al., 2007). Institutional priorities now focus more on international reputation, external funding and the entrepreneurial skills that male academics more often bring to the job, while academic practices continue to reward peer-reviewed research over teaching and service (Baker, 2012). In this paper, however, I focus only on explanations relating to gendered personal lives, including support from parents and partners, academics' living arrangements, their domestic division of labour, and the 'motherhood penalty'.

The article is set within feminist political economy and interpretive frameworks, drawing on previous theorising and research on the interdependence between gendered patterns of employment and family relations. The empirical portion is based on two sets of qualitative interviews with university-based academics in Canada in 1973 and New Zealand in 2008. Unlike studies that focus on institutional factors, this paper demonstrates that gendered families remain significant contributors to the academic gender gap. Combined with age-old academic values and new institutional priorities, gendered families continue to shape women's subjectivities and employment strategies, and diminish their rank and salaries.

## Theoretical framework

Feminist political economy theories argue that women's daily responsibility for household work tends to reduce their employment hours and productivity, especially in competitive workplaces (Grummell et al., 2009). This paper particularly draws on the 'motherhood penalty' research showing that the careers of mothers tend to lag behind those of childfree women and fathers (Baker 2010d; Budig & England, 2001; Portanti & Whitworth, 2009). In addition, prevalent marriage patterns, where women partner with older and professionally established men, augment the expectations that employed women will shoulder the 'second shift' of household work (Hochschild, 1989; Johnson & Johnson, 2008).

Interpretive perspectives, also used in this paper, acknowledge the different subjectivities of equally-qualified workers in the same occupation (Thomas & Davies, 2002). These theories generally suggest that the meanings associated with actions are socially constructed. Our subjectivities (including self-image and decisions) are shaped by the ways that we present ourselves to others and how they interpret, ignore, resist or reinforce our actions (Butler, 1997). In particular, I rely on 'performance' theories of gender, suggesting that masculinity and femininity are not what people are but what they do (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Kimmel, 2008). This approach acknowledges that women and men sometimes make different life 'choices', although these are shaped by circumstances and opportunities. Furthermore, even when women behave like men, their actions can be viewed, evaluated and legitimated differently (Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Kelan, 2009).

## Literature review

The 'academic gender gap' refers to male/female differences among university-based academics, including variations in job security, working hours, rank, salary, job satisfaction, collegial networks and retirement age. After decades of social change and institutional reform, this gap has diminished considerably but remains visible in all the English-speaking countries. The gender gap has been noted by studies in New Zealand (Baker 2009 & 20010a & b; Brooks, 1997; Middleton, 2009; Wilson, 1986), Australia (Carrington & Pratt, 2003; Probert, 2005; White, 2004); Canada (CAUT, 2008; Drakich & Stewart, 2007; Nakhaie, 2007), the United Kingdom (Brooks, 1997; Fletcher et al., 2007; Knights & Richards, 2004), and the United States (AAUP, 2006; Monroe et al., 2008; Toutkoushian et al., 2007), to mention only a few.

Gender differences are most notable at the 'senior' ranks<sup>1</sup> of academia. In New Zealand, 49.7 percent of new doctorates were earned by women in 2008 (NZ Ministry of Education, 2009) but only 20 percent of senior academics are women (HRC, 2008). Men occupy between 76 and 82 per cent of senior academic positions in New Zealand as well as Australia, Canada and the United States, down from 90 to 95 per cent in the 1960s (AAUP, 2006; Carrington & Pratt, 2003; HRC, 2008; Sussman & Yssaad, 2005). As more women enter the profession, there is clear evidence of inter-generational change but the gender gap cannot be attributed solely to fewer women doctorates in the past. It is also influenced by institutional priorities and practices, a 'chilly climate' for women and an 'unbreakable glass ceiling' (Drakich & Stewart, 2007). Family circumstances and responsibilities, and personal priorities also perpetuate the gender gap (Baker, 2010a; Bassett, 2005).

This paper focuses on the family/personal lives of academics, drawing on five gendered patterns in the literature. Researchers find that parental encouragement and family background shape educational and occupational achievement (Reay et al., 2001; Van De Werfhorst et al.,

<sup>1</sup> In North America, 'senior' includes full professors but in the other countries includes both associate professors and professors.

2003) but the personal consequences of gaining a doctorate and developing a professional career vary by gender. Firstly, academic men are more likely to be married with children, while more academic women are single, separated, divorced and sole parents (Wolfinger et al., 2008). In earlier New Zealand research, Ann Brooks found that 85 percent of men and 56 percent of academic women were married, 6 percent of men and 19 percent of women were separated or divorced, and 8 percent of men and 24 percent of women were never-married (Brooks, 1997, 74). More recent American figures reinforce this pattern. Twelve years after the doctorate, 69 per cent of men in tenured/tenure-track positions are married with children, compared to 41 per cent of women (Mason et al., 2006).

Secondly, a 'marriage gradient' is visible in national populations, with men marrying 'down' in terms of age, educational attainment and occupational status (Baker, 2010b). Academics also follow this pattern. For example, Mason et al (2006) found that married male doctoral students in America were more likely than females to have younger partners with part-time, temporary or no paid jobs. Marriage to a 'junior partner' enables men's careers to gain priority in the household (Bracken et al., 2006).

Thirdly, partnered academic women are more likely than comparable men to have dual-career marriages where both partners work long hours (Jacobs, 2004). In professional jobs, a stable relationship is often considered advantageous for promotion because it represents maturity and social integration (Toutkoushian et al., 2007). Both men and women benefit from having highly educated spouses, which expands their networks and enhances social capital (Xie & Shauman, 1998). However, research suggests that marriage to a non-employed spouse is a definite asset for men's salary and promotion but an asset only for women's initial promotion (Bellas, 1994). Furthermore, academic couples often critique each other's articles and sometimes publish together but women's male partners tend to have seniority (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). For this reason, early-career women need to maintain some intellectual autonomy from their partners to be seen as independent scholars (Creamer, 2006; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2003).

Fourthly, more women than men are primary caregivers of young children and researchers conclude that 'babies matter' to academic women's promotion (Grummell et al., 2009). Living with young children is associated with employment and earnings advantages for men but disadvantages for women (Correll et al., 2007). Women academics are also more likely than comparable men and other women professionals to remain childless, while academic men are more likely than other male professionals to become fathers (Bassett, 2005; Hewlett & Vite-Leon, 2002). Tenure-stream university jobs are over-represented with childfree women while part-time or contractual work attracts more married mothers (Harper et al., 2001). Furthermore, mothers are less likely than fathers or childless women to reach the senior ranks of academia (Probert, 2005; Monroe et al., 2008).

Fifthly, women tend to accept more responsibility than men for housework even when they work full-time (Craig, 2006; Lindsay, 2008), which also pertains to academics (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Educated men perform more household work than other men (Craig, 2006) but male academics still report less involvement than female academics (Mason et al., 2006). Academic mothers with full-time tenure-track positions clearly face challenges but they also may have found more family support or better childcare services than women employed part-time.

All these studies suggest notable gender differences in the personal lives of academics and the rest of this paper focuses on my two sets of interviews before drawing tentative conclusions. The interview themes relate to parental support for an academic career, partner support, the 'motherhood penalty', the household division of labour, and family constraints to work-related travel.

## The interviews: Methodology

My first study was done in Canada in 1973 and the second in New Zealand in 2008. Both sets of qualitative interviews focused on participant perceptions of the impact of gender, marital status and parental status on academic careers, comparing two eras and heightening our understanding of the family-related reasons behind the academic gender gap. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on details of their family and academic backgrounds, their living arrangements, mentoring experiences, and their working environment. The 2008 interviews further noted the influence of university type ('research' versus 'teaching' university<sup>2</sup>) on career satisfaction and development.

These two studies are integrated into one paper to demonstrate changes in the gender gap over time in comparable places. Both Canada and New Zealand are bicultural countries sharing similar policies/laws<sup>3</sup> and socio-demographic trends such as gendered patterns of work (Baker 2006, 2010c). Despite the countries' distance from each other and their population differences<sup>4</sup>, they have experienced comparable increases in women's educational attainment and representation in academia. Their university ranking systems use different nomenclature and gaining job security is often rigorous in Canada. However, their universities are publicly funded<sup>5</sup>, they both hire high percentages of foreign-born academics, and criteria for hiring and promotion are comparable.

The first study was situated in a 'research' university in Western Canada and began with an analysis of contributors to the gender gap and academic practices in North American universities (Baker, 1975). The 1970s coincided with the second phase of the feminist movement and several investigations of women's status, including university-based and a royal commission. Many women at the Canadian university had migrated from the United States to take up positions (or accompany their husbands) during the expansion of universities in the late 1960s. This suggests that geographic mobility was important to the academic profession even then.

The Canadian study consisted of 40 qualitative interviews with women in male-dominated departments at a time when women formed 13.5 percent of full-time permanent academics. In 1973, nearly all departments had a majority of male academics while some contained few or no women. I contacted the women by telephone and asked to interview them in their offices. The sample consisted mainly of full-time academics from assistant professor to full professor but also included temporary lecturers, doctoral students and former students who recently withdrew from the doctoral program. The project focused on the inconsistencies between university discourse about academic merit and the realities of 'particularism' experienced by these participants. It also explored their experiences of being women in a male-dominated profession, as well as their role models and mentors, career trajectories, and personal circumstances.

The 2008 New Zealand study included qualitative interviews with 30 male and female academics working in two universities on the North Island. One is a large university that prides itself on its research and postgraduate education and enjoys a high national/international reputation. The second is newer and more oriented to undergraduate teaching, with higher class contact hours, slightly more women in senior positions, and a lower national/international profile.

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2 In official statistics, universities are often divided into undergraduate/teaching universities (focusing more on undergraduate teaching) and medical/doctoral/research universities (focusing heavily on research and postgraduate supervision), although there is sometimes a 'comprehensive' category in between.

3 With some exceptions in French Canada.

4 Canada's population is about 34 million (Statistics Canada 2011); New Zealand has over 4 million (Immigration New Zealand 2011).

5 Universities are also provincially administered and funded in Canada.

The participants were personally contacted by email, invited to be interviewed<sup>6</sup>, and the interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. The sample included men and women with doctorates who had permanent positions in all academic ranks (lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, and professor). I tried to keep workplace culture constant by focusing on the humanities and social sciences. The views and experiences of participants were compared by sex, rank and university type.

These two sets of interviews are not meant to form a systematic comparison of academics working in different jurisdictions and eras, as the study designs varied slightly. Instead, the rich and subjective verbatim comments are used to enhance our understanding of the wider research, including social and institutional changes. The rest of this article focuses on the findings, beginning with gender and parental support.

## Parental support for doctorate and career

### Parental support: 1973

In the Canadian study, many women reported that they had been encouraged by parents and/or teachers to continue their education at a time when only about ten percent of new doctorates were awarded to women. Clearly, these participants were contravening gendered practices by gaining doctorates but many also came from privileged families that emphasized the importance of tertiary education. However, less parental or societal support seemed to be available in the 1970s than in later decades for women to pursue professional careers.

A lecturer in education reported that her mother encouraged her to attend university and study law but never thought that she would finish her degree or work as a lawyer. She reported that her parents 'saw a career as *insurance* in case I did not get married, or as something to do before marriage' (ibid, 167). In a similar vein, a part-time lecturer mentioned that her parents opposed her career choice as a lecturer:

They thought that after I got my PhD I would settle down and be 'normal'. They felt that it was just something that I had to get out of my system. They brag about what I have done, but they think I'm deviant (ibid, 168).

Another woman in law mentioned that her father was concerned that she would become 'too hard-nosed' and would 'move too far away from my *natural* role as wife and mother' (ibid, 166).

These comments suggest that middle-class parents in that era may have encouraged their daughters to obtain a doctorate but did not always expect them to enter male-dominated careers.

### Parental support: 2008

Nearly half of recent doctorates are now awarded to women in both countries, female role models are available, and more people live outside marriage, suggesting that fewer unmarried career women would be viewed as 'deviant'. However, having supportive parents still makes it easier to develop successful careers. In the 2008 interviews, several participants from the research university mentioned that their parents had tertiary degrees, were high-level professionals, or were 'self-taught intellectuals' who encouraged them to strive for academic excellence. For example, a male lecturer who recently came to the research university from a privileged American family talked about his decision to pursue a doctorate: 'It's always been in the back of my mind. My dad has a double doctorate, he's got a PhD and a DDS and my mother's an MD. So it was ... a natural thing to do.'

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<sup>6</sup> Christine Todd, a mature MA graduate, completed one quarter of the interviews and I did the rest.

The participants particularly spoke of their father's influence on their decision to pursue a doctorate. For example, a senior woman (unmarried, childfree) reported strong paternal support for her doctorate:

I come from an academic background so I've kind of taken in a certain amount of knowledge by my father... So I guess I always thought that I had a bit of a head start in that sense of having that kind of knowledge.

A married father in a senior position said: 'My dad was fantastic... genuinely interested in my PhD. He used to read my draft chapters and talk to me about them.' Paternal encouragement seemed important for both sexes.

Several women, however, spoke of their parents' lack of interest in their career, even though some had already reached the senior professoriate. For example, a senior woman said: 'My mother definitely was a bit discouraging [about her doing a doctorate], couldn't understand why I bothered. My father was proud ... but fairly non-committal.' Another female senior professor said: 'My father died when I was young and my mother thought I should get married. She didn't disapprove [of me doing a doctorate] but didn't encourage it.' Several participants implied that their career decisions were more attributable to academic mentors than to their parents.

Other participants seemed to experience multiple family obstacles, such as lack of parental support or additional family/cultural responsibilities. A female senior lecturer from the teaching university said: 'My family could never work out why I ever went to university and so I had no family support for this direction at all... I come from a working class background'. A female lecturer at the research university, who also came from a low-income family, spoke of her mother's lack of education and a cultural background that did not encourage an 'individualistic career'. Participants who mentioned lack of parental support were more often women, those from working-class backgrounds, and/or employees of the teaching university. As in the 1973 study, several women in the 2008 interviews talked about their homemaker mothers as *negative* role models.

A few participants mentioned parental support with caring work, which enabled them to pursue their careers while raising young children. For example, a sole mother said: 'My parents both work but they generally come once a week and pick [child] up and take him home so I can work late.' A partnered mother said: 'We both have family here and they do babysitting and things like that.' Mainly women spoke of childcare assistance but these women seemed more optimistic about integrating work and family in a long-hours culture. However, this assistance sometimes came with 'strings attached'. For example, a male participant reported that his mother-in-law interfered with their domestic affairs and criticised his wife's career aspirations, housekeeping and childrearing practices when she came to care for her grandchildren. Other participants were migrants who lived too far from parents to take advantage of their assistance but most women reported that partner support had become more consequential to their careers.

## Marriage and partner support

### Partner support: 1973

In the Canadian study, numerous women were unmarried or divorced at a time when marriage rates were historically high, the age of marriage was low, and divorce laws were restrictive (Baker, 2010c). Consequently, remaining unmarried was unusual and cohabitation was rare. One unmarried doctoral student in education commented: 'I am a bit of an embarrassment to my parents, as mother thinks that being unmarried is unnatural and sad' (Baker, 1975, 183).

Another unmarried doctoral student in social sciences stated: 'I am aware of the pressures to marry and aware that I am bucking the stereotype. The biggest hurdle for a single woman to overcome is social ostracism.' Later she talked about women's double bind when she said:

If a woman is not married, they assume that she is either a 'recluse' or will run off and get married any minute. If she is married, then they assume her family responsibilities will interfere with her job (ibid, 183).

Several married women talked about supportive husbands who strongly encouraged them to complete their doctorates and pursue an academic career. For example, an associate professor of education said that her husband had 'no desire for the kind of wife who stays at home and diddles around the house' (Baker, 1975, 168). However, not all women I interviewed were so fortunate. One temporary humanities lecturer talked about her former husband who 'generally disapproved of women working outside the home' (ibid, 169). When they later divorced, she returned to university to complete her doctorate but never found permanent academic work.

A trend was apparent in the 1973 interviews for women who lacked partner support to experience more work/family conflict and a lower academic rank. However, several participants rationalised their lowly positions by stating that they were 'grateful for the appointment'. This was especially the case for women who experienced difficulties finding a position at the same university as their husband due to anti-nepotism rules<sup>7</sup>. After a period of unemployment, some women accepted any university offer, without attempting to bargain for a higher salary or better conditions (Baker, 1975, 135).

### **Partner support: 2008**

The New Zealand participants were chosen largely by rank but more men than women were partnered parents. All twelve men were married or cohabiting, and eight out of twelve (67%) were married/partnered fathers, with another two contemplating fatherhood in the near future. In contrast, only ten out of eighteen women (56%) were married or cohabiting, the same percentage that Brooks (1997) found in her earlier New Zealand research. In my study, only ten women (56%) were mothers but half of these (five) were sole parents. Fewer women than men at the higher ranks were parents, which mirrors overseas findings. Among the partnered participants, three women said that their male partners were retired or semi-retired. A higher percentage of men reported partners outside paid work or working part-time, or who had changed jobs and/or reduced their employment hours with his career moves.

The wider research generally concludes that most married academics report that their partner supports their career (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005) and the 2008 interviews mirrored these findings. For example, a young mother with a self-employed husband said: 'I've been very lucky to have somebody who is incredibly supportive... I don't think I would have been able to do all kinds of things that I have done if I hadn't had somebody who was there with me all the way through it.' A male senior lecturer at the teaching university talked at length about his supportive academic wife:

She has academic skills that complement mine and she helps me out in my own work sometimes. If I've got a journal article that I'm writing, I can hand it to her and she can go through it and proofread it.

Participants also told stories about unsupportive spouses, although most were now ex-partners. One male professor spoke of his first wife who would not allow him to discuss work-related matters at home and failed to take an interest in his first book, although she gave dinner parties for his colleagues. He later noted that his current wife, who works part-time, is more accommodating. In contrast, a number of women reported making major career sacrifices for ex-

<sup>7</sup> These rules prevented family members from gaining permanent jobs in the same department or institution.

husbands who failed to acknowledge their support. Previous studies conclude that separation/divorce is widespread for academics during early career, especially for women (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005).

Several women in the 2008 study reported that they had no partner to share their career triumphs, tribulations or domestic workload, which was both an advantage and disadvantage. A senior academic, who was single and childfree, expressed this succinctly when she said: ‘It’s *clearly* an advantage being single, instead of trying to carry the double load that a lot of my women friends do. But it has its down side ....’ A young sole mother, who recently arrived from overseas, expressed a typical female concern about lack of domestic support when she said:

Men seem to have no problems setting roots as young academics because they have women to look after them. I needed a wife, if that makes sense... I mean for me, it’s a high-pressure kind of job and to be in a foreign country...

Marriage seemed to be a form of social capital for many men but fewer women. In fact, some participants noted that women’s marital status could alter collegial perceptions about career commitment. As one young unmarried female lecturer said:

Guys might say that when they apply for a job being married is seen as a good thing that they’re seen as ‘long term’. I don’t know if that’s the same for women that you might be seen to be a bit risky if you’re married because then you might want to have children.

Both studies included stories of female partners who began their career with higher qualifications than their husband or was the first to receive a doctorate/academic position. However, at the time of the interview the male partner held a more senior job or was working full-time while she had downsized to part-time or less prestigious work. These examples reflect a wider pattern, prevalent in the past but continuing today, of couples prioritising the man’s career or women taking leave for child rearing.

## Having and raising children

### Children and academic careers: 1973

The women in the earlier study typically reported traditional households with gendered divisions of labour. Particularly the mothers said that they had to work harder than men to integrate their academic and domestic duties. One woman said: ‘Society is set up in such a way to give women a double load. The more conscientious they are about bringing up their families, the more they are penalised’ (ibid, 180). An assistant professor stated that she had to work ‘one-and-a-half to two times as hard as a man to keep everything going ... My husband has a traditional view of women and doesn’t help out at home’ (ibid, 177). Several mothers also reported that their attention had become divided between university work and children, which childfree participants viewed as a reason to avoid motherhood. For example, a childfree associate professor in education commented: ‘Teaching university is a very full-time job. If I had children, something would get lost in the shuffle. Can you really have both and do it well (ibid, 178)?’ The mothers who maintained a traditional division of labour at home generally held lower ranking jobs, including part-time or temporary positions.

Some mothers consciously requested part-time work to focus on family responsibilities but they mistakenly expected to secure permanent positions later. Others successfully managed to obtain tenure-stream jobs. For example, a woman full professor mentioned that after she completed her doctorate, she had been given a temporary appointment and one-third of the salary her husband received without a doctorate. However, she quickly added: ‘I wanted a part-time job until I was sure that I could handle a full-time job and my baby’. Despite working the



equivalent of full-time hours, she felt that her salary 'seemed reasonable at the time' (Baker, 1975, 136). Some of these comments sound antiquated, as women's presence in the workforce is now much stronger and equity issues more prominent.

### **Children and academic careers: 2008**

In the 2008 study, more participants cohabited without marriage but they typically postponed parenthood until they obtained doctorates and found permanent positions. Most saw having children as desirable but the women more often viewed them as career obstacles. Several participants weighed the advantages and disadvantages of having a child or another child, such as this young mother:

We're feeling - well [child] is so great maybe we would like to have a second one... but one of the big things is for me feeling like this has had a big impact on my publishing career and would a second child ... be sort of exponential?

Several childfree women talked about why they had not reproduced. One senior lecturer at the teaching university said:

I love kids, it's just that circumstances have meant that I've not had kids, but I'm sure that those circumstances have a lot to do with my choice of career... I hear these stories about how you have to coincide your pregnancies with the summer break (laughter) ... and about the pressure if you have to make a decision to take time off to be a mum. Will you be able to pick up, will you be left behind?

The men also talked about children slowing the pace of their publishing and promotion but they tended to view them as a mixed blessing. For example, a senior academic man said: 'Having children is the greatest sacrifice you can make ... it's also the greatest blessing in some ways. It prevents you from being a single track workaholic'.

In contrast, the women worried that children would truncate their career mobility with the sheer extent of caring work. A childfree woman professor articulated this very clearly: 'Academic couples that I know with children, it's still seemed to be more the mother that takes on the responsibility... My sense is that having children has a much bigger impact on the mother... in terms of career.' Academics tend to use childcare services during working hours but they also need substitute care in the evenings and weekends, when the child is sick, and especially during conferences or research trips. Particularly mothers talked about such dilemmas; while some could rely on care by the child's father, others depended on their mothers and friends to assist them.

In the 1973 study, women typically took several years off work to have and raise children, and mothers who worked full-time insisted on the importance of efficiency in managing their careers. Most viewed housework as women's duty although they also hired sitters and home cleaners, and were assisted by their mothers. In the 2008 study, the younger women took shorter parental leave and then used public childcare services. However, finding suitable care remained a major concern for mothers in both eras. The household division of labour was also problematic in both studies but in the next section I focus on gender differences in the 2008 study.

### **Male participants and housework: 2008**

Like the earlier study, the partnered participants in 2008 seldom reported equally-shared housework. The few men who initially mentioned sharing were childfree and/or lived with women professionals but their statements about equal sharing were usually modified after further discussion. They also reported partner disagreements over housework. For example, a senior childless man, living with a senior academic woman, said: 'We share the housework

50/50 but I don't do the washing because I'm incompetent at it [laughter]. I might wash the wrong colours together so she's quite happy to do all of that.' Other men suggested that they chose which tasks they preferred. A childless man cohabiting with an academic woman claimed to share the housework but also mentioned that he had been doing little cooking since starting a new job. When I said: 'So are you suggesting then that you divide the household tasks fairly equally?' he answered:

No, I'm suggesting that I do the things that I like doing and [partner] does the rest (laughter)... I think [partner] does something along the lines of 65% and I do the rest. She would probably say that it's more like 75%.

Both sexes suggested that a difference of opinion existed about how much housework the men actually did, and when and how it should be done. For example, a senior lecturer father married to an academic woman reported that he did more housework than most men:

In terms of housework, we're both involved although I would say she probably does a majority, but I don't think it's a great majority. Compared to most professional couples, I think I do more housework than your average male partner does... We do have some issues which probably many couples have. At times, her tolerance for clutter is less than mine, you know?

Most men reported that his female partner did more housework, such as this lecturer father married to a homemaker:

Ah, she carries the lion's share of it. The responsibilities that fall to me are typically, um, well when I get home, I get home shortly after 5, and I then take the children, she works on the preparation for the meal...

Especially fathers living with homemakers or part-time workers were unlikely to report equal sharing but there was a certain amount of nervous laughter from men relating to the housework questions, implying that their partner might not agree with their answer.

### **Female participants and housework: 2008**

The women typically reported that they shouldered the housework and many complained about an uneven workload. Even women with non-employed partners (retired or semi-retired) claimed to take responsibility for most household chores. To explain this, women said they had 'higher standards' or reported their partner's unwillingness to share. The single women also did most of their own housework, including those who lived with relatives. One woman who lived with her frail mother and elderly uncle reported that she had to do the housework for everyone because her mother was too ill and her uncle feigned lack of knowledge of the equipment. Several women implied that an inequitable domestic workload was a major factor in their separation, such as this woman from the teaching university: 'That was one of things that led to our separation ... I realised we'd both come home from work together and I went into the kitchen and started doing (the dinner) and he sat and read the paper.'

A domestic division of labour in which women did the 'lion's share' was especially likely among older participants, parents with young children, and couples where the wife was employed less than full-time. However, even female professors reported doing most of the housework. One senior professor from the research university said: 'I don't mind [doing 80% of the housework]... It really is a question of competency,' suggesting that she was more efficient and skilled at cooking and cleaning. Many mothers (but no fathers) cited the sheer amount of household work as a reason for lower research productivity or for reducing their employment hours. The single participants (all women) explicitly mentioned that their marital status provided better opportunities for research and academic travel, which universities now prioritise.

### Family constraints to work-related travel

Women academics are more likely than males to change jobs for their partner's career moves (Bracken et al., 2006) but several women in the 2008 study came from overseas with their husband as the 'trailing spouse'. This kind of role reversal is becoming more prevalent as universities attempt to meet their gender equity goals. These women reported that their (older) male partner had decided to retire, to live off his inheritance, work part-time or become a consultant before he agreed to accompany her to New Zealand.

In contrast, more male participants reported living with partners who had moved from overseas to accompany them to their current positions. The males typically downplayed the relocation consequences for their wife. For example, I asked a male lecturer who had recently arrived from America if his wife had any concerns about moving around the world. He replied: 'Not really. A few concerns here and there. I mean we'd always anticipated moving back ... but we both like travelling and it's not necessarily a permanent move.' No mention was made of the implications for her career or the distance from family/friends. In these interviews, accompanying wives often accepted job demotions or marginal employment to accommodate their husband's career.

Several male participants mentioned that they had made short-term moves for their wife's career. For example, two men from academic couples said that at one stage they held jobs in different universities and countries than their wives. They took leave for six months or one year in order to live together, and eventually found work in the same city. However, one of the two female partners (but neither of the males) accepted a job demotion to do so.

In the current competitive job market, the need for geographic mobility has become more important. Many participants in the 2008 study reported that they could improve their professional circumstances if they moved overseas but those with partners and children sometimes doubted that they could relocate because their partner would not agree to move or their children's lives would be disrupted. Concern about lack of geographic mobility was particularly reported by the men, perhaps because their aspirations were higher and more were 'head-hunted' for overseas jobs. One ambitious man (senior lecturer) married to an academic woman expressed this quite explicitly: 'I've been offered lots of jobs overseas but I can't take them. It's not an option ... If I wasn't married with kids, I would have left here three years ago'.

Many of the male participants acknowledged and appreciated their partner's willingness to move overseas. For example, a married father in his early thirties said: 'My wife has always been very supportive of my career ... She can easily find work, you know, wherever she arrives or wherever we go'. However, family constraints to relocating to improve job prospects were clearly a 'bone of contention' for many men. A senior male talked about the possibility of moving overseas for a job he applied for but did not get. I asked him explicitly if the move would have been a problem for his wife's career: 'I suppose it would have been ... but she would have been willing to try something else.' Although we do not know his wife's view on relocating, his comments provide another example of the assumption that men's careers should be granted priority.

Several women (but no men) seemed unaware that receiving external job offers could be used as career-enhancing bargaining tools, and most expressed disapproval of such tactics. The men were more likely to perceive promotional opportunities overseas and at their current university but particularly men partnered with women professionals lamented the constraints to accepting external offers. In contrast, women participants seemed more inclined to focus on their current duties, and only two women mentioned recruitment to external positions. Perhaps this can be explained by women's more junior rank and their lower social capital as academics.

## Conclusions

My two studies, along with the wider research, suggest that gendered living arrangements and unequal workloads at home contribute to the perpetuation of the academic gender gap. Despite decades of changing gender relations, more academic men than women continue to live in two-parent households with younger partners who have lower work attachment. Furthermore, academic women who are married mothers with young children are much more likely than fathers to work in part-time, temporary jobs or junior positions, and women academics who maintain a traditional division of labour at home seem less able to gain promotion.

The fact that a disproportionate percentage of tenured and senior academic women are single, divorced and childless suggests that integrating work and family remains problematic for women. Those who combine full-time academic work with motherhood continue to face tremendous challenges in terms of working hours, stress levels and work/family conflict, especially when they become sole mothers (Munroe et al., 2008). The current university emphasis on raising research productivity and promoting international reputation and collaboration tend to exacerbate these challenges.

In other publications, I have addressed the contribution to the gender gap of academic practices and institutional restructuring (Baker, 2009 & 2013). This particular paper has emphasised the importance of gendered families, demonstrating that regardless of educational qualifications and occupational prestige, women are more likely than men to fit their employment around their family's needs. They do this out of love, to avoid marital conflict, to 'perform gender', and from lack of alternative support. Furthermore, childfree women are still more likely than mothers with several children to reach the highest academic ranks, and women who reach the senior ranks more often remain single, become separated or divorced, and produce fewer children than they might otherwise have chosen.

Women are now marrying and producing children later than in the 1970s and more are gaining tertiary qualifications and pursuing academic careers. A disproportionate number of academic women continue to remain childfree, partly because the timing of reproduction conflicts with gaining a doctorate or job security. Many mothers complete doctorates after their children are in school but this pattern usually means that they cannot reach the professoriate by retirement age.

The research in this paper shows that women who become mothers typically work harder than men to create work/life balance but they also accept more responsibility for household work, including allocating, doing and supervising it. This relates to gendered expectations and personal preferences, but someone has to take responsibility for organising, cleaning and caring. Shouldering the burden and pleasures of family activities may enrich women's lives but it also limits time and energy to devote to career advancement and personal leisure. Heavy care responsibilities could either reduce women's ambition and productivity, or require them to develop very efficient work habits.

To counteract gendered relations at home, academic women need to discuss the implications of their domestic practices with their partners, friends and mentors. This includes the personal satisfactions as well as the potential career 'penalties', as the research clearly shows that the domestic division of labour matter to women's careers. Nevertheless, meaningful change will require complex negotiations between partners and within households, and many women feel powerless to change their male partner's behaviour. Currently, universities seem preoccupied with funding, managerial and reputational concerns rather than equity issues, suggesting that most institutions will provide women employees with little formal assistance to counteract the impact of gendered families.

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