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Early Career

“It Is Tenure or It Is Nothing”

The earliest years in a faculty member’s career life-cycle are likely to be the most difficult ones (Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992). Many factors contribute to these difficulties, and life balancing issues are among them. Indeed, with few exceptions, early-career faculty in this study find it challenging to establish what they would consider a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives. The reasons are manifold, and some cut across lifestyles and family constellations. These general issues are addressed first in this section before the analysis moves on to topics that vary depending upon the faculty members’ specific life circumstances.

The Curse of Ill-Defined Expectations: “It’s a Moving Target”

“Am I able to balance. . . ? I would say ‘no.’ Not at all” are the words of Flagship University’s assistant professor Dr. Miller. She is convinced that what she sees as her rather limited success at establishing a healthy balance between the personal and professional spheres of her life is symptomatic of the academic profession. It is not just she, in other words, who is struggling at finding balance. It simply comes with being a faculty member in a high-pressure environment. Not being able to find a satisfying balance is, furthermore, not exclusively a trait of faculty with families but typical

for most faculty members. It is also not limited to women but faces men as well. In Dr. Miller's words:

In terms of personal life, family is just one aspect of personal life. I would be hard-pressed to name more than a handful of people in my field total who have thriving personal lives outside of the field, because there's just so much pressure in general on performing academically that there isn't much room left for personal life. . . . I was told early on when I was a grad student by one of the senior faculty in my department that I could have at best two of the following three things. I could have a career, a life, or a family but you can't have all three. I found even having two was hard, but I can't do all three successfully. Even for the men, you can barely do two successfully.

She elaborates that one of her biggest struggles derives from feeling that nothing ever gets done to the extent or with the quality she would like. Academics, she explains, tend never to know how much work is enough and, subsequently, carry a constant sense of guilt because they are never doing as much as they could. The academy is remiss at providing clear expectations, and as long as faculty don't know what, exactly, the expectations are and what it takes to succeed, they are doomed to try to do as much as they possibly can. She recounts attending a meeting on the tenure and promotion process called by the deans of her institution, hoping to learn specifics about work expectations. She left empty-handed.

I wanted to know, and I didn't expect they could give this, and they didn't. I wanted to know on average how many papers I need a year. On average, what do my teaching evaluations need to be? I know it's a very

complicated formula, and it's a moving target, and they can't give those numbers, but if I could have those numbers in front of me, I could say: "OK, this is my goal, and if I can meet that goal, I'm OK and I don't have to worry about it." But they don't exist.

Dr. Miller explains how unclear expectations in the academy are reflected by a lack of boundaries within the self. She describes finding it difficult to say "no" when an opportunity presents itself, although she may not have the time to devote to the task. She may also say "yes" to activities not essential for her pursuit of tenure. Puzzled with herself she asks:

Why would you choose that? Why would you choose to live your life out of balance? I don't know. It's not that I choose it consciously . . . Maybe that's the obstacle. Maybe the obstacle is I don't know how to say 'no' effectively. Or that I don't want to.

Perhaps what plagues not only Dr. Miller but many other academics, namely the inability to say "no," has its roots in how she generally feels about her job. It, according to her, "isn't just a job. It's sort of my life, for better or worse. What allows me to have a life is that my job is my life, and I'm passionate about it." She cannot conceive of leaving her job because of her family, for instance, knowing that she would "feel totally ungrounded" given that her field "is so deeply part of who I am; without it, I would be totally out of balance. It is not something I can give up."

The curse of ill-defined expectations echoes throughout interviews with early-career professionals. These are the words chosen by different people to describe the same phenomenon:

Not always being sure that you are doing everything right. Not always being sure you are meeting the invisible

line that has been drawn, so you don't know when you are just taking on too much.

It feels like I'll get a big pass/fail grade in six years, and I kind of know what I need to do to get a pass, but not very directly. . . . The lack of clarity, . . . if you don't get the information through the grapevine, then you might not know.

Even faculty who seem fairly happy with their own balancing act are plagued by the great unknown. Flagship University's assistant professor McLeod, mother of a two-year old and pregnant, talks about her balance working "pretty well." She is happy that her daughter has the same day care schedule as her work schedule, and reports that she does not work much in the evening or on weekends. What she does not know is whether her lifestyle is going to "produce the appropriate level of productivity" and, accordingly, writing papers is "probably the major thing on my mind."

Coupled with the problem of ill-defined expectations is the paradox of flexibility. Academics have the reputation of benefiting from relative freedom to define the boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Dr. Calhoun, assistant professor at Private Comprehensive, however, is not able to enjoy this flexibility. This is what she has to say:

Part of the problem for me at least is that when you don't have a clearly defined 9 to 5 job it is not like you can leave at the end of the day and say "I'm done." Your project is always with you in a certain sense. On the one hand, I feel like I have a lot of free time because my time is not scheduled. On the other hand, I feel like I don't have any free time because since my time isn't scheduled, or as scheduled, at any moment I could be working or arguably should be working. Sometime I think if I could set banker's hours in some way and sort

of tell myself that I'm working from 8 to 6 and then I'm done, but thus far I haven't had a lot of success holding myself to those commitments.

Quite a bit has been written about unclear expectations and ill-defined boundaries. Colbeck observes that faculty may have much discretion over how they allocate their time and integrate roles, but they work under intense pressure to meet high expectations that are often unclearly specified. She quotes a colleague saying that faculty "enjoy the freedom to work themselves to death" (Colbeck, 2006, p. 47).

The consequences of unclear expectations can be exacerbated when faculty work in isolation. Assistant professor Dr. Adams at Metropolitan University describes that, in her case, isolation does not necessarily stem from colleagues' lack of interest in her research area. Nor is it due to their unwillingness to help. Rather, she finds, they are simply unable to find the time to help her, and she feels as if she would bother them given their workload. The end result is a sense of isolation and a lack of what Dr. McMillan, assistant professor at Metropolitan University, calls "structures" necessary to ensure that people succeed in whom the academy has made tremendous investments. Success, for her, means tenure. She finds it "a shame" that assistant professors often need to learn on their own how to design a research plan. If you learn to plan ahead, she explains, lay out your work, make sure you know when you have to submit proposals, you can "make decisions pretty far out in terms of your scholarship," and then "it takes off some of that pressure because you're tenure-track." She explains what many tenure-track faculty members know only too well:

You know there's an expectation, and you're teaching; it takes a tremendous amount of time because if you don't really have a plan for your scholarship, it gets lost.

It is time for change. According to research by Cathy Trower on “Generation X” (born between 1965 and 1980), young scholars have a “new view” of academic employment policy that is markedly different from the “traditional view.” Among other things, Gen X scholars want clarity of the tenure process, criteria and standards, and the evidence required. They want clarity of expectations for scholarship, teaching, advising, collegueship, and campus citizenship. In addition, they are asking for reasonable and consistent performance expectations, as well as consistency of messages from senior faculty and administrators (Trower, 2005, p. 17). They are, in other words, asking for all the things Dr. Miller at Flagship was hoping for when she attended her deans’ meeting.

Although this discourse about academic reform is well under way and suggestions are ample, in short, it does not appear that much progress has been made. What is just beginning to be explored and needs to be added to the conversation, furthermore, is how the stress resulting from muddied expectations affects faculty members’ attempts to balance their professional and personal lives. As Dr. Miller at Flagship so vividly captured, undefined expectations, both within the academy and the individual scholar, result in the extremely stressful situation of faculty striving to do ever more, without knowing whether what they do is going to be enough. Work spills over into the personal sphere, which, too, is affected by stress.

Research indicates that beginning scholars of either gender are increasingly seeking work environments that permit them to effectively address both their personal and professional responsibilities (Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000). Doctoral students note the constant pressure and stress in their teachers’ and advisors’ work, leaving some to wonder whether a balanced life is possible or even to rethink their career goals (Austin, 2002). As Austin argues, it is therefore imperative to take action and improve the quality of the academic work life given that it is not merely a personal but an institutional issue (Austin, 2006, p. xiii).

Parents on the Tenure-Track: “I Always Feel Like My Attention Is Divided”

Whereas the issues discussed previously apply to tenure-track faculty members regardless of family status, others stem from the individual makeup of their personal lives. Being a mother while on the tenure-track, for example, poses unique challenges. Both the academy and the family are, after all, “greedy institutions” (Letherby, Marchbank, Ramsay & Shiels, 2005, p. 211). This phenomenon, however, has only recently begun to attract national attention.

The public seems well aware that women have made progress in academe. It is often emphasized that they constitute the majority of bachelor’s and master’s degree recipients and about half of all Ph.D.’s (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). It is less often articulated that women continue to lag behind in the upper echelons of the professoriate and are underrepresented at both the associate and assistant professor ranks (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 2007–2008, p. 24). This problem in the pipeline has much to do with female faculty having babies and continuing to carry the lion’s share of family responsibilities. Not until recently has research begun to document and address these issues.

The “Do Babies Matter?” project, for example, examined the effects of family formation on career progression, the effects of having a faculty career on family patterns, and the nature of work–family conflict for academic parents. According to the research, marriage and young children have a strong negative effect on women entering tenure-track positions, and tenure-track women are less likely to gain tenure than their male counterparts (regardless of family formation). Once on the tenure-track, women and men possess different family formation patterns. For example, tenure-track women are less likely than tenure-track men to have children. When attempting to answer why women opt out of the academy or are pushed out, and why men and women have different

family formation patterns, the researchers find one explanation in the tension between work and family responsibilities. This tension, they underscore, is more strongly felt by women than men (Mason, Goulden, & Wolfinger, 2006, pp. 11–17).

The following testimony gives life to the numbers. Women faculty reflect on what it is like to be or become a parent on the tenure-track, how having babies has changed their lives, and what, exactly, the causes are for the tensions between work and family responsibilities. The stories of women who are in later career stages are woven into this section when relevant.

Division of Labor: “I Wish It Were a Little More Equal”

Dr. Carver is a thirty-five-year-old assistant professor at a small, private, liberal arts comprehensive college. She is married and has an eight-week old infant. She talks about having lost control over a situation she called “well balanced,” something she had been able to establish before the birth of her child. Before its arrival, she was able to carve out time for herself and for activities she enjoyed away from work. She chose, in other words, a fairly rigid boundary between her professional and her personal lives and was happy with the arrangement until the birth of her daughter changed everything. Now she feels that her personal and professional lives are more in competition with each other.

Up until I had this baby, I think it was really quite well balanced. I wasn't constantly bringing work home all the time. I certainly worried, and still worry about going up for tenure, and there's a fair amount of anxiety around that. So I don't mean to suggest that I have this great separation, I really don't. But I've always managed time outside of work for other things. I played music with some friends, and would spend time on weekends with my husband and friends, and my dog. So I felt like up until very recently it was well balanced.

Dr. Carver struggles with a tension within her, wanting simultaneously to take care of the infant and needing a break. She emphasizes that her husband does a lot of the domestic chores, a situation that leads to a more even division of labor than most couples experience, something that is “incredibly enabling” to her career. Yet he is not as involved in child care as she would want him to be, although he has, according to her, “this great flexible schedule” as post-doc fellow at Flagship University. She describes how they are still trying to negotiate the division of labor and “every woman I know says in the early period they do much more work with the baby. It’s just a standard.” Part of the problem, she explains, has to do with breastfeeding, but even if that is not an issue (her baby is mostly bottle-fed), she nevertheless does most of the feeding. She describes being torn in these ways:

I am mostly pumping [breast milk] and he could give her a bottle. . . . That means he could just take over a lot of these feedings and he does, some, but I do much more of it. So we’re trying to negotiate because sometimes that’s just fine with me because . . . I want to have this time in my life, . . . but there are other times when I just kind of feel overwhelmed with taking care of this baby, and I want a break, and I wish it were a little more equal.

She elaborates that there is a “cognitive difference” in that she monitors the baby much more than her husband. Even when they are both at home, she feels in charge “even though we’re both sitting there in the same room with the baby. It’s easier for him to get absorbed in concentrating on something else. I always feel like my attention is divided.” She describes how as long as she is physically near the baby she is monitoring the baby, feeling that “it’s just my nature.” The only way she can imagine to get a good stretch of concentration is if she leaves her daughter with

her husband and leaves the house herself because otherwise “I feel I just have to be attuned to her.” Her husband, however, doesn’t seem to feel that way, and in her mind that’s a “real asymmetry” that doesn’t play out so much in the couple’s behavior but in the way they think.

Dr. Young-Powell, first-year instructor at Community College and married mother of a three-year-old and an eight-month-old, talks about her difficulty letting her husband take over domestic duties. She describes herself as being “very hands on, and I like to control. I like things the way I want them done.” She elaborates further:

For me it is harder to let go of the kid responsibilities. I feel like I should be the one giving them a bath at night, giving the last bottle of the night, reading bedtime stories. Sometimes I need to be doing other things and he’ll say, let me read the story. And I think, no, that’s mommy’s job. There’s certain things I’m not willing to say, daddy do. I feel like that’s mommy time. . . . And financial things like paying the bills, where he’ll say “I’ll do it.” That’s a control thing for I need to know where everything is going.

Dr. Young-Powell’s need to control manifests itself in the words she chooses when she describes the division of labor between herself and her husband. She talks about “giving him grocery shopping and bath time” or just generally “giving him more responsibilities around the house.” She clearly is the one in charge, in other words, of domestic affairs, either by being “hands on” and doing it herself or delegating, managing, and telling her husband “I need you to do x, y, and z today.” She seems to be looking forward to the summer when she will teach only one Internet class and “other than that I’m home. I think I do pick up a lot more responsibility during the summer.”

Sacrifices: “It’s Tiring”

Life with small children certainly makes it difficult for most female faculty to craft what they would consider a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. In their efforts to “do it all,” care of self is sacrificed first. Dr. Miller is an assistant professor at Flagship University, married with a three-year-old daughter and pregnant with her second child. In response to my question about balancing, she replies:

I guess for me the way I balance, if you can call it that, is I put out the biggest most immediate fires as they come and juggle as necessary. There is always something falling through the crack.

Dr. Miller has learned to “prioritize ruthlessly” but “what goes in that prioritization is nothing for myself.” Anything that has to do with taking care of herself, she explains, comes last. She recounts how “exercise has gone pretty much out the window,” and so have quiet meditation and journaling. Dr. Young-Powell at Private Comprehensive University describes a similar reality. She lacks sleep and gave up hobbies and things she enjoys doing in her free time such as the gym or working on scrapbooks.

There were other stories of sacrifice. Dr. Nelson at HBCU told the story of a female colleague who had to sacrifice success in her career because she got pregnant and had a child.

She went up for [tenure] last year in August. She got pregnant, she had a baby . . . while she was pregnant, she went up for tenure. One of the guys put her down and said she hasn’t published enough, she hasn’t done enough. But she goes, I was pregnant, and I was getting ready to give birth. The whole committee decided not to grant it to her. She tried again this August and she still didn’t get it, so she is up for it one more time.

She elaborates how pregnancy is a nine month process, and not all women are fortunate enough to be able to fully function during that time. Some develop physical problems, and accommodations need to be made (such as extending the tenure clock) that allow all women to have a chance at success.

Sacrifices occur even when women with families are professionally successful and able to have babies without being pushed out of the academy. Dr. Nelson, instructor at HBCU, has ample support from her husband and extended family to free her up for professional duties. Yet she mourns the fact that she cannot spend significant amounts of time with her three small children. There simply is not much time left when she comes home in the evening. She does not think she has been able to establish a balance but concludes “right now I have to establish myself in my career, so it takes front row.”

While grateful for her family support, Dr. Nelson is torn between her career and her desire to be a parent. These are her words:

There were many instances I wanted to quit but then I didn't quit because of my support system. . . . “I can't bear this, there's too much work”. . . . and people keep going “it's just a couple of years. You have the job.” “I'm never with my kids.” They go “think about it, you have them on the weekend and in the evening.” I'm like “that's nothing. I would like to be home with them all the time.” They go “remember who chose this path. Nobody chose it for you. It's what you wanted to do.”

She recounts wanting to quit her Ph.D. program but continuing because of her family's encouragement. They told her once she was finished, she would be able to spend time with her kids. “I'm done,” she says, “and still don't get that time.” She has come to the conclusion that “I have to learn that since you make the optional choice to work, you have to give up something. With a family, you

can't do both equally. One will have to give." She perceives a clear gender component in her ruminations and says, "I think if it's a girl pursuing a career, they will have to learn that that is going to become the focus. Although the family is number one, the family kind of takes a back seat when you go to work."

Dr. Nelson is looking forward to a time when the tension eases up, either because she can use grant money to buy back time that she can devote to her family, or because her small children will go to school, in which case "it doesn't become such a big problem anymore because they're gone and you're gone." As for now, however, the pain in her face is obvious when she says that even though things may not be bad long term, they are short term between the kids' ages of zero and five. "That's when the emotional attachment problems become more predominant. At least for me." She sums it up by saying, "to a young girl trying to get where I am, they have to be focused."

Dr. Nelson's analysis of her dilemma is based upon the notion that women need to choose whether they want to pursue a career or have a family. This notion may well be shared by many women themselves, Dr. Nelson being one example. However, choice is an insidious notion here, despite its seemingly benevolent character. Being an immensely popular societal construct, it seems inconceivable to oppose "choice" on rational grounds. How can anybody be against "choice"? And yet, in certain situations asking people to make a choice is simply wrong. In cases of women such as Dr. Nelson, the idea of choice is just as perverted as a choice between shelter and food would be. People need both, food *and* shelter, not a choice between the two. Likewise women, and men one might add, need to be able to pursue *both* a career and a family life if they wish, and they need to be able to do so without major emotional or physical costs.

Ms. Young-Powell's life is illustrative here. Echoing many of Dr. Nelson's dilemmas, the instructor and administrator at Community College is the married mother of two children under

four years of age. She, too, craves “mommy time” with her children, and rather than doing without, she goes home, plays with them, and then waits until they go to bed before she “reverts back into the academic mode.” This modus operandi is not without costs. Explains Ms. Young-Powell:

For me it’s tiring. I do find myself a lot of times at eleven, twelve, one o’clock in the morning doing more planning and other administrative duties. I don’t want to stay [at work] until six every night because I want to go home to be mommy. . . . Sometimes when [I have] time off, when they’re napping, instead of doing things that I need to be doing at home, I’m spending time doing things for [work] at home. . . . I spend a lot of time [working] when I’d really rather be sleeping when they’re in bed.

In addition to fatigue, Ms. Young-Powell also battles feeling guilty because she is not a stay-at-home mother. Feeling insufficiently available, however, is a sentiment shared by other mothers on the tenure-track, including those of older children.

Dr. McMillan, for example, a fourth-year tenure-track faculty member at Metropolitan whose children are fifteen and twenty-three, talks about the difficult adjustments she had to make after leaving a K–12 teaching environment to begin her work in higher education. She used to think of her job as an extension of her life; she socialized with her colleagues, and her family was involved in her school. All that changed when she entered higher education. Now she is no longer as available to her children. One of her sons experienced difficulties in middle school, and she talks about his challenges given that his mother was “whacked up in her new position that demanded a tremendous amount of time.” She recalls coming into the office on Saturdays at least twice a month, working at home on Sundays. In short, she “wasn’t that available.” She struggles with that, she says, and explains:

I think women, more than anything else, struggle with that. Men for the most part, I don't see that as a big struggle for most men. Work as hard as necessary to attain that goal for my job, and struggle over how much time I give my family, or how much quality time. . . . I see that is something that women, because we are nurturers and because culturally, we see our role as being available, that we struggle with it. But you know I am surprised, some Saturday mornings I would be waking up to run out to do some errands. . . . and my kids would say 'are you going to work now?' They expect me to work all the time. It bothers me a little.

Female faculty on the tenure-track, it seems, rarely have options both workable and healthy. They are asked to make choices, furthermore, that their male counterparts hardly ever have to make, namely the choice between family and work. In fact, recent research shows that women who enter the tenure-track without children have less than one in three odds of ever having children. Furthermore, a majority of men (60 percent) are married with children twelve years after receipt of their Ph.D. whereas only a minority (41 percent) of women on the tenure-track are married with children (Mason, Goulden, & Wolfinger, 2006, p. 16). As this study indicates, if women refuse either—or propositions and pursue both, a career and a family, they suffer the consequences of doing something that is simply “too much to ask.”

And yet to pursue both is not too much to ask in a society in which work is plentiful and families are needed, if for nothing else than reproduction. A civil society simply cannot afford to force people into false dichotomies and ask that they make *choices* that require them to abjure one if they want the other, or suffer dire consequences if they pursue both. Instead, the focus ought to be on how to design support mechanisms and realistic expectations to enable people to have a fulfilling career *as well as* a family life

without paying the price in degrees of sanity or physical health. Of course, the women in this study had many suggestions in this regard, summarized in Chapter Five.

Single Parenting: “I Was Paying for Having Some Relaxation”

There are single mothers on the tenure-track, and if being a parent is challenging for women with partners, it can certainly be daunting for women without. Dr. Adams became a single parent because she took a tenure-track position at Metropolitan. Her husband was unable to find work in the new city and stayed behind. It was up to Dr. Adams to take care of their teenage daughter. She describes the transition:

My husband and I are geographically separated. He's not here. So when I started this position not only was I separated from someone I'd been with for thirty years, but I suddenly became a single parent and moved to a city that I was not even familiar with, and left a city where I'd lived for over twenty years.

Living in limbo for two years was difficult. Dr. Adams began to realize that she, too, had to “make a choice between my career and my family, and I chose my family.” She decided to resign from her position at Metropolitan, move back to her old town, and apply for a job at a less research-intense institution. Again, the paradox of choice. According to Dr. Adams, this is a choice she would not have made twenty years ago. In her life stage, however, she prefers to make a difference professionally without the strains that come with the competitive nature of a tenure-track position, which, in her field, heavily relies on federal grant funding. Says she: “The research opportunities have been here, but my decision [to leave] was based on what was most important to me, which was my family.”

Dr. Adams worked hard all her life, juggling her professional obligations and her family. She is fifty-one years old and has two grown children in addition to the teenager. She received three degrees while building her family: “It seems like I got another degree with each child. I got my bachelor’s degree when I only had one child. My master’s when I had two children. And I got my doctorate when I had three children.” Despite the fact that she is certainly experienced at working hard and multitasking, always doing more than one thing at a time, it is her most recent tenure-track experience that was simply too much. As she recalls:

Being in a tenure-track position has been more difficult than anything I’ve done in the past. I’ve worked full-time and gone to school full-time and taken care of a family. Yes, it was very stressful, but it also provided time for me . . . to spend with my family and do the things I enjoy doing. That probably could have been done here, but there was always something that needed to be done as far as work was concerned. . . . I was paying for having some relaxation. . . . I was always playing catch-up.

She found it difficult to find the creative spaces necessary for research and writing. And if she got a break from work, she did not get one from her family.

Being separated from her husband, and the daughter from her father, was not only emotionally difficult for Dr. Adams and her daughter, at times it was also a logistical nightmare. Her field demands faculty teach in clinical settings, and she explains what it means to be given an evening clinical course:

Not only was I in a new town and being a single mother with a teenager, but I had to go to a setting from three to nine in the evening weekly. . . . Which drove me

crazy mentally because I'm thinking 'I'm in this town where I know no one, and I'm away from my child in the evening.' So that was difficult.

Her contract, she points out, is not a traditional nine-month contract running Mondays through Fridays. Instead, some work needs to get done on evenings and weekends because her clientele consists of licensed professionals who are coming back to obtain degrees. They are busy during the week, and faculty are expected to accommodate the students' schedules. This kind of flexibility, however, is exceedingly difficult to offer for a faculty member who, as a single mother, is solely responsible for a child.

The observation that faculty appointments involving clinical work are exceedingly demanding is echoed by her late-career colleague at HBCU, Dr. Noah. She points out how challenging it is to have a family and teach in her field because of the clinical hours. She explains: "You're spending an enormous amount of time in a clinical setting, and then having to evaluate your students on their performance with their patients in their clinical settings. . . ." Being a single mother, of course, exacerbates the challenge.

Dr. Adams surmises how much more of a logistical challenge being a single mother to her teenage daughter would have been if the girl had been more involved in school activities than she was. "If she was involved in a whole lot of things, and I had to take her this place and that, . . . I don't know what I would've done."

Being a single mother is not always easy for Dr. Yong either, a young immigrant scholar at Metropolitan. Dr. Yong's fourteen-year-old son was raised by her parents in China before joining her just over a year ago in the United States. Since then, she has been a single parent.

Dr. Yong is well aware that some of the challenges she faces have much to do with the fact that she is not only a single mother but also a relatively new mother to a teenager who, in addition, grew up in a different culture. She feels stressed simply because parental

scripts taken for granted by many of her American counterparts are not always known to her. In her words, “nothing is routine.”

For single moms there are so many little things that you cannot skip. Because a child there depends on you. I had very limited experience because my parents took care [of the child] until last year, and that’s why I feel so stressed because many times I don’t know whether I am doing the right job as a parent. . . . Little things like making a choice about extra-curricular activities. I don’t know which is the right choice for him, who I can ask for support. This is already routine for many parents; they do this all the time. For me it’s kind of a learning; it creates a lot of stress, and you cannot always just ask people because people do it as a routine, but for me nothing is routine. Everything is new. Even . . . parent meetings.

To deal with the challenges of single parenting, administrator Dr. Lilian at Community College decided to stay close to her extended family. Dr. Lilian is thirty-four years old, divorced, and the mother of a thirteen-year old daughter. She describes making the decision “to stay local” in relatively close proximity to her parents and sister. Says she:

As a single parent I didn’t want to go far from my support, meaning that if I had to fly somewhere for a conference, then I could be at my parents’ house in an hour where they could take care of [the daughter]. Whereas if I lived on the West coast, I wouldn’t have that support line.

“Staying local,” Dr. Lilian admits, came at a cost. She simply could not take advantage of professional opportunities that presented themselves. “There are so many career opportunities, you

know, in different states and so forth. As a single parent, I really needed to stay close to my support line.”

Maternity Leave Policies: “It’s Something the Deans Kind of Do”

For mothers on the tenure-track, academe is a mixed blessing. It allows an uncanny degree of flexibility, and is one of the few professional environments that does not strictly regiment employees’ time and place. The benefits are huge. Parents are able to attend children’s special events, take time off without fearing for their jobs when children are sick, bring children to work, and bring work home.

Academe is also uniquely detrimental to parenthood with its “up or out” promotional system that renders it difficult to take time out for childbearing and rearing without repercussions. A faculty member who leaves the tenure-track to take care of family responsibilities will not find her job waiting for her when she comes back. Tenure-lines are valuable commodities snatched up at once upon a person’s departure. Faculty careers are certainly possible outside the tenure system, but they tend to be second class and unprotected.

Official university policies designed to lighten the load of female faculty members with children at the institutions represented in this study are currently in various stages of infancy. All do, of course, offer the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007, pp.1–18). FMLA allows eligible full-time employees to take up to twelve workweeks of unpaid leave per calendar year for the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child or to care for a child. It also allows for paid leave which at the universities in this study is typically granted if the employee requests to use annual, compensatory, overtime, or sick leave during a Family and Medical Leave period. Additional provisions are possible, but the policies are neither uniformly applied nor well known. Universities do not appear to put forth

much effort to publicize them and, therefore, implementation is largely capricious.

At Metropolitan University, for example, a special program sponsored by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation allows faculty one-semester paid leaves of absence for birth and adoption of children. It also provides faculty with the option of extending the promotion and tenure review by up to one year. However, only pre-tenure faculty in the College of Humanities and Sciences are eligible. The program is not widely advertised. Says Associate Professor Dr. Schumacher at Metropolitan: "It isn't publicized very well. Every time I bring a new faculty member in, I tell them, you go take advantage of this."

The lack of awareness of existing maternity policies is a problem well beyond the colleges studied here. Even at the University of California-Berkeley, with its extensive maternity leave package, researchers found that faculty were ill aware of its availability (Mason, Goulden, & Wolfinger, 2006, p. 20). Compounding the problem might be uninformed human resources personnel. This is how Dr. Schumacher sees the situation at Metropolitan:

The other barrier is that the university human resources system has no idea what to do with maternity leave. They give out wrong and bad information, and it is a very poor system. . . . It is terrible. It is an awful system. I actually got cheated out of a semester of leave . . . after the birth of my first child because I was told by a person in human resources, unequivocally, that I was not eligible for it because she was born in May. And because I was a nine-month faculty, any time-off had to be continuous to the birth when indeed I was entitled to twelve weeks of combined paid/unpaid leave. I specifically asked this person in human resources this; they said "no, you are not entitled to it." So, I came right back bleary-eyed with a three-month old.

Flagship University appears similarly unpredictable. Faculty do mention that a paid semester's leave is granted, and the tenure clock can be temporarily stopped. However, the policy is not "official," meaning sanctioned, put in writing, advertised as part of employee benefits packages, and equally available to all. Dr. Miller at Flagship, pregnant with her second child, describes the situation as follows:

It's not well publicized though. I couldn't find it on the web, my chair didn't know. It's something I think the deans kind of do, but it's not publicized . . . There certainly is not [a policy] university wide. I think each school within the university might have its own policy somewhere that's not readily available. It many not be in writing.

Dr. McLeod at the same institution, also mother of a three-year-old and pregnant, corroborates:

[Flagship] has a fairly good maternity policy but it's not like a real official policy. It's sort of an "ad-hoc" policy. . . . Most people get a research leave. They usually give us a semester off from teaching. . . . I'm not sure about [people's] knowledge because it's not on the web anywhere. . . . So I feel like if you didn't talk to anybody who'd gotten it you might not know that you can get it.

She explains that the official policy at Flagship is based on the Family and Medical Leave Act and, therefore, whether or not a woman is granted maternity leave (disguised as research leave) depends on the department. With this practice, she elaborates, the university obtains an element of flexibility and can grant faculty leave that staff members do not get. "And I'm guessing that's part of the reason there's not an official policy."

Serious equity considerations would arise should pregnant women have to take their “research leave” to have children while others use it for its intended purpose. Yet Dr. McLeod insists that she is certain to be granted research leave again, in addition to the leave she will enjoy after her baby’s birth. She also disagrees with colleagues who think that maternity leave ought not carry with it any expectations that you are scholarly active. Says she: “it’s freaking nine months. It doesn’t seem that extreme what we’re expected to do. Come on. Let’s face reality here. Because if you time your birth correctly, it’s a summer-plus-sort-of-thing.”

Dr. McLeod timed the impending birth of her child “correctly”: the due date is in June. She will be able to take the summer and the fall semester off. Not everyone is so lucky. Her colleague, she recounts, is expecting a baby in October, in the middle of the fall semester, and “she had lots of pressure from her department to take [leave] in the fall.” Concludes Dr. McLeod: “It’s just, if you get lucky at the time. . . .”

Luck is a relative term here because faculty are typically on nine-month contracts. Taking the summer off entails not being able to supplement one’s income through summer teaching and, although it might “buy time,” it nevertheless means financial loss. Even if something as fickle as a pregnancy could be reliably planned, the “correct timing issue” is complex, as explained by Dr. Miller at Flagship:

I think if you were to have the child in May and wanted to take time off, the university would probably not pay you, but I don’t know. I think you would just not take your summer salary [supplemental income from teaching or grants] and then have the fall semester off when you would be paid. So that would be financially a hit if you were to have a child in May. . . .

Timing is an issue brought up by Dr. Schumacher at Metropolitan as well. She explains that since the Family and Medical Leave

per se is unpaid, faculty have to use such things as accrued sick leave to convert it into paid leave. They can, however, only use 33 percent of accrued sick leave for maternity leave. In her case, she was able to use more than 300 hours of her 1,000 hours accrued, a number that translated into eight weeks of paid leave and four weeks of unpaid leave. Her second child was born in July. She faced a dilemma:

So I said, "what would I do if I took eight weeks paid leave?" We work on semesters. "What does it mean if I take eight weeks of a semester off, and we have seven weeks of a semester left? What does that mean?" No one had ever thought of it, or had an answer. They said "well, you come back and we'll put you in the administration office and you do administration work for seven weeks." I thought, I'm not going to do this. The last thing I want to do is shuffle paper. I mean, I'm an academic, right?

Dr. Schumacher approached the problem by negotiating based on "some obscure rules in the University system about half-time Medical/Family Leave use." After having her baby, she took half-time leave for sixteen weeks rather than full-time leave for eight. The arrangement was awkward at best.

Once we got that agreement set for half-time leave, I said OK, what are my responsibilities? What is half-time for an academic who teaches a three/three load and [serves on] twenty-five committees? So we futzed around, and I taught one class with a brand new baby and a C-section, and did some administrative work, and wrote and published.

She reiterates a familiar theme: "There were no policies. There were no guidelines." What happens when there are no guidelines,

she emphasizes, is that faculty have to “sort of tentatively feel out what is possible. It is sort of like pushing until people say ‘no.’ Yet you never know where ‘no’ is.” The process, in short, is completely arbitrary.

Tenured professor Whitehead recounts policy perversions similar in nature dating back to times prior to the Family and Medical Leave Act. After the C-section birth of a child with health complications, she asked for a tenure delay and was put on half-time work. Her paycheck was also cut in half, and she lost her health insurance altogether: “So there is a time when I really need it, and they cut my health insurance.”

Back at Flagship, Dr. Miller did not run into quite the same obstacles and finds her institution’s one-semester paid leave “quite generous by U.S. standards.” Those standards, however, are low, and discussions about maternity policies in academe do, after all, occur in the national context of a country that is unique among industrialized nations in its absence of viable maternity or paternity policies, as even the popular press noted recently.¹

USA Today reported that, with the exception of some American states, the United States and Australia are the only industrialized nations that do not provide paid maternity leave. Australia does, however, offer a one-year job-protected leave whereas the U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act only provides twelve weeks of job-protected leave, and only to those who work in larger companies. Canada, in comparison, offers fourteen months of paid maternity leave and Sweden provides sixteen months of parental leave for mothers or fathers. To illustrate the point differently, out of 168 nations studied recently by Harvard University, 163 provided paid maternity leave, “leaving the United States in the company of Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland.” In response to the question why the United States fares so poorly in comparison, the article cites experts who explain that whereas some countries such as France needed expanded maternity leave policies after World War II to combat falling fertility, the United States could rely

on immigration to ensure population growth. Likewise, the feminist movement in the United States, unlike its European counterpart, did not advocate for mothers, specifically. Be that as it may, at this point American women and men seem to consider a three-month maternity leave to be the norm (*USA Today*, 2005, p. 1).

Besides leave, stopping the tenure clock is often discussed as an option for new mothers in academe. Dr. Carver at Private Comprehensive is currently on leave after the birth of her baby six weeks ago and had her tenure-clock stopped. She is grateful for both, convinced she has gotten good support professionally and hopeful that she will not be expected to produce more scholarship just because she has more time. Yet she concedes: "Of course I don't really know how that plays out in people's judgment of you." Despite her support, Dr. Carver cannot deny that simply being on the tenure-track adds a component of pressure to an already stressful time following a major life event:

I think the nature of the job, and being on the tenure clock, it adds a certain sort of stress to this period of our lives. As I said, they extended the clock for me which is great. If they hadn't, I think this would have been a very stressful period. As it is, I don't think I'm a shoo-in for tenure, and it's something in the back of my mind I have to manage, but I don't think I could reasonably ask for anything better than the extension that I got. I wish I had tenure; that would be better. . . . I feel like if I had a rough year, it wouldn't throw my entire career off-track. But I do feel that to some extent it's not really anybody's fault. It's just the period of my career where I am at. The nature of being on tenure-track.

Although maternity policies are neither "official," uniformly implemented, nor well advertised, colleges may well provide more to women than originally meets the eye. Yet even if female

faculty know about and are theoretically able to take advantage of policies, they may not necessarily be inclined to do so. University policies suffer, in other words, from a “bane of unintended consequences,” to use the words of educational historian David Tyack (Tyack, 1974). Though intended to help, they may actually hurt or, at the least, be perceived as potentially hurtful and thus underutilized.

Dr. McLeod at Flagship illustrates the point. She wonders: “I don’t know how you really change the institution because once you start dropping requirements or creating a perception the bars are different for people based on their family, I think [you create] really big problems.” She alludes to debates about whether stopping the tenure clock helps or hurts. Her tenured colleague Dr. Sutherland puts it more decisively:

At [Flagship] if you have a child before tenure, for each child you’re allowed a one-year extension of the tenure clock, but . . . oftentimes there’s increased expectations that go along with that. It’s hard to balance whether you should take it because it’s viewed that you had an extra year, and maybe they expect more of you.

In response to the question whether she knew of people who decided not to take leave for that reason, she responded, “Yes. Lots of people decide not to take it for that reason.” At Private Comprehensive, associate professor Pryzinski, echoes the sentiment. She tells the story of a colleague who took sabbatical, maternity leave, and stopped the tenure clock, and who talks about “all of that as this beautiful life resource. And yet, she fears backlash that is now more subtle and more hidden than anything that would have happened prior to these institutional resources.” The insecurity is fueled by the fact that maternity leave entails an expectation for continued research, and the question is how this expectation will affect tenure standards in comparison to those for men or women

without maternity leave. Dr. Pryzinski recounts having talked to other junior faculty women at her institution who share the worries and wonder “how it is all going to pan out. So there is this new anxiety of the unknown. . . .”

This finding is consistent with quantitative research that found that faculty do not make use of available policies for fear that doing so might hurt their careers. This phenomenon, the authors conclude, “points to deeply rooted problems of institutional culture and climate” (Mason, Goulden, & Wolfinger, 2006, p. 20). How those problems might possibly be addressed will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Single Women

The Ability to Focus: “My Job Is Much Easier Because Women with Children Have Two Jobs, and I Have One”

Being single seems to make it easier for some women to perceive their balancing act as successful. Assistant professor at Private Comprehensive University Dr. Rossi talks about having a “really sweet job, very flexible job, no family,” and being able to see her friends whenever she wants. She is convinced that single persons have a lot of control and, comparing herself with women who have children, simply states: “My job is much easier because women with children have two jobs, and I have one.”

Ms. Ohler at Community College feels similarly. She is twenty-eight years old, a relatively new instructor who watches her friends get married and have children. That, however, is not for her. Says Ms. Ohler:

Looking at that situation and looking at them trying to manage family life, and all of them have ended up either working just part-time or staying at home full-time while the children are small. Certainly to balance that sort of personal situation would be difficult to me because I just

enjoy working on my own academic interests too much. I think I'd have a hard time giving up that stimulation that would go along with that.

When asked whether she thought that having a family necessitates going part-time or staying at home altogether, she replies that people can combine work and family successfully; examples do exist. For her, however, "it seems like a daunting prospect . . . I see what they struggle with. . . . I think 'wow, how do they do it?'"

For now, she simply wants to be able to focus on her academic pursuits rather than being torn between family and work demands. According to another single faculty member, thirty-six-year-old Dr. Calhoun at Private Comprehensive, women get a pretty bad deal, furthermore, when compared with men. These are her observations.

It does seem awfully easier for men. I have this one colleague who has three children under the age of nine. His wife is a lawyer; it's not like she doesn't have a career, but I was once chatting with him and a female colleague who also has young children and sort of inadvertently comparing how much they were talking about how much they had to do around the house because the issue was having kids at this age. What she was describing was all about picking people up and taking them places and dropping them off and making lunches. What he was describing was all about interacting with them when he got home at 7:30 in the hour before they went to bed. I was sort of thinking at the time, 'he has got a good deal.' It is kind of a nice little set up. He comes home at 7:30 and plays with the kids for an hour and half, and then they go to bed. My poor colleague Annie was talking about all of this stuff, and it just seemed very poignant, and it was enough to make me think I wasn't

so sure I wanted to have kids even if I were so lucky to find someone to have them with.

Despite her doubts and the gender inequities she observes, Dr. Calhoun joins the ranks of those women who are very much interested in giving up the single life. Yet they face difficulties of their own. Research indicates that single women on the tenure-track, who are within three years of receiving their Ph.D.'s, are significantly less likely than single tenure-track men or single non-tenure-track women to get married. They have a 37 percent lower probability than single tenure-track men and a 34 percent lower probability rate than non-tenure-track female faculty (Mason, Goulden, & Wolfinger, 2006, p. 15). The following section sheds light on the dynamics behind the statistics.

Racing the Biological Clock: “I Have to Sort of Roll the Dice on Whether or Not I Will Ever Be Able to Carry Children”

Not all single faculty members in this study describe their balancing acts in glowing terms. Having trouble establishing a social life, making friends, and dating were identified as impeding their sense of a good balance. Dr. Calhoun, for instance, assistant professor in her fifth year at Private Comprehensive University, describes the relationship between her personal and professional lives as “vexed.” She finds that the pressure to get publications out and make herself indispensable in her department has made it difficult to prioritize relationship building. Her problems are exacerbated by the nature of where she lives, a town she describes as a “pretty married place.” She elaborates:

Most of the friends I have are married. All of my colleagues are married, so there is no single culture, or I haven't found much of a single culture at this point.

In order to “find a slightly more conducive social life with a few more single people in it,” Dr. Calhoun is planning to spend the next summer with friends in Manhattan, just to get away. Back home, however, given the difficulty of finding a “singles culture,” Dr. Calhoun chooses to immerse herself in her work and get her research done rather than “trying some online dating, or really nudging my friends to introduce me to people, or join groups that would introduce me to people.” Dr. Calhoun emphasizes that for her, questions about balancing are about finding a partner with whom to start a family rather than dealing with a family that already exists. This aspect of the single life tends to get lost in discussions about balancing one’s life. Dr. Calhoun talks about friends who have infant children and who resent the fact that she does not.

They say things like how nice it is that I have all this free time to myself, and how great it must be to be able to get your research done whenever you want and not to have to worry about changing someone’s diaper and getting food on the table.

She points out, however, that her lifestyle comes with certain costs, such as the worry about whether she will ever be able to find a partner or have a family. She is irritated by the fact that she cannot make finding a partner more of a priority because “my career has such a rigid understanding of what it means to be successful in the first stage of your career. It is tenure or it is nothing.” Her college is trying to increase its research profile, she explains, by growing from a medium-sized, regionally recognized liberal arts university into one with a national reputation. To this end, enormous pressure is put on junior faculty to publish quickly and profusely. Simultaneously, however, the college does not want

to lose its reputation as a teaching-oriented college, leaving faculty in the double bind of having to meet both high research and teaching expectations. Not much time is left to craft one's personal life. She explains that if one is not lucky enough to find a partner as a graduate student, one is "out of luck" until after tenure. Most of her friends who are married, she elaborates, got married in graduate school. The ones who didn't get married then, got married after tenure, not before.

Trying to find a partner and start a family once you have tenure is not always easy, however. The biological clock ticks ruthlessly. Dr. Calhoun puts it clearly:

The thing I worry about the most in terms of this question about balance is the . . . whole biological clock problem which is that my pre-tenure years are also, for whatever reason, in sync with the years in which I should probably, if I want to have a child, I should be doing it. I will get tenure provided everything goes all right when I'm 38. According to a lot of doctors that is getting late to start a family. I haven't found a way to start a family yet while on the tenure-track. The one thing that would make a difference to me is if there was a way to make tenure sort of not coincide with one's child producing time. It isn't that I don't want to get tenure. Obviously I do. It would be nice if tenure didn't have to be such a rigid thing. As it stands, I don't feel like I can really prioritize finding a partner and getting pregnant right now. So, I have to sort of roll the dice on whether or not I will ever be able to carry children. Which scares me. To get a more flexible schedule for tenure would make a big difference, I think.

Dr. Calhoun recounts the example of her forty-four-year-old friend who was thirty-nine when she was granted tenure. After that

she made her social and romantic life a priority but was not able to build a lasting relationship. Menopause hit early, and she had to give up on having children. Dr. Calhoun admits that her friend's example colors her attitude and contributes to her sense that she needs to meet and commit to somebody during her pretenure years if she wants to have a family. Although she is not opposed to the idea of tenure per se, she finds the system rigid. It simply "doesn't take into consideration how complicated people's lives can be, and how maybe your life doesn't fit into this very clearly defined five-year clock." Consequently, she sees herself facing a dilemma: "It feels like a risk to wait [having children], but it is also a risk not to do everything I can to establish myself in my job."

Dr. Sutherland at Flagship echoes Dr. Calhoun's sentiments and says the timing of the tenure clock is just "really crappy for a woman's biological clock." She was lucky she did not meet her husband and get married until after tenure, she says, and so she was spared the difficult question as to whether or not she wanted to risk having children before tenure.

Lives are often complex and not amenable to the five-year tenure-system. What makes things more complicated, furthermore, is the nature of the academic job and the typical requirement that people move, often long distances, in order to take a tenure-track position. They are forced to uproot and possibly jeopardize social networks they may have established in graduate school. In Dr. Calhoun's words "you have to kind of rebuild your networks."

The notion that female faculty may be forced to choose between having a career and having children was confirmed by Dr. McLeod, assistant professor at Flagship University, married, one child and expecting a second one. She stated that there are "obviously a lot of people who put off childbirth . . . until after tenure," something that just did not make sense to her. She did not want to sacrifice her personal life and build her life around her job. Consequently, she chose a field that she thought would be less

intense than others and made use of a “couple of windows” to have children, such as graduate school when “nobody’s counting the time.”

Dr. McLeod is also very clear that she would never have become an academic if she hadn’t been married. She defines academe as a “crappy place to meet people. . . , a sheltered sort of life” that compares unfavorably with businesses who may sponsor trips and events. She recalls her pre-academe life in a consulting firm:

We were always going out for happy hours. They would sponsor parties; they would rent out restaurants, bars. It’s such an entire social structure built around work. And some of that, they were deriving from a very homogenous set of people, like all Ivy league grads, all kind of following a similar career path. So there’s more social interaction than you would have at a later stage in your life.

The Two-Body Problem: “People Have to Think of This More as a Package Deal”

Dr. Ingersen-Noll at Flagship calls it the “Two-Body Problem,” more commonly referred to as the “dual career” or “spousal hiring” issue. No matter what the name, it is one of the most vexing dilemmas in higher education.

An obvious place for academics to meet potential life partners is academe itself, and if one or both partners are not yet institutionally established (if they meet as graduate students, for example), the couple has to deal with the “dual-body problem.” It faces a competitive job market with institutions interested in specialized expertise. Finding a suitable job may not be easy for one person; multiplied by two, the barriers can be insurmountable. If both partners are housed in the same discipline and do similar work, they must find an institution that needs “two of them.” More likely, they will end

up competing for the job. If they are of different backgrounds, they are searching to find homes in different departments at the same institution, or at geographically close ones. In most fields, and for most people, the problem is close to intractable and may well mean that one spouse truncates career aspirations at least temporarily to do adjunct work, accept visiting professorships, work part-time, out of field, at a less desirable institution, or abandons academic work altogether.

By the time of this writing, Flagship University had already lost Dr. Ingersen-Noll due to the two-body problem. Her husband and she joined a university in another country because Flagship could not satisfactorily accommodate two promising scholars in similar fields. Here is Dr. Ingersen-Noll's story.

She came to Flagship after completing a post doc at a major research university in the United States. Before that, she received her Ph.D. in the Netherlands. Dr. Ingersen-Noll is thirty-one years old and married to a scholar who shares her field of research. He followed her to Flagship but did not receive a tenure-track position. Instead, he was offered what Dr. Ingersen-Noll calls "a dead end job" as system administrator. "There is no career path," she says, "no progress. . . . There is nothing like that, and it has been made clear to us that that's the case." She relates that there are no future prospects for her husband in the department and perceives "unwillingness to solve this." The couple finds the situation "not very satisfying."

Dr. Ingersen-Noll is determined to move forward in her career but seeing her husband confined to his job is not "very motivating for either of us." This is her analysis of the university environment:

. . . this university in particular is a very male dominated environment. . . . A lot of people here, especially if you look at the generations before us. Men who came to work here at the university have had their housewives come along with them, and they stayed at home to take care

of their kids or something. Women were only admitted here—both professors and students—in the 1970s. It was quite late; so it is still a bit of a male-dominated community.

While acknowledging that Flagship is doing its best to make women part of the institution, she diagnoses a real problem in the absence of consideration given to the partner situation.

What they do they just apply the same strategies. They assume you can move people around whether they're men or women without thinking about what their partner is going to do. That's something that they're not thinking about here at this university. And it's a big problem.

According to her, the university is now willing to adjust its modus operandi and make women the breadwinner but is not at all concerned about the partner. Her conclusion: "We are actually looking around for other jobs because we've been told that there is no solution for him here. This is the consequence the university has to deal with."

Dr. Ingersen-Noll knows many people with partners who leave their institutions because of the two-body problem. "And they're good scientists," she emphasizes. The university, she explains, often is interested only in one person, in "one half of the deal." People have to get over this perspective "because you may not get either of them if you're being so restricted to only one of them and not both."

Universities may argue that one of the partners is simply better than the other, but, in Dr. Ingersen-Noll's experience "this is not very often true." Once people have obtained their Ph.D.'s and even gone beyond and are engaged in research, they have to be pretty good scientists. Universities have to start thinking "of this more as

a package deal.” If you want to hire one, you have to come up with a solution for the other. Otherwise, you will lose them both.

Dr. Ingerson-Noll relates the story of a couple that includes a scholar hired by Flagship in a department different from hers and a spouse who receives a post-doc in her department. Her department chair resists giving the spouse any kind of permanent position because he feels the person has “been sort of dumped on us.” In Dr. Ingerson-Noll’s opinion, the university should at least make an effort and offer the spouse a teaching appointment. “He’s a good scientist,” she says. His research may not be completely what the department wants to do but “it is more important to keep people happy than to try to be very precise about what kind of science you want to have.” Besides, she argues, if a person is hired for twenty or thirty years in a permanent position, they might change their research trajectory anyhow. She elaborates:

Maybe today they’re hiring me because I’m doing [topic A], but they give me tenure. The year after tenure I’m just “oh, I’m really so interested [topic B].” And I’m going to change my topic. There’s nothing they can do about that, right?

Today’s realities, according to her, require a different way of thinking. And if there is a partner, there should be a backup plan. The couple ought to be appointed in whatever way appropriate. Universities may just have to be creative and “think of a couple as more than the sum of the halves.” Her own situation serves as an example:

My husband and I, I’m doing [topic A], he’s doing [topic B], but we’re both interested in [topic C]. . . . If you want to start a group in this field and you hire us both, then you have a good start because we’re both doing this thing, but we’re not doing exactly the same

thing. That's a way to think of it, but there are also of course couples that are completely different. You might get two good people, and if you can appoint them both and make them both happy, then that's worth something.

Being an international scholar, Dr. Ingersen-Noll knows that universities in other places are struggling with similar issues. She tells the story of how her husband and she both applied for jobs at a university in Ireland. Her husband got his job, but she came in second for hers, and "number one" accepted the offer. The couple was left empty-handed. Irish universities, according to her, go strictly by the book and make decisions solely based on "a check list." Whereas the United States may be concerned about not denying equal opportunities on the basis of race, Ireland is concerned about religion. Here is how it played out:

When we applied it was clear to the department that we were married. If they were smart about it they would sort of think about it but . . . they have all these issues about Catholics and Protestants. They have a very strict rule about how, if you appoint someone, how to make it as fair as possible because they don't want anyone to say he's appointed because he's Protestant, or he's appointed because he's Catholic. . . . They basically had a checklist. . . . They gave points for everything that we did, and then added up the points. The person who had the most points was going to be offered the job. There were no other considerations. You couldn't say "well, here we have a couple. If we give them both a job they are very likely to come and they are very likely to stay."

Dr. Ingersen-Noll was the runner-up for the job in Ireland. It was accepted by a woman with a partner who, given that the

two-body problem cannot be considered in Ireland, was not offered a job by the university.

This is what Dr. Ingersen-Noll has to say about this hiring decision:

By doing it this way, strictly following the protocol, they're basically not taking the opportunity to solve a problem and keep people happy. They're actually creating problems. . . . It would have been really easy if they had the power after they made the list and they have the points that they could circumvent that with a good reason to make the offer to number two rather than number one. They're not allowed because of the whole discrimination issue. It has to be as fair as possible. The woman might be number one, come work for a year and leave again because she finds a job closer to her partner. And they should have the possibility one way or another to solve this.

Dr. Ingersen-Noll makes an excellent case. The old mode, according to which dutiful wives follow their husbands around, is long obsolete. Institutions of higher education must pay attention to the "two-body problem." Dr. Miller at Flagship faces the same problem, having a highly qualified husband who finds it difficult to find a permanent position. Yet she views the problem as complex and concedes that "the department can't just hire spouses and throw their strategic planning out the window for the next decade, and not hire the best people in the field."

Simply disregarding hiring criteria and turning "number two" into "number one" because there is an eligible spouse might also create new forms of discrimination. Minority faculty are sparse in higher education, and perhaps the two-body problem is primarily a "white" problem because more non-whites have non-academics as partners. If search committees were to give

preference to dual-academics, they would very possibly engage in a form of discrimination that has received little attention in higher education, namely discrimination against academics whose life partners are non-academics.

Another issue seldom discussed is that of divorce and what happens to “spousal hires” afterward. Oberlin College’s Assistant Professor Anne Trubek writes about the problem. Years ago, she accepted her part-time position as part of a “package deal” with her husband. Now they are getting divorced and share custody of a four-year-old. She has seen other women choosing to share a job or work part-time in order to balance work and family obligations but “[r]arely does the question arise of what might happen should women divorce. The prospect of becoming a single mom is simply not mentioned” (Trubek, 2004, p. 1). Trubek attempts in vain to turn her part-time position into a full-time one but is not mobile due to the shared custody of her child. In hindsight, she questions the wisdom of spousal hires and making employees’ personal lives a consideration during the hiring process (Trubek, 2002, pp. 1–6).

The two-body problem is not easy to solve. It is clear, however, that it needs to be addressed. Institutions of higher education, however, are just beginning to do so.

The Immigrant Scholar: “I Feel Many Times I Live Between Cracks”

An increasing number of scholars in the United States are immigrants.² Many of their challenges are similar to those of their American-born counterparts, but some are unique. The latter may be caused by immigration laws and policies, both in the scholars’ home countries and the United States, that produce unpredictable life situations and therefore stress. Other problems derive from sacrifices, cultural norms, and cultural barriers little understood by American colleagues.

Dr. Yong from China, assistant professor at Metropolitan University, for instance, went back to China while in graduate school and was denied a visa to come back to the United States, according to her a rather common occurrence: “it happens all the time.” She was eventually able to return, finish graduate school, and stay but then encountered other challenges. For one, she continues to suffer from what she calls “identity paradoxes.” Explains Dr. Yong:

I feel many times I live between cracks. Two cultures. My original culture and this new culture. Every time I go back to China to visit I don't feel I fit anymore. I have lived in this country for ten years; I feel many times I am never completely accepted.

Dr. Yong finds it difficult to establish a strong social life in the United States, a recurring theme for her because she suffered from isolation back in China as well. A gifted student, she went to college young, beginning at age fifteen, which made it difficult for her to fit in socially. She recounts how, given her talent and academic accomplishments, everybody thought she was going to have a very successful life, but she says, “I define success differently. . . . I did not have a normal life.”

She explains that life decisions were always made for her rather than by her: she did what her parents or the Chinese government wanted her to do. Her parents sent her to college early, and the Chinese government sent her to the United States (she initially came as a Chinese representative to work for a U.S. corporation). Says she: “I never had the choice to think ‘what is the best choice for myself?’ . . . Most of my life decisions were not made by myself.”

Not only did others decide the course of her life, Dr. Yong herself made sacrifices for others. She stayed in the United States after completing graduate school, for example, because she wanted

to provide her now fourteen year-old-son with opportunities she did not think he would have in China. Dr. Yong could have enjoyed a fine career back home and easily moved into the professoriate in China after her U.S. graduation. She tells stories of other Chinese immigrants in similar situations; they gave up professional accomplishments and status they had achieved in China in order to raise their children in the United States in hopes that they will enjoy more opportunities and freedom here. Elaborates Dr. Yong:

There were very few professionals in previous generations [from China] who came who ended up teaching in higher education. . . . [T]he previous generations came first of all to survive. Many of them, as I witnessed, sacrificed their own profession for the next generation, their children. Many of them just picked up whatever work. I had doctor friends . . . and when they were in China, they were already medical doctors and very successful, and now they have research fellowships at Harvard University Medical School. They are in their fifties or older but none of them are now doctors.

When probed as to why successful professionals come to the United States to raise their children, Dr. Yong repeats that they do it for the next generation. In response to the question of what, exactly, makes life better or gives people more opportunities in the United States, she explains that China is currently changing and opening up but until recently one did not have many choices. She gives the example of people not being free to move from city to city without official permits that were at times difficult to obtain if you were needed in your place of employment. She, for instance, was not able to live with her husband because they did not get the permits that would have allowed them to reside in the same city. She lived with her parents as a married woman.

I applied. I went to the president of the medical school where I worked, showed him the marriage certificate, “see I got married; he [the husband] works in another city.” He [the president of the medical school] said “well, maybe he should move here.” So then I said “can I just leave?” and he said “no,” because at that time in most higher education they needed teachers, and I was one of the top students and was selected to teach at the medical school. They typically would not let you go.

Moving to the United States to gain an education and establish a life for her son, however, involved more hardships for Dr. Yong than merely leaving her native land. She had to leave it without the child. He grew up with her parents in China while Dr. Yong went to graduate school in the United States, a difficult choice that once again her parents had made for her. Dr. Yong recounts that it was not only painful to live without her son but she was also confronted with people asking her, “How could you leave your child behind?”

I said “I did not leave him behind, I had something to do”; I had wanted to make a better life for him. Also I was doing that because my parents wanted me to, it was part of my family’s priorities. They wanted me to achieve. It was not like I wanted to leave my child behind. But that was very hard.

Dr. Yong was divorced from her husband years ago and has found a new significant other. Her son joined her recently in the United States, once her parents felt comfortable to have him transition to her because she now has a stable job as an assistant professor. Unfortunately, even today the thirty-eight-year-old is of the opinion that she does not have a “typical happy personal life” because it is “missing a lot of parts.” Though successful

professionally, she feels that she “missed a lot, as a person, as an individual.” She shares that she does not have many friends in this country, nor a strong social life. She often feels lonely and uncertain about where, exactly, she belongs. One particular challenge is to connect to people on a level that goes beyond superficiality. Dr. Yong illustrates the point:

There is an obstacle of communication between me and my colleagues. One particular example I remember so clearly. . . . My mentor, she was a very nice lady, she wanted to help me succeed professionally. At this point I really needed to talk about my personal dilemma. I’m lonely, I want a friend. . . . I tried maybe three times when we had a mentor-mentee lunch. I felt very, very lonely. My child at the beginning was not there with me, and I wanted to share some of my struggles. It started when she asked me “how are you doing?” And I started to share my problems but I was interrupted. And then I began to realize, OK, when people, some people, nice people, when they ask you how you are doing, the response they want from you are not really the problems. It’s a courtesy. It’s a social courtesy. You’re supposed to answer “I’m doing great,” and if you cry, close your door but you’re not supposed to tell them.

Dr. Yong finds it culturally difficult not to be able to share personal dilemmas or problems, a situation that leaves her feeling isolated. After her disappointing experiences trying to connect to colleagues in a former position, she followed their example and kept her office door closed. Her isolation mounted.

If I did not go out and ask a question or say “hi” to people, I realized some days if I didn’t teach I did not say a word. I was in the office the whole day, got some

lunch and came back, didn't see anybody. I said "that's really very weird." I feel very abnormal to live that way.

Dr. Yong is not alone in her isolation, and though non-immigrants certainly experience their share of isolation too, that of immigrant scholars may be compounded by cultural barriers and the lack of family. Dr. Marx at HBCU, a full professor originally from Jamaica, talks about rarely getting integrated into the community, a fact she finds particularly odd because she is a black woman feeling rejected by African Americans. In her words:

I'm a foreigner. We very rarely get integrated in. . . .
I'm Black in African American society. . . . I have been invited to dinners by non-African Americans, not by African Americans. . . . It's African Americans in relation to other blacks from other countries.

She describes how she gets together with other immigrant scholars, and this group is inclusive of "whites, Indian, all kinds," but African American colleagues in her immediate work environment tend to be exclusionary. Dr. Marx has previous work experience in another historically black university, and recounts that there, too, she found her colleagues unwilling to share information. She attributes this attitude to past hardships African Americans endured that led them to think that "OK, if I had to go through it you go through it too. I'm going to keep my information, whereas the culture I come from, we share." She concludes that if she had to live her life over again, she would not choose a career but stay home. She says, "I cheat my personality going into the workplace," which she finds very harsh. She elaborates:

I must say if I had been in Jamaica or in the islands I would definitely prefer to work but I find the American workplace very harsh. So, for me, if I had to do it over, I

would stay home with my kids. . . . I do very well, don't worry. But all I can think of is I'm going to walk out one day and not work again because I found it traumatizing, as it were. . . . I've been very successful at it. . . . So I have achieved but it's not the life I would've chosen had I thought it through before.

Dr. Koshino from Japan, full professor at Flagship University, believes that although she may have been exploited because of her minority status, being an immigrant scholar has its advantages, too. She feels that her cultural background helped her a great deal in that it prepared her to be organized, a perfectionist who likes to do "things almost 110% right." She compares her basic education in Japan with basic education in the United States, and is simply relieved she got what she did. Says Dr. Koshino:

I can't believe the problem of literacy in this country. That American natives can't spell, cannot write grammatically correct English, that's very, very disturbing for me. So then I say to myself, wow, I got something right from being Japanese.

Interviews with other immigrants confirmed that isolation seemed to be the resounding theme. Some relayed, however, how they had found ways to prevent or break through isolation by relying on their families. An assistant professor at Metropolitan University, Dr. McMillan came to the United States from Trinidad at the age of nine, and she recalls the importance of her family throughout her life. Her family had immigrated to New York, and she found it painful to be far away from them while at college, so she transferred and moved back. She got married, had two children, and moved South; her extended family followed. She concedes:

I'll be honest with you, I forced a lot of that. I said I needed to have my mom close by so we really worked

with her on selling her house in New York City. We talked seriously to my in-laws about not retiring very far away because we wanted them to have a close relationship with the children. My mother came, and subsequently my sisters came, and when my sister got divorced, I said you need to be with your family because you need the support. Do not leave. You need to have the family to hold you up. We've generally been that support for each other. Even growing up, because we moved from another country, your family was always the nucleus of everything you were doing.

Currently her sister lives next door and her mother resides in her house. It is this family that has kept her grounded, as she would say, and has also supported her and made it possible for her to go to graduate school. Her mother and mother-in-law took turns cooking and taking care of her children while she went away to obtain her Ph.D. Whatever friends she makes, they become integrated into her family, and so "you stay within that hub, it's fine."

There are few Caribbean scholars at Metropolitan University but her extended family life, or "the hub," helps Dr. McMillan deal with the fact that as Caribbean people "we have really different cultural lives." When I asked her to elaborate on these "different cultural lives," she explained:

Coming to this country as immigrants, my parents let us know very early, especially my father, that Americans were very different from us, and we didn't live like they did. . . . It was pretty clear, they have their lives, we live here, we will get the best of what's here but we will always be who we are. . . . So we always had that thing of we have our family and our family will be our friends. We would have interactions with people on the outside but it wasn't as important. One of the really

strange things is that we would always look at my sister who always had lots of American friends. It was like “why does she do that?” It was like she always has these people around her, and we would always kind of turn up our nose and see that as something not being very right about that. We’d see them as a little bit unsavory.

To be sure, Dr. McMillan and her family opened up and befriended other people on the outside given that “I realize that you do need people outside of your family that you are friends with, that you are close to.” The extended family does remain her most immediate support network, however, and a major factor in preventing the feeling of isolation other immigrant scholars confront.

Dr. Sikka from India, full professor at Community College, emphasizes that though “as a family we tend to be more Americanized than anything else,” her husband and she were greatly aided by her parents who moved to town after her father’s retirement. Their move coincided with the birth of Dr. Sikka’s daughter “and that did enable me to continue working at a pretty intense rate. . . . They watched her and juggled her preschool and all that schedule, so that helped.”

Extended family is equally important for Dr. Nelson at HBCU, who immigrated from Ghana at age thirteen. Her family was instrumental in helping the twenty-eight-year-old Ph.D. pursue her career while having three children who are now six, five, and two years old. Dr. Nelson stresses that she has family support and never took any time off to have or care for her children. Says she: “I went to school while giving birth and taking care of them, but I had family support. They would come watch them while I went to class and come back.” She attributes her professional success to the help of her husband, parents, and parents-in-law.

Reflecting on the immigrant experience more generally, Dr. Nelson echoes sentiments expressed by other immigrant

scholars. Dr. Kochino from Japan explained that being an immigrant was a positive influence on her work because her education prepared her well. Dr. Yong from China shared the investment immigrant parents make to provide better opportunities for their children. Dr. Nelson recalls that being an immigrant made her “work harder” and “strive to be better. That’s why I was brought here. Otherwise I would have failed my parents because the only reason why they came here was to give us a better education. It was my job to take that opportunity and make something out of it.”

Immigrating to the United States without family not only means forfeiting the daily support one might otherwise gain from family members but it also can produce hardships because of prolonged periods of separation. Flagship University assistant professor and recent immigrant Dr. Ingersen-Koll describes how the teaching schedule makes it difficult for her to go home and visit her family back in the Netherlands. She describes the teaching schedule as “very fixed,” limiting her to travel over the holidays and not being able to go home during the summer because tickets are prohibitively expensive:

So we’re not going home. If I weren’t in a teaching schedule, we could go in October but we can’t do that right now. It [being an Assistant Professor] is not as flexible as it used to be when I was just a researcher.

Since the job market for academics is a national one, many American scholars face long-distance separations from their families, to be sure. And yet they may have the opportunity to look for academic jobs closer to home, if they so desire, or move their families closer to them. Unless immigrant scholars came to the United States with their families in the first place, they do not have these options. Parents and other family members live in different countries, often on a different continent, speak different languages, and are restricted by immigration policies. In short,

they tend to face insurmountable hurdles if they consider joining their daughters in the United States. Being an immigrant scholar, consequently, might well mean enduring a permanent separation from those to whom they feel closest.

Immigrant scholars face some of the same barriers to professional success as their American born counterparts. They need to find ways to balance busy lives and overcome isolation. And yet in some ways their balancing acts are unique. They negotiate webs of relationships based on conventions markedly different from those in their native lands, as Dr. Yong's battle with prolonged loneliness illustrates.

Another example is Dr. Ingersen-Noll's negotiation of attitudinal difference between people in two countries. She grew up in the Netherlands, and the Dutch simultaneously strike her as more and as less traditional than people in the United States. Back home, they are much more closed-minded about working mothers, she says: "In the Netherlands, if you have children and you keep working five days a week, you are pretty much considered a bad mother." And yet the Dutch are more open-minded toward different living arrangements:

This is a very strong difference between Western European countries and being here. Back home you can just live with someone, and that is considered the same as being married. Here you actually have to have the paper that says you're married.

Her husband and she realized the difference in perception and got married, whereas "if we were in the Netherlands, we probably wouldn't have been married by now."

In addition to navigating of conflicting cultural norms, immigrant scholars may carry burdens that are invisible to others and little understood because they are culturally scripted in ways unimaginable to most Americans. Dr. Yong's forced existence as a burgeoning scholar without her child serves as an example.

But perhaps some immigrant scholars are uniquely positioned to deal with the challenges of academe. They may, for instance, have close-knit families who support them and serve as enablers for their careers, particularly by providing child care. They stay together, move close to each other, and live the notion that it takes a village to raise a child.

Immigrant communities can also serve important emotional functions, as in the case of Dr. Marx, who experienced black-on-black racism. Rejected by the African American community at her college, she found solace not only in her immediate family but also in a community of immigrants who were more embracing and open minded.

Being an immigrant scholar, finally, might positively affect the scholars' work in that it enhances their work ethic and increases their motivation to succeed. Dr. Nelson, for example, personifies what educational anthropologist John Ogbu describes as "voluntary minorities" in contrast to "involuntary minorities." Ogbu defines involuntary minorities as having become a minority against their will, through conquest or enslavement. Examples are African Americans or Native Americans, who look back at a long history of oppression and exploitation and tend to see little experiential evidence that hard work will lead to success or will remove discrimination. Consequently, Ogbu observes, members of involuntary minorities, especially adolescents, are likely to develop oppositional cultures. They may be inclined to view hard work in school, for instance, as "selling out" and instead engage in actions intended to subvert the system. The behavior backfires, and they often undermine their own educational success. But voluntary minorities, such as those found in this study, came to the United States by choice in search of economic, political, or religious opportunities or to flee oppression. Voluntary minorities are much more likely than involuntary minorities to accept a temporary second-rate status in order to prove themselves worthy and to work their way up through society. They tend to have a strong work ethic and seek success within the existing educational system (Ogbu, 1987).

Making It Work and Dealing with It: Enablers and Coping Strategies: “Keep Moving and Getting It Done”

Despite the fact that early-career faculty members face a host of challenges, they also enjoy a variety of enabling factors in their lives. Most of these are personal in nature, some institutional. Institutional enabling factors include advisors at alma maters who continue to be mentors, graduate assistantships that made Ph.D. work possible, colleagues who are friends or who share information freely in a collegial atmosphere, flexibility, and the ability to set one’s own schedule. Some institutions grant one-semester maternity leave and one-year extensions of the tenure clock. Also mentioned were positive attitudes of colleagues and administrators who understand that faculty may have a role to play at home in addition to their work, or mentors and advisors who served as role models because they were able to combine families and successful careers. Flagship University’s Dr. McLeod tells a poignant story:

My main male advisor was . . . an incredible, not sort of your standard run-of-the-mill advisor. I’m not sure he’s emblematic of the standard male. . . . He was talking about meeting with junior faculty members at Berkeley who would tell him outright that they weren’t going to get married because that would affect their tenure-track. He was just like, “if you’re miserable, how is that going to help you get tenure?”

Dr. Miller at Flagship describes a “critical mass of people with children” in her department, a fact that fosters an “understanding of what it means to have children and what you can and can’t do when you have children.” Decent day care is close to the university, which is important because the university’s child care center has a waiting list of two years.³

Dr. Miller also benefits from what she calls “serendipitous things” such as her husband’s office being close to hers. Therefore, they are able to bring their child to work on days that day care is closed.

Not many faculty enjoy the set-up of Dr. Miller, and yet others do find their institution supportive of them as parents. Dr. Carver at Private Comprehensive and mother of a very young child, for example, credits her encouraging colleagues who extended her tenure-clock without question, rearranged classes to accommodate her leave, and even gave her a baby-shower, an important symbolic gesture of their support. She is happy to be able to take her baby to work:

The work environment is also very enabling because I bring the baby to work with me. I go in a few hours a week here and there to meet with students who are doing research with me. . . . I’m not working anywhere near full-time but I’m trying to keep my foot in the door and be a presence in my office. So I just bring the baby with me. I strap her in a carrier, and nobody bats an eye about the fact that I’m working with the baby strapped to my body.

Dr. Carver made a conscious choice not to go to an Ivy League or Research One university that would have higher publishing and grant writing standards. She did that “for the sake of work-life balance” and is happy about her choice. She is of the opinion that her work environment ought to be standard in academia, and if she had a nonacademic job, things would be more difficult to manage. She marvels at the flexibility of both her work and her husband’s schedule and wonders “how women with nonacademic jobs manage and do motherhood.”

While institutional enablers play a role in some women’s lives, other women rely on family members, including husbands, parents,

siblings, and in-laws who look after children and households while women work.

Greatly relieved that her sister is a stay-at-home mother, Dr. Young-Powell at Community College takes her small children to her every day.

They're not stuck at a day-care center somewhere. They're loved and they're rocked, and it does help me because with my oldest one I had to take her to day care when she was eight weeks, and it almost killed me.

Dr. Carver at Private Comprehensive considers herself lucky to have a husband who not only has a flexible work schedule but also is willing to do more than half of the housework, thus helping her making the adjustment to being the parent of a newborn. She calls their division of labor incredibly enabling to her career and is convinced that "a lot of women don't have that." Without it, she would expect a "real strain on the marriage because I would feel resentful, and a strain on the career. It's valuable. I appreciate it a lot."

HBCU's Dr. Nelson credits both extended family and her husband with being her main supporters. Her husband makes sure, she explains, that she is being left alone so she can get her work done, and he is the one she can turn to for advice. Her parents and in-laws, furthermore, used to take time off and drive long distances to baby-sit until her children were old enough to attend day care.

The same holds true for Dr. McMillan at Metropolitan, who recounts that obtaining her Ph.D. would not have been possible without her family, who "was very supportive. My husband and my in-laws and my mom took turns cooking meals for the family." Her mother moved in with Dr. McMillan's family and continues to cook, and the cleaning is hired out so that "most things are taken care of from the home front, the day to day, the cleaning the house, fixing the food, the basic necessities." Dr. McMillan's husband supported her desire to obtain her advanced degrees; "he almost

does it without question. . . . I would meet people who would say ‘oh, your husband talks bout you all the time.’ I know he’s really proud of me, and I couldn’t do this if it wasn’t for him.”

The McMillans are of Caribbean background, and Dr. McMillan relates that her husband tells stories about his Caucasian co-workers, mechanics and electricians, who warn him that “your wife is not going to want to be married to you after [she got her Ph.D.]. That was his way of saying . . . that that could be a concern for him.” Counters she: “I’ve always made it very clear to him, I’m not going anywhere. We’ve been married twenty-seven years this year. There’s nobody I want to start over with. He’s a great guy.” She relates that being an academic, while her husband is not, has caused some friction at times in their relationship. She also knows “it’s an issue for some men, machismo and all that stuff.” Yet she points out, the bottom line is that she will never earn as much money as her husband, and both realize they have different strengths. She respects her husband highly for his willingness to come into her circle of friends: “I know it is not easy for him when we sit around and talk about our stuff at work and all that. He’s willing to be there because he loves me enough that he’s going to be a part of it.” She concludes: “It speaks to a strength, I think.”

Whether enabling conditions are plentiful or sparse, early-career faculty employ a wide variety of coping strategies. Some strategies focus primarily on replenishing their bodies and souls whereas others are practical in nature, intending to “make it all work.” Women mention exercise, enjoying the outdoors to “get grounded,” and being nurtured by friends and support groups. There is talk about spirituality and prayer as a way to refocus the mind on the purpose of the profession and the people who might benefit from one’s work. One woman describes self-talk and finding inspiration in “little sayings in my office, words people have sent to me.” Self-talk comes in particularly handy, she explains, in dealing with the “imposter syndrome,” common among academics who often assume they know much less than people expect them to know.

Instead, this faculty member works on “being positive,” seeing opportunities, and downplaying negative parts of life.

For some, “refueling” through hobbies and personal pleasures may not come easily. Ms. Ohler at Community College sometimes wonders whether she is missing out on social things, given that she is one of those academics she describes as “consumed by academic interests” so that it becomes “sometimes difficult to extricate yourself from that world.” Her questions resonate with Dr. Calhoun at Private Comprehensive, a single faculty member. She talks about “forcing myself out of the house,” “trying to make sure that I take time to do things like actually go see a movie rather than just write about them,” and “scheduling that kind of activity . . . instead of assuming at the end of the day that I’ll find something to do.” She describes being “rigid” with herself about going to the gym on a regular basis and using the workout as a boundary between work and home. This, she emphasizes, makes it easier for her to release whatever it is she is working on, a way of “sort of becoming free of the work environment.” She is then ready to relax, fix dinner, get in touch with friends, and talk on the phone.

Talking to people who find themselves in similar situations appears to be an effective coping strategy, as in the case of Flagship’s Dr. McLeod, who shares both motherhood and a passion for her work with a female colleague at a different institution. She also enjoyed Flagship’s first-year-teacher program, which gave her an outlet to talk to people, get acclimated to the institution, and build bridges outside of her department. “Decompressing” at the end of the day with her husband, a scholar in her field, is seen as helpful by Dr. Miller at Flagship. This is how she captures their relationship:

I find it’s been very helpful to have a spouse who knows exactly what I need when I describe a situation, or a problem, or an issue. They don’t just smile and nod and say “yes” or “that sounds awful,” they really know,

he really knows what it is I'm talking about. And he can offer concrete responses and concrete suggestions. That has been immensely useful to have someone to talk to. . . . So I do have an outlet to decompress, and that helps me stay sane.

Her sanity is further aided, she describes, by her daughter, who "laughs and you laugh, and for a couple of hours at least before bedtime I can most days put work aside and not think about it. I thing that's good for me."

An effective coping strategy shared by some women derives from self-determination and simply making sure to meet deadlines and achieve goals. Women find various ways to remain inspired and on track. Dr. McLeod at Flagship finds it helpful to remind herself that, because she has a family, she cannot afford to go off on tangents, and this is her chance to be more effective in the time she has available to work. She states: "You're a little more focused because you realize you have constraints." She also embraces the idea of dedicating certain times to doing things that easily become distracting if allowed to penetrate the entire day. The example she used was reading e-mail only during a child's swim practice, and otherwise "not touching it." Such measures can be used to free up the limited time that faculty members have to be productive.

Ms. Ohler at Community College makes lists. Carrying around her calendar and her "little notebook," she finds it essential to keep lists and, therefore, keeps herself organized. Her colleague Dr. Young-Powell sits down every night and plans the next day so as to not "lose sight of my responsibilities." She separates the "has to be's" from the "kind of needs to be's" and "would like to be's." After prioritizing her day, she makes peace with the fact that she cannot get everything done, and then she tells her husband what she needs him to do. She had to work on that last step after her second child was born and she realized she needed to give up the assumption "that I could do it all."

Getting her husband involved in the care of her newborn is an important coping strategy for Dr. Carver as well, who is trying to carve out periods of time each week when she can “just leave and not think about [the baby’s] care.” She is planning to hire students to baby-sit on campus while she is doing work in the office and arrange full-time day care once the child is older.

At Metropolitan, Dr. Yong pursues very sophisticated motivational strategies. She likes to travel with her son and life partner, and on those trips read and write novels instead of professional literature. She sets deadlines for her projects and searches for external motivators (she used the last day of the month of November—national novel writing month—as a deadline, and indeed wrote 50,000 words). Says she: “I set deadlines by looking at something that I really like and make it work.” Dr. Yong explains how she uses a powerful dialectic between personal and professional writing to increase both her pleasure and her productivity:

. . . getting it [the novel] published is not my priority. I try to balance, and reading only academic research articles would drive me crazy. And I feel I’m not productive by only focusing on one thing. Actually, it makes me more productive, like this month, November, while I was writing my novel, I also wrote an academic peer reviewed article, and it was already accepted. So I’m trying to do both. That part makes me really happy as a person. . . . That’s one of the strategies. Find something really interesting that you’re good at. And do it.

Another example of a refined coping system is personified by Dr. Lilian, who masterfully integrates various aspects of her life. She invites her family along on business trips, for example, and while she attends meetings they go sight-seeing. Everybody has dinner together, however, and “just knowing that they were there,

and knowing that they were in the hotel. . . , that was fun.” Dr. Lilian combines her work and personal life in other ways as well; she takes pleasure, for example, in volunteering in the community fully conscious of the fact that she represents her college. She also combines care of self and family activities by sharing personal pleasures with her daughter:

I just need to go and do some things that take care of myself. For example, I want to get a pedicure or a manicure, or something simple, you know, and so I find that I have to involve my daughter into those things and make it a fun day. Let’s go get our nails done together. So that way, we’re spending time together, we’re doing things we need to do, and we’re doing things we like because we like to reward ourselves with certain little things.

Dr. Lilian is a master at “multitasking,” another coping strategy that helps her manage her busy life as a successful professional and single mother.

Having an only child, I found that after 9 o’clock I am very productive because at 9 o’clock she is in bed, and I’m not tired and ready to crash myself. . . . I can be doing a load of laundry, watching television and reading e-mail all at the same time. . . . And I’m content. I don’t feel like I’m burdened to be sitting there reading these e-mails. I’m watching my favorite TV show, I have on my favorite slippers, in about an hour you hear the drier ‘ding,’ which is fine. I’m doing things that I need to do. What’s stressful is if I couldn’t do these things, and they’d pile up on me. That’s when the stress comes in but as long as I can keep moving and get things done, I’m fine.

When comparing her generation to previous ones, Dr. Lilian finds significant differences that enable her to cope with a busy schedule. For one, she describes herself as not knowing “anything other than fast pace.” Technology is a part of life, a phenomenon accentuated in her daughter’s generation, who, at age thirteen, “can already do all those technology programs, PowerPoint, access databases, Excel . . . because she started with the computer from kindergarten.”

Technology, she explains, means change, and she finds it easier to adapt to change than members of previous generations. This ability to adapt, however, helps her cope:

If you are accustomed like my mother to dinner every night, and just couldn’t imagine walking through the house with dinner in your hand, so I guess for her that would be a big issue to adapt to because you should be sitting at your dinner table at six o’clock. But you can’t because the child is still at basketball practice, and basketball practice ends at eight thirty. So then we’re going to get home, and we’re not going to set the place setting here at the table. We’re probably more than likely, if we haven’t grabbed something from the gym, we’re going to go home and grab something quick. So you’re really trading off the personal dinner table time. That can be a big issue.

Making adaptations in routine is not stressful for Dr. Lilian, given her generation’s adaptation to fast paced life. Again, her lifestyle clashes with that of previous generations:

And that’s what I hear from my grandparents too. My mother just said last week: “your grandmother’s getting kind of upset with you because she hasn’t talked to you in two weeks now.” So I have to take time . . .

and be sure that I call her as much as she thinks I should call her that week or that I am even answering the phone when she thinks I should be answering the phone because in her mind we're not getting enough sleep because we're always gone. In our mind we're not always gone, we're home a lot. So it's really a generational thing.

Integration is also used as a coping strategy by Dr. McMillan, who employs it primarily to prevent isolation and stress in her professional life. Specifically, she collaborates with people in other departments, reaching out and making connections with scholars who do similar work. She remembers realizing that "I have to be the one to make those connections to allow this thing that I do to work." She describes doing a small study with a colleague at a neighboring college as a "tremendous lift."

So now I remove myself from my workplace almost every Friday . . . and we work all day. . . . we can off-load our stuff on each other, then we jump into our work. That is just like the most "wow" thing for me."

Despite many enabling factors in women's lives and the coping strategies they themselves develop and nurture, early-career faculty agree that much reform is needed in the academy. Their ideas are summarized in Chapter Five.

Notes

1. For a detailed comparison, both historical and contemporary, of U.S. social policies toward children and their families with those in other industrialized (mostly Western European) countries, see: Kamerman, S. B. (2005). Europe advanced while the United States lagged. In J. Heyman & C. Beem (eds.), *Unfinished work: Building equality and democracy in an era of working families*. New York/London: The New Press, 309–347.

2. The exact number of immigrant scholars, defined here as first-generation immigrants who hold faculty positions in academe, are difficult to obtain. The group includes immigrants who are nonresident aliens (people with visas that allow them to work), resident aliens (green card holders), and citizens. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 21,200 full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting institutions were nonresident aliens in 2003 (NCES, 2005). To obtain an accurate picture of the size of what is here defined as “immigrant scholars,” one would have to add green card holders as well as first-generation citizens to this number.
3. In fact, a visit to the institution’s website reveals that faculty are encouraged to “research your desired childcare provider and then to place your name on the appropriate waiting list(s) as close to the *time of conception* as possible.”