

## Second Chances for Mothers on the Fast Track

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Mothers who achieve the highest position in their field are wonderful models. Mothers serving as high court judges, university presidents, distinguished medical scientists, and corporate executives give courage to those starting up the ladder. They affirm that it is possible to have a family and a career, and they tell us that their lives are richer for having succeeded at both. We admire these mothers and greatly appreciate their work opening doors and holding them open for those who are following in their footsteps. But we also realize that these strong and determined women are walking a very narrow path, and a single slip—a divorce or a sick child—could permanently sideline them. To finish the revolution, we must level the playing field for mothers, so that not only the lucky and the strong can succeed. We must make it a family-friendly field where fathers play along alongside mothers. To do this, critical workplace changes are needed to remove the institutional barriers that sideline women.

Hard evidence can produce hard changes. At Berkeley, our *Do Babies Matter?* research project offered substantive proof that women were leaking out of the pipeline before taking their first academic positions. These talented young minds realized that if they stayed the course they would be at least forty before they achieved job security. They didn't see a way to fit children into that scenario. "I want a life more than I want a career," one of my students told me.

Our research, coupled with leadership from the University of California president, has led to a full-scale UC system-wide (ten universities) initiative, the UC Faculty Family Friendly Edge, which has begun to transform the academic culture. Both mothers and fathers can stop the tenure clock for up to one year to take time out for childbirth or adoption; both are eligible for one semester of teaching relief at full pay, mothers for two semesters. A part-time tenure track is available as well, which extends the tenure clock up to ten years.

Hiring faculty are encouraged to help place dual-career couples and discount “résumé gaps” when considering talented women—and men—who were diverted for a few years by family obligations. Rather than discarding them from the competition, search committees now consider the talent and potential of these nontraditional candidates. In addition, part-time emergency child care and more on-campus child care are in the planning stages.

At Berkeley we begin our initiatives with the graduate student years. Stopping the coursework clock, constructing new infant and toddler facilities, offering parent grants and paid maternity leave for supported students are important steps forward. Students are beginning to feel that it is safe to have children. Women students, in particular, are encouraged to stay the course.

Jenny Mitchell, a neuroscience postdoc, points out that such initiatives make it possible for young women, including graduate students, to start a family before assuming the crushing demands of a tenure track position. “When I was at Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) there were graduate students with children, and they got benefits and support for it. The attitude in the program was that it was an appropriate time to have a child because there’s less pressure to publish.” I believe these parental leave and “stop the clock” policies should be standard.

New options by themselves do not transform a culture; there must be encouragement, cooperation, and ongoing vigilance. In the university culture the department chair hires, monitors, and evaluates faculty performance. One of the initiatives in our Family Friendly Edge project is a “School for Chairs,” which teaches these gatekeepers hiring and retention concepts such as actively promoting a second job for dual-career couples, discounting résumé gaps attributable to parenthood, ending faculty meetings by 5:00 P.M., and carefully mentoring new parents through the tenure process. Most importantly, it is the chair’s job to make the case at tenure time that stopping the clock and taking time off for childbearing cannot be used against otherwise qualified candidates.

These family-friendly policies are good business. They allow us to attract the best and brightest faculty and graduate students and to maintain our competitive edge. Our hiring rates for new women faculty at Berkeley have steadily climbed from 26 percent to nearly 40 percent over the past few years.

And other universities are clamoring to follow the lead. Institutions change when forced to compete with each other for the best talent. A recent meeting

of the “nine presidents” (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, MIT, University of Pennsylvania, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, and Berkeley) at UC Berkeley established benchmark criteria and a commitment to new policies by the presidents of all these universities.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond academia, some forward-looking countries are tackling these problems with sweeping policy reforms. In France, incentives offered by the government—including a three-year paid parental leave with guaranteed job protection on returning to the workforce; universal, full-time preschool starting at age three; subsidized day care before age three; stipends for in-home nannies; and monthly child care allowances—are changing the way professionals think about family. According to a recent report in the *Washington Post*, French mothers say they feel less guilt at work than their American counterparts do.<sup>2</sup> Marie-Therese Letablier, research director of the Center for Employment Studies, notes in the *Post* article that French policies have created a complete cultural paradigm shift. In many European countries it’s “work or children,” she says, while “in France, it’s work and children.” Letablier’s statement is borne out by the numbers: three-quarters of all French mothers with at least two children are employed.

In Germany, a private foundation is making headway in attracting and retaining women in science and engineering. Led by physiologist and Nobel Prize winner Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, the foundation awards grants to young female scientists to pay for baby-sitters and household help. “We lose talented women at the time they get pregnant . . . Later, these young women find it difficult to get back. They drop out,” she said in an interview with the *New York Times*.<sup>3</sup> “We try to find the gifted ones, where it would be a real pity if they dropped out. We say, ‘use these funds to buy yourself time away from household matters.’”<sup>4</sup>

These innovations show that change is possible when countries, foundations, and workplaces have the vision and commitment to see them through. While the problem seems complex, just a few simple institutional solutions could address many of the work–family conflicts parents currently face. As this book has shown, successful solutions must recognize that work–family choices occur across the entire life span beginning in the student years. The five transformative solutions suggested here will require, beyond putting new policies on the books, a commitment to change the culture at each step of the career path, with particular attention to the make-or-break years when women are most likely to drop down or drop out.

## 1. BREAK THE MAKE-OR-BREAK YEARS

All of our high-status professions are front-ended—the greatest demands are made on thirty- to forty-year-olds during the make-or-break decade. We need to rethink this century-old concept for the twenty-first century. The ideal workplace for the make-or-break years would start with a commitment to flexibility at the front end of a career—the years of greatest demand that collide with the childbearing years. Flexibility would take different forms across the professions but all would allow periods of less intense work followed by the right to return to the main track. In law it could be a part-time partnership track that allows the parent to take up to ten years (or more in special circumstances) before being considered for full partnership.

Most large law firms already offer a track of this kind, instituted during the first push for family-friendly policies in the 1980s, but it is rarely utilized. As senior partner Jessica Pers (whom we met in Chapter 4) noted, these are “graveyard” positions guaranteed to marginalize an employee and keep her from the best cases and the most powerful clients. These options have failed because the culture works against them and almost no men take the option. As Rena, the third-year law student introduced earlier, commented, “[All law students] know that daddy lawyers are partners, mommy lawyers are not.”

But what if the senior partners introduced this option when they hired new employees, clearly set up the rules to make it workable, and backed it up with mentoring and resources, such as child care support, to make it work? What if men as well as women were seriously encouraged to take advantage of parental leave and flexible time, setting a new cultural norm for law practice?

Recently I met a successful corporate lawyer and mother of two children who reported that the part-time track at her firm was well utilized and well regarded. The secret, she said, is having part-timers available when the client needs service, even if it is their day off. “Your client doesn’t know if you are full- or part-time; he doesn’t see you everyday. Just as long as you are there when he needs you, all is well,” she explained.

Her experience suggests that incorporating children into the fast track, especially during the crucial make-or-break years, may be possible in law if part-time attorneys operate under the principle that clients are always attended to, if not always at work.

Reformers are unanimous that firms must begin to conduct formal and informal surveys on the effectiveness of alternative work arrangements.<sup>5</sup> Joan Williams and Cynthia Calvert's 2001 Project for Attorney Retention suggests that firms should begin to measure comparative promotion rates between men and women.<sup>6</sup> Since one of the factors contributing to the low proportion of women partners is the practice of taking part-time attorneys off the partnership track, firms could test the accuracy of the perception that this practice ends all hope of promotion. Firms might also compare the attrition rates of attorneys on balanced schedules with those of attorneys on standard schedules. If the attrition rate among attorneys working reduced hours is higher than for other groups, there may be problems with existing "balanced hours" policies.<sup>7</sup>

The accounting firm Deloitte & Touche recognized in the early 1990s that women were rapidly leaking out the partnership pipeline. They considered this a bad business result and put in place practices that encouraged women to stay with the firm. These practices extended to their corporate law department, which is composed of 40 percent women employees. Attrition now is very low. While attorneys work forty- to fifty-hour weeks, their schedules are flexible, and they do not always have to put in face time at the office when working at home is a viable option.<sup>8</sup> Partnership decisions are carefully monitored to ensure that gender equality is maintained.

Deloitte & Touche has the numbers to prove that their policies make good business sense. A loyal, stable workforce is more productive than a revolving door. Other corporations, such as Citicorp, American Express, Ernst & Young, and Pfizer, have adopted more flexible work options for their workers, and all have seen improvement in employee retention. Pfizer has held on to its working mother employees by offering a three-day workweek option with the ability to return to full-time at any point.<sup>9</sup>

Genentech has taken this challenge a step further—the company not only accommodates working parents but celebrates them. The biotech company gives expectant moms a new-baby kit (complete with bib and pregnancy books) and a fully paid six-week leave after the baby is born. In addition, it has built twelve lactation rooms at four sites for nursing mothers. All employees at the company's headquarters in South San Francisco have access to an on-site child care center with full-time, backup, summer, and holiday care.

For computer powerhouse Hewlett-Packard, employee work-life issues became a top priority when former CEO Lew Platt lost his wife to cancer and

found himself alone with two young children. Suddenly Platt discovered that flexible work–life balance was not a women’s issue but a parents’ issue. Today Hewlett-Packard encourages flexible work hours, job sharing, and telecommuting. According to Platt, these policies are the key to retaining talented employees in a competitive business.

These businesses have shown that flexible schedules are not only possible but practical. It’s time for other fields to learn from their lesson.

## **2. CREATE SECOND CHANCES**

Men and women who drop into the second tier or drop out of the professional world for a period of years must have opportunities to reenter the fast track—second chances to realize the professional goals they set out to achieve as ambitious young students. Parents need help in returning to the workforce after a long or short hiatus. Reentry training programs, networking resources, and temporarily reduced-hour jobs that offer phased-in full-time schedules are promising examples of progressive reentry policies.

Discounting the résumé gap would be a big step toward offering a second chance. In science and engineering fields, grants and fellowships routinely specify a limit to the number of years spent post-Ph.D. for an applicant, excluding those who have taken time out for family. Employers also follow this line of thought when hiring. Any applicant who has been off the fast track—even for a year or two—may not receive serious consideration. The federal government could change the rules governing these competitive grants (and all other federal employment for that matter) in a single swoop of family-friendly legislation that effectively creates second chances for academic parents. This legislation could also include grant supplements to pay for childbirth leave and one-year reentry postdoctoral fellowships that would allow parents an opportunity to ramp up to speed, even in highly competitive areas of science.

Business schools such as the Tuck School at Dartmouth and Babson College in Massachusetts have begun offering executive training programs for women executives seeking to return to the workforce. Some law schools, such as the Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, are also considering reentry training programs for women that help “second-tiered” moms get back on the fast track. These programs are important steps in the right direction.

### **3. SUPPORT FAMILY AT ALL AGES**

Family pressures are not limited to the make-or-break years. Becoming a parent can be the right choice for students in their twenties or early thirties—if universities and professional schools transform their chilly attitude into a warm welcome. The progress that Berkeley and other universities have made in providing child support, housing, paid leaves for working students, and a flexible curriculum are important new steps in keeping and retaining the next generation of talent.

Becoming a parent could also be right for women and men in their forties or fifties who choose to adopt. Of course children's needs do not stop at birth. Children can get sick at any time, and partners and parents can require immediate and extended care. The model of the Family Medical Leave Act (twelve weeks for any family-related illness) is a good one, but it needs to be completed with pay. Flexible part-time options will find the greatest support and acceptance if they are offered for all ages. In our survey of all UC faculty we found that the majority of men supported a part-time flexible track, especially if it could be taken at any time during the career. Women were enthusiastic about this possibility at any time, but especially during the make-or-break years.

### **4. ENCOURAGE FATHERS**

As noted above, parental leave and reduced hours to care for young children should be routine for fathers as well as mothers. This would encourage stronger families and ensure that a flexible career pattern is not only a mommy track. Without fathers' participation, it is difficult to change the culture, and "family friendly" will come to mean "mommy trap." In Sweden, the government changed its generous eighteen-month parental leave policy to insist that fathers take at least six months of the total; otherwise the leave will be reduced to twelve months. The intention was not to save money but to make fatherly participation in raising children an accepted norm. In the university world fathers who provide substantial child care are now beginning routinely to stop their own tenure clock for childbirth. As this becomes the norm, the culture will no longer look on parental rights as women's rights.

## 5. IMPROVE THE SECOND TIER

The robust second tier, which has developed in all professions as a highly trained female labor force, is not likely to disappear. But it could be improved to ensure better conditions as well as opportunities back to a faster track. This would make it attractive to men as well women. In academia, reentry grants—whether federally subsidized or private—could help scholars bridge the gap between the world of the gypsy scholar and the demanding lead-up to tenure during the make-or-break years. Those who prefer the schedule and lifestyle that the second tier affords should be given job security, benefits, and pay that better represents their training and contribution. HMOs in the medical world provide a reasonable model for a functioning part-time second tier that is attractive to men as well as women. HMOs like Kaiser Permanente in California, while not competing with the scientific glamour of university research hospitals, offer good pay, security, and flexible schedules.

The final two suggestions are well-known and have been the subject of public debate for decades; nevertheless, little progress has been made. In fact, parental leave and child care seem to have fallen off the political agenda in the past few years. Where are the candidates who pledge to help working parents with the everyday support they need? Where are the voters who are demanding it?

All political candidates should be rated on their support of working families. At the top of the list should be the following:

*Political support of parental leave.* Policies that facilitate time off for and reentry after maternal or paternal leave are sorely needed, and the government should take the lead. Of the world's most developed industrial countries, only the United States and Australia do not offer government-mandated paid maternity leave.<sup>10</sup> Italy guarantees mothers a five-month maternity leave paid at 80 percent of the mother's wage, and both parents can take ten-month leaves at 30 percent of their earnings until the child's eighth birthday.<sup>11</sup> Notably, Italy, France, and Sweden offer time off to fathers as well as mothers. In contrast, the U.S. Family Leave Act gives new mothers just twelve weeks of *unpaid* leave after childbirth.

*Child care* that is high quality, flexible, and affordable is the cornerstone for all family-friendly policies in Europe as it must be in this country. Child care always tops the list of requests for family-friendly reforms. The greatest single



boost to morale for parents at our university is the long-awaited opening of a new infant and toddler facility at the edge of campus. For students there will be subsidies, and for lower-income staff and faculty there will be scholarships. The companies with the greatest success in hiring and retaining parents make this a top priority. This should be a government priority as well.

## **PERSONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Institutional and legislative solutions are only part of the answer. As the women profiled in this book will attest, barriers to success exist not only in the workplace but also in the home. Societal stereotypes and expectations about parenting and gender play a role too. Solutions to the problem, I believe, are both personal and political.

Fortunately we now know better how mothers can plan their lives to succeed in spite of these of obstacles. The mothers in this book provide practical, personal guidelines that hold true across professions and generations. They also exhibit certainty that it can be done. They act with confidence and energy, often in the face of great resistance.

## **STAY IN THE GAME**

Nearly all of the successful mothers interviewed in this book took little or no time off when their children were born. They did not believe they had the option to do so and still succeed—and they were probably right. Although 93 percent of highly qualified women want to return to work after taking time off in a study of corporate women, only 40 percent successfully return to full-time jobs.<sup>12</sup> And on average, these women lost 18 percent of their earning power when they returned to work after taking a break.<sup>13</sup>

Mothers who rose to the top of their professions worked reduced schedules for a while, but as psychiatry professor Lynn Pontin related, most returned to their jobs as soon as possible, and some even brought their children to work with them in order to do so. Our research shows that mothers who have children while in graduate school and persevere without taking years out do well. In the academic world, continuing to publish, even when not fully

employed, can make the difference between a permanent second tier and a second chance. Until second chances become routine institutional practice, staying close to the center of action is critical.

Breaking the punitive cycle of the make-or-break years will allow more mothers to stay in the game as our successful mothers did. The strategies described above will give the mothers a break without terminating their career plans.

## **CHOOSE A GOOD PARTNER**

Partners play a critical role for working mothers, but that role can be enabling or disabling. It is not a coincidence that most of the successful mothers interviewed attribute much of their accomplishment to their partners. Sometimes, as in the case of Senator Dianne Feinstein, the partner provides economic and emotional support. Other times, as in the case of Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg, the partner insists that the mother's career is equally important. Occasionally, as in the case of lawyer Carole C.'s husband, male partners break with gender stereotypes and stay at home with young children.

But many of the women we interviewed believed that partners constrained their careers. In two-career couples women often defer to their husband's job offer, as I did early in my career. Judith Kliman, the distinguished member of the National Academy of Sciences who appears in Chapter 6, related that following a divorce she had the freedom to advance her career by moving to a different university. And not all fathers believe that mothers should have a powerful, independent career. As one of our mothers sagely advised, "Don't marry a jerk."

An intriguing finding from our research is that single mothers do a little better than married mothers in achieving tenure.<sup>14</sup> When I ask the audience what their theory is, since our data do not offer explanations, I hear such answers as "They have no choice," to "They have fewer children to take care of."

## **LEARN MOTHER TIME**

Successful fast track mothers learn how to adapt their schedules to what I call "mother time." They must firmly negotiate reduced hours for childbirth and

other family needs. And they must say no to many late meetings and some business travel. Learning to negotiate a flexible schedule without becoming marginalized is a skill some possess naturally and others can learn. Basic classes in negotiation and time management are useful if mentors are not available. “Mother time” also means making the workplace work for you. As lawyer Jessica Pers commented, “My clients don’t know if I am writing a brief from my office or from home.” In other words, successful mothers are skilled tacticians who know when they must put in face time at the office and when it’s okay to keep a less rigid schedule.

## **MIND YOUR MENTOR**

As we’ve noted throughout this book, women on the fast track need guidance, and mentors are important at all career stages. The mothers we interviewed reported that mentors in graduate and professional schools greatly influenced their career direction. Some mentors, like my history professor, open the imagination or even the doors to the next important step. All along a career path, a mentor can make the difference between staying the course and dropping out, as did the encouragement of an older senior partner for Maryellen Herringer, the first woman in her law firm, when her clients treated her as an oddity, “like a talking dog.” Mentoring is most critical during the student and make-or-break years, when women need the most help juggling career ambitions with family needs.

Mentors are not easy to find, in part because it is not usually in anyone’s job description. As women rise in their careers they must make sure they bring younger women along with them and take responsibility for setting up a mentoring program in their workplace.

Mentoring about life issues should become routine in schools. Career/Life Planning 101 should be a part of every curriculum, beginning in high school and repeated in college. Forcing all young people to script out their adult lives—how they will organize their work and life and how they will achieve their ultimate goals—would assist them in planning a future in which they have real, not illusory, choices. During their graduate years, students should continue to be mentored not just for academic preparation but also for career/life preparation. Harvard University, for example, has offered a class for MBA students called Charting Your Course since 2001. It aims to help

students factor in family issues to their long-range career plans. Special support is needed as students complete their training and face the job market—the danger zone period that triggers the exodus of women from the career pipeline. Women should be assisted in holding on to their professions and not veering into the second tier. Those who planned some part-time or time-out years for family would be encouraged to develop a life plan that included reentry.

Young women in science and engineering must receive special attention and encouragement from primary school onward. They should be recognized as a valuable, scarce resource in a country that is not producing enough trained technical minds to support our future growth and continued scientific innovation. NSF offers an Advance grant to universities that can offer innovative ways of advancing women through the competitive ranks of research science. Often a major component is an organized mentoring program. These grants have significantly changed the culture of participating universities.

## **TAKE A CHANCE ON SECOND CHANCES**

Finally, successful fast track mothers take a gamble on a second chance. In our current workplace structure, there is little encouragement for mothers who leave their careers aside for a few years to return. But most mothers don't even try. Often they lose confidence and do not apply for positions or seek out old mentors for advice and direction. But second chance opportunities do arise, as they did for me. Maintaining contact with mentors and maintaining a foothold in the profession are the best ways to prepare for the opportunity.

## **MAKING IT HAPPEN**

Recently my new colleague, the second woman dean to be appointed in five years, suggested we gather the handful of top-ranked women on campus to brainstorm about promoting women to leadership positions beyond the glass ceiling. We all knew that most women professors stalled at the associate professor level and felt worn out by the time they were full professors. Many turned down positions like department chair that would lead to higher

authority and many were not asked. She said we already knew what it took to bring about change; we just needed to articulate the guidelines.

She was right. Over lunch we easily agreed on the following strategies, which could be a field manual for every CEO, law partner manager, chief of medicine, and editor in chief across the country.

- Take a chance on women who have not served as managers in line jobs such as department chairs, and advance them to a higher post. These women professors, particularly the mothers, have shown great drive, talent, and competence to get where they are, even if they have lost some time and not followed the traditional seniority sequence. Seniority, as measured by progressively responsible supervisory positions, is the usual criteria used for picking top leaders. Mothers who have deferred extra responsibilities in earlier years are often overlooked when they are ready to serve.
- Ensure that our loose association of faculty women, which already greets new women faculty and provides some guidance in the probationary years leading up to tenure, can continue to mentor beyond tenure. Commit senior women to becoming the cheerleaders for the next generation. Provide an “old girls’ network” to match the advantage that “old boys” have usually given to young men.

Such a support network is particularly needed to address the recruitment and retention of women in science. An informal group here at Berkeley, which also includes several prominent women scientists from UCSF, has been meeting bimonthly for almost thirty years. The group includes members elected to the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, along with prestigious professorships and research positions. These high-achieving women all agree that continuous practical and emotional support is needed, and is a key to women’s success in research and academic science.

- Encourage the chancellor and other top male executives to make appointing women leaders their own initiative. Convince them of the value of such appointments as a message to all young students that all doors are open to men and women equally. And on the business side of the house, point out they are taking advantage of some of the best and most capable talent in the university.

## FINISHING

A revolution cannot be finished without continued passion. The revolutionary zeal of my generation has naturally expired. The days of public bra burning and man bashing, always a flashy sideshow to the main work of establishing equal footing in the workplace and in the law, is a memory, one that's sometimes embarrassing to the second generation. Their need to separate themselves from the *F* word, feminism, is understandable.

But the revolution was always for our daughters and now they must complete the task. The pioneer generation is beginning to retire. Young women, those who entered the workplace in the 1990s and early 2000s, and current students feel entitled to equal treatment but are unclear how to chart their own work and family life plans.

These generations must enlist the support of young men to succeed. Young men say they want a more balanced life, but will they actually pursue the changes that make it possible? Will they insist on a flexible workplace and then take their turn at parental leave? Will they encourage women to continue their careers on an equal footing to the very top positions? Improving work-life policies for men must be a key element of any solution. A Center for Work-Life Policy study found that 48 percent of professional men feel that part-time options are perceived as illegitimate in their workplace culture, even when it's part of official policy. That culture needs to change before men are able to participate equally in family life with women.

There are hopeful signs that momentum exists to change the structure of the workplace, but will our daughters fight to see it through? We know they are less willing to give up family for work, but are they willing to change the workplace rather than retreat to the home? My generation, still keenly aware of our struggle to gain recognition as professionals, hopes that the answer is a resounding yes.

—Mary Ann Mason

Will my generation continue the struggle started by the pioneer generation, or will we retreat to the home? This is a timely question and one that's difficult to untangle in the current mixed-message environment. I believe we will

continue to fight for more rights, but in our own way; we may not follow the exact path of our pioneer mothers.

When I began working on this project in early 2004, family and feminism were far from my mind. At twenty-four, I had just resigned from a job in the photography department of a prestigious men's fashion magazine in New York City and had moved back to San Francisco after six years in the Big Apple. I was enjoying the freedom of doing freelance writing and photography by day, and doing street outreach for a women's community clinic by night. Like many people my age I knew that family would probably be part of my future, but I hadn't given the idea deep thought. And I had not considered how my career would affect choices about family. This topic was as abstract as the 401k plan options I was supposed to choose from at my first full-time job with benefits.

Over the course of this project, however, my perspective changed. I discovered a new awareness of how work and family issues have played out historically and how they are currently influencing the lives of my peers as well as my own life. My mother's generation removed the barriers to career opportunity for my generation, but the pioneers still worked a second shift at home—their revolution fell short of achieving equality for women.

While my generation seems less interested in a highly public battle akin to the feminist movement of the 1960s (feminism and bra burning seem decidedly uncool), we are challenging stereotypes that enable gender inequality in the home. Women don't consider it a given that they will do the majority of housework and young men aren't opting out of caretaking responsibilities. Many young men want a more active role in parenting and are choosing less demanding careers in order to make that happen.

In my own class of recent professional school graduates, couples are approaching work-life issues with equality in mind. I recently met a fellow classmate from my social work program to celebrate our graduation and discuss our future professional plans. She and her husband of two years have been discussing children seriously in the past six months and she felt compelled to take a job she felt would accommodate family. But importantly, her husband also considered family obligations. His job allows a flexible schedule and he has told her he will be happy to accommodate whatever her schedule is. It's a heartening development that many young couples today are approaching this issue on equal footing. Neither one assumes that the woman will take on all of the care duties.

This approach stems in part from our experiences growing up in split family households. At least half of my friends had divorced parents. They shuttled back and forth between parents and witnessed some of the difficulty, if not animosity, of these breakups. The result of this awareness probably undermines my generation's faith in marriage, but it also inspires a healthier approach to the institution, and a more practical attitude about career-life issues. We don't assume that married couples live happily ever after. Success requires negotiation and communication at every step of the way.

In the burgeoning days of the feminist movement an unfortunate decision to demonize and blame men for the unequal status of women polarized many male supporters of women's equality. As a correction, it is especially important to include men in the discussions and plans for solutions.

Female identity and responsibilities are in a state of flux and almost caught between epochs—the Donna Reed happy homemaker and some unclear vision of an equal self-actualized woman of the future (which I hope is not exemplified by the superficial, self-absorbed characters in *Sex in the City*). As a child I watched the programs of the great animators Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera, who created all sorts of clever spacescapes and timesaving technologies for the Jetsons' futurized life. But they made sure the mother, Jane Jetson, was busy selecting dinner from the machine screen, taking care of the kids' cyber toys, and organizing the home with the help of Rosey, the robo-maid. George Jetson sped off in his little spacecraft to work each day. The women of my generation need to challenge this vision, and changing the paradigm requires a new consciousness from both men and women. Balancing work and child rearing is a family issue, not a mother issue.

The pressure to be a certain kind of mother—one who sacrifices career for children—exists even today with the resurgence of the new momism movement. Looking back, I realize that my mother—like many successful women in this book—was able to rise above the social pressure to conform to a certain maternal stereotype. I grew up with full-time working parents, but I never felt that I was shortchanged on maternal or paternal time. In fact the role my mother modeled for me was one of being ambitious and loving; I saw no contradiction there. Her choices factored directly into my own drive and ambitions.

But my mom would sometimes question her path. She would joke about not being the "Donna Reed mom," buying cupcakes at the store instead of baking cookies. My first semester in college my dorm roommate's mother



was endlessly sending her baked goods and other personalized goodies and presents; she was a stay-at-home mother and my roommate was her only child. I remember my mom calling while my roommate was opening one of these packages. She lamented that she had been swamped with her teaching schedule and had not been able to do something like that for me. A week later I received a package. She had ordered an enormous cheese wheel online and had it sent to my room. It didn't matter that my mother had a successful career and two well-adjusted children; self-doubt still crept in now and again. I realize now that letting go of this mother guilt and charting your own path requires independence, self-confidence, and sacrifice.

To my surprise, some of the graduate students I interviewed made me realize that there are also advantages to having children while still an apprentice. As a graduate student I never considered that my schedule would be well suited for starting a family. However, after hearing about the long hours required for most first positions, from lawyers to lecturers, I revisited this notion. For most graduate students, children and family fall farther down the to-do list; cultivating career and establishing work stability often trump these urges and desires. For most professional women having a child without job security seems risky and difficult. However, the risks and difficulties of having children later on are also significant. I was warned by a number of women who waited to have children that, though there appears to be infinite choice in family planning with modern contraception and fertilization techniques, there is still significant difficulty, if not failure, when trying to conceive later in the reproductive years.

The women in this book, like my mother, taught me many important life lessons. Some of the best family planning advice I have heard came from Ashley Dunning, a powerful young San Francisco lawyer currently planning her family with concise attention. She described the importance of knowing your worth. A lack of confidence and perceived workplace productivity requirements, more than the actual demands of the firm, is what leads many women to make time commitments that overextend their capabilities. Confidence in career comes with stability according to Ashley; some women find stability from spouses, real work experience, or advanced degrees. All can contribute to building a firm platform to solidly stand on.

Although a number of interviewees identified the importance of time set aside for themselves, others found being with their children more fulfilling than time spent any other way. Clearly there are differences in styles among all

mothers, even fast track mothers. The pace and schedule of many of the women I interviewed could seem unappealing to some and exciting to others, just as some women love the infancy stage and others prefer toddlers or later years. Women will find ways to have children, and some will find that balance with career ambitions. The goal is for women to have more choices: to stay home, keep working, move up and on, and have more children.

I hope these lessons—and the other important issues raised in this book—serve as a piece of an ongoing dialog about women, family, and work. We will need continuous discussion, research, and thought to move toward the kind of cultural, societal, and legislative changes necessary.

—Eve Mason Ekman