

Combining Family & Work Life

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Emmy-Noether Meeting 2026



General outlines

- I am not an expert on this topic; my only qualification is having a 4-year-old and a 9-months old child
- I assume most of the audience has or is planning to have a long-term partnership, children, or other forms of care work (!)
- This is supposed to be a forum to exchange experiences and useful information
- Experiences are always personal and idiosyncratic
- I checked some literature on family + academic careers specifically to provide a bit more context



General outlines: Literature review

- Disclaimer: Many studies outside the German system (mostly US)
- Possibly specific cultural factors („national pressures in the US for emphasizing work over other interests“, cf. Fox et al., 2011)
- Differences in the social security systems and working laws *may* reduce generalizability to Germany
- Also note: All of this data is observational and correlational ´, not experimental
 - There may always be third variables that affect family status and the other outcome measures (social skills, life values, socio-economic status, ...).



Family and career
perspectives in academia

Is There a Motherhood Penalty in Academia? The Gendered Effect of Children on Academic Publications in German Sociology

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CV and survey data

Male and female academics in the German
university system in 2023

Having children leads to decline in
publications in women but not men

Driven by drop in “low-performing women”
and does not affect “high-performing
women” (granted academic awards)

Review of Educational Research
February 2017, Vol. 87, No. 1, pp. 204–239
DOI: 10.3102/0034654316631626
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Family or Future in the Academy?

Seher Ahmad
University of Pennsylvania

Pipeline with „ideal worker norms“:
rigid, tightly-coupled, sequential, time-
bound requirements

Women with PhDs and young children
drop out of the pipeline
disproportionally often

Among main reasons: Lack of family
friendliness

Why women leave academia: A longitudinal study of the leaky pipeline in German sociology

Isabel M. Habicht^{1,2}  · Mark Lutter²  · Martin Schröder³ 

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Entire population of German sociologists 1980 - 2022, careers of academics exiting since 2013

Within gender:
(Only) women more likely to leave
- in pre-doc phase
- higher risk when they have children

Between gender:
Women 35% more likely to exit
Not explained by differences in parenthood, career stage, productivity, academic recognition

Careers Versus Children:

How Childcare Affects the Academic Tenure-Track Gender Gap

Stephanie D. Cheng*
Harvard University
(Job Market Paper)

November 7, 2020
([Click here for most recent version](#))

More women than men with PhDs in
biological science

Women with children less likely than their
male peers to obtain tenure-track position

No gender gap for individuals before they
have children, or those who never have
children

Mothers tend more to leave labor force or
reduce working hours (compared to
fathers)

Parenthood and Academic Career Trajectories[†]

By ANNE SOPHIE LASSEN AND RIA IVANDIĆ*

After graduation, as soon as women give birth and become mothers, they fall behind and don't end up in leadership positions.

—Katalin Kariko,
2023 Nobel Prize Winner in Medicine[‡]

All individuals in Danish PhD programs for which family information is available

Most have children, no difference inside academia and outside

Persistent gender gap in attrition from research following parenthood

New fathers more likely to go into broader research sector (outside academia) than non-fathers; new mothers more likely to leave research altogether

Motherhood decreases likelihood of senior position and delays time to tenure

Onto, Up, Off the Academic Faculty Ladder: The Gendered Effects of Family on Career Transitions for a Cohort of Social Science Ph.D.s

Emory Morrison, Elizabeth Rudd, and Maresi Nerad

Negative effects of motherhood and marriage on women's careers have been diminishing over time

For fathers, fatherhood and marriage are beneficial

Marriage to a less-educated spouse is associated to significant career advancements for men; women do not realize similar benefits from this type of marriage

scientific reports

OPEN The relationship between parenting engagement and academic performance

Gemma E. Derrick^{1✉}, Pei-Ying Chen², Thed van Leeuwen³, Vincent Larivière^{4,5} & Cassidy R. Sugimoto⁶



Gender differences in research productivity often attributed to disproportionate childcare responsibilities for women

But fathers are becoming increasingly engaged

Global survey: 1.5 million active scientists asked, > 10,000 responses, productivity: number of papers

Men in (childcare) lead roles suffer similar penalties for parenting engagement, but women are more likely to be engaged in that lead role

A short parental leave (< 12 months) associated with **increased** productivity

Parental engagement better explanatory variable than gender

SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

The unequal impact of parenthood in academia

Allison C. Morgan^{1*}, Samuel F. Way¹, Michael J. D. Hoefer¹, Daniel B. Larremore^{1,2},
Mirta Galesic³, Aaron Clauset^{1,2,3*}

Impact of parenthood in longitudinal study

About 3,500 institutions in the US and Canada
(computer science, history, business)

„Parenthood explains most of the gender
productivity gap by lowering the average short-
term productivity of mothers“
(got a bit better over time)

Parents slightly more productive on average
than non-parents

Women report that parental leave and childcare
are important factors in their recruitment and
retention



Work-life interactions
in academia

Balancing Parenthood and Academia:

**Work/Family Stress as Influenced by
Gender and Tenure Status**

ELIZABETH M. O'LAUGHLIN
LISA G. BISCHOFF
Indiana State University

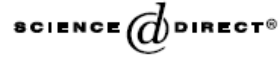
(published 2005)

85 men and 179 women working full-time in tenure-track positions; at least 1 child < 16 years

Women report greater academic and family stress, and perceive less institutional support for balancing work and life



Available online at www.sciencedirect.com



Journal of Vocational Behavior 67 (2005) 169–198

Journal of
**Vocational
Behavior**
www.elsevier.com/locate/jvb

A meta-analytic review of work–family conflict and its antecedents ☆

Kristin Byron *

*College of Business, Rochester Institute of Technology, 103 Lomb Memorial Drive,
Rochester, NY 14623, USA*

Meta-analysis of 60 studies

Two directions of interference:

- WIF: Work interference with family
- FIW: Family interference with work

Work factors tend to be related with WIF

- Hours at work, schedule flexibility, job stress, ...

Family factors tend to be related with FIW

- Family stress, family conflict, number of children, age of youngest child, ...

Demographic factors (sex and marital status)
weakly related to both

Vicious cycles?

Work and family conflict in academic science: Patterns and predictors among women and men in research universities

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School of Public Policy, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, USA

Carolyn Fonseca

Peanut Collaborative Research Support Program USAID, University of Georgia, Atlanta, GA, USA

Jinghui Bao

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For men and women:
influence of work conflict on family higher
than other way around

Both at medium levels, and a bit lower for
men

Summary

- Parenthood is a central driver of gender gaps
- Degree of parental engagement and institutional support seem to matter more than gender alone
- Fatherhood and marriage tend to benefit men, but not women (third variables at play?)
- „Ideal Worker Norms“/academic pressure clash with family needs
- Work-family conflicts are bidirectional but asymmetric (WIF stronger)

Institutional support options

- 〰(ツ)〰
- DFG Equity funds (also for your project members) – never for „Grundbedarf“
 - Does not need a specific plan („Pauschale“)
 - PI funds can be requested post-hoc
 - All other funds cannot
- Most funding agencies (and maybe even appointment commissions) subtract parental leave from academic age
- Contact your university's equity/family support institutions (e.g. Familienbüro)



Time for exchange

- **What are your experiences?**
 - Family and career advancements
 - Work-family interference and family-work interference
- **What are your strategies?**
 - Where has family helped with your professional activity
 - Where has your professional activity helped with family
- **What options do you know for institutional support?**
- **Keep in mind that we all have access to different resources**
 - Single parents
 - Partner's work or private situation
 - Living or working at the same place or different locations?
 - Access to personal and institutional support networks (grandparents, friends, childcare, ...)
 - Other care work besides children!