

The postdoc: The leakiest part of the academic pipeline (for women)

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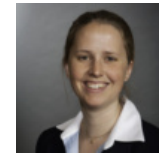
CIFAR Global Scholar Alumnus

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Who are we?

This talk is based on scientific literature studies and the (shared) experiences of:

- Maya Bhatia
Oceanographer
- Elena Hassinger
Quantum Materials Physicist
- Anne Broadbent
Computer Scientist
- Else Starckenburg
Astrophysicist
- Margaret Frye
Sociologist
- Vera Tai
Microbial Ecologist
- Katharine Greenaway
Social Psychologist
- Renate Ysseldyk
Health Psychologist



3 new faculty, 2 research fellows, 3 postdocs. 5 Nationalities working in 4 countries.

CIFAR brought us together in 2013.

The postdoc(toral scholar)

In transition from PhD graduate to faculty position

- How many postdocs are the “norm” very much depends on academic discipline
 - Typically 2 years (up to 5) *each*
- Postdocs are more and more common
 - Tenure moves later in life
 - They are the “work horses” of science
 - A large percentage are female (which is the good news!)

POSTDOCS ARE:

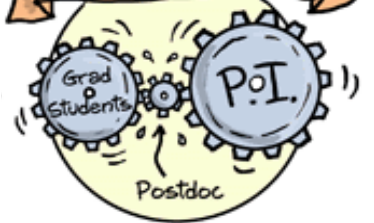
INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS!

Write this proposal for me.



And this paper. And this review.

ESSENTIAL COGS IN THE GRANT SCHEME OF ACADEMIA!



MENTORS!

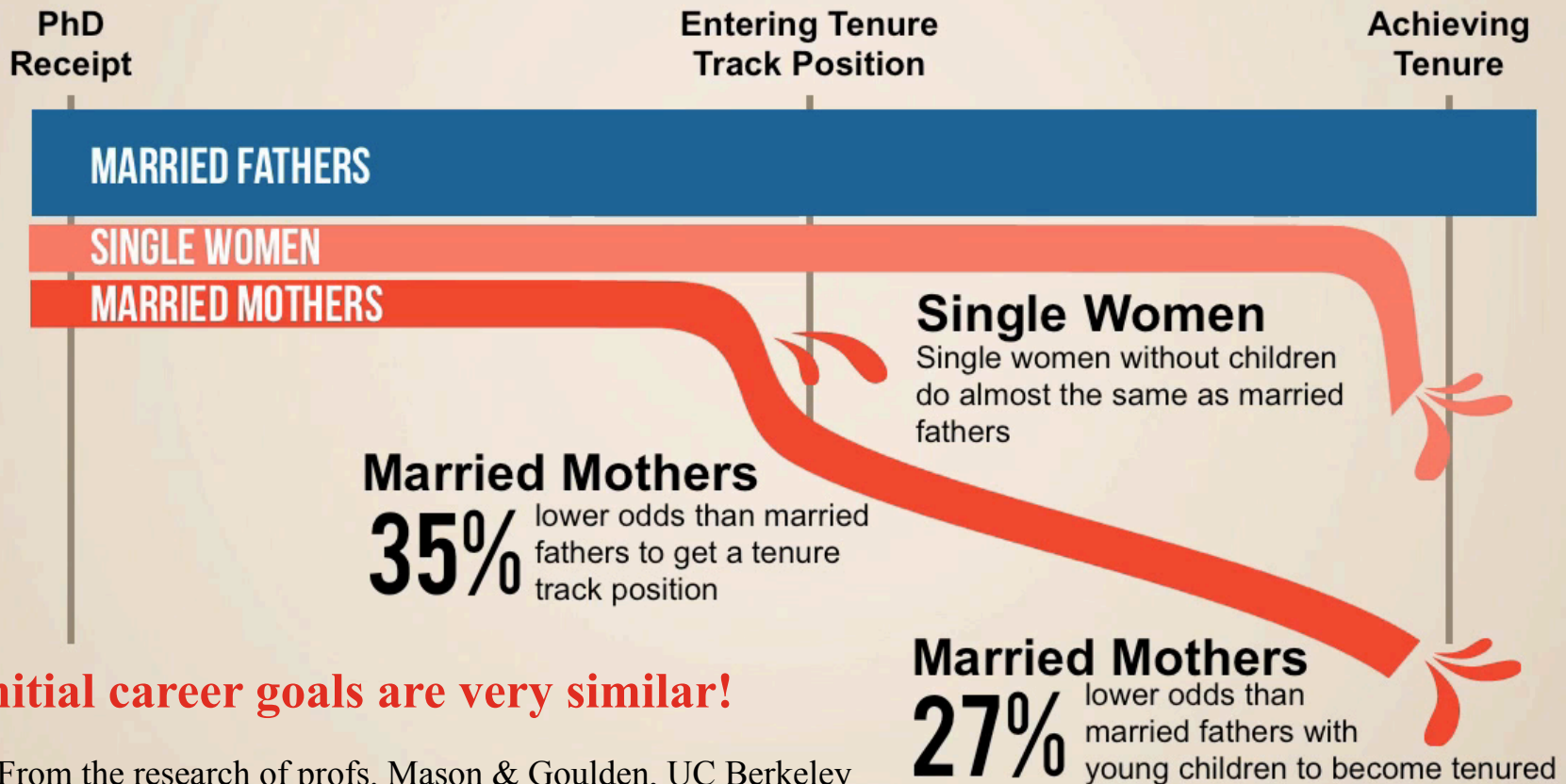
Don't become a postdoc.



PhDcomics by Jorge Cham

The leaky academic pipeline

LEAKS IN THE PIPELINE TO TENURE FOR WOMEN PHDS IN THE SCIENCES



Initial career goals are very similar!

From the research of profs. Mason & Goulden, UC Berkeley

Source: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/11/women_and_sciences.html

The in-between life of the postdoc: Professional and Personal

A time of my career when:

- I have to get used to a new environment and build up a new network
- I continue my line of research (often under a new boss) but also have to craft a scientific identity
- Independence and confidence have to be there or be quickly developed
- Long-term strategy has to be balanced with short-term output

A time of my life when:

- I might want to start/continue a relationship & settle down
- The “question of babies” is raised (or rather three):
 - **Whether** to have a family?
 - **When** is the best time?
 - **How** can I support myself as young parent?
- Women are more affected and more likely to compromise on career issues

More barriers on the way to tenure

- **Impostor syndrome**
 - Feeling that you tricked people into thinking that you are competent
 - Fear of being “found out”
- **Prove it *again***
 - Overcoming (conscious and unconscious) biases and sexism/racism
- **Stereotype Threat**
 - Just realising the stereotypes about your group (e.g., women can't do math) can make you act in line with those
- **The “tight rope”**
 - In developing your identity at work, striking the balance between being “too” feminine or masculine

“Impostorism is something that negatively affects both men and women, but it's more pronounced among women, and therefore affects their career trajectories more” (J.L. Collett, Science Careers, 2013)

Fixing the leak: the academic mother

- Minimizing the “baby penalty”
 - Paid maternity leave
 - Here postdocs often “fall through the cracks”
 - Parental leave options
 - Both for mothers and fathers
 - Certainty to come back to your job
 - Support to travel with caregivers & child care subsidies
 - Networking is key
 - Return and/or part-time fellowships



Fixing the leak: what you can do

- **Talk about it**
 - This helps normalizing (“You are not the only one who feels like an impostor”)
 - Share your weaknesses and insecurities, for yourself and others
- **Counter** the biases around you with information
 - Be open about your ambitions
- **Record** your achievements (real-time)
 - To prove it *again*
 - To keep yourself motivated
- **Think** about your own biases



In conclusion

An academic career has a lot to offer. It is an incredibly rewarding, international job with a lot of freedom, flexibility and intellectual stimulation as well as one in which you can make a contribution to the flow of human knowledge.

All of us have met amazing, supportive and inspiring colleagues along the way.

This is a job worth fighting for.

Change is happening.