

Early Career

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Growing up, I always wanted to be a professor—a dream fueled by the nightly game my father played with me. I could choose the volume and entry of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and he would read it aloud. This game instilled a tremendous respect for scholarship and I, too, wanted to contribute to that knowledge base. As a female, the path forward seemed filled with obstacles. At one university, upon announcing my plans to marry, I was asked to give up a graduate fellowship and leave the Ph.D. program in psychology. At another university, as a married woman, my search for a faculty position was not taken seriously.

Thus, my Berkeley appointment in 1973 as an assistant professor, during the first year of affirmative action, was hard won. As we had taken turns at choice points in our dual careers, I followed my husband to the Bay Area. But when I responded to the posted job announcement, I listed my Yale address, knowing full well that a local woman would be perceived as less desirable. Pre-offer communication traveled back and forth across the country—Berkeley to Yale and Yale back to me in San Francisco. My husband, huddled with the wives at the required evening dinner, was asked about *his* job prospects.

When I arrived, I took over the Tolman Hall office of a faculty member who didn't receive tenure and as he was packing up, he wished me better luck. I remember my shock at how few female faculty there were in the university, 47 of us gathered in one small room. I also remember the discomfort I felt as the only woman in a meeting, on a committee, and in more informal gatherings.

Among the indignities, I was denied a summer salary because I had a husband to support me, asked to bring coffee to meetings, expected to take notes, chastised for gossiping in the hall when speaking to female colleagues, and un-invited (as an assistant professor) to faculty tenure meetings because “women become too emotional.” My voice was often stifled as men listened best to men—even taking as their own, points previously made by women. Early on, my authority was challenged in the classroom: I was called by my first name, comments were made about my wardrobe (dressed in formal suits in Berkeley of all places), and grades were contested.

As the sole community psychologist in a clinical program, I faced special challenges in building a partnered-research program in schools and the community, outside of laboratory settings. Early in my second year, I made the unpopular decision to start a family, the first pregnancy in the Psychology Department. This yielded twins and it was publicly said in a faculty meeting that “the department was saved another pregnancy.” Five faculty members visited my office and suggested I resign because motherhood would stand in the way of an academic career. Working until delivery, with no maternity leave, I returned to teaching five courses—the extra lecture class added to test my commitment. After an unfavorable mid-career review, made within that slim window of time in which my future trajectory was predicted, the chair suggested that I might consider leaving immediately.

I did not heed the advice. My consciousness had been raised and with the support of many, importantly, my husband and colleagues (both male and female), I came to see this as an institutional problem, not one of personal failure. A pivotal mentor, Jeanne Block, begged me to hold on to my faculty title with its vote, if not for me, then “for her and all the women at IHD.” Sue Ervin Tripp peppered me with edits on the letters I wrote, as I fought for systemic changes. Arlie Hochschild’s brilliant paper “Inside the Clockwork of Male Careers” articulated the mismatch between academic norms, women’s biological clocks, and societal gender roles, providing perspective. The “stop the clock” policy mechanism for childbearing proved vital to my survival. As I was to learn, the wish to have it all—a career, marriage, and parenthood—provoked anger and even sadness, for men and women alike, those who had made great sacrifices to earn their place in the academy. As time passed, as the representation of women grew, many softened and even apologized for attitudes born of earlier eras.

I am ever so grateful for the opportunity to have served as a professor in a public university like Berkeley, which has responded with policy changes to recognize and develop the talent of half the population—women who earlier had been left behind. Without a doubt, these experiences of fighting against low expectations for women has played a role in my research interests in how expectations about ability can become self-fulfilling prophecies.