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# Family Responsibilities in Academia: Premiums, Penalties, and Policies

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The perspective advanced in this piece is that family responsibilities are a source of either career premium or career penalty inside academia, and that university policies and practices have the capacity to influence these outcomes. Drawing on research from economics, sociology, and social psychology, I present a conceptual model in which family responsibilities lead to differences in career outcomes through two channels: real differences (i.e., based in non-discriminatory factors, or productivity) and perceived differences (i.e., based in discriminatory factors, or stereotypes) between those with and without family responsibilities. Based on social role theory, I propose that whether family responsibilities lead to career premiums or career penalties depends on whether the family responsibility centers on breadwinning (i.e., providing financial support) or caregiving to related others. While gender affects the type of family responsibility faculty members hold and are expected to hold, I propose that it is ultimately the connection to the role (breadwinner versus caregiver) that determines career consequences. I assess this framework using recent research inside and outside academia, finding evidence consistent with perceived differences contributing to differences in career outcomes and limited evidence for real differences explaining differences in career outcomes. Finally, I propose two dimensions – signal reduction and resource provision – for assessing policy efforts by universities to limit the scope for family responsibilities to affect career outcomes of faculty.