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I take strong exception to Jacqueline Barton's comment, quoted in the "Women in Science" special section (p. 1372), that, for women, "There are no obstacles if you work hard." This can only be wishful thinking.

Even under the best circumstances, most young female chemists begin their academic careers in predominantly male departments with few female role models and few male colleagues who feel comfortable as their mentors. Those women brave enough to choose parenthood find that most universities provide decidedly inadequate infant-care facilities and that their time is entirely consumed with teaching, research, and child care. Increasing isolation from their colleagues is the inevitable result. Moreover, many find that their status has changed in the eyes of their colleagues if they have babies: they are considered less committed to their careers.

It is my impression that the experiences of female academic chemists may be divided into two categories. The success stories come mainly from women who started as assistant professors in supportive departments where they felt valued by their colleagues, even when they had babies. The horror stories come from women whose very promising careers were damaged or derailed by a department whose work environment was hostile to young women (and not infrequently also to young men). This atmosphere either destroyed their self-esteem or so exhausted them that they gave up and went elsewhere.

On the basis of my experiences and those of my female chemist friends, here is some practical advice which reflects the real situation for women chemists at the start of their academic careers:

1) When you apply for a position and during the interview process, avoid asking questions related to "women's issues." If you are labeled a feminist at this stage, it may diminish the seriousness with which you are evaluated.

2) After you have been offered a position (in writing) and before you accept it, you are in a very advantageous position to ask questions about the history of women in the department, relative salary levels, parental leave policies, and availability of nearby child care. Find out what life will be like if you have children: Will you be able to carry a reduced teaching load for a while? Will you be able to find affordable child care close enough to allow you to nurse your infant during the day?

3) As a part of your negotiations with the chair of the department for funds for your laboratory, salary, and so forth, ask for a guarantee of places for your children in the available child-care facilities and a housing allowance to permit you to live as close to your laboratory as possible. These assurances are important even if you are not married or uncertain whether or not you will have children. (Male candidates should also take heed.)

4) If you have a choice of offers, accept the one that offers the best environment for both your professional and personal growth. Choose a department with a spirit of collegiality. Shun departments with a record of hostility to women (and to assistant professors in general), no matter how high those departments may stand in national rankings.

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I would like to offer the following clarification of my reasons for taking leave from Princeton University, as discussed in Paul Selvin's article of 13 March (p. 1382) about women in mathematics.

The serious obstacles to the full participation of women in science are too complex to be addressed completely in one magazine article. Likewise, the experiences and opinions of individual women mathematicians can very easily be misrepresented or misinterpreted. I hope some readers will reconsider at least the first paragraph of Selvin's article in light of the following information.

The primary reason I took leave from my position as an assistant professor at Princeton University is that Princeton's mathematics department rarely tenures its junior faculty. In fact, the chair encourages those in their second 3-year term to consider themselves on the job market. Last year I heeded this thoughtful advice and applied to four institutions where I felt my research program would continue to flourish. At Haverford College I have the opportunity to collaborate with one of the leading researchers in my specialty. The teaching environment here is also stimulating, due to excellent students and a dedicated faculty. Haverford is simply a wonderful place for me. I enjoy serving on its faculty as much as I love mathematics research.

Attracted by Haverford, I requested leave from Princeton. The dean of the faculty and chair of the mathematics department at Princeton, with characteristic understanding and generosity, granted my request. Like many senior faculty at fine research universities, they try to keep the best interests of junior faculty uppermost in their minds.

I wish only that those few readers who have reacted to Selvin's article by criticizing the profession of mathematics or Princeton's department of mathematics would focus instead on removing barriers to the full participation of women in their own fields and at their own institutions.

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Apparently "almost every female chemist" interviewed believed that "affirmative action" means hiring "weaker women" (p. 1373). This simply accepts the fallacy that women are not as good scientists as men. Affirmative action—making extra efforts to train, hire, and support women scientists—is necessary precisely because such prejudice is rampant.

The women mathematicians express a more correct understanding of the situation in regard to "affirmative action" (p. 1383). As Lynne Butler describes it, it "loosens restrictions" (which are usually defined by the men in the old-boy network) and opens the door to women. Women in the field are often better than the men, but at present are not being hired, which shows how little action there has been in "affirmative action."

Why should hiring women mean hiring weaker scientists? It doesn't, unless you believe that women can't do things as well as men. That fallacy we women, who so often see discrimination justified because we are "weaker," must refuse to accept.

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Corrections and Clarifications

In the 13 March special section "Women in Science" a caption accompanying a chart on page 1382 accompanying the article by Paul Selvin about women in mathematics was incorrect. The data did not show how male and female mathematicians evaluated mathematics articles. In fact, the articles in the study that was discussed [M. A. Palerdi and W. D. Bauer, *Sex Roles* **9**, 387 (1983)] were about politics, the psychology of women, or education; the subjects were not mathematicians but male and female college students. *Science* regrets the error.