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**Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home**

Pamela Stone. Univ. of California, \$24.95 (288p) ISBN 978-0-520-24435-1

“Opting out,” “off-ramping” and “following the mommy track” are all popular terms to describe professional women who leave their jobs to be stay-at-home moms. But do they describe the truth of the matter? Stone, an associate professor of sociology at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, set out to answer this question after discovering that there was no research on the matter; perceptions of these women were shaped almost exclusively by the media. Stone conducted in-depth interviews with 54 women: white women who had been highly successful professionals and were married to men who could support them while they stayed at home—i.e., women who had a “choice.” What Stone found was fascinating and surprising: women quit because of work, not family, and only as a last resort: “They have been unsuccessful in their efforts to find flexibility or... because they found themselves marginalized and stigmatized, negatively reinforced for trying to hold onto their careers after becoming mothers.” These women were abandoning “all-or-nothing” workplaces where the demands were so unrelenting that, as one mutual fund trader put it, “there were days when I couldn’t get up from my desk to go to the bathroom.” Stone’s revealing study adds an important counterpoint to Leslie Bennetts’s forthcoming *The Feminine Mistake*. (May)