

Susan Schwartzman Public Relations

[sjschwa@aol.com](mailto:sjschwa@aol.com)

[www.susanschwartzman.com](http://www.susanschwartzman.com)

---

811 Bronx River Road, Bronxville, NY 10708

voice: 914-776-1380

Dear Editor:

Professor Pamela Stone's **OPTING OUT?: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home** (University of California Press; May 2007; Hardcover; \$24.95) explores the ongoing challenges women face when it comes to family-and-career choices. Opting out of a career for the sake of family is a Catch-22 situation fraught with ambivalence and difficulty.

The dozens of women Stone interviewed for her book—almost all graduates of Ivy League or other elite schools who left high-paying, prestigious jobs—“did not opt out but were rather pushed out of the workplace which is inhospitable to working moms,” says Professor Stone.

They subsequently experienced a significant loss of identity and status in the world, a lack of intellectual challenge, and the mental stimulation and camaraderie their jobs provided. Stone provides ample evidence to suggest that these women do not have as many options about combining careers and family as is commonly believed. Among the many issues women must confront in leaving the career track for the mommy track that Stone explores include:

- The double bind of combining work with motherhood
- How the all-or-nothing workplace makes impossible demands on women
- What happens to women once they are home and what the future holds for them

Drawing on the experiences of real women, Stone points directly to concrete solutions for today's world, offering five policy guidelines (and examples) that will make the workplace truly family-friendly. In short, women and children have been squeezed as far as they can, they have literally “given at the office,” and it is time for the office, that is, the workplace, to give back.

**OPTING OUT?** is a fully nuanced portrait of women struggling to make important life decisions in a culture that often provides only simplistic zero-sum alternatives: mom *or* worker, even though most women are already *working moms*. Stone cuts through the hype about women reverting to a 1950s-style traditionalism and uncovers the full truth behind women opting out.

A bittersweet story about the obstacles and opportunities women face to create balanced and integrated lives told with insight and compassion, **OPTING OUT?** is a call to arms to women to challenge the existing status quo to provide all women—and men—with meaningful options for combining work and family.

I hope you will consider reviewing this well-researched book which can shed new insights into why women on the career track are opting out for the mommy track and what the ramifications of their decisions hold—for the workplace as well as for the future of working women and their families.

Best,

Susan Schwartzman

# ***OPTING OUT?***

## ***Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home***

by

### **Pamela Stone**

“A fascinating, fine-grained look at the real reasons why many professional women with children leave the workplace.” —Ann Crittenden, author of *The Price of Motherhood*

“This seminal book goes beyond the myths, misconceptions, and even what is usually said, to reveal very important and compelling truths. Everyone who cares about work and family life in the United States today needs to read this book.” —Ellen Galinsky, President, Families and Work Institute and author of *Ask the Children*

What *really* happens to women who opt out of the workplace and their careers for the sake of their families? What happens when they take on the full-time task of motherhood, a role as much reviled as it is revered? Why do these once high-flying professionals walk away from years of training and professional accomplishment? How do women still pursuing their careers struggle to find answers to the work-family dilemma? And what are the implications for the workplace and for the next generation of women entering their professional lives?

Professor Pamela Stone’s **OPTING OUT?: WHY WOMEN REALLY QUIT CAREERS AND HEAD HOME** (University of California Press; May, 2007; \$24.95) is the first book to offer systematic, in-depth answers to this question. Her well-researched and compellingly written account reveals why highly successful women interrupt their once-flourishing careers for the sake of their families and the dilemmas they face when caught between the demands of work and motherhood.

Based on new research, **OPTING OUT?** demolishes the myth of opting out: The dirty little secret of the workaday world is that it is not providing work-committed women with the support they need to keep working once they become mothers. Instead, women must too often sacrifice their jobs and surrender their dreams and ambitions because of inflexible, all-or-nothing workplaces where “family friendly” is more rhetoric than reality.

The women profiled in **OPTING OUT?** graduated from top schools, held advanced degrees, and worked for premier firms. They received regular kudos and recognition in the form of glowing annual reviews, raises, bonuses, and promotions. Yet all this wasn’t enough to achieve the

elusive and modest accommodation they needed to continue with their careers and be the mothers they wanted to be. Their experiences left them disappointed and disillusioned, feeling set-up and sucker-punched, especially the thirty-somethings among them. Despite relishing their success as lawyers, doctors, bankers, and scientists, these women had to make a painful and reluctant decision to choose between careers and families. Too often, they did not “opt out,” but were rather effectively shut out of their careers by a workplace inhospitable to working moms.

Once at home, women continued to face additional challenges as they re-invented themselves and turned to domestic and community pursuits, utilizing their many talents in new ways while remaining committed to making a difference and one day returning to work. Among these and many other issues, **OPTING OUT?** explores:

- *The Myth of the Stay-At-Home Mom.* Opting out may be the latest status symbol, but women pay a high price when they return home to raise children full-time.
- *The Invisible Woman.* Highly trained and qualified professional women are ascending into thin air rather than into high-paying positions of leadership and authority.
- *The Silent Strike.* Women who “opt out” represent a kind of silent strike by saying no to the workplace. At the same time, these at-home mothers become prime targets in the culture wars, being frequently construed as the poster girls of anti-feminism. The reality, however, is otherwise.
- *The Next Wave of Opting Out.* Women at home are showing signs of increasing mobilization and collective awareness that will transform prevailing cultural attitudes about motherhood and the workplace.
- *Building a Better Workplace.* Discover what top companies are beginning to do to ensure that their women employees do not need to choose between their career and their families—and what remains to be done.

**OPTING OUT?** reveals the real reasons too many educated women are “gone missing” from the workforce and the larger lessons we can learn from them. Professor Stone’s groundbreaking research is a major contribution to a highly sensitive issue whose social and economic consequences none of us can afford to ignore as we move forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **About the Author**

Pamela Stone is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Hunter College and The Graduate Center, City University of New York. Married and the mother of two, she lives with her family in the New York City area. Her work has been featured in *Time* and *Child* magazines among others and she has appeared on numerous radio and television programs, including *The Today Show*.