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Strong hopes/shattered dreams : study of college females and perceived economic future

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.9a36-gyrx>
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**Strong hopes/shattered dreams: Study of college females and
perceived economic future**

David, Heather Marie, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1992

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STRONG HOPES/SHATTERED DREAMS
STUDY OF COLLEGE FEMALES AND PERCEIVED ECONOMIC FUTURE

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Social Science
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Heather M. David
May, 1992

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ABSTRACT

STRONG HOPES/SHATTERED DREAMS STUDY OF COLLEGE FEMALES AND PERCEIVED ECONOMIC FUTURE

by Heather M. David

The present state of the U.S. economy is such that the current generation of young adults in their twenties can anticipate downward mobility. For the first time in U.S. history, an entire generation may experience a lower standard of living than its predecessors. Young women, as a group, are especially economically vulnerable. Balancing the roles of work and family, today's women are faced with a persistent wage gap, a society indifferent to the needs of working mothers, and a high rate of divorce. This thesis addresses how young women in college perceive their economic futures. A series of 20 in-depth interviews reveals that although young women understand economic realities, many are optimistic that they will meet or surpass their parents' standard of living. Despite the knowledge of external social and economic forces, many young women believe that they are in control of their own futures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the end result of three years of graduate school, combining coursework and field research with a job in substitute teaching. I am forever indebted to many for without their support, this work may have never materialized.

My sincere appreciation goes out to the young women who made this research possible--for setting aside time in their busy, often hectic schedules, to assist a graduate student in need. I am grateful to these women for their willingness to disclose their personal hopes and concerns to a stranger. Their perceptions are the very heart of this thesis.

I am equally grateful to my committee members for these individuals guided me along in my many moments of frustration, insecurity, and indifference. Dr. Mira Zussman, chair of my committee, gave me the confidence I needed to pursue an advanced degree. Dr. Meg Bowman repeatedly boosted my self-esteem and reminded me of my capabilities. Dr. Bob Kumamoto came through for me once again. When one of my committee members took a leave of absence, he graciously took her place.

In addition to my interviewees and my committee, this thesis would not have been possible without the loving

support of my family and friends. To Dad and Monica for providing me with a quiet place to work and for the encouragement to keep going. To Mom for sending me articles and pushing me along and to Bob for all the helpful advice and the fine book on research methods. To my best friend, Karla, for listening to my joys and sorrows and accepting my frequent absence. And, to my boyfriend, Steve, for encouraging me to fulfill all my dreams.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

For the first time in history a whole generation of
Americans despair of doing better than their parents.

MARVIN HARRIS

Jean is twenty-seven. A university graduate of 1989, she has been looking for a job in her field, advertising, for over two years. Despite a few temporary stints in advertising, Jean has had to rely on her two part-time jobs (salesperson by day and waitress by night) to make a living. Both of these jobs offer low salaries and no benefits. Jean worries about how she will make ends meet each month. She has not had medical coverage for over two years.

Discouraged, yet surprisingly optimistic, Jean tries to keep up her spirits by taking college courses. In her eyes, updating her skills makes her more marketable in today's shaky economy. When asked about the future, Jean admits that sometimes she is bitter. Regarding the future, she says, "I expect it to get worse. I mean, look at the way things are going." But, then she adds with a gleam of hope in her eyes, "You never know. They could get better."

Jean is young, bright, and talented. She has a college degree. Like many women her age, Jean hopes that she will someday have a successful career, marriage, children, and a

home. However, at present, her dreams have yet to materialize. Unfortunately, she feels, it is becoming more and more likely that many of her dreams may never come true. Jean belongs to today's unique generation of young adults--the first generation in U.S. history that is expected to be downwardly mobile. Although this generation is well-educated, it faces a job market with dwindling opportunities as well as a high rate of divorce.

From Past to Present

The decades immediately following World War II are often viewed as the brightest in United States history. The Second World War was followed by an economic boom, placing numerous luxuries within reach of a large segment of the U.S. population. The post-World War II economy (with the aid of government bank loans) "converted the U.S. from a nation of renters to one of homeowners" (Church, 1988, p. 28). Individuals watched as their incomes rose and many of the nation's poor escaped the official poverty line (Skolnick & Currie, 1985, p. 91). Throughout the 1950s and continuing into the 1960s, the U.S. was characterized by a great deal of optimism. The future could only be perceived as getting brighter.

The decade of the 1970s dealt a harsh blow to widespread optimism. In the words of Currie, Dunn, and Fogarty (1985), ". . . the rapid growth in living standards that fed rising expectations throughout postwar America came

to an abrupt halt in the early 1970s" (p. 96). The year 1973 (marking the beginning of the U.S. oil crisis) represented a crucial turning point in the United States economy. Two oil embargoes were soon followed by two years of recession, a prolonged battle with inflation, and a significant decline in the nation's economic growth (Levinson, 1991, p. 23). During the 1970s, it became increasingly difficult to smile in the face of economic crisis. Faith in the nation's future eroded rapidly.

While the economic turmoil of the 1970s squelched U.S. optimism, the decade of the 1980s held for some a more promising future. Early in the 1980s, however, the economy was caught in the worst recession since the 1930s (Currie et al., 1985, p. 110). This recession was followed by a "recovery" of sorts that allowed some people to pick up the pieces and a few to prosper. Yet, despite the recovery, a considerable number of people suffered a loss to their standard of living. The decade of the 1980s would mark an all-time high in the disparity between the rich and the poor in the United States. This disparity was so great that the U.S. came to be known as the "hour-glass society" (Ehrenreich, 1990).

In the 1990s, the U.S. economy is faring, in a word, poorly. The previous decade of the 1980s marked the loss of millions of jobs in the manufacturing sector--a trend that continues today. U.S. productivity continues to drag and

three-fourths of all new jobs are in the service sector--where productivity has only slightly increased in the last three decades (Bernstein, 1991, p. 80). The U.S. government continues to cut crucial resources for the lower and middle classes--those classes, ironically, most heavily taxed (Ehrenreich, 1990, p. 44). Despite recent price decreases, the percentage of individuals owning their own homes continues to drop (Bernstein, 1991, p. 84).

We are currently (1992) experiencing the longest recession since World War II. The U.S. unemployment rate has climbed to a five-year peak of 7.1 percent (which translates into 8.9 million without jobs) (Rankin, 1992, p. 1A). However, this disturbing statistic of joblessness is only part of the picture. Those counted as "officially" unemployed in the U.S. are individuals who are actively seeking employment (Macionis, 1989, p. 507). Official U.S. rates of unemployment do not include those who have given up searching for work and those who are underemployed--"part-timers who would prefer a full-time job but can't find one" (Rankin, 1992, p. 1A). A more realistic portrait of joblessness, including the above two categories of individuals, would climb to 10.4 percent or approximately 16 million people in the United States (Rankin, 1992, p. 1A).

Government explanations for our economic woes range from dwindling U.S. rates of consumption to unfair Japanese trading practices. Social scientists have long pointed the

finger at tax breaks and other "favours" granted the rich. However, the number one cause of economic instability in the United States is the shift from a manufacturing to a service-and-information economy (Harris, 1987, p. viii). Marvin Harris (1987) refers to this shift as "the central impulse of social life in late-twentieth century America" (p. viii).

In the 1990s, we are in the midst of a changing global economy where foreign competition has erased millions of U.S. manufacturing jobs. Many U.S. companies have moved to poorer countries where the labor and costs of production are less expensive. This leaves millions of skilled U.S. workers jobless. As Barbara Ehrenreich (1990) writes:

When producers could move operations to northern Mexico or Thailand and pay a few dollars a day, the bargaining power of domestic employees diminished significantly. . . . Between 1979 and 1984, 11.5 million American workers lost their jobs because of plant shutdowns or relocation. Only 60 percent were able to find new jobs, and nearly half of the new jobs were at lower pay than the lost jobs. (p. 44)

Individuals in the manufacturing sector of the U.S. economy are not the only ones losing their jobs. Middle managers now account for 17 percent of all layoffs (Moyers, 1992). This situation has led Senator Donald Riegel, Democrat of Michigan, to conclude that "every sector of our economy now is under great stress. . . . This downward economic spiral must be broken before it turns into a depression" (as quoted in Rankin, 1992, p. 1A).

Bill Moyers (1992) recently reported that one-third of all new jobs being created today offer poverty level wages and no benefits. Seventy-five percent of all new jobs in the U.S. are in services (Bernstein, 1991, p. 82). This is no strange coincidence. All too often, jobs in the service sector are part-time, have low salaries, and offer little or no benefits (Sidel, 1990, p. 179). Furthermore, Ruth Sidel (1990) notes that this is a trend that will continue into the future (p. 179).

Economic crisis has translated into downward mobility for millions in the United States. However, downward mobility (slipping down one or more social class levels) is nothing new in the United States. Rather, it is a permanent feature of any open-class system. In the words of Katherine Newman (1988), ". . . downward mobility is not simply an episodic or unusual phenomenon in this country. It is a regular feature of the economic landscape" (p. 7). But, beginning in the 1970s, and more noticeably in the 1980s, a considerable number of individuals joined the ranks of the downwardly mobile (Newman, 1988). In addition, our current generation of young adults may be the first generation in U.S. history that can expect downward mobility.

A Unique Generation

Today's young adults may never match the living standards of their parents. The combined income of a young married couple, for example, is likely to be less than what

either of their fathers earned at the same age. Since 1973, real hourly wages have dropped 19 percent (Hewlett, 1991, p. 80). "Measured in inflation-adjusted dollars, the median income of families headed by someone under 30 is now 13% lower than such families earned in 1973" (Bernstein, 1991, p. 80). And, this drop in income has occurred even though the average person's workweek has increased six hours (from 41 to 47) since 1973 (Wallis, 1991, p. 205). According to Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder (1991), "Modern-day economic realities have put pressures on the family that have not been levied on any other generation" (p. 222).

Economic pressures translate into divorce for many young couples. At present, one-half of all marriages end in divorce. However, out of all age categories, those in their twenties experience the highest rates of divorce (Preston & Smith, 1989, p. 409). Furthermore, the consequences of divorce are different for men and women. Duncan and Hoffman (1988) found, for example, a 30 percent decline in women's living standards in the first year following divorce while men experienced a 10 to 15 percent improvement (p. 641).

Sometimes referred to as the "baby bust," "lost," or "twentysomething" generation, our current generation of young adults has recently been the subject of much inquiry: first, for its predicted downwardly mobile status and, second, for its seeming lack of an identity. The following work expands on this inquiry by examining the hopes, dreams,

and concerns of some of these young adults. Because definitions in the media and in social research have often been inconsistent and vague, in this study, "young adults" is defined as individuals in their twenties. While it is acknowledged that young women and men share many of the same issues simply by being members of the same birth cohort, both groups must deal with issues specific to their gender. Therefore, the focus of this research was narrowed down to how young women perceive their economic futures (this author believes that young men, with their own set of issues, necessitate a separate inquiry).

One of the issues that young women encounter today is what Arlie Hochschild terms the "stalled revolution." In her book, The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home, Hochschild (1989) writes:

The exodus of women from the home to the workplace has not been accompanied by a new vision of marriage and work that would make this transition smooth. Most workplaces have remained inflexible in the face of the changing needs of workers with families, and most men have yet to really adapt to the changes in women. I call the strain caused by the disparity between the change in women and the absence of change elsewhere the "stalled revolution." (p. 12)

Obviously, young men are affected by the stalled revolution. However, it is also clear that they are not the primary victims of it.

According to Hochschild (1989), in addition to a significant wage gap between men and women, there is also a

gap in their leisure times. Because of the stalled revolution, women end up working an extra month of 24-hour days a year (Hochschild, 1989, p. 3). They work this extra month because after their first shift at the office or factory, they have a "second shift" waiting for them when they get home. Two decades ago, men contributed to 20 percent of the housework--today, they do only about 25 percent (Hochschild, 1989, p. 276). The remaining 75 percent of household tasks are left for women. At present, the stalled revolution remains a predominantly female issue.

Do today's young women understand the realities of their future? Do they understand that they are part of a birth cohort that is expected to be the first in U.S. history to be downwardly mobile? Do these women comprehend the secondary position of women in the labor market, the high rate of divorce, the inadequate shape of childcare in the United States? Have these women planned for the stalled revolution? If today's young women have given careful thought to their futures, have they planned accordingly? If so, what are their plans? What are their desires? What are their expectations?

The following study addresses these questions in order to gain an understanding of how women in their twenties perceive their economic futures. This paper is based on 20 in-depth, in-person interviews with 20 young women. The purpose of these interviews was threefold:

1. To understand these women's hopes, dreams, and fears.
2. To compare their hopes and fears with economic realities.
3. To evaluate their awareness of the current economic crisis and to see if there is a relationship between awareness/lack of awareness and current values.

Furthermore, an effort was made to uncover some of the underlying reasons (including demographics, family histories, and significant life experiences) for these women's perceptions.

This study is exploratory in nature and is meant to serve only as a guide for future research. Obviously, due to the limited sample size ($N = 20$) and area of study (a California State University campus), the findings will not be generalizable to the population at large. However, the findings of this study will be compared to previous research as well as to popular media images and any inconsistencies will be noted.

The present economic reality in the U.S. inevitably means that young people will have to make some compromises. Even if today's generation of young adults "ultimately does as well as its parents, it will do so at a much later age" (Bernstein, 1991, p. 81). In the 1970s and 1980s, women entered the workforce in record numbers in order to maintain a standard of living that, at one time, could be achieved on one wage. In the 1990s, "two incomes are a necessity, not a

luxury, and a precarious economy promises only more pain" (Gibbs, 1990, p. 13).

The perceptions and values of today's young adults will be strongly related to future realities. Today, we experience a multitude of problems stemming from an economy that is both unpredictable and unstable. As Bill Moyers (1992) warns in a recent television news special entitled Minimum Wages: The New Economy, if current economic trends continue, "Economic progress will come to fewer and fewer of us. The divisions among us will grow. And millions will find that poverty and paycheck go hand in hand." In order to ensure our country's well-being, changes beyond the individual level must be made. In order for changes to occur, the perception must be there that if left alone, things will not get better. We can either change our social institutions now or suffer the consequences later.

CHAPTER II

RELATED RESEARCH

This thesis examines the first generation in United States history expected to be downwardly mobile. The specific focus is on the young women of this unique generation. To review some of the previous research and some of the literature pertaining to this area of inquiry, the following chapter will focus on three studies. First, to understand how the downwardly mobile are perceived by others and how they tend to perceive themselves, a study by anthropologist Katherine S. Newman is reviewed. Second, to comprehend some of the economic realities women face today, the work of economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett is explored. Third, to better understand the fears, hopes, and dreams of young women, the research of sociologist Ruth Sidel is examined.

On Downward Mobility

In researching her book, Falling From Grace: The Experience of Downward Mobility in the American Middle Class, Katherine Newman (1988) conducted 150 in-depth interviews with victims of downward mobility. Her research sample was neither random nor representative, yet Newman (1988) describes it as "an attempt to look for the diversity of experiences that constitute downward mobility in the

middle class" (p. 249). In addition, whenever possible, Newman supported her interviews with data gathered through participant-observation ethnographic fieldwork.

Those who are downwardly mobile in the United States or, in the words of Newman, those who "fall from grace" are trapped in social and cultural isolation (1988, p. 10). While their numbers continue to increase, these individuals are ignored by our society. To examine closely the experiences of the downwardly mobile makes people uncomfortable because they realize that they are not safe from falling from grace.

The cultural heritage of the United States includes an unyielding faith in progress and a strong belief that individuals are in control of their own lives (Newman, 1988, p. 9). Victims of downward mobility, especially those who once occupied a comfortable slot in the middle class, threaten some of our most cherished cultural ideals. The United States, it is commonly believed, is the country where anyone, with enough talent and hard work, can aspire from "rags to riches." The downwardly mobile are disturbing proof to the contrary (Newman, 1988, p. 229).

Newman (1988) is concerned with our society's perception of the downwardly mobile. She is careful to point out that the downwardly mobile are often confused with the poor. However, unlike the poor, who occupy the very bottom rung of the social ladder (and some have been there

for generations), the downwardly mobile:

. . . once "had it made" in American society, filling slots from affluent blue-collar jobs to professional and managerial occupations. They have job skills, education, and decades of steady work experience. Many are, or were, homeowners. Their marriages were (at least initially) intact. As a group they savored the American dream. They found a place higher up the ladder in this society and then, inexplicably, found their grip loosening and their status sliding. (p. 8)

The downwardly mobile constitute a diverse population but Newman finds that, despite differing value systems and outlooks on life, those who fall from grace experience their fate in similar ways. Newman (1988) emphasizes that the majority deeply miss their old lives: "They spend hours reflecting upon what their old world meant and what the new one lacks" (p. x). In addition, it is common for these victims to experience feelings of failure, helplessness, self-blame, loss of control, and loss of identity. Some feel a sense of injustice. Bitter and resentful, they are left to contemplate the meaning of their lives in a society that looks down upon failure.

From white-collar professionals to blue-collar laborers, Newman (1988) provides the downwardly mobile with a voice to describe the pain of their losses. She studies the family as well as the individual to discover that the effects of falling from grace are far-reaching. In addition, Newman (1988) emphasizes the especially vulnerable position of women in our society (p. 202).

To be sure, there are women who slip down the social ladder because they lose their well-paying jobs (an experience not unlike their male counterparts). However, despite considerable advances in the workplace, women, in general, continue to occupy a weak position in the United States labor market (Newman, 1988, p. 13). The majority of working women today are concentrated in low-paying clerical and service jobs.

At present, the number one cause of downward mobility for women is not job displacement but divorce. Following divorce, many women are left to fend for themselves and their children on solely one income (if these women are lucky enough to have a job). Furthermore, for displaced homemakers with few marketable skills, the push from home into the labor market can be economically devastating (Newman, 1988, p. 13).

Newman (1988) concludes that the downwardly mobile "should not be left to suffer in silence or self-loathing" (p. 241). She points out that European companies reduce hours before they lay off workers. She writes of the mutually rewarding relationship that occurs between employer and employee in Japan. According to Newman, as more individuals and families join the ranks of the downwardly mobile, our nation will be at risk. Falling from grace undermines our society's values and inevitably threatens our country's prosperity (Newman, 1988, p. 240).

On the Economic Vulnerability of Women

In the fall of 1984, Sylvia Ann Hewlett, author of A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women's Liberation in America (1986), organized a reunion with some of the young women she had encountered while teaching at Barnard College from 1974 to 1981. The purpose of this reunion was to provide Hewlett with feedback on some of the main ideas included in her book. Hewlett was interested in how members of the "post-feminist generation" viewed the areas of work, career, marriage, and motherhood.

The central premise of A Lesser Life is that women in the U.S. experience immense economic vulnerability. They have less economic security than previous generations of U.S. women and are significantly worse off than women in other advanced countries (Hewlett, 1986, p. 12). As evidence of women's economic vulnerability in the United States, Hewlett offers the following:

1. Despite the advances women have made into the world of work, the United States has one of the largest wage gaps in the advanced industrial world. Although women in the United States have as much education as their male counterparts, the earnings gap between men and women has not narrowed in five decades and shows no signs of doing so in the future. (Hewlett, 1986, pp. 13-14)
2. While European women enjoy such family supports as paid maternity leave, subsidized child care, child allowances, and free health services, more than 60 percent of working mothers in the United States have no right to maternity leave and spending cutbacks have further reduced the low level of public support for child care. (Hewlett, 1986, pp. 14-15)

3. In the U.S., where one-half of all marriages end in divorce, the degree of financial injury women suffer as a result of divorce is far higher than anywhere else in the world. Partly due to the economic crisis following divorce, 77 percent of this nation's poverty falls into the hands of women and their children. (Hewlett, 1986, pp. 13-14)

Thus, while many women in the United States pride themselves on being "liberated," women in this country actually have little economic security and face an unfavorable and deteriorating economic reality.

Hewlett was able to locate 35 young women for her Barnard reunion. Of these 35, 17 met together at her home, 8 spoke to Hewlett individually, and 10 filled out questionnaires. Those who gathered at Hewlett's apartment ranged in age from 23 to 33. Half were married. With the exception of one individual, all the women were working or completing graduate school.

Although none of the Barnard women had children, the first discussion of the evening centered on how to combine career with family. Many women felt as if they were trapped in a "Catch-22" situation, between the world of work and the desire for children. In the words of Laura, who works 12- to 14-hour days and is next in line for vice-presidency for her company:

When we have a child, I can do one of three things. I can continue my career by hiring enough help for full-time coverage at home. . . . The snag is I would have to resign myself to seeing my baby only an hour or two a day. Or I can opt out of my banking career and work part-time for my father. This way I can make enough

money to pay the mortgage and still have time to see my child and manage the house. Or, finally, we could sell the house, move into an apartment, and I can take time out of the work force and become a traditional homemaker. All three options entail huge costs for me. (Hewlett, 1986, p. 386)

After years of dedication to a successful career, Laura is having to make some tough decisions. Hewlett (1986) emphasizes that Laura's husband does not equally share the burden of these choices (p. 387).

Today, many women are finding themselves like Laura, caught between two conflicting lifestyles. They are squeezed between the "traditional" female role model of devoted wife and mother and the "modern" female role model of liberated career woman. At the same time, many have come to the realization that these two roles are incompatible and contradictory (Hewlett, 1986, p. 16). Kathryn, one of Hewlett's interviewees, for example, shared with her peers the fear that she may not be able to balance her two primary goals in life--a successful career and a rewarding family life (Hewlett, 1986, p. 391).

Although many women grappled with if/and/or/when to have children, others at the Barnard reunion expressed their fear of never having children. A quarter of the women at Hewlett's gathering were single, childless, and in their thirties. After years devoted to their careers, these women felt the time ticking away on their "biological clocks." Elizabeth, for example, revealed to the group that in her

eyes, her life will never be complete unless she has a child (Hewlett, 1986, p. 394). Sonia, recently divorced and childless, added that although today's men and women have roughly the same goals, women face more obstacles than men and have a greater chance of failure (Hewlett, 1986, p. 395).

According to Hewlett (1986), 90 percent of all women in the United States will have children at some time in their lives (p. 15). While women express the need for equal opportunity in education and in the labor market, they also feel they deserve to be supported in their family endeavors. At present, in the U.S., working women with children are left with the double burden of two full-time jobs--one that is paid and the other unpaid. Hewlett (1986) concludes that women need more than equal treatment if they are to be successful in both family and career roles (p. 401).

On the Dreams of Young Women

In an effort to understand the hopes and dreams of young women, Ruth Sidel, the author of Women and Children Last: The Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America (1986), conducted over 150 open-ended interviews. These interviews took place with three categories of individuals: (1) "young women" (between the ages of 12 and 25); (2) professionals who worked with these young women; and (3) "older women" (in their late twenties to early forties). The majority of Sidel's interviews were with women in the first category.

Although Sidel did not use a random sample in her research, she made every attempt to ensure her sample contained a diversity of class, race, ethnicity, educational level, and geography (Sidel, 1990, p. 4).

On Her Own: Growing Up in the Shadow of the American Dream (1990) is the end result of Sidel's comprehensive study of young women. In this book, Sidel describes the dreams of these young women, the realities they face, and the illusion that they have numerous choices. Two themes that run throughout Sidel's book are: First, young women feel that they are in control of their own destinies (Sidel, 1990, p. 9). Second, the central dilemma for most young women is how to combine career and family roles (Sidel, 1990, p. 40).

The first part of Sidel's book, entitled "Dreams," is divided into three sections. After several months of interviewing, Sidel (1990) found that the women in her study fell into three groups (p. 9). Sidel calls the first group the "New American Dreamers," the second group the "Neotraditionalists," and the third group the "Outsiders."

New American Dreamers are young women who dream of "having it all." Generally, these young women desire marriage and motherhood, but their central focus is on career. New American Dreamers want, more than anything, to be successful (Sidel, 1990, p. 9). For New American Dreamers, the future seems bright and there are few

limitations on what they may achieve. These women expect to be the central characters in their lives and they expect to be able to "go it alone" (Sidel, 1990, p. 27).

Like the New American Dreamers, the Neotraditionalists want both career and family. However, while these young women recognize the importance of work, they perceive their family roles in more traditional terms. Neotraditionalists are more concerned than New American Dreamers about being able to balance work and domestic roles (Sidel, 1990, p. 9). They assume that there will be another breadwinner and that they will not have to "go it alone." For these young women, the future appears as a delicate balancing act of two roles.

Set apart from the New American Dreamers and the Neotraditionalists are the Outsiders, young women who take life day by day (Sidel, 1990, p. 9). The Outsiders are women alienated from society, community, and family. They have few options and few dreams for the future. Any hope they may have is set aside for their children.

While the first part of On Her Own is devoted to dreams, the second part focuses on realities. It is Sidel's attempt to "examine the social, economic, and cultural context in which these women have grown up and in which they are likely to live in the foreseeable future" (Sidel, 1990, p. 10). For example, although Sidel discovered that many young women dream of becoming lawyers, doctors, and high-fashion models, the reality in the U.S. is that the

overwhelming majority of women work in clerical and service jobs (Sidel, 1990, p. 179). Furthermore, despite the awareness of the high rate of divorce in the U.S., many of the young women interviewed by Sidel assumed they would spend their lives in happy, stable marriages (Sidel, 1990, p. 52).

The third and final part of Sidel's book is called "Choices." The main idea in this section is that "the illusion of choice is a major impediment to the establishment of conditions that would enable women . . . to have real choices" (Sidel, 1990, p. 227). The young women interviewed by Sidel viewed the future in an almost completely individualistic light. Because they perceived that it was in their power to make or break the future, few were able to see that in reality, our lives are often influenced by forces outside of our control (Sidel, 1990, p. 79).

Although the faith young women have in the American Dream appears to be alive and well, few will be able to achieve this dream without radical changes taking place in our society. Sidel (1990) argues that the U.S. must change (p. 10). However, she goes beyond such concepts as parental leave, day care, and job flexibility. Sidel calls for a total redefinition of priorities, reorganization of social institutions, and redistribution of wealth in this country.

The previous three studies, combined, are a stepping

stone into an area of research focusing on today's generation of young women. Newman's (1988) analysis provides us with some insight into how today's young women may deal with being part of the first downwardly mobile generation in United States history. Hewlett's (1986) study helps us to understand the economic issues facing young women today. Finally, Sidel's (1990) research will be important to consider after analyzing and interpreting the findings of this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Twenty female college students served as subjects in this study. The research sample was collected on a state university campus in California during the months of July through September of 1991. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, a convenience sample was used. All of the subjects volunteered to be interviewed; none were paid for their participation. None of the subjects were acquaintances of the researcher.

All interview subjects were in their 20s (members of the population under inquiry). Subjects ranged in age from 20 to 29; the average age was 22. All subjects had a college level of education. Individuals were selected in college with the assumption of social mobility through education. Sixteen of the twenty interview subjects were seniors in college; the other four were graduate students.

Interview subjects varied in numerous areas. Varying characteristics included race, college major, class level, occupation, political affiliation, religion, marital status, place of birth, social class (self-designated), and general personal background. For the specific breakdown of these characteristics, see Appendix B.

Research Methods

To gather the perceptions of young women regarding their economic futures, the interview was selected as research method. The interview allows for the collection of a wealth of information from the population under inquiry (Johnson, 1986, p. 41). Furthermore, the interview with an open-ended format enables the researcher to investigate past the surface level and to clarify subtle inconsistencies and changes of opinion (Macionis, 1989, p. 46). In addition to the interview, however, the participant-observation method was used. This will be discussed further in the section evaluating research methodology.

To compare young women's perceptions with economic realities, data were gathered through secondary analysis. While it took three months to complete the interviews, approximately one year was devoted to researching outside data. Data from previous studies and government statistics were analyzed as well as data contained in the various media.

Procedure

With the consent of various instructors teaching summer session courses, the researcher visited classes and briefly explained the proposed research. Classes were asked if they had any questions or comments regarding the thesis proposal and any issues that were raised were discussed. Volunteers

were requested and a sign-up sheet passed around the classrooms.

Volunteers were contacted by phone and a time and a place arranged for the interview sessions. Interviews did not take place in a controlled setting. Rather, interviewees were asked to select a place where they would feel most comfortable. As a result, interviews took place in a wide range of settings, from the lobby of a newly remodeled hotel to a quiet neighborhood park.

Interview subjects were told that they would be asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions concerning their perceived economic futures. They were told that they did not have to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. Furthermore, they were told that the interviews would last about, but were not limited to, one hour.

Interviewees were informed that there were no anticipated risks of the study, that there were no discernible benefits expected for the interviewee, and that the study did not contain any alternative procedures. In addition, the subjects were told that any information that could be identified with them would remain strictly confidential. A consent form was then presented to be signed by both interviewee and researcher. A copy of the consent form (see Appendix A) was given to each interview subject for her to retain for her own records.

All subjects were encouraged to call the researcher if they had any further comments or questions.

The Interviews

To protect the identities of the subjects, interviewees were asked to select pseudonyms and were notified that identifying characteristics would be altered in the thesis. All of the data collected during the interview sessions were kept in a safe place in the researcher's home and no one had access to it other than the researcher. Following the completion of the thesis, all of the data were destroyed.

Interviews began with questions concerning personal background information (see Appendix A). Personal characteristics provided the researcher with some insight into some of the social and cultural influences on the interview subject's values and perceptions. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, subjects were encouraged to expand on their family histories, early childhood experiences, and significant life memories.

Following the questions concerning demographics, interviewees were asked how they felt about the direction of the U.S. economy. The exact state of the economy was not defined for the interview subjects; rather, they were encouraged to provide their own evaluations of the economy. Subjects were requested to expand on their perceptions of the economy and to state their current

feelings, hopes, and fears.

After the open-ended question concerning the U.S. economy, subjects were asked if they expected to have the same, better, or worse standard of living than their parents/families of origin. Subjects were asked to describe where they desired to be situated economically 5-10 years into the future (where they wanted to live, what material items they would like to possess, their general standard of living, etc.). They were also asked how they expected to be living at this time frame. If a discrepancy occurred between desires and expectations, the researcher requested that the subject explain the perceived reason(s) for this discrepancy.

Subjects were asked to imagine that the interviewer was a person new to the United States. They were asked to define for the interviewer the "American Dream." They were asked if they thought this dream was possible for everyone in the U.S. to achieve and to provide reasons for their answers. Furthermore, because a significant part of the American Dream is to own a home, subjects were asked if they expected to own their own homes (if they did not already own one) and to give reasons for their answers.

The next section of the interview consisted of questions regarding the areas of education, occupation, and marriage and family (for a list of the interview

questions, see Appendix A). Regarding education, interviewees were asked their primary reasons for going to college, how they paid for their tuitions, and what role they felt their educations would play in their future standards of living.

Regarding occupation, interview subjects were asked if they desired a specific occupation. They were asked whether, given the option of staying home and being a housewife, they would prefer to do so or to participate in the paid workforce. The last question relating to occupation concerned the perceived role the subject's occupation would play in her future standard of living.

Questions concerning marriage and family included whether the subjects desired and/or expected to be married (if not already so) and if they desired and/or expected to have children (if they did not already have children). Subjects were asked how many children they ideally would like and to explain the reasoning behind their desired number of children. They were asked to explain what they deemed more important--a high material standard of living or time spent with family. They were asked how they saw the effect of marriage on their future standard of living. If subjects desired and/or expected marriage, they were asked if they ever thought about divorce. In addition, the subjects were asked if they expected their children (or the next generation) to have the same, better, or worse standard

of living in the future and to explain why.

The final interview question concerned the status of women in the 1990s. In the eyes of the interview subjects, had things become easier or harder, better or worse, for women today (as compared to previous generations of U.S. women). Interviewees were asked to explain their personal views regarding women, their joys, frustrations, and fears. They were encouraged to share some of their personal experiences of being a young woman in the 1990s.

Interviews did not always end after the various questions were answered. All interview subjects were asked if they had any further comments or questions regarding the interview. Generally, interviews lasted about an hour; however, many stretched past the hour as young women pondered their futures in an oftentimes, uncertain world.

Evaluation of Methodology

For researchers, one of the toughest challenges is to remain objective--to consciously keep personal feelings and beliefs from creeping into the interpretation of data. In an anthropological sense, researchers can study phenomena from two different perspectives--an emic or "insider" perspective or an etic or "outsider" perspective (Harris, 1987, p. 14). I have attempted to do my research from an etic perspective, allowing my interview subjects to speak for themselves and trying to remain objective in the

interpretation of my data. However, I acknowledge here that my own views and biases may surface as I belong to the population under inquiry. Because I am part of the group I am studying, a completely etic perspective may be impossible.

In my research, the roles of insider and outsider inevitably overlapped. However, I found this to be advantageous. For example, as Preston and Smith (1989) write:

The interviewer's success in obtaining accurate information depends as much on the rapport and trust that are established as on remaining objective about the topic being discussed. (p. 39)

Being a member of the population I was studying, I was better able to establish rapport with my interviewees before questioning. Furthermore, I was able to supplement interview data with data gathered through participant observation. In my research, I was as much a participant (whether I wanted to be or not) as an observer.

There are other limitations in my study. For example, all subjects volunteered to be interviewed after hearing the proposed research. A self-selecting sample raises methodological problems as a convenience sample is likely to be biased. Most of my interviewees had definite opinions about my research topic and were eager to discuss them. In addition, some interviewees volunteered to be interviewed as they, too, planned to be doing graduate research in the near

future.

A sample collected of individuals enrolled in summer session courses is also likely to be biased. Summer session courses tend to contain individuals close to graduation. In addition, summer session courses are more expensive than spring and fall courses and considerably time-consuming. Thus, individuals enrolled in summer courses must have the available time and money that is necessary to take such classes.

Interviews were not conducted in a controlled setting. Interviewees were asked to select a place where they would feel most comfortable. It is acknowledged here that the varying interview settings may have affected the interview data. However, due to the personal nature of the interview questions, this researcher felt it more advantageous to have interviewees as comfortable as possible.

Interview questions were ordered in such a way as to begin with the general and end with the specific. Questions were placed in a sequence that would be sensible from the subject's point of view. Furthermore, questions that might be offensive (i.e., marriage as related to standard of living) were placed at the end. Every effort was made to ensure the order of the questions would not skew interview responses. However, there is always the possibility that some questions were in an order that biased responses.

Because the sample used in this research was neither random nor representative, the findings of this study will not be generalizable to the population at large. Again, it is emphasized that this study is exploratory in nature--to be used only as a guide for future research. The perceptions of young women regarding economic future is an area that requires further inquiry.

CHAPTER IV

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Despite the national deficit, the decline of the middle class, the increasing need for two wage earners in the family, the vast numbers of poor Americans, particularly women and children, and the until recently unimaginable increase in the hungry and the homeless, the American Dream lives on.

RUTH SIDEL

Most people in the United States have a pretty good idea what the American Dream consists of (Goldstein, 1988, p. 76). The Dream centers on a traditional family composed of a breadwinner husband, his housewife, and their two children (Macionis, 1989, p. 370). This traditional family lives in a comfortable home in a tree-shaded, suburban neighborhood and owns one or two cars. In addition, the Dream family has enough money for family vacations, college tuitions, and savings accounts (Church, 1988; Ehrenreich, 1990; Goldstein, 1988). The American Dream is a cultural sense of what it means to be middle-class in the United States (Ehrenreich, 1990, p. 45).

The Dream Defined

In my study of young women, interviewees were asked to imagine the researcher as a newcomer to the United States. Then, they were asked to define for the researcher the American Dream. Seventy-five percent of those interviewed

offered the standard cultural definition or some minor variation of it. For example:

The American Dream is a married couple with 2.5 children, a house, and one or two cars. The wife may or may not have a job; the husband has some sort of managerial position. The kids are healthy. Everyone lives happily ever after. It's a fairy tale dream. Basically, the "Beaver" family . . .

Katherine, age 23

Two people get married. The man works and the woman stays at home with two children and the dog. The husband and the wife are both from the same city and they grew up with both of their parents. They own a three-bedroom house with a two-car garage. They have a boy and a girl--the boy is older, of course. Everybody's happy. Everybody's supportive and compliant.

Athena, age 24

Twenty-five percent of the interviewees responded with definitions that centered on upward social mobility. References to "success," "rags to riches," and "economic independence" were common throughout these responses. For example:

The American Dream is rags to riches. I think that's what America is supposed to be about. Anyone can be president, right?

Tuesday, age 23

[In the American Dream] you can go from poverty to wealth. You can do whatever you want with your life.

Lynne, age 28

To the majority of women in this study, the American Dream involved marital and familial success. In their definitions of the Dream, families were happily intact; there were no hints of family conflict or divorce. However, regardless of how the Dream was defined, all definitions

included signs of material prosperity. Whether implied or stated, in all definitions, upward social mobility, measured in living standards, was a central component of the American Dream.

Can The Dream Be Achieved By All?

The American Dream was a possibility and a reality for many (but not all individuals) during a few short decades following World War II (Currie et al., 1985, pp. 96-97). However, after three decades of economic turbulence, many people in the United States are discovering the Dream, or components of it, beyond their reach (Church, 1988; Ehrenreich, 1990; Goldstein, 1988). Today, the American Dream is not the blueprint for the majority of U.S. families (Macionis, 1989; Sidel, 1990).

Ours is a stratified society. In the United States, not everyone is born with equal opportunity (Johnson, 1986). Nonetheless, inherent in the American Dream is that anyone, with enough talent and hard work, may rise to achieve it. Can anyone in the United States achieve the Dream?

According to Ruth Sidel (1986), the answer is "no":

The very existence of large numbers of poor people in this country can open to question the heart of the American Dream--that anyone, with enough hard work, can surely make it to the middle class and perhaps beyond. (p. 22)

The overwhelming majority of the women interviewed in my study appear to have reached a similar conclusion.

When presented with the question, "Do you think this

Dream is possible for everyone in the U.S. to achieve?," 95 percent of those interviewed responded with a decisive "no." The following is a sampling of some of the reasoning behind the negative responses:

I don't think it [the American Dream] is possible for anybody! I don't know who created all this. . . . It's an ideal that can't be achieved. Nobody actually lives this way!

Katherine, age 23

I see the history of the United States as that of an exploiter screwing people, feeling guilty, then trying to make up for it. In California [for example], there is a lot of poverty. For many, there are no opportunities.

Corine, age 23

I think it's scary when immigrants come to the United States and expect the American Dream. It is much harder for them to achieve. I think, ultimately, very few will actually attain the Dream.

Smervia, age 28

Only one woman optimistically believed that anyone could achieve the American Dream. According to Laura, a 29-year-old Social Science major:

Yes [the Dream can be achieved by anyone]--with a lot of work. I think it is up to the person. You can rise up from the ghetto to become president if that's what you want to be! If you are down and out, I have a hard time understanding how people can't get out of their predicaments. I just don't get it. I think the people who are going to succeed in life . . . it's a spark.

Laura's own life is proof to her that the Dream is achievable. She is a self-made woman who has had a successful career for the past decade. She has acquired for herself many of the material components of the American Dream and has achieved a better living standard than her

parents. In Laura's eyes, if she can achieve the American Dream, anyone can--the keys are hard work and sacrifice.

Desires vs. Expectations

Although the vast majority (95 percent) of those interviewed did not believe the American Dream possible for all in the U.S. to achieve, the majority (90 percent) felt they would stand a good chance of achieving it. For example, 85 percent of the young women in this study expressed the desire to be living the American Dream five to ten years into the future. Of those who desired to be living the Dream at the time frame of 5-10 years, one-half also expected to be living the Dream at that time frame.

Patricia, a 23-year-old senior in Psychology, for example, lives with her fiancé and is engaged to be married in a year. At present, Patricia works in addition to her college classes. She desires and expects to continue working when she is married. Patricia's desires and expectations for the near future are the same:

My fiancé and I want a nice home [house] with a two-car garage. To afford one, we are planning to move out of the area. We are talking [about owning] three cars. We'd also like to have kids. We've always talked about two. I'd like twins.

Patricia's hopes and expectations for the near future sound like the American Dream--with one exception. Patricia does not want to be a housewife; she desires and expects to hold a paying job. Without work, in the words of Patricia, "I'd be a basket case."

Five to ten years into the future, what young women wanted and what they expected were not always the same. While 50 percent of those interviewed had the same desires and expectations, 50 percent experienced a discrepancy between what they hoped for and what they expected.

Athena, a 24-year-old senior in Child Psychology, for example, acknowledges that her desires and expectations are not the same. When asked how she would like to be living 5-10 years down the road, Athena explains:

I'd like to be living in a mid-sized house in a safe area, married or with someone planning to marry, with adequate transportation, the financial stability to be able to have children if we chose, and enough money for savings, vacations, and small luxuries.

However, Athena does not expect to be living this way in the near future. The following is what she expects:

Oh, I'll be getting comfortable in a career. I'll still be looking for "Mr. Wonderful." If I compromise in a living area, I guess I could be mortgaging.

Five to ten years into the future, Athena does not expect to be living the American Dream. However, it appears that she expects to be on her way to achieving it. Furthermore, like Patricia, Athena desires and expects to be working outside the home. In fact, Athena says she expects to have a career and, in her words, "I expect to be able to support myself."

Whether or not young women desired and expected to be living the American Dream 5-10 years into the future, 90 percent believed they would experience the Dream at some point in their lives. Yet, these women did not perceive the

American Dream in the conventional sense, based on a traditional family. Every woman in this study expressed the desire to work (see Chapter VI).

Home Ownership

A core part of the American Dream is home ownership (Goldstein, 1988, p. 80). In 70 percent of the definitions of the American Dream, interview subjects included home ownership. Defined, a home is simply "one's dwelling place" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1985, p. 670) or in the words of one interviewee, "Wherever you live can be your home." In this sense, one's home can be a room one rents, an apartment, a townhouse, a house, etc. However, in the American Dream, one's home is most often a house, defined as "a building occupied by one family" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1985, p. 680).

Eighty-five percent of those interviewed expressed that they expected to be homeowners. Home ownership was described as a "priority," a "number one goal," "part of one's identity," "freedom," and "stability." When interviewees spoke of home ownership, the majority (80 percent) referred to the houses they would own. For example:

I want to own a house and I believe that I will. I have a hunch that I'll be a co-owner. If I don't marry, I still think I'll own a house. When I see something I want, I usually get it!

Beth Ann, age 21

I know that it [owning a house] will be difficult, but it's almost a given with me. I just know that I will own a house someday. I'll do anything to get it.

Desiree, age 23

Owning a house is one of my main goals . . . because renting sucks! Buying a house is a great investment.

Corine, age 23

The majority of the women in this study were confident that someday they would own homes. Two women had already purchased houses with their husbands. However, according to George J. Church (1988), in these times, "those buying homes tend increasingly to be those lucky enough to have parents from whom they can borrow money" (p. 28). Indeed, outside support eases the burden (both financial and emotional) as the following responses indicate:

My parents have property. I have two older sisters. We each have houses of our own for when we get married. My older sisters both have Victorians . . . mine's the smallest. I'll start out small and by sacrificing a lot of other things, I'll end up with a big house.

Beth, age 20

My grandparents have some money. They said they would buy me a house. I'll make payments to them.

Tuesday, age 23

In this study, those who were the least apprehensive about owning homes were those who could depend on financial help from outside sources.

On Personal Dreams

During the interviews, a pattern surfaced concerning the desire and intrinsic need for personal fulfillment. This pattern was first visible when interviewees were discussing the American Dream. While the majority of those

interviewed came up with strikingly similar definitions of the Dream, a few women incorporated their own personal dreams into the cultural definition.

The conventional version of the American Dream focuses on material wealth; success is measured in living standards. Corine, a 23-year-old Anthropology major, for example, describes the American Dream as:

. . . to do equal or better than your parents, to own a home, to put your kids through college, to have enough money to pay your bills, for the extras in life, and to travel.

However, Corine incorporates emotional success into her American Dream: "My own personal dream is to be better off emotionally than my parents." In Corine's eyes, emotional success is as important, if not more important, than material success.

Repeatedly throughout interviews were references to personal dreams. These dreams revolved around such themes as "happiness," "comfort," "satisfaction," and "personal fulfillment." For example, Tuesday, a young mother and a senior in college, describes the importance of happiness in her life:

I measure success in terms of personal happiness . . . not money. I'm dirt poor and completely satisfied with my life. I could stay like this forever.

Tuesday was not alone in her view on happiness. Regarding personal dreams, happiness was the most common theme.

When interviewees were requested to define for the

interviewer such vague terms as "happiness" and "comfort," few could convey what they meant by the terms. Rather, explanations tended to be circular. One interviewee, for example, defined happiness as "comfort in life." Then she went on to describe comfort as happiness. Indeed, feelings are often hard to define. Regarding happiness, Norman Cousins (1986) writes:

Happiness is probably the easiest emotion to feel, the most elusive to create deliberately, and the most difficult to define. It is experienced differently by different people. To some it is nothing more complicated than the absence of pain; to others enough money in the bank to cover outstanding checks . . .
(p. xv)

Although interviewees had considerable trouble defining their feelings, their desires for their feelings were passionate.

Dreams vs. Realities

There is a considerable amount of evidence suggesting that the American Dream is on its way to extinction (Church, 1988; Ehrenreich, 1990; Goldstein, 1988). In fact, in the 1990s, the American Dream might more appropriately be entitled the "American Myth." At present, families in the United States are working harder than ever, yet losing the battle to improve their living standards (Levinson, 1991, p. 24).

The Dream revolves around a traditional family. However, in 1985, only one-third of all U.S. families included a married couple with one breadwinner (Goldstein,

1988, p. 79). At this time, almost half of all U.S. families were dual-income and one-fifth involved single parents--the majority of which were women (Goldstein, 1988, p. 79). Furthermore, in 1988, few married women were housewives. Over half of all married women with a child under one year old were in the labor force (Sapiro, 1990, p. 23).

A central component of the American Dream is home ownership. Yet, over the past 25 years, the cost of housing in the United States has skyrocketed 56 percent (Hewlett, 1990, p. 54). The average U.S. homebuyer today must save half of a full year's income just for the downpayment on a home (in 1978, it was 33 percent) (Church, 1988, p. 28). In the quest for home ownership, young adults and first-time buyers are the hardest hit. Individuals in their early twenties pay nearly 40 percent of their gross income on rent and homeownership among those ages 25-29 has recently (1990) dropped from 44 percent to 35 percent (Bernstein, 1991, p. 84).

In the American Dream, there is plenty of time for family picnics, barbecues, and vacations. But, according to the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C., over the past 25 years, the amount of time parents spend with their children has dropped 40 percent (cited in Hewlett, 1990, p. 54). Fifty-seven percent of wives are now working, as compared to 39 percent two decades ago (Smolowe, 1991, p.

66). Although women are working, they are still left with about 75 percent of all household tasks (Hochschild, 1989, p. 276). In addition, since 1973, the average workweek in the United States has extended from 41 to 47 hours, further impinging on family time (Wallis, 1991, p. 205).

In the 1990s, in order to make ends meet, families are working longer hours and spending less time together (Horn, 1991, p. 134). Nonetheless, they are finding it increasingly difficult to put their children through college. For example, from 1980 to 1988, family incomes increased by 53 percent, but the cost of a public college education went up nearly 70 percent, and the cost of a private college education skyrocketed 100 percent (Quinn, 1990, p. 49). In 1988, parents who sent just one child to a public college paid 20 percent of their median family income (Church, 1988, p. 29). This was still quite a bargain compared to the 40 percent of median family income it took to send a child to a private college (Goldstein, 1988, p. 79). To make matters worse, in the 1990s, middle-class college students are finding themselves in a bind. They are too well-off to receive financial aid yet too needy to afford the more expensive colleges and universities (Quinn, 1990, p. 49).

In the American Dream, the family is financially comfortable and survives quite well on one wage. There is plenty of money for the necessities and the luxuries in life

and there is no hint of poverty or material deprivation. In the 1980s, however, the after-tax median family income in the U.S. became inadequate for a middle-class standard of living (Ehrenreich, 1990, p. 45). Regarding taxes, between 1977 and 1988, only the top 10 percent of the U.S. population received a significant tax cut while the majority (90 percent) sacrificed a larger portion of their incomes to the U.S. government (Church, 1988, p. 28). Over half of all U.S. households owed more than they possessed in financial assets, and 37 million individuals in the United States had no health insurance (Church, 1988, pp. 29-30).

Ruth Sidel (1990), in her study of young women, found that: "[S]ome young women have an almost magical attitude about success--somehow they'll get there" (p. 30).

Regarding the American Dream, the present study supports Sidel's finding. In the words of two interviewees:

In the U.S., there isn't equal opportunity for everybody. I have three older sisters and two older brothers and they haven't achieved it [the American Dream]. No one owns a home. But, I'm going to plan it better!

Mary, age 22

Can the American Dream be achieved by anyone? On paper, yes, but in real life, no. I can achieve the American Dream. Why? Because I think I can! I am an exceptional person [laughs]!

Tuesday, age 23

The U.S. economy in the 1990s is shaped much like an hourglass. The rich keep getting richer, the poor keep getting poorer, and the middle class is disappearing

(Ehrenreich, 1990; Goldstein, 1988). In my study, only one individual in twenty believed the American Dream could be achieved by anyone in the United States. At the same time, however, the vast majority (90 percent) felt they would be able to achieve the Dream. For many of these women, the quest for the American Dream is likely to be nothing short of a nightmare.

The American Dream family. Norman Rockwell, 1960.

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION

For many, the great faith placed in American education almost approaches blind faith.

FREDERICK PRESTON & RONALD SMITH

People in the United States have long placed great faith in education (Preston & Smith, 1989, p. 461). According to Macionis (1989), "The United States was the first nation to embrace the principle of mass education" and was one of the first nations to enact mandatory education laws (p. 400). Long perceived by many as the "great equalizer," formal education has been linked to the ideology of equal opportunity and has been associated with upward social mobility (Johnson, 1986, p. 524).

Statistics support a correlation between education and economic attainment revealing that, in general, the more years of formal education, the higher one's income (Preston & Smith, 1989, p. 458). A recent statistic, for example, indicates that college educated individuals under the age of 30 will earn quadruple the amount of income as their degreeless counterparts (Gross & Scott, 1990, p. 60). However, statistics such as the above reveal only part of the picture. In the United States, education does not guarantee upward social mobility.

In our society, education, an achieved status, is often limited by ascribed (at birth) statuses such as social class, race, and sex (Johnson, 1986, p. 338). Regarding the ascribed status of sex, in 1987, women received 50.8 percent of all bachelor's degrees and 50.2 percent of all master's degrees in the U.S. (Sapiro, 1990, p. 21). But, in 1988, a college-educated woman was earning 59 cents to her male counterpart's dollar (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989, Table 35, cited in Faludi, 1991, p. 364).

Women today have about as much education as their male counterparts but according to Virginia Sapiro (1990), author of Women in American Society, "education does not 'pay off' for women in the same way it does for men" (p. 106). Part of the reason behind this inequity is that women tend to pursue different courses of study in college than men. Women are likely to be clustered in the so-called "female" areas such as nursing, elementary education, and the social sciences--fields unlikely to lead to the more lucrative jobs in this society (Sapiro, 1990, p. 106). However, even when women obtain degrees in the traditionally "male" areas such as engineering, medicine, and law, they are apt to earn less in the workforce. In the words of Sapiro (1990), "Men get better jobs, more pay, and higher status for the same amount of education" (p. 106).

Despite economic and social realities, faith in education, as an equalizer and a door to opportunity,

persists. Education continues to be "a central focus of women seeking to improve their condition and raise their status" (Sapiro, 1990, p. 95). Even at a time where college-educated women can expect to earn far less than their male counterparts (Faludi, 1991, p. 364), my interviews with 20 college women reveal that for the majority, faith in education is alive and well.

Reasons For Going to College

In response to the question, "What would you say is your primary reason for going to college?," 75 percent of those interviewed gave an answer that centered on education as "a means to an end." For these women, obtaining an occupation is a primary goal; education, in their eyes, is the first and most important step toward making this goal a reality. Richard Coleman and Lee Rainwater (1978), authors of Social Standing in America: New Dimensions of Class, explore the reasoning behind the perception of education as a means to an end:

Income is everyone's goal, and the more of it the better. Education is the first step toward its attainment--the launching platform. . . . Occupation is the bridge between education and income, the conversion process; it is what you do with the first to earn the second. (p. 68)

The majority of women in my study explained they were going to college to enable them to obtain occupations. Their responses were brief and to the point:

I'm going to college to make myself more marketable.
Jacqueline, age 21

Education gets you the occupation and the occupation gets you what you want--a better car, a better house
 . . .

Bridget, age 21

Education is the number one way to increase financial status. College is the difference between me being an administrative assistant and a professional.

Corine, age 23

While 75 percent said their primary reason for going to college was that their education would enable them to get a job, 15 percent responded that their principal reason for going to college involved family pressure. For example:

I've never had a reason [for going to college]. It was always set. You are going to college! It was never a choice for me.

Patricia, age 23

In addition, 10 percent responded that their main reason for going to college revolved around personal growth. For example:

I want to learn more! I used to think that if you go to college, you'll get a Porsche. Now, I have a different perspective. Well-educated people have more goals. They are more open-minded.

Michelle, age 22

In my study, the number one reason for going to college was to obtain a job, but a college degree holds no guarantee for a job. During the 1970s, for example, numerous college graduates competed for a limited number of jobs. This situation led many researchers to question the value of a college degree (Jencks, 1972; Freeman, 1976; Collins, 1979).

Jencks (1972) noted that economic inequality is nearly

as great among individuals with the same educational background as among the general population. Therefore, he concluded, economic opportunity is determined by the state of the economy and the resultant demand for labor, not by one's educational level. Freeman (1976) described the plight of the "over-educated American" when he discovered that about one-third of male college graduates and two-thirds of female college graduates had to accept jobs unrelated to their college degrees. Furthermore, Collins (1979) held that college graduates had no guarantee for prestigious occupations. He described the United States as a "credential society" where the number of credentials in order to obtain an occupation keep rising because of an overabundance of people competing for a limited number of positions.

In the 1990s, as in the 1970s, a college degree does not always translate into a job (see, for example, the Ann Landers column on page 53). In 1992, we are experiencing the longest recession since World War II (Rankin, 1992, p. 1A). Almost 9 million in the United States are without jobs and more and more individuals are joining the ranks of the downwardly mobile (Rankin, 1992, p. 1A). According to a recent Business Week survey, "Job security continues to be the prime concern among households" (Cooper & Madigan, 1992, p. 25). In addition, according to a recent article in the San Francisco Examiner, individuals graduating from college

Ann Landers

DEAR ANN — “Unemployed in Conn.” hit me where I live because I, too, am unemployed and sick to death of people who tell me to “cheer up.” I’m a college-educated, white-collar professional. I lost my job last April. I’ve applied for 130 positions and spent over \$900 in job search and travel expenses. After eight months with nothing but rejection, I feel like a loser. Meanwhile, some financial analysts say there is no recession, and I am eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and living in an unheated apartment.

I dread running into former co-workers or college classmates for fear they will ask, “What are you doing now?” It’s a daily struggle to get out of bed in the morning and write application letters and make phone calls. I know that I need a positive attitude in order to get a job but after months of failure, it’s hard.

My bills are piling up, and I’m afraid I’ve messed up my credit rating. I’ve been told that fast-food places are hiring with flexible hours. I don’t have a problem with people who work at fast-food spots. I did it in high school. But college-educated, professional people don’t work in those places. The pay is terrible.

Thank you, Ann, for printing that woman’s letter. You really made me feel less alone.

— *Unemployed in the Fox Valley, Ill.*

DEAR F.V. — You didn’t ask for advice, but you’re going to get some, anyway. I suspect you are reluctant to take a job in a fast-food place for fear you might be seen by friends and former colleagues. Please remember that no honest job is beneath your dignity. On your time off, you can continue your search for something more upscale. Good luck.

In the 1990s, a college degree does not always translate into a job (Ann Landers, San Jose Mercury News, February 12, 1992).

in 1992 enter "the worst job market in thirty years" (Seligman, 1992, p. A-1).

Who is Paying for the Education?

Although public funding has been the backbone of state colleges and universities, the fact remains that today, higher education comes at a cost. Even in state colleges and universities, most families must come up with the money for tuition as well as other expenses which include books, school supplies, room and board, parking, etc. Faced with economic crisis, more and more families in the U.S. are finding a college education for their children out of reach (Church, 1988; Goldstein, 1988).

In 1988, parents who sent just one child to a public college could expect to pay 20 percent of their median family income (Church, 1988, p. 29). A painful 40 percent of median family income was necessary for those considering a private college education for their child (Goldstein, 1988, p. 79). In the 1990s, college tuitions continue to escalate and the Bush administration has made it increasingly difficult to secure student loans (Quinn, 1990, p. 49). Furthermore, according to the National Organization for Women's Legal Defense and Education (1987), female undergraduates receive 30 percent less financial aid in grants and work-study positions than their male counterparts (cited in Faludi, 1991, p. xiv).

Sarah, 26, is a senior in Women's Studies. She has

been happily married for the past four years and aims someday to run her own preschool. Sarah's husband is financing her education. Sarah considers herself very lucky to have her husband's support and refers to what she experiences as "survivor's guilt": I feel really guilty about the things I have . . ." Sarah does not take her husband's financial support for granted. She says that she really dislikes the fact that "all the responsibility is on him." In addition, having grown up in a family of four and raised by a single working mother, Sarah finds it difficult to relinquish the economic power that comes with working and allow her husband to be her sole support.

Beth, 20, is a senior majoring in Sociology who desires to be a social worker. In addition to a full course load, Beth takes an active role in her sorority and works as an instructional aide to provide herself with spending money. She relies on a scholarship and parental support to pay for her schooling. Yet, Beth acknowledges uneasily her dependence on her scholarship: "Due to the budget cut, my scholarship may no longer be available. And with the increase in school living expenses, I'll have to work full-time." Beth knows that without the scholarship money, she will have to make changes in her already hectic lifestyle.

Like Sarah and Beth, the majority of individuals receiving outside financial support in this study were grateful. They mentioned peers that did not have it so

lucky. Furthermore, they were well aware how difficult it would be to finance their own educations. The difficulty in pursuing a college degree without any financial assistance is illustrated by the following case.

Laura, 29, is a senior majoring in Social Science. She has been attending college part-time since the age of 17, paying for her own education by working full-time. For the past nine years, Laura has had a successful career but obtaining a college degree remains very important to her.

Laura explains:

I wanted to go to college so bad I could taste it. They [her parents] wouldn't send me. . . . A college degree is the minimal status of the class I want to belong to. I have a blank space on my wall where I want to hang my diploma!

The cases above represent the three main ways that women in this study were able to afford their educations. Women received family support, a combination of sources of support (family/financial aid, family/work, financial aid/work), or they worked themselves through college (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows that out of twenty women, ten were being put through college by various family members. Of these ten, five were being supported by their parents, two by their fathers, two by their husbands, and one by a fund set up by her grandparents. Three women were able to afford their college educations through a combination of family support and financial aid. Two women received some family

Table 1

Affording a College Education

How the Education is Paid For	Number of Women Supported in This Manner
Family members	10
Family support/financial aid	3
Family support/work	2
Financial aid/work	1
Work	4

support but also needed to work. One woman received financial aid and worked. Four women paid for their own educations by working their way through school with no outside assistance.

Generally, those individuals with the most outside financial support found their college lives the least hectic. Those who received minimal or no support were under the most stress and were forced to make some compromises. Women who needed to work to finance their educations, for example, had considerably less leisure time than their nonworking counterparts.

Perceived Role of Education in Future Standard of Living

According to a recent Time/CNN poll, 80 percent of young adults ages 18-29 agree with the statement, "Young people starting out today have little chance of [economic]

success without a college education" (Gross & Scott, 1990, p. 61). When presented with the question, "What part do you think your education will play in achieving your future standard of living?," 55 percent of the women in my study responded that they believed their educations would play a significant role:

Education plays a vital part--unless you have the money, you can't really go anywhere without a degree.
Beth, age 20

My education will ensure me getting a decent paying job, something stable, enabling me to live independently. It's so hard to get a job without a good education.

Michelle, age 22

Thirty percent felt their educations would have a role in their future standards of living--but perhaps not a major role:

It's not the degree. It's what I've learned. I don't really feel it's a big deal to have a degree. In some occupations, it helps. The experience and maturity I've gained in college will help me more than a piece of paper.

Katherine, age 23

It's a part, but it's not the only part. Some of the other parts include my particular style of dealing with things, my nationality, my parents, my husband [to be]
. . . .

Marie, age 26

Only 15 percent believed their college educations would play little or no role in their future standards of living:

Zero. I don't want to be completely negative--I think it will help eventually. Right now, I don't see it helping me get ahead. It's so difficult for a person, even with a college diploma, to get a job these days.

Jean, age 27

None. I think I could probably make more money doing the job I have now.

Laura, age 29

A review of the type of responses received to the question relating education to future standard of living reveals a pattern that has long been recognized by researchers. In the words of Johnson (1986), "The perceived importance of higher education is strongest among those with the most to gain" (p. 336). Although all of the interview subjects described themselves as middle class, those who belonged to the lower end of the middle class (determined by both subjective and objective criteria) placed the strongest value on their college educations in achieving their future standards of living. Those in the upper rungs of the middle class were less likely to perceive their educations as contributing significantly to their future standards of living.

Individuals who had the most faith in what their educations would do for them tended to be younger (in relation to the rest of the individuals in the sample). The older the individual, the less faith in the part education would play in future standard of living. Therefore, age, in addition to social class influenced women's perceptions on education and standard of living. This study indicates that even a few years' difference in age may divide the perceptions of today's women.

In 1833, Oberlin College in Ohio was the first

institution of higher learning to open its doors to women (Doyle, 1985, p. 203). Today, over a century and a half later, there exists a strong cultural force pressuring women to dedicate their lives to home and family over the pursuit of higher education (Sapiro, 1990; Sidel, 1990). Nonetheless, women in the U.S. are attending colleges and universities in greater numbers than ever before. In fact, there are now slightly more women attending colleges and universities than there are men (Sidel, 1990, p. 177).

My interviews conducted with 20 young women in college reveal that, despite social and economic realities, most young women place a great faith in their educations. Although a college degree does not guarantee an occupation, most interviewees (75 percent) were optimistic that their educations would enable them to secure jobs. Furthermore, those individuals who believed their educations would play a significant role in their future standards of living tended to be from the lower middle class and younger in relation to the rest of the interview sample.

CHAPTER VI

WORK

. . . government statistics tell us that only one woman in ten will get through life with the option to decide whether she wants to work. The other nine will have to work.

CONGRESSWOMAN PATRICIA SCHROEDER

In 1890, when labor force statistics were first recorded, 18.2 percent of the U.S. female population participated in the labor force (Blau, 1984, p. 302). By 1947, that number had increased to 31.8 percent (Sidel, 1986, p. 60). By 1988, 57 percent of all U.S. women were in the labor force (Sapiro, 1990, p. 23). At present, the U.S. labor force is nearly one-half female, and female participation in the labor force is expected to continue rising (Sidel, 1990, pp. 179, 235).

The fact that great numbers of women are now working outside the home should come as no surprise. The exodus of U.S. women from the home into the workplace began decades ago. Marvin Harris (1987) explains:

At the end of the 1960s, women were being drawn through a pneumatic tube. At one end of the tube there was inflation squeezing them out of the home and into the job market; at the other end there was the expanding service-and-information job market, sucking them into a niche specifically designed for literate but inexpensive and docile workers who would accept 60 percent or less of what a man would want for the same job. (p. 94)

Although women went to work to help support their families, family incomes continued to drop. The use of the female surplus labor force resulted in the depression of male earnings (Harris, 1987, p. xvii). Ironically, because women went to work, they eliminated the option of whether or not to work. Today, most families still need two wage-earners to make ends meet (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1991, p. 233). As a result, nine out of ten women today have to work (Schroeder, 1991, p. 222).

The steady advancement of women into the labor force has not been accompanied by a substantial rise in their status. Two-thirds of all poor adults in the U.S. are women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989). Eighty percent of working women in the U.S. hold clerical, service, and sales jobs (Downie, 1988, cited in Faludi, 1991, p. xiii). The wage gap between men and women has not narrowed in the last five decades (Hewlett, 1986, p. 14). Female college graduates still earn less than male high school graduates (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989, cited in Faludi, 1991, p. xiii).

It is important to note that women have always worked. Even before significant numbers of women held paid occupations, women worked on farms, on plantations, inside their homes, etc. With industrial capitalism, work came to be associated with paid labor and unpaid labor was not deemed true work (Sapiro, 1990, p. 47). Work came to be

defined as "employment at a job, occupation, or profession" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1985, p. 1638). The distinction between work and unpaid labor remains today with U.S. women contributing what amounts to billions of dollars each year in unpaid domestic labor (Johnson, 1986, p. 420). Furthermore, despite women's increased participation in the labor force, they nevertheless continue to perform about 75 percent of all household tasks (Hochschild, 1989, p. 276).

Why Women Work

Work was not alien to the young women in my study. Fifteen out of twenty (75 percent) were employed at the time of their interviews. Of those who were working, the majority (two-thirds) worked in part-time jobs (some held more than one part-time job), and one-third worked in full-time jobs. The majority of occupations were clerical and service-oriented.

The question, "Do you desire to work?" was posed to the 20 women in this research. Every woman responded with "yes." The question was given in the context of having the option to stay home and be a housewife. Interviewees were asked to explain their reasons for wanting to work. The following are a few of their explanations:

I have to work--for self-satisfaction and to feel adequate. Besides, I'm kind of uncertain if I'll marry or not. I know I'll be all right with or without somebody.

Desiree, age 23

Yes! I desire to work! I work for many reasons--
 mental stimulation, my own identity, unconditional
 spending money, pride, personal growth, making friends
 . . . . I expect to be able to support myself.

Athena, age 24

My work is my way of contributing to the world. I want
 to be a part of life. I would feel uncomfortable with
 my husband supporting me economically. A lot of skills
 and knowledge would be going to waste. Two salaries
 will allow us to achieve material gains, such as
 savings for health, education, and emergencies.

Marie, age 26

The women in my interview sample preferred working
 outside the home for a combination of personal and financial
 reasons. However, in many of the responses, the personal
 took precedence over the financial. In the previous
 chapter, it was revealed that 75 percent of the interviewees
 received some family support in obtaining their college
 educations. It is likely that these women are able to
 focus on their personal reasons for wanting to work because
 they are receiving outside financial assistance in their
 lives.

However, the 25 percent responsible for their own
 support also placed more emphasis on their personal reasons
 for wanting to work (see the responses of Desiree and
 Athena). This may have something to do with the fairly
 recent trend of viewing work as an emotional need as well as
 an economic need. During the past few decades, for example,
 work has come to be perceived as "crucial for freedom and
 human development" (Ewens, 1984, p. 90). In the words of
 Studs Terkel (1974), author of Working, work is:

[A]bout a search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying. (p. xiii)

The value of "liking what you do" has become more prevalent in our culture, especially in the younger generations (Gross & Scott, 1990, p. 57).

There are two basic lines of reasoning pertaining to why women work. First, women say they work because they want to (Steinem, 1983, p. 171). Second, women say they work because they have to (Steinem, 1983, p. 168). The most common explanation involves both lines of thought: Women work primarily because they have to and secondarily because they want to (Scarr et al., 1991, p. 233). The women in my research emphasized their personal reasons for wanting to work but most will work, in addition, because they need to work.

Occupations

When interview subjects were asked if they desired a specific occupation, slightly over half (12 of the 20) had definite answers. The desired occupations were as follows: businesswoman (1), chiropractor (1), company executive (1), family counselor (1), graphic designer (1), human resource specialist (2), preschool owner (1), researcher (1), and teacher (3). Seven women were not sure exactly what they wanted to do but had a general idea:

I'd like to be a teacher, maybe high school teaching English, history, or theater. Or, a travel agent . . . I still want to someday manage my own restaurant or store.

Beth-Ann, age 21

Something glamorous! I'd really like to be in charge . . . at least, of myself. Perhaps, a district manager? A flight attendant--I love to travel. I really love service jobs. I think I'm really more ambitious than I realize. The key, I think, is liking what you are doing.

Jacqueline, age 21

I want a career but I want it to be with what I really enjoy doing--working with children--like a teacher or owning my own business like a nursery school. Women are going to work and there is a need for good, well-balanced childcare.

Michelle, age 22

One interviewee had no particular occupation in mind for her future. She simply stated that she wanted to do something "enjoyable."

The majority (80 percent) of women in this study were college seniors nearing completion of their degrees. Twenty percent were college graduates. Slightly over half had concrete occupational goals. However, only four (20 percent) women were in jobs related to their desired future occupations. One woman could not decide whether to remain in her present occupation (as she was very successful) or pursue her desired career, a change which entailed significant risk.

As might be expected, age turned out to be a factor influencing women's occupational goals. The older individuals (mid- to late-20s) tended to be more decisive

when it came to their desired occupations. Younger interviewees (specifically those ages 21 and 22) were less decisive--having a number of possible occupations in mind.

Job vs. Career

On the subject of occupation, some interview subjects spoke of jobs and others spoke of careers. Oftentimes, the terms "job" and "career" were used interchangeably.

However, Robert Bellah (1985) distinguishes between the two terms:

In the sense of a "job," work is a way of making money and making a living. It supports a self defined by economic success, security, and all that money can buy. In the sense of a "career," work traces one's progress through life by achievement and advancement in an occupation. It yields a self defined by a broader sort of success, which takes in social standing and prestige, and by a sense of expanding power and competency that renders work itself a source of self-esteem. (p. 66)

Seventy-five percent of the interview subjects referred to their future occupations primarily as "jobs." Only 25 percent of those interviewed spoke of "careers."

In Chapter VII, it is revealed that 95 percent of women in this study desire and expect to be married at some point in their lives. Furthermore, 85 percent desire and expect to have children. Careers are more time-consuming and demanding than most jobs. Most careers leave little time and energy for family (Sidel, 1990, p. 204). Because the majority of women in this study plan on being married and having families, it is likely that many perceive their future occupations more as jobs than as careers.

The Perceived Relationship Between Occupation
and Standard of Living

When interviewees were asked their primary reason for going to college, 15 out of 20 (75 percent) viewed their college education as a means to an end. In the eyes of these women, a "good" education should lead to a "good" occupation (an occupation that is personally satisfying and pays the bills). A "good" occupation should translate into a "good" standard of living (a standard of living that allows one to live the American Dream).

The question "What role do you believe your occupation will play in achieving your future standard of living?" revealed that over half of those interviewed (60 percent) perceived their future occupations as "significant," "vital," and "important" in their support. Whether or not these women planned on being married, they expected to be able to support themselves.

Basically, it's everything . . . unless [sarcastically]
I marry a husband that is rich!

Katherine, age 23

It'll be the whole thing. At this point in time, I
really don't think I'll be married. I don't want to be
economically dependent on anyone.

Beth-Ann, age 21

Twenty percent of the interviewees expected their occupations to contribute at least 50 percent of their future standards of living and implied the other 50 percent would be supplied by their husbands:

My occupation will be a big part [of her future standard of living] but not all of it. I don't expect to make wonderful money. I don't even know if I could buy a house on my own income. You know, I never really thought of that!

Jacqueline, age 21

Two people are going to have to work in my household--most definitely!

Michelle, age 22

In addition, 20 percent explained that their future occupations would probably add little to their future standards of living. These individuals were already satisfied with their current standards of living:

It'll enhance it. But, right now, I'm living comfortably. My occupation will just allow us more perks.

Sarah, age 26

I don't plan to make that much money. I don't know--I just feel that I'll have money somehow.

Tuesday, age 23

Caught Between Work and Family

One of the concerns voiced repeatedly throughout the interviews was what should take precedence--career or family? All of the women in this study expressed that they desired occupations (whether jobs or careers). However, the overwhelming majority (85 percent) also stated they wanted families. The stress of having to choose between a career role and a family role is best demonstrated in the following case.

Debbie is an outgoing, friendly, 25-year-old senior majoring in Business. She describes herself as "lucky." To many, this is likely to be an accurate description.

Debbie's parents are still married and she describes her upbringing as stable: "We didn't have everything but we had what we needed." Debbie has not had to work her way through college. She has a good education and appears motivated to work toward her career goals. In addition, Debbie has been happily married for one year to a man she describes as "wonderful."

Debbie is nearing the completion of her degree and hopes to go into her own business. At present, she has a promising career opportunity that will enable her to gain valuable experience in her field. She feels strongly that her husband will support her, explaining, "If I want to work, he'll be there to help me ten times more." Debbie's husband is well-established in a successful career and, according to Debbie, "makes really good money." He is able to make his own hours and has recently received a significant raise.

On the surface, Debbie appears to "have it all" or, at least, she is on her way to "having it all." She is educated, has a promising career-lead, and is married to a loving, well-to-do husband. However, Debbie uneasily acknowledges that she is experiencing a "dilemma" in her life. In her words:

My husband and I both have the same goals. We both want to be successful. We both want our own businesses. And, we both expect 50/50--we are going to help each other. We are going to do it as a team.

Right now, I have the opportunity for a partnership. Eventually, I can go into my own business, using my degree and getting my benefits through my husband. But, I have to make a choice.

We just decided to try and have kids. My dream is to be with them at home, be there for everything, and watch them take their first step. There is no way I'd put my children in daycare. I feel torn . . .

Debbie feels that she must make a choice between pursuing her career and starting a family. It does not seem that her husband shares the burden of this decision. Although Debbie's husband is well-established in his career and makes his own hours, it does not appear that he plans on taking time away from his career to help raise the children (despite the notion of 50/50). The career of Debbie's husband takes precedence as he is (and has been) the breadwinner of the household.

Debbie's case reveals contradictory beliefs and values that are held simultaneously. For example, Debbie desires to be a successful career woman, yet she also wants to be the American Dream mother--two roles that are impossible to blend as the Dream mother does not seek employment outside the home. Furthermore, Debbie strongly feels her husband will share the responsibility of raising their children. However, her husband is not physically present to help her "ten times more" and she says she wants to "be there for everything."

Despite the high rate of divorce in the U.S., Debbie does not foresee divorce as a possibility in her life. She

says, with confidence, "There's no way in this world that anything would happen to our relationship." Debbie's husband does not share the burden of her choices, nor does he share her economic vulnerability.

The Balancing Act

The majority of women in my research desired to "have it all"--to combine both work and family roles. As Kathleen Gerson (1989) writes, "Women's work and family decisions have always been closely connected" (p. 170). Although interviewees expressed the desire to have it all, few had concrete plans on how they were going to achieve it all. Lynne, however, was one young woman who had given this area some thought.

Lynne is a 28-year-old senior majoring in Humanities. She works full-time during the week and goes to night classes in the evening. She has been married the past three years and wants a family as well as a successful career. Lynne has given her future considerable thought and, unlike the majority of those interviewed, she has a plan on how she hopes to balance career and family. I asked Lynne to describe for me her plan and she said:

After I get my B.A., I'm quitting [her job] and having a baby. I'm going to have children and I'm going to stay home with them until they reach kindergarten age. Then, I'll be a teacher.

I don't think it's healthy to be with your children 100 percent of the time or to leave them in daycare. When I'm home [from work], they will be home [from school]. I don't want any "latch-key" kids.

You can't be a full-time mother and a full-time

career woman. For the woman who doesn't have a choice, look to God. To me, my kids are eternal--a job is passing. I mean, look at the economy . . .

Lynne's plan involves, first, having her children, and then establishing her career. She has chosen the profession of teacher as it will allow her to be home for her children when they return from school.

There is a name for Lynne's desired plan of action--sequencing. According to Nancy Gibbs (1990), many young women today share this plan (p. 14). Nancy Pearcey (1991) refers to sequencing as "the idea that adult life proceeds in stages, each with a unique balance between personal life and career" (p. 225). Pearcey (1991) describes four stages of the sequencing woman:

1. Starting Out - getting educated and established.
2. Coming Home - caring for small children.
3. The Best of Both Worlds - balancing family with part-time or community work.
4. Reaching Out - using one's talents in the world.

(p. 226)

It is important to note that sequencing is, more or less, an option for women in the middle and upper social classes. Few lower class women can afford to sequence. Furthermore, as a life plan, sequencing does not consider the possibility of divorce or death of a spouse.

In this study, every woman interviewed expressed the desire to work outside the home. Interviewees had personal

as well as financial explanations for wanting to work. Just over half of the interview subjects had specific occupations in mind for the future. Over half viewed their future occupations as crucial to achieving their future standards of living. As the majority of women in this research desired both work and family roles, many experienced conflict over which role to place first. Few women had definite plans on how they would achieve "it all." The conflict between work and family leads us to the next chapter which addresses perceptions on marriage and the family.

The young woman who "has it all." Burger King advertisement for fast-food product, 1991.

CHAPTER VII
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Today fewer than one in ten American families have the luxury of having the mother at home with the children while the father is at work. In this nation today there are 8.7 million women as the sole providers of their families. They are taking care of 16 million kids who have no father at home.

SENATOR CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
Democrat of Connecticut

A disheartening statistic that faces young adults in the U.S. is that, in our country, one-half of all marriages end in divorce (Collins, 1985, p. 241). The United States has the highest rate of divorce in the world (Macionis, 1989, p. 386). According to Judith Wallerstein (1989), author of Second Chances: Men, Women, and Children a Decade After Divorce, all relationships between men and women are affected by the high divorce rate (p. xxi). However, focusing solely on the high rate of divorce in the U.S. overshadows the fact that the U.S. also has the world's highest rate of marriage (Macionis, 1989, p. 387).

Most people in the United States get married at some point in their lives (Macionis, 1989, p. 392). Although it is likely that many will experience divorce, it is also likely that those divorced will marry again (Collins, 1985, p. 260). In fact, about one in every three marriages today is a remarriage (Veevers, 1988, p. 170). As Randall Collins

(1985) observes: "It appears that we can't quite stand marriage, but we can't stand being without it either" (p. 238).

Although much has been heard about the increasing popularity of remaining single, today's rate of singlehood reflects more the tendency of young adults to postpone marriage than the lack of faith in marriage itself (Moorman, 1986, cited in Faludi, 1991, p. 11). In the U.S., marriage continues to be popular and the single life is often viewed as emotionally, socially, and economically problematic (Stein, 1981). Studies indicate that people who are married are more satisfied in their lives and that singles experience more stress as a result of social isolation (Preston & Smith, 1989, p. 407).

On Marriage

Due to the popularity of marriage in our culture (despite the knowledge of divorce), it is not surprising that 95 percent of the women in this study desired and expected to be married at some point in their lives. In fact, five women were already married and four women were engaged. Only one individual did not enthusiastically address the possibility of marriage in her life.

According to Laura, age 29:

I don't know [about marriage]. I just don't believe in it. I don't like anything traditional. Marriage, to me, doesn't make any sense. It's religious and I don't think the law has any right to impose on a love relationship.

On an emotional level--sure, I guess, it's emotionally appealing. But, why do you need marriage to bind yourself to a person? It's a pretty shaky thing if you need this piece of paper to keep you together. A committed partnership is more lasting. Marriage is just a big excuse to have a party.

At 29, Laura appears perfectly comfortable with her unwed status. She describes her own parents as "still married, very miserably" and her younger sister's marriage as "unhappy." However, Laura concedes that it has been difficult finding men who share her values regarding marriage. Although she dates frequently, she finds that men have trouble accepting the fact that she does not desire children. Laura states that she is economically independent: "I don't need a husband. I stumbled into a good job." Yet, in order to achieve her desired standard of living, she feels that she needs a partnership: "Maybe with a dual income and no kids, I figure, I hope to be one of those who stay in the middle class instead of sinking."

Laura might have difficulty locating a mate who shares her desire for a childless "committed partnership." Although conventional wisdom has it that women are more attracted to the idea of marriage than men (see, for example, the "Cathy" comic strip on page 78), research reveals that, in the long run, men are more invested in marriage than women (Collins, 1985, pp. 172-173). Faludi (1991), who reviews dozens of studies, writes:

The suicide rate of single men is twice as high as that of married men. Single men suffer from nearly twice as

many severe neurotic symptoms and are far more susceptible to nervous breakdowns, depression, even nightmares. And despite the all-American image of the carefree single cowboy, in reality bachelors are far more likely to be morose, passive, and phobic than married men.

. . . Single men suffer from twice as many mental health impairments as single women; they are more depressed, more passive, more likely to experience nervous breakdowns and all the designated symptoms of psychological distress--from fainting to insomnia. (p. 17)

In short, despite popular belief, women, in general, handle the single life better than men. In addition, the demographer Charles Westoff (1986) notes that women who are economically independent find marriage less attractive (cited in Faludi, 1991, p. 16). For economically secure women, marriage is a matter of personal choice rather than of financial need (Macionis, 1989, p. 392).

Cathy □ Cathy Guisewite

Another woman desperate for marriage. Copyright 1992 Cathy Guisewite.

On Children

According to a national survey conducted in 1987, most people in the United States feel that a family should

contain at least one child (National Opinion Research Center, 1987, p. 234). The average number of children per family in the U.S. is about two (Faludi, 1991, p. 264). Although raising a child today is incredibly expensive and our economy is far from stable, women, in this country, continue to bear children (Macionis, 1989, p. 379). An estimated 90 percent of women in the U.S. will have children at some point in their lives (Hewlett, 1986, p. 15). Furthermore, while more women are choosing to delay childbirth until later in life, "most women still have their first child by their late twenties" (Sapiro, 1990, p. 19).

When the women in my study were asked if they desired and expected to have children, 85 percent (17 out of 20) responded "yes," 10 percent (2 out of 20) responded "no," and one woman expressed that she did not know. Tuesday, age 23, the only woman in this study with a child, has a baby boy (14 months old at the time of the interview). Tuesday says she is very content with motherhood and desires another child: "I desire more--ideally, I'd like to have two. Children are lots of fun." Regarding the two women who expressed that they did not want children, their reasons were as follows:

Definitely not! I know for a fact how much time, energy, and trouble kids are when you have 'em. I took care of my nephew for two years and another [child] for a year and a half. The responsibility--I don't want it. When you have kids, you don't have a life. Your kids are your life.

Katherine, age 23

I've never wanted to be a mother. If I had a lot of money, maybe I'd feel different. But, I don't particularly like children. Being an auntie is just fine for me. Frankly, I'm not into the work. And, some children are problem children--I'm not willing to take that risk.

Laura, age 29

Katherine, after years of babysitting, says she is "burned out" on children. But, Katherine wasn't the only one disenchanted with childcare. Corine, age 23, for example, explains:

Being home with an infant [all day] sucks. For my mom to have a baby was the best birth control for me. I taught daycare so I know it's so taxing. No one deserves more to have their incomes raised than childcare workers!

Despite the above, however, Corine wants children.

Laura's lack of desire for motherhood stems from her financial situation and her lack of desire for the work involved with raising children. However, she also acknowledges the role of her own childhood in reaching the conclusion that she wants to remain childless. In the words of Laura:

We [her family] could've lived decently but we didn't. I never got to do what my other classmates got to do. They [her parents] were very cheap, cheesy people. I've never been to Disneyland and I was always the kid with the highest score on the exam! I'd adopt a child that needs a home before I'd create a new life.

Laura describes her childhood as having been "miserable" and says she is "jealous of children."

Laura and Katherine were exceptions in this study. The majority of interviewees expressed a clear desire for

children. Regardless of their past experiences, these women felt the benefits of having children far outweighed the costs.

Desired Number of Children

Ozzie and Harriet Nelson had two children . . . so did Ward and June Cleaver. When the women in this research were asked what they considered to be their ideal number of children, the most popular response could have been straight out of a 1950s television sitcom. The most prevalent response was "two," occurring in 75 percent of all responses. Two was followed by the number three (in 30 percent of responses) and four (in 20 percent of responses).

What is so special about the number two? In this study, 50 percent of the responses included the importance of sibling companionship, and 38 percent of the responses considered the expense of raising children. For example:

If I could, I'd have three to five children. But, realistically, I'd like two or three. I want to be able to have enough money to put my kids through school. You need money for vacations and for when they are sick. I don't want my children to suffer. I couldn't afford five kids--and that's not fair to them.

Beth, age 20

I'd like twins. We've [herself and fiancé] always talked about two--sibling bonding and they are easier to handle as well. It's also more affordable to have two.

Patricia, age 23

Two or three. I don't want just one. I think they need a playmate. It's just a matter of time--how many I can handle.

Debbie, age 25

While sibling companionship ranked number one in reasons for desiring a certain number of children, economics may play an even greater role in people's decisions than these women realize. Today, it is incredibly expensive to raise children. One estimate, not including the cost of a college education, places the expense of raising just one child to the age of 18 at over \$140,000 (Macionis, 1989, p. 378). Because children these days are not economic assets, many women are delaying childbirth until they are better able to afford children, and some women are electing to remain childless (Macionis, 1989, p. 380). Furthermore, with the U.S. labor force now being about half female, there simply is not a lot of time to share with children anymore (Macionis, 1989, p. 379).

Importance of Spending Time With Children

In the 1990s, families with two wage earners may be making ends meet but they are inevitably spending less time together (Horn, 1991, p. 134). With parents spending 40 percent less time with their children than 15 years ago (Hewlett, 1991, p. 10), many children are left to rear themselves. Today, for example, there are an estimated 6 million "latch-key" children in the U.S. (Macionis, 1989, p. 379), children who return from school to empty homes rather than to milk and cookies with Mom.

When interviewees were asked what they deemed more important, the amount of time they would spend with their

children or their family's material standard of living, all stressed that time spent with children is more important. The following are some examples of what young women had to say:

They [children] are more important. The quality of their lives would be better if I were guiding them along than if we had a house.

Jacqueline, age 21

I would rather spend time with my children and live in a less expensive house than not have time to share with them and work full-time. The ideal situation for me would be to work part-time when I have my children.

Athena, age 24

When you die, they [your children] are going to remember the time spent with you--not the Nintendo or the Nike Air Pumps that Mom bought them.

Sarah, age 26

In the above responses, women assume that there will be another to help support them and their children (recall that 95 percent desired and expected to be married). In addition, there is the assumption that they will have the choice of whether or not to work. Statistics reveal, however, that most women today do not have the choice of whether or not to work (Schroeder, 1991, p. 222). As Betty Friedan (1979) writes:

[I]t isn't really a free choice when their paycheck is needed to cover the family bills each month, when women must look to their jobs and professions for the security and status their mothers once sought in marriage alone, and when these professions are not structured for people who give birth to children and take responsibility for their upbringing . . . (p. 40)

Moreover, 75 percent of working women hold full-time, not part-time, occupations (Macionis, 1989, p. 328).

It is likely that some women in this study will experience being the sole providers for their families. In 1987, for example, 16.2 percent of all U.S. families were headed by single mothers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987). In 90 percent of all divorce cases, women are awarded custody of their children (Weitzman, 1985, p. xiii), and the majority of these divorced women receive little or no child support from their ex-husbands (Women's Legal Defense Fund, 1986). Thus, while interviewees value family over material wealth, most will find the time they have to spend with their own children in short supply.

On Divorce

Interviewees were aware of the high rate of divorce in the United States. However, the knowledge of divorce did not dissuade individuals from wanting to marry. The majority (95 percent) of women desired marriage. Of these women, few (15 percent) grappled with the possibility of marital breakup:

I'm going to get married and I'm not going to get divorced.

Beth, age 20

Yes, I desire marriage. Divorce? I think about it sometimes but I don't expect it. Emotionally, it would be hard. But, careerwise, I really don't think it would hurt me.

Bridget, age 21

I definitely want to be married. Marriage is forever unless it jeopardizes your psychological well-being for a long time. I'm not going to rush into anything. I'm going to wait and find the right person.

Athena, age 24

Not one married woman in this study expected divorce. However, of the married women, not one had been married for more than five years. It is important to note that these marriages were relatively new and, in the eyes of the married interviewees, quite satisfying.

Debbie, age 25, has been married for a year and in her words, "There's no way in this world that anything would happen to our relationship." Lynne, age 28, married three years, explains, "Marriage is hard. You go a few years just hating the person but you work through it. The blessings outweigh the bad times." In addition, Smervia, age 28, married five years, says with confidence, "I love my husband. I do not expect to be divorced."

While no married woman anticipated divorce, two of the five admitted that thoughts of marital breakup had crossed their minds. For example, Tuesday, age 23, has been married three years. She explains, "I'm going to college so that if I ever get divorced, I won't end up like my mom [single working mother responsible for the support of two children]." It is not clear how a college education will prevent divorce. Perhaps, in Tuesday's eyes, her education will enable her to obtain an occupation that allows her to be economically independent. Like Tuesday, Sarah, age 26, married four years, does not expect divorce but is prepared nonetheless: "You prepare for the worst and hope for the best. The only one I can really count on is sitting right

here in this skin."

My interviews indicate that past experience affects people's perceptions on divorce. Of the three married women who did not acknowledge the possibility of divorce in their lives, two (Debbie and Smervia) came from intact families. Furthermore, although Lynne's parents divorced when she was 9, she looks to her grandparents' marriage of 50 years as a model to emulate.

The two married women who examined the possibility of marital breakup experienced families without intact marriages. Tuesday's parents separated when she was about three or four (she does not recall the exact age). In Tuesday's words: "I don't remember them ever being married." Sarah never knew her father since he has long been deceased. Sarah's mother raised four children by herself.

It has been found that the children of divorce are more hesitant to marry and less likely to marry in the first place than individuals from intact families (Korbrin & Waite, 1983). Furthermore, research has revealed that children of divorce are more likely to experience the breakup of their own marriages (Glenn & Shelton, 1983). However, while children of divorce may be more wary of marriage, they are still likely to marry. In fact, Collins (1985) writes that "children of divorce are only 3-6 percent less likely to marry in their twenties than other people"

(p. 259). Judith Wallerstein (1989), a researcher of divorce, explains, "Children of divorce come to adulthood eager for enduring love and marriage. They do not take divorce lightly" (p. 298).

In this study, 60 percent of those interviewed came from intact families, 30 percent were children of divorce, and 10 percent experienced other family patterns (i.e., father deceased at birth, mother raises child alone). Although a recent Time feature article describes individuals in their twenties as "the ultimate skeptics when it comes to marriage" (Gross & Scott, 1990, p. 59), my research reveals otherwise. Only one individual expressed that she was really afraid of marriage as a result of her parents' divorce. Jean, age 27, explains:

I want to be married someday and I think I will. But, frankly, I'm scared of marriage. I'm afraid of divorce. I don't know [for certain] if I could spend the rest of my life with just one person.

While Jean is cautious regarding marriage, she still desires to be married someday. In this research, all of the women from broken homes expressed a desire for marriage. The only woman who did not want to be married came from an intact family (based on what she perceives as an unhappy marriage).

The finding that young women desire marriage yet overlook the threat of divorce is consistent with the findings of previous research into the values of young women. For example, Ruth Sidel (1990) discovered:

While many of the young women with whom I talked recognized the high rate of divorce in American society and felt they had to be prepared to take care of themselves and their children, few were willing to acknowledge that they might become divorced. . . . the young women generally assumed they would live their lives in a traditional nuclear family. (p. 164)

Do these findings indicate that young women are overly confident regarding marriage or that they are in a state of denial regarding divorce? The perceptions of young women on marriage and divorce require further inquiry.

The Perceived Role of Marriage in Future Standard of Living

When interviewees who desired marriage were asked to explain the relationship between their marriages and future standards of living, 75 percent viewed marriage as significant in achieving their future standards of living.

For example:

It's gotta be a "yes" question these days--it just takes two [wage earners to make ends meet]. Realistically, in this age, in order to get by, you have to have two incomes. We are in the age of interdependence. My financial well-being is his financial well-being.

Corine, age 23

Marriage is support through the vulnerable years of childbirth and later life.

Athena, age 24

Marriage will help me. A combined income will make it easier.

Jean, age 27

Some women were offended by the question concerning the role of marriage in achieving future standard of living. The women in this study stressed that they were not looking to marry someone rich. In fact, what interviewees said they

wanted most out of marriage was "happiness." In the words of Sara, age 21, for example, "I'm not going to marry someone just to increase my standard of living. Happiness comes before financial stability." Other women who were offended by this interview question:

Sure, I see it [marriage] playing a role but I certainly wouldn't get married just to have money.
Jacqueline, age 21

We lived together three years before marriage. I never equated marriage with economic success. I would have married him if he was homeless.
Sarah, age 26

What a self-defeating means to attaining your goal!
Smervia, age 28

Over and over, women stressed that they wanted to do their share--more specifically, they desired marriages based on a balanced reciprocity, a "50/50" split of responsibilities. A marriage based on 50/50 was the ideal. However, not everyone thought they were going to experience it:

I'd like a marriage based on a 50/50 split but I really don't think it'll be like that.
Bridget, age 21

I want to marry someone who can hold their own. I'd like to be able to share things--a 50/50 split, a give and take. Well, I guess 60/40 [woman does more around the house] is okay. Seventy/thirty is a little more realistic. My dad doesn't do anything around the house.

Beth, age 20

I want to make as much or more than my husband. I want to put in my share. I want a 50/50 relationship but I guess everyone does. It'll probably end up being more like 40/60. I'll end up doing more.
Mary, age 22

Interviewees were accurate in their assessment of the division of labor in marriage. Arlie Hochschild (1989) found, for example, that many wives come home from work to a "second shift," doing 75 percent of the household tasks (p. 276). This second shift results in wives working an extra month of 24-hour days a year (Hochschild, 1989, p. 3)--an arrangement that is hardly 50/50.

Only 20 percent of those interviewed perceived marriage as unimportant in achieving their future standards of living. For example:

You can't depend on a man. You have to depend on yourself.

Michelle, age 22

It [marriage] doesn't have anything to do with it [standard of living]. If I don't marry, I could still have the standard of living I want.

Marie, age 26

In an age of economic instability coupled with a high rate of divorce, perhaps the only person one can depend on is oneself. However, this leaves out the reality that most people need two incomes to achieve a standard of living comparable to the one they experienced as children (Bernstein, 1991, p. 81).

Ninety-five percent of the women in this study desired and expected to be married. In addition to occupations (Chapter VI), the majority (85 percent) of those interviewed expressed the desire for families. Most women desired about two children--for the reasons of sibling companionship and

cost of childrearing. All of the women valued time spent with children over their material standard of living.

Many women in this study believed they would one day have the option of whether or not to work. Others felt they would be able to choose between part-time and full-time work. In any case, most assumed there would be another to help support them and their children. Eighty-five percent realized the importance of marriage today in achieving desired standard of living. Only 15 percent of the interviewees had given any thought to divorce.

Are the young women in this study being realistic? Are they denying their economic vulnerability? The next chapter examines how young women perceive the status of U.S. women today.

CHAPTER VIII

ON WOMEN

To be a woman in the 1990s is, by definition, to be a juggler of priorities. It is to be confronted by decisions many men still never face or never make. It is to be given choices denied previous generations but to be caught in the cross-fire of increased work-related pressures and home responsibilities that haven't lessened significantly.

KIM BOATMAN

According to Nancy Gibbs (1990), author of a Time article entitled "The Dreams of Youth," today's young women "inherit a revolution that has largely been won" (p. 12). Indeed, there is no denying that women have made some incredible gains in this society (Ehrenreich, 1990). However, it is also true that U.S. women cannot depend on secure abortion rights, equal pay, maternity leave, or subsidized child care (Gross, 1992, p. 17). To quote the standard Virginia Slims advertisement (see page 93), women may have "come a long way," but it is also clear that they still have a way to go.

There are disturbing signs that women's status in the U.S. is slipping. Susan Faludi (1991), for example, investigates a cultural "backlash" that is eroding women's gains in such areas as work and politics and is blocking their future progress. Faludi (1991) asks some very good questions:

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY.

We know a woman is perfectly capable of doing anything a man can. The question is, why would she want to?

VIRGINIA SLIMS

9 mg "tar," 0.7 mg nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

Women may have come a long way, but they still have quite a way to go.
Note the caption.

(1991 Philip Morris)

If American women are so equal, why do they represent two-thirds of all poor adults? Why are more than 80 percent of full-time working women making less than \$20,000 a year, nearly double the male rate? Why are they still far more likely than men to live in poor housing and receive no health insurance, and twice as likely to draw no pension? . . . [W]hy are they less than 8 percent of all federal and state judges, less than 6 percent of all law partners, and less than one half of 1 percent of top corporate managers? (p. xiii)

Faludi (1991) exposes how U.S. women are manipulated by political, legal, and media establishments. In doing so, she identifies the primary obstacles standing in the way of women's equality. Yet, Faludi is not alone in her concerns.

Betty Friedan (1991), a founder of the modern women's movement, has noted signs of a "new feminine mystique" encouraging women to return to their pre-feminist roles (quoted in Hill, 1991, p. 12E). Friedan, who runs a project called Women, Men, and the Media, offers the popular film "Fatal Attraction" (1987) as one example. In this film, an independent career woman is portrayed as a homicidal monster and in the end, it is the good mother and devoted housewife who saves the day. According to Friedan (1991), who also refers to the movie "Thelma & Louise" and the Clarence Thomas hearings, the media message to today's women is "if you don't want to stay in the kitchen all the time, then get out" (quoted in Hill, 1991, p. 12E).

In addition to wanting to understand how young women felt about the American Dream, education, work, and marriage and family, I also wanted to know their perceptions on the

status of U.S. women in the 1990s. In the eyes of the interview subjects, have things become easier or harder, better or worse, for today's women, as compared to previous generations of U.S. women? Interviewees were asked to explain their personal views regarding women, their joys, frustrations, and fears. Furthermore, they were encouraged to share some of their personal experiences of being a woman in the 1990s.

On the Perceived Status of U.S. Women

The young women in this study perceived the status of women in the United States as mixed with both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, interviewees spoke of the "choices," "options," and "opportunities" women have today:

I think women have it much better [than previous generations of U.S. women] economically and socially. There is more choice. There is more opportunity to achieve. But, you have to work really hard for everything you want. Don't expect anything to be handed to you.

Beth-Ann, age 21

Women in the '90s have more choices than they ever had before. With choices, however, come responsibility. I don't think the women in our generation were socialized to comprehend the significance of all the choices they have.

Sarah, age 26

On the negative side, interviewees acknowledged that women who combine both work and family roles inevitably face an exhausting double workload:

There is a lot of pressure and stress on women today . . . to have the career, marriage, and kids. We feel

we have to do everything. There are still these stereotypes of what men and women are supposed to do and we are still caught in 'em.

Katherine, age 23

There are more opportunities [for women]. But, I don't think things are any easier. I mean, just look at the double workload problem.

Laura, age 29

Over and over, interviewees enthusiastically spoke of "choices." These choices included remaining single or getting married, having children or remaining childless, working full-time, part-time, or not working at all. The majority of those interviewed firmly believed that their lives were in their hands and if they "worked hard enough," their dreams would come true. In reality, however, people's lives are often influenced by factors outside of their control (Sidel, 1990, p. 79). The majority of women in this study, for example, will not have the choice of whether or not to work; they will have to work (see Chapter VI).

The Stalled Revolution

According to Arlie Hochschild (1989), the stalled revolution is "the strain caused by the disparity between the changes in women and the absence of change elsewhere" (p. 12). Over the past three decades, women's lives have changed substantially but the changes in women have not been accompanied by significant changes in men or in society. One result of the stalled revolution is that working women devote an extra month of 24-hour days each year to household responsibilities (Hochschild, 1989, p. 3).

Not one interviewee referred to the stalled revolution, per se, but many recognized that women have changed a lot faster than men and our society, in general. For example:

Women today have it much better [than previous generations of U.S. women]. But, we have a lot more stress [than men] careerwise. We are expected to carry the same weight as men and raise our children at the same time. The roles of women are changing. Yet, there are a lot of men who remain traditional.

Desiree, age 23

Women today are expected to be "super people." Things have gotten a lot harder because we are taking on more. In a male-dominated society, we have to work harder. But, the fact that women are working isn't changing the roles of men. They are doing the same thing they've always been doing--just working [outside the home].

Jean, age 27

I still think women are considered second-class citizens. Look, all across America, women do the same jobs as men and get paid less. There is only one female educator in my husband's field. If you are a female math major in college, you are a human oddity. Society expects us to change but is not willing to accommodate the changes.

Smervia, age 28

Most of the women in this study hoped to marry men who would accommodate their needs as working mothers. These women desired marriages based on a balanced reciprocity--a "50/50" split of responsibilities (see Chapter VII). They wanted husbands who would do their share of the cleaning, cooking, shopping, and child care.

The reality today, however, is that women continue to do the majority of all household tasks (Hochschild, 1989; Sapiro, 1990). As Joseph Pleck (1989) writes, "Married women's increased employment has induced a partially

accommodating reduction in women's family role, but as yet almost no increase in husbands' family role" (p. 166). Today's women may hope for a marriage based on 50/50 but few are likely to experience one.

Masculinity and Femininity

It is commonly believed (despite a considerable amount of evidence to the contrary) that males and females differ in terms of their basic personality characteristics (Doyle, 1985; Richmond-Abbott, 1983). Males exhibit "masculine" characteristics--such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, and independence (Garfinkel, 1985). Females exhibit "feminine" characteristics--such as cooperativeness, passivity, and dependence (Brownmiller, 1984). Masculinity and femininity, by definition, are opposites (Brownmiller, 1984, p. 16).

The real life experiences of men and women do not support the dualistic conception of masculinity and femininity (Blood, Tuttle, & Lakey, 1982; Richardson & Taylor, 1989). Yet, these constructs remain with us. The family, centering on motherhood, continues to be perceived as "the ultimate proof of feminine nature" (Brownmiller, 1984, p. 230). Furthermore, despite the increased participation of women in the workforce (a traditional male domain), numerous occupations remain structured on the traditional male model of work which assumes there is a full-time wife and mother at home (Pleck, 1989, p. 167).

Interviewees emphasized that today's women are caught between the polarities of masculinity and femininity. They felt that, in many instances, women are not sure just how they should act. For example:

Things are changing--I think these are confusing times. Women aren't sure what their proper role is anymore. You can't be too aggressive [masculine] and you can't be too feminine either.

Jacqueline, age 21

Women today face a double-edged sword. We are expected to do twice as much [as men]. We are expected to play two opposing roles--both masculine and feminine.

Athena, age 24

Women who desire and need to combine both family and work roles face a complex dilemma. In the words of Susan Brownmiller (1984), author of Femininity, "Motherhood and ambition have been seen as opposing forces for thousands of years" (p. 229). Today, the working mother must perform a delicate balancing act of behaviors traditionally assigned as masculine or feminine. At home, she is gentle and nurturing with her children and probably defers to her husband (Richmond-Abbott, 1983, p. 285). At work, she is assertive and logical, yet careful not to be too masculine as a masculine woman is often perceived as threatening (Fallows, 1985).

Sexual Harassment

Over the past three decades, women have entered the workforce in great numbers. In many instances, however, they have not been received kindly. Work continues to be

perceived by many (both men and women) as "unfeminine" behavior. For example, the conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly (1986) maintains, "The plain fact is that most women would rather cuddle a baby than a typewriter or factory machine" (p. 115). In addition, according to Gary Bauer (1988), chairman of the 1986 task force on the family, "They'd [working women] rather be at home with their children. Most women work only because they have to" (quoted in Faludi, 1991, p. 265).

Some of the women in this study addressed the issue of sexual harassment. Beth-Ann, age 21, spoke of her own personal experience:

When I was 18, I was extremely optimistic. I thought I could be the president of a company. I took a position in a theater company and encountered a lot of sexism. Basically, I had to fight for everything that I wanted. There was always this issue of whether I could handle it or not. I took on too much to try and prove myself . . . I really wanted a powerful position. Well, I ended up getting sexually harassed a lot--which, by the way, I did report. I was really disappointed that I was not treated equally.

Athena, age 24, recounted her sister's experience with sexual harassment:

My sister is a mechanic. She gets a lot of attention [sexual innuendos] from her co-workers. The men at her work check her out [look upon her as a sexual object]. For a long time, many doubted her abilities. She, being a woman, had to work twice as hard to prove herself.

Because many men find working women threatening (both personally and economically), a common female experience in the working world is sexual harassment--"the explicit use of

sexuality as a tool of power or dominance" (Sapiro, 1990, p. 276). Studies reveal that most working women experience at least one case of sexual harassment in their working lives (Sapiro, 1990, p. 276). This harassment takes a number of forms, ranging from verbal sexual innuendos to physical sexual assaults (Brownmiller, 1975; Sapiro, 1990).

According to traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, a man is strong and sexually aggressive and a woman is soft and sexually appealing (Blood et al., 1983, p. 3). A common myth regarding sexual harassment is that it "is not harassment at all" but "a purely personal matter between men and women . . . a fact of life" (Alliance Against Sexual Coercion, 1979, cited in Francoeur, 1984, p. 429). It is not surprising, therefore, that most victims of sexual harassment blame themselves rather than take action (Sapiro, 1990, pp. 276-277). Sexual harassment continues to be a problem working women encounter in the 1990s.

Social Change

Leslie Wolfe, executive director of the Center for Women's Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., describes young women as "wanting different rules" and expecting others to change to accommodate their needs (quoted in Gibbs, 1990, p. 13). In my interviews, I found this description to be accurate. Today's young women perceive the problems and obstacles facing them and understand the need for change.

Furthermore, they acknowledge that change will have to occur on an institutional as well as a personal level. However, few are willing to actively work to make changes occur.

The following are a few examples of what the women in this research had to say regarding change:

Things can change on a social and personal level. Social movements can help but it'll just take time-- probably a long time. On a personal level, I will not submit to someone else and I will teach my children to do the same.

Mary, age 22

Women need to be raised differently . . . to ask, "Why has the responsibility [for raising children] always fallen on women?" I think it all starts with socialization. We have to break the cycle somewhere.

Debbie, age 25

I think society needs to change. We need more daycare and social support systems. People need to start voicing their opinions to people who can make a difference. We need to take a look at government, state government, and grass roots politics.

Athena, age 24

A recent Time article devoted to individuals in their twenties describes them as "cynical," if not downright pessimistic (Gross & Scott, 1990, p. 62). Douglas Coupland (1991) centers his first novel, Generation X: Tales For An Accelerated Culture, on young adults who have little or no faith in the future. In a San Francisco Examiner article, Martha Farnsworth Riche, director of policy studies for the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C., has the following to say about today's generation of young adults:

I call them the New Petulants. They seem to spend so much time feeling sorry for themselves. . . . If they'd just get their noses out of their navels and

sniff the winds of opportunity blowing around, they'll do just fine. They've got an attitude problem, rather than a real problem (quoted in Flinn, 1992, p. A-10).

Media images aside, however, "optimistic" is a better word to describe today's young women, especially regarding their own personal futures (Hutchison, 1992; Sidel, 1990).

When it comes to the ongoing fight for women's rights, for example, young women appear apathetic (Ehrenreich, 1990; Gibbs, 1990). Perhaps, some women are. However, apathy is not the only reason why young women fail to get involved in institutional change. My research reveals that young women have a faith and an optimism that things will change on their own. As one interviewee expressed it:

The answer [to women's progress] is evolution. It just takes time. The women before us forged a path for us. Every generation makes a difference. You can't give up, you have to be optimistic.

Corine, age 23

Optimism may be part of the solution. Yet, optimism is not going to help a young single mother feed and care for two children (regardless if she has a college diploma). Optimism is not going to magically narrow the persistent wage gap between men and women. Optimism, alone, will not erase the economic vulnerability of today's women.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The prelude to revolution and the commitment to inventing an alternative future is a fundamental change in expectations and hopes.

GEORGE L. MADDOX

The longest recession since World War II is tearing away at U.S. morale. In late 1991, a poll conducted by Newsweek revealed that "only 62 percent of U.S. households are satisfied with their current standard of living" (Levinson, 1991, p. 23). More recently (January 10, 1992), a New York Times/CBS News poll disclosed that "eight in 10 Americans say the economy is in bad shape" (Rankin, 1992, p. 16A). In February of 1992, consumer confidence dropped to a 17-year low, and a Conference Board survey discovered U.S. consumers unhappy with their present economic conditions and even more pessimistic regarding the near future (Cooper & Madigan, 1992, p. 25).

Given that U.S. spirit is not at an all-time high, it is not surprising that the majority of women in this study (85 percent) were markedly negative when asked about the direction of the U.S. economy. For example:

It [the economy] is going down the toilet. The cost of living is getting too high. I actually think we are losing the middle class. The government is doing nothing about it; it's just making it [the economy]

worse. I think we are getting close to [a situation where there are only] "haves" and "have-nots."

Katherine, age 23

The economy scares me. I just fed the homeless. There are more and more people and more and more women and children living below the poverty line--and this cycle perpetuates itself. As long as we have these political systems, this is the way it's going to be.

Sarah, age 26

What is surprising, however, is that pessimism did not extend to women's perceptions of their own economic futures. If we look over the findings of my research, we discover, in most cases, a persistent optimism in the face of economic crisis.

Summary of Findings

Only one individual in twenty (5 percent) believed the American Dream is possible for anyone in the U.S. to achieve. However, the vast majority (90 percent) felt they would be able to achieve the Dream. Although the percentage of people owning homes in the U.S. continues to drop, home ownership was an important goal for 85 percent of those interviewed. Furthermore, the majority (80 percent) referred to the houses they expected to own.

Women in this study placed a great faith in education. Although a college degree does not guarantee an occupation, most interviewees (75 percent) were optimistic that their educations would enable them to secure jobs. Over half (55 percent) believed their educations would play a significant role in their future standards of living.

Every woman in this research expressed the desire to work outside the home. Over half (60 percent) of those interviewed viewed their future occupations as important in achieving their future standards of living. The majority of interviewees desired to combine both work and family roles (despite concerns on how they would do so). Few had definite plans on how they would balance these roles.

Despite the knowledge of the high rate of divorce in the U.S., 95 percent of the women in this study desired and expected to be married. Only 15 percent of the interviewees had given any thought to divorce. Eighty-five percent expressed the desire for families. Most women desired two children--for the reasons of sibling companionship and the cost of childrearing. All of the women valued time spent with family over material standard of living. Eighty-five percent realized the importance of marriage (two incomes) in achieving their desired standards of living.

Interviewees perceived today's women as having more choices, opportunities, and options as compared to previous generations of U.S. women. However, they acknowledged that women who combine both work and family roles inevitably face an exhausting workload. Many women recognized that the changes that have occurred in women over the past three decades have not been accompanied by substantial changes in men or in society. Interviewees emphasized that today's women are caught between the polarities of masculinity and

femininity. They acknowledged the need for change but few were willing to actively work toward making change occur. Most had a faith and an optimism that change will occur on its own.

Perceived Future Standard of Living as Compared to
Parents' Standard of Living

John Flinn (1992), a writer for the San Francisco Examiner, recently noted that:

It's become almost a cliché that the generation of Americans just entering the work force will be the first in U.S. history to achieve a standard of living lower than their parents'. (p. A-1)

However, when the women in my study were asked if they expected to have the same, better, or worse standard of living than their parents, 45 percent expected the same and 30 percent expected better. Only 25 percent expected to experience a worse standard of living than their parents.

When those who expected to experience a higher living standard than their parents were asked to explain why, the number one factor (in 4 out of 6 responses) was higher education:

Education. I'm the first in my family to go to college. I think I'm more ambitious [than her parents]. The choices my mom and dad made affected their standard of living. My mom [for example] had my brother when she was 19.

Jacqueline, age 21

It'll be better because of my education. It [a college degree] is going to give me choices that my mother didn't have. She had 4 children to support.

Sarah, age 26

Those who expected to have the same standard of living as their parents tended to focus more on personal ambition than education:

I'll achieve the same standard of living as my parents because I don't want to live any less. If I put my mind to it--I can do it. I don't think education has much to do with it. Classes tend to perpetuate themselves.

Katherine, age 23

I'll achieve the same because I know I'll work for it.

Debbie, age 25

Those who expected to experience a lower living standard than their parents tended to blame tough economic times:

I would hope to achieve the same [as her parents], I would wish for better, but I expect worse. In my field, I'm not going to be making a lot of money.

Michelle, age 22

I expect worse because of the increased cost of living. It's a combination of changing [increasing] prices plus lack of opportunities.

Athena, age 24

Most of the women in this study did not expect downward mobility to touch their lives. This finding is consistent with previous research into the area of downward mobility. Katherine Newman (1988), for example, found that for most victims of downward mobility, the experience of slipping down the social ladder comes as a shock (p. 7). U.S. culture places such a great emphasis on success that downward mobility and its victims tend to be ignored (Newman, 1988, p. 8).

Feelings Regarding Downward Mobility

Because, in life, things don't always work out as

expected, interviewees were asked to explain how they would feel if they could not meet the standard of living of their parents. The majority (60 percent) said they would find not meeting their parents' standard of living hard to handle.

For example:

I'd feel like I had failed.

Bridget, age 21

I'd feel terrible. I'd be miserable. Your parents' standard of living is the foundation of what you expect in life. If you don't meet it, you feel inadequate. There's lots of pressure on me because I'm the star of the family.

Desiree, age 23

Most interviewees said they would take not meeting their parents' standard of living personally. Only two women felt they would blame their circumstances on external social and economic forces. In the words of one interviewee, "It wouldn't be because of lack of trying. It would have to do with something outside of me."

Forty percent of those interviewed said they would feel "okay" if they could not meet their parents' standard of living. Once again, the value of personal happiness surfaced. For example:

If I was happy, I'd be okay. Money doesn't make you happy. If I was doing what I enjoy [for a living]
 . . .

Katherine, age 23

I guess I'd feel okay as long as my basic needs were still met . . . as long as we [herself and husband] have happiness in our lives.

Debbie, age 25

According to Newman (1988), it is common for victims of

downward mobility to experience feelings of failure, helplessness, self-blame, loss of control, and loss of identity (p. 11). As Newman (1988) writes:

America's puritan heritage, as embodied in the work ethic, sustains a steadfast belief in the ability of individuals to control the circumstances of their lives. When life does not proceed according to plan, Americans tend to assume the fault lies within. (p. 9)

Furthermore, Ruth Sidel (1986) notes that, "Those who get by but aren't really living the American dream wonder what is wrong with them" (p. 8). Thus, victims of downward mobility are more likely to blame themselves than forces beyond their control.

Will The Next Generation Have It Better?

In September of 1991, Senator Bill Bradley, Democrat of New Jersey, noted that over half of New Jersey parents believe their children will have a lower standard of living than theirs (cited in Flinn, 1992, p. A-10). In February of 1992, a poll conducted by the Boston Globe revealed that only 34 percent of Massachusetts parents feel their children will experience a higher standard of living than theirs (cited in Flinn, 1992, p. A-10). It appears that U.S. pessimism regarding the economy has extended to expectations for the next generation.

When interviewees were asked if they expected their children (or the next generation) to experience the same, better, or worse standard of living than themselves, 40 percent responded the same, 40 percent responded worse, 15

percent said they did not know, and only 5 percent responded better. The following are a few examples from those who expected their children to live the same:

It's stupid to say they'll live better, but I'm very optimistic that they will live the same.

Sara, age 21

Financially, they'll be the same--with an education. Education will be stressed. They [her children] will not have a choice [they will have to go to college].

Patricia, age 23

The following are examples of what those who expected the next generation to live worse had to say:

My hopes are for better, but I have a feeling that the future is going to be a bit dark.

Beth-Ann, age 21

Things are going to get worse. Actually, I worry about that. I think things are going to bottom out before they get better.

Laura, age 29

The one individual who expected better for her children did not expect better for future generations. She explained:

I expect my children to do better. They would have all of our [herself and husband's] help. Our prosperity is not going to go anywhere. If you have it [material wealth], you can build on it. I expect America as a whole to get worse unless there are radical changes instigated now. What we [our country] are doing now is not working efficiently.

Smervia, age 28

While most women expected their children to experience the same or better standard of living, a few women referred to personal choice as being a factor. For example:

I expect them [her children] to choose. I would hope for them to live the same or better.

Marie, age 26

I expect them [her children] to make that decision for themselves. My standard of living will allow them choices that I didn't have.

Sarah, age 26

Once again, we see women's perception of having choice. Most of the women in this study felt their lives were in their hands and if they worked hard enough, they could make their dreams come true. It is not surprising, therefore, that some women expected the same approach to life from their children.

Patterns

The majority of the young women in this study were pessimistic when asked about the direction of the U.S. economy. However, at the same time, these women were optimistic regarding their own economic futures. This appears to be a failure on the part of individuals to make connections. One's economic future is, at the very least, influenced by and, in many cases, controlled by fluctuations in the nation's economy.

The inability of individuals to acknowledge the relationship between their lives and the world around them is a common finding in research examining people's perceptions regarding the future (Johnson, 1987, p. 40). For example, a survey conducted by the Hearst Corporation investigating the U.S. public's "hopes and fears" for the decade of the 1990s found that individuals in the U.S. are optimistic regarding their personal futures but pessimistic

regarding the futures of the nation and the world (cited in The Futurist, 1990, p. 54). Despite dire predictions for the U.S., two times as many individuals said they believed their personal lives would be better than worse in the year 2000 (The Futurist, 1990, p. 54).

Why were the women in my study optimistic regarding their own economic futures yet negative regarding the direction of the U.S. economy? It could be a matter of youth. Elizabeth Toledo (1992), president of the San Francisco chapter of the National Organization for Women, points out that young women are likely to believe media messages that they can "have it all" (cited in Hutchison, 1992, p. 8D). Furthermore, experts in women's studies note that young women's attitudes and beliefs change as they get older and gain more experience (Hutchison, 1992, p. 8D).

The inability of individuals to see the "big picture" may also be due to psychological defense mechanisms-- "unconscious processes used . . . to ward off anxiety" (Ornstein, 1988, p. 494). As Johnson (1987) writes, it is "much more comfortable to make dire predictions for the U.S. and the world than for one's own life" (p. 40). Perhaps, the women in this study are denying their economic vulnerability in order to go on living their lives.

In addition to interviewees being optimistic regarding their economic futures, another pattern surfaced in this study. Oftentimes, women held two sets of conflicting

values at the same time. Recall that Debbie (Chapter VII) desired to be a successful careerwoman and the American Dream mother at the same time. Other women in my study shared this inconsistency in values.

Sarah, age 26, for example, had the following to say about media images of "Supermom": "You can't have it all. It's media hype. Don't even try it!" However, later in her interview, Sarah went on to describe how she planned to combine her career with children. Sarah hopes to open up her own preschool and then have her children. She plans on bringing her children with her when she goes to work. Despite Sarah's perception of the media, it appears that she expects to "have it all."

It is not surprising that young women hold conflicting values. Young women make up a transitional generation; they are caught between changing values and roles. For example, Harriet Brown (1991) writes:

. . . those of us having children now . . . [were] raised by our own mothers to be ambitious, to want more than a diaper in one hand and a spatula in another. At the same time we carry within us an idealized vision of motherhood, a combination of what we have observed our mothers doing and what we want for our children. (p. 509)

Today's young adults are just one generation removed from the American Dream. As children, they watched their parents achieve the Dream. As adults, it is difficult to accept that the American Dream may be out of their reach.

The findings of this research are important to

consider. If young women, for example, believe they can do "it all," alone, they are not likely to demand societal supports to aid them in combining work and family roles. If young women firmly believe they can achieve the American Dream through hard work and perseverance, they are likely to turn to self-blame if they cannot reach their goal. Today's values and perceptions are related to tomorrow's realities.

Few women will be able to achieve the American Dream without changes taking place in the United States (Sidel, 1990). Working women need job flexibility, maternity leave, and subsidized child care (Hewlett, 1986). They need their husbands to pitch in more at home (Hochschild, 1989). Furthermore, the wage gap between men and women must narrow (Faludi, 1991).

Yet, few changes in our society will occur unless people perceive the need for change and perception is followed by action. This study reveals that the cultural value of individualism may be the primary obstacle to social change. The majority of young women in this research firmly believed that they were in control of their own futures. The perceptions of young women regarding economic future is an area that requires further study.

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APPENDICES

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

Appendix A

Research Approval Forms & Interview Materials

University form to be submitted to SJSU Foundation with any graduate student research protocol involving human subjects.

Research Protocol Title: Study of College Females and Perceived Economic Future

Graduate Student(s): Heather M. David

Responsible Faculty Member: Dr. Meg Bowman, Ph.D.

Department: Social Science

As the responsible faculty member for the research conducted by the above graduate student(s), I believe that the research protocol follows University and Federal policy for protection of human subjects in research and for obtaining informed consent from research subjects, as outlined in the materials provided by SJSU Foundation.

Signature of Responsible Faculty Member

2-1-91

Date

Office of the Academic Vice President • Associate Academic Vice President • Graduate Studies and Research
One Washington Square • San José, California 95192-0025 • 408/924-2480

To: Heather M. David, Social Science

From: Serena W. Stanford *Serena W. Stanford*
AAVP, Graduate Studies and Research

Date: July 25, 1991

The Human Subjects Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your request for exemption from Human Subjects Review for the proposed study entitled:

"Study of College Females and Perceived Economic Future"

You may proceed with this study without further review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

I do caution you that Federal and State statutes and University policy require investigators conducting research under exempt categories to be knowledgeable of and comply with Federal and State regulations for the protection of human subjects in research. This includes providing necessary information to enable people to make an informed decision regarding participation in your study. Further, whenever people participate in your research as human subjects, they should be appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the confidentiality of all data that may be collected from the subjects. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Dr. Serena Stanford immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma and release of potentially damaging personal information.

Please also be advised when people participate in your research as human subjects, each subject needs to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate or withdrawal will not affect any services the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2480.

CC: Meg Bowman, Ph.D.

School of Social Sciences • Department of Social Science
One Washington Square • San José, California 95192-0121 • 408/924-5740

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Heather M. David

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: Study of College Females and Perceived Economic Future

I have been asked to participate in a research study that is investigating the values college women hold regarding their economic futures. The results of this study should further our understanding of people's visions of the future.

I understand that

- 1) I will be asked to respond to a series of open-ended interview questions. The interview will take, but is not limited to, one hour. The interview will take place in an agreed-upon setting between interviewer and interviewee.
- 2) There are no anticipated risks of this study.
- 3) There are no discernible benefits expected for the interviewee.
- 4) This study does not contain alternative procedures.
- 5) The results from this study may be published, but any information from this study that can be identified with me shall remain confidential and will be disclosed only with my permission.
- 6) The subject will not receive compensation. The interview is conducted on a volunteer basis.
- 7) Any questions about my participation in this study will be answered by Heather David (293-0484). Complaints about the procedures may be presented to Dr. Maria Alaniz, Ph.D. (924-5543). For questions or complaints about research subject's rights, contact Serena Stanford, Ph.D. at 924-2480.
- 8) My consent is given voluntarily without being coerced; I may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study, and I may withdraw at any time, without prejudice to my relations with SJSU.
- 9) I have received a copy of this consent form for my file.

I HAVE MADE A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. MY SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE AND THAT I HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE.

DATE _____

SUBJECT'S SIGNATURE _____

INVESTIGATOR'S SIGNATURE _____

DEMOGRAPHICS

NAME (fictitious) _____

AGE _____

RACE _____

MAJOR IN COLLEGE _____

CLASS LEVEL _____

OCCUPATION _____

POLITICAL AFFILIATION _____

RELIGION _____

MARITAL STATUS _____

PLACE OF BIRTH _____

PARENTS' PLACE OF BIRTH _____

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

	MOTHER	FATHER
EDUCATION	_____	_____
OCCUPATION	_____	_____
INCOME	_____	_____

FAMILY INCOME:

Under \$9,999	60,000-69,999
10,000-19,999	70,000-79,999
20,000-29,999	80,000-89,999
30,000-39,999	90,000-99,999
40,000-49,999	100,000 & above
50,000-59,999	

SIBLINGS _____

PARENTS DIVORCED OR MARRIED _____

PERCEIVED SOCIAL CLASS _____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about the direction of the U.S. economy? Positive? Negative? Apathetic? Explain.
2. Do you EXPECT to have the same, better, or worse standard of living than your parents? Why?
3. How would you FEEL if you were not able to meet the standard of living of your parents? Why?
4. Regarding your economic future, describe where you would LIKE to be situated economically approximately 5-10 years into the future? Where do you EXPECT to be? Why?
5. Would you say your expectations have changed over the past few years regarding your economic future? Why or why not?
6. How would you define the "American Dream?" Do you think this dream is possible for everyone to achieve in the U.S.? Explain.
7. Part of the so-called "American Dream" is being able to own a home. Do you expect to own a home? Why or why not?
8. EDUCATION
  - A. What is your primary reason for going to college?
  - B. How are you paying for your education?
  - C. What part do you think your education will play in your future standard of living?
9. OCCUPATION
  - A. Do you desire a specific occupation? If so, what is it?
  - B. Do you desire to work in the paid workforce?
  - C. What role do you believe your occupation will play in your future standard of living?
10. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
  - A. Do you desire/expect to be married (if not already so)?
  - B. Do you desire/expect to have children? If so, how many? Why?
  - C. What do you value as more important--material standard of living or time spent with family?
  - D. How do you see the effect of marriage in your future standard of living?
  - E. If you desire/expect marriage, do you ever think about divorce? Why?
  - F. If you have children (if not, substitute the next generation), do you expect them to live the same, better, or worse than you in the future? Why?
11. As compared to previous generations of U.S. women, have things become better or worse for women in the 1990s? Explain.

Appendix B

Interview Subjects--
Breakdown of Variables and
Summary of Personal Characteristics

Table B-1

Breakdown of Subjects by Age

Age	No. of subjects in age category
20	1
21	4
22	2
23	5
24	1
25	1
26	2
27	1
28	2
29	1

Table B-2

Breakdown of Subjects by Race

Race	No. of subjects in racial category
Caucasian	16
Mexican-American	2
Eurasian	1
Filipino	1

Table B-3

Breakdown of Subjects by College Major

Major	No. of subjects in college major
Advertising	1
Anthropology	1
Behavioral Science	1
Business	3
Child Psychology	2
Communications	1
History	1
Humanities	1
Music	1
Political Science	1
Psychology	3
Social Science	1
Sociology	2
Women's Studies	1

Table B-4

Breakdown of Subjects by Class Level

Class level	No. of subjects in class level
Senior	16
Graduate	4

Table B-5

Breakdown of Subjects by Current Occupation

Occupation	No. of subjects in occupation
Bank teller	2
Court reporter	1
Dispatcher	1
Grocery clerk	1
Human resources	1
Marketing assistant	1
Research assistant	1
Restaurant worker	2
Retail salesperson	2
Secretary	1
Teacher's aide	2
N/A	5

Table B-6

Breakdown of Subjects by Political Affiliation

Political affiliation	No. of subjects in political affiliation
Democrat	7
Republican	1
Independent	2
N/A	10

Table B-7

Breakdown of Subjects by Religion

Religion	No. of subjects in religion
Baptist	1
Catholic	5
Christian	3
Muslim	1
Presbyterian	1
Protestant	1
N/A	8

Table B-8

Breakdown of Subjects by Marital Status

Marital status	No. of subjects in status
Single	15
Married	5

Table B-9

Breakdown of Subjects by Place of Birth

Birthplace	No. of subjects in birthplace
U.S.	18
Outside U.S.	2

Table B-10

Perceived Social Class

Social class	No. who perceive they belong to class
Lower middle-class	6
Middle-middle	9
Upper-middle	5

Table B-11

Parents--Married or Divorced?

Marital status of parents	No. of subjects from families
Married	12
Divorced	6
N/A	2

Table B-12

Siblings

Yes	No
18	2

Appendix B (continued)

Interview Subjects:
Summary of Personal Characteristics*

- Athena   age 24; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Child Psychology; occupation - grocery clerk; political affiliation - Democrat; religion - N/A; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - lower middle class; parents divorced; 3 siblings.
- Beth   age 20; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Sociology; occupation - teacher's aide; political affiliation - Democrat; religion - Catholic; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - lower middle class; parents married; 2 siblings.
- Beth-Ann   age 21; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Music; occupation - waitress; political affiliation - N/A; religion - Catholic; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents divorced; only child.
- Bridget   age 21; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Business; occupation - bank teller; political affiliation - N/A; religion - Protestant; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents married; 3 siblings.
- Corine   age 23; race - Caucasian; college graduate; major - Anthropology; occupation - human resources; political affiliation - Democrat; religion - N/A; marital status - single; place of birth - outside U.S.; perceived social class - upper middle class; parents divorced; only child.
- Debbie   age 25; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Business; occupation - N/A; political affiliation - Democrat; religion - N/A; marital status - married; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents married; 1 sibling.

* Names of informants have been changed.

- Desiree age 23; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Business; occupation - marketing assistant; political affiliation - Independent; religion - Christian; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - lower middle class; parents married; 6 siblings.
- Jacqueline age 21; race - Mexican-American; college senior; major - History; occupation - salesperson; political affiliation - Democrat; religion - Catholic; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - lower middle class; parents divorced; 2 siblings.
- Jean age 27; race - Mexican-American; college graduate; major - Advertising; occupation - waitress; political affiliation - Independent; religion - N/A; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents divorced; 3 siblings.
- Katherine age 23; race - Caucasian; college graduate; major - Sociology; occupation - secretary; political affiliation - N/A; religion - Baptist; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents married; 2 siblings.
- Laura age 29; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Social Science; occupation - reporter; political affiliation - N/A; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - lower middle class; parents married; 1 sibling.
- Lynne age 28; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Humanities; occupation - teacher's aide; political affiliation - N/A; religion - Christian; marital status - married; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents divorced; 5 siblings.
- Marie age 26; race - Caucasian; college graduate; major - Communications; occupation - research assistant; political affiliation - N/A; religion - Muslim; marital status - single; place of birth - outside U.S.; perceived social class - upper middle class; parents married; 2 siblings.

Mary age 22; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Behavioral Science; occupation - N/A; political affiliation - N/A; religion - N/A; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents married; 5 siblings.

Michelle age 22; race - Eurasian; college senior; major - Child Psychology; occupation - sales; political affiliation - Republican; religion - N/A; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - upper middle class; parents married; 1 sibling.

Patricia age 23; race - Filipino; college senior; major - Psychology; occupation - dispatcher; political affiliation - Democrat; religion - Catholic; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - upper middle class; parents married; 2 siblings.

Sara age 21; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Psychology; occupation - bank teller; political affiliation; N/A; religion - Christian; marital status - single; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - upper middle class; parents married; 2 siblings.

Sarah age 26; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Women's Studies; occupation - N/A; political affiliation - Democrat; religion - N/A; marital status - married; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parent-single mother-not married, father-deceased; 3 siblings.

Smervia age 28; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Psychology; occupation - N/A; political affiliation - N/A; religion - Catholic; marital status - married; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - middle class; parents married; 2 siblings.

Tuesday age 23; race - Caucasian; college senior; major - Political Science; occupation - N/A; political affiliation - N/A; religion - Presbyterian; marital status - married; place of birth - U.S.; perceived social class - lower middle class; parents separated, mother deceased; 1 sibling.