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Betsie Garner 4/12/2011

The Career Ladder and the Baby Cradle: College Seniors, Gender, and Work-Family Issues

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Abstract

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In 1979 Gloria Steinem reflected on her interactions with college students: "I've yet to be on a campus where most women weren't worrying about some aspect of combining marriage, children, and a career. I've yet to find one where many men were worrying about the same thing" (Steinem 1979, 232). In an effort to measure the degree to which today's college students resemble those Steinem observed, I explore the future work and family plans of current college seniors and their attitudes toward gender and work-family balance. I conducted 20 in-depth interviews with students on issues regarding career aspirations, family plans, and work-family conflict. This paper presents major themes and concepts related to gender difference among college men and women. I discuss the study's implications and thereby extend theories on the gendered nature of work and family by offering evidence of gendered attitudes toward negotiating work and family conflicts at the college stage before individuals have even begun working or forming families.

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Introduction

In 1979 Gloria Steinem reflected on her interactions with college students: "I've yet to be on a campus where most women weren't worrying about some aspect of combining marriage, children, and a career. I've yet to find one where many men were worrying about the same thing" (Steinem 1979, 232). As a feminist and spokeswoman for the Women's Liberation Movement of the 60s and 70s, Steinem argued that as women increasingly pursued higher education and joined the American workforce they encountered a "double-role" problem forcing them to choose between integrating into the masculine world of paid labor and remaining in the traditionally feminine realm of domestic work. The attempt to build both successful careers and happy families was especially burdensome for women because men failed to respond by contributing to the traditional women's work of raising children and keeping house. While women's enrollment in college began to match that of men's for the first time, it was women alone who were facing the struggle to balance work and family.

More than two decades later, Stone and Lovejoy argued that "by virtue of their occupational status and class membership, professional women are caught in a double bind between the competing models of the ideal worker and ideal parent" (2004, 62). Forty-three stay-at-home mothers who had once pursued professional careers were interviewed in the study, and the researchers found that women's choices to leave work and go home had less to do with attitudes toward gender roles and more to do with gender as they experienced it in their day-to-day lives:

> Our results undermine the notion that women are freely choosing family over work. Inflexible and highly demanding workplaces are the major barriers to their ability to exercise discretion in any meaningful way … the women in our study made the "choice" to be at home not out of their preference for traditional gender roles but because of their experience of gendered realities. These realities are shaped by multiple factors that include economic restructuring, workplaces that assume the male model of work, the lack

> of real reduced-hours options that undermines women's efforts at work-family accommodation, husbands' exemption from household parenting obligations, and the ideology of intensive mothering at home. (Stone and Lovejoy 2004, 80)

For these women, the complexity of gendered social structures and gendered culture norms resulted in a difficult and complicated decision to leave the formal work place and concentrate instead on their family lives.

Stone and Lovejoy's study provides evidence of difficulties which many young women may expect to encounter over the life course as they attempt to balance professional careers and family-related responsibilities. I am interested in the degree to which today's college students resemble those which Steinem described in the 70s. If the work-family interface continues to be a gendered experience for professionals today, then stepping back and examining gender and work-family issues during the college stage is pertinent. After all, today's college students are tomorrow's workforce professionals. What are college students today worrying about and planning for? In what ways does it vary according to gender? How do cultural norms and social structures shape students' attitudes toward gender and their plans to pursue career and family goals?

Research Questions

1. How does gender affect attitudes toward career choice and career commitment? What types of careers are seniors planning to pursue? How willing are students to alter their career plans or work schedules in order to accommodate family plans?

2. How does gender affect attitudes toward family? Do students desire marriage and children? What do students believe about happy marriages? What do students believe about good parenting? What roles do students see themselves taking on within their own families and households?

3. How does gender affect attitudes toward balancing work and family? How do students prioritize future work commitments and family commitments? What kinds of strategies do students plan on using to negotiate work-family conflicts?

This project explores the future work and family plans of current college seniors and their attitudes toward the issue of work-family balance and gender. I first present a theoretical framework informing the project's research design, a literature review of past empirical findings, and four hypotheses. I then describe the research methods employed to collect and analyze the data and report on the project's findings. Finally, I discuss the study's implications and thereby extend theories on the gendered nature of work and family by offering evidence of gendered attitudes toward negotiating work and family conflicts at the college stage before individuals have even begun working or forming families.

Theoretical Framework

Ideology of Separate Spheres

It is not a coincidence that so many men tend to work primarily outside of the home while so many women tend to take on domestic and family-related responsibilities alone. Traditional gender roles normalize breadwinning as masculine and homemaking as feminine, thereby placing men and women into gendered spheres of labor. The development of separate spheres can be traced to industrialization and the Victorian obsession with domesticity. Victorian domesticity was characterized by women working to satisfy that which men sacrificed to the new world of industry and urban life. To accomplish this work, the preindustrial household was transformed into a sacred safe-haven—a home (Tosh 1999, 33). As men increasingly sought work in urban cities, women increasingly found themselves isolated both physically and politically in suburban homes. The private sphere became the appropriate space

for women and the public sphere became the appropriate space for men. It is important to note, however, that men had the ability to move freely between the spheres while women did not. Thus, a power structure was perpetuated:

> The public/private dichotomy (both the political and spatial dimensions) is frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude and suppress gender and sexual difference preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures. (Duncan 1996, 128)

The spatial rearrangement of family members into separate spheres correlated to the separate social roles and responsibilities deemed appropriate for men and women. A father's role was to manage resources and productive activities in the public sphere, and the mother's role was to handle reproductive activities in the private sphere (Aitken 2005, 226).

While both men and women may have had their own powers to exercise in their own spheres, this is not to say that those spheres and powers were both separate and equal. The powers men exercised in public served their egotistical identities as breadwinners, and their ability to move freely between the spheres without putting that identity in danger made their social situation better than women's. A (good) woman's identity was staked not primarily, but solely in her private home away from the public:

> The modern city was fashioned for men as a space where the responsibilities of the private sphere could be left behind, as a place of freedom and even immorality. For a man, walking the public streets was a way of losing himself in the crowd, of being "away from home" … For bourgeois women, to wander the streets was to risk losing one's reputation, to be seen as a "public" woman or potential prostitute, to be identified as an object of potential purchase or consumption. (Giles 2004, 37)

While male identity was characterized by movement and access to public and private spaces, female identity was established securely in domestic space, and "the association of home with women and femininity [has become] so commonplace that it is often considered natural" (Domosh and Seager 2001, 1). A father maintained his authority and superiority in part by

moving effortlessly from one sphere to the other each day; meanwhile his wife remained confined to only one sphere in which she exercised comparatively far less autonomy and authority. Negative consequences of this asymmetrical power structure, while experienced by both sexes, were more damaging for women. Women were effectively isolated (both symbolically and literally) by the politics of separate spheres and forced into the role of "those angels of the hearth confined to the sylvan peace of suburbia" (McDowell 1999, 154). Their feminine sphere of unpaid labor was consistently devalued by a society that placed increasingly more value on "progress" and the public sphere (Johnson and Lloyd 2004, 120).

This ideology was supported by masculine and feminine stereotypes which depicted men as rational, aggressive, and competitive and women as emotional, virtuous, and nurturing. Because people believed these qualities were natural to being male or female, each sphere was framed as the obvious space for its respective sex. Men were well-suited for the new world of industry and business but lacked the piety and gentleness to make a house into a home. Women were innately skilled to care for children and tend the housekeeping, but lacked the intelligence and strength to carry on business in public. Such rigid and narrow gender roles left little flexibility for families to organize work and manage their households. The economic survival of an ideal family depended solely on the father and "masculinity was measured by the size of a man's paycheck" (Gould 1974). Thus, a married woman who sought employment symbolized a husband who had failed as a man (Westover 1986). Employed women shamed not only their husbands but themselves as well and were often considered very low-class or even labeled "sluts" (Fink 1998, 102).

In addition to sex stereotypes, ideology associated with Judeo-Christian traditions characterized men as inherently superior to and more valuable than women. For example, the

creation story found in Genesis tells that God created man first, in his own image, and later fashioned woman from one of Adam's ribs. It was then Eve who disobeyed God by eating fruit from the forbidden tree and introducing sin into the world. The Apostle Paul argued that the creation story illustrated the inferiority of women and subjugated them to the authority of men:

> A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (1 Tim. 2:11-15 NIV)

This religious heritage informed a culture which privileged men in matters of authority, and men were prone to place the most value on their own activities and accomplishments:

> Men, who more often than women occupy positions that set value on human activity, tend to accept male activities as the standard and see other activities as inferior—regardless of the importance of these activities for a society's survival. (Padavic and Reskin 2002, 10)

The combination of inherited religious justifications for the marginalization of women and the political and economic advantages for men associated with excluding women from the public sphere gave society in general and men in particular the motivation to maintain gendered spheres of labor and perpetuate a patriarchal norm.

"Opting Out" and "The Choice Gap"

The emergence of separate spheres produced a distinct hierarchy which ranked masculine stereotypes and men's work as more valuable than feminine stereotypes and women's work. However, Victorian women did not accept these cultural and structural transformations without dispute. Middle class women began to challenge the idea that a woman's place is in the home, and by the 1890s the term "feminism" was formally used to describe the political and social activity which demanded "emancipation" and sought increased educational and political opportunities for (middle class, white) women (Holmes 2009, 84). The first wave of the

women's movement saw women stepping into the public sphere to win suffrage, and the second wave saw women embracing the public sphere to join the work force. The rate of workforce participation for married women with children less than six years old grew from 12% in 1950 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1977) to 64% in 1995 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996). The addition of women into America's workforce is regarded as the most significant change for families since industrialization (Harris 1978).

Whereas Victorian gender roles dictated masculine privilege to move freely from sphere to sphere and consigned women to the private sphere alone, some scholars suggest that today it is women who enjoy the freedom to make a life in either sphere or even both spheres at once. Fiorentine analyzed patterns of persistence in premed education tracks and found that female students who perform academically at moderate or low levels are less likely to apply to medical school than their male peers who perform at the same levels (1987). However, females and males who demonstrate equally high levels of academic performance apply to medical school in equal numbers. He put forth a "normative alternative approach" to explain the phenomenon:

> At this historical juncture, the decline in proscriptive norms concerning female employment has not been accompanied by a similar rise in prescriptive norms regarding occupational commitment and success. As it is for males, occupational success is a normatively appropriate activity for females. But having no occupational goals or, if family finances permit, no plans to work full time in paid employment is also appropriate for women. Currently, women have two socially acceptable routes by which to claim a legitimate, adult social status—their own occupational achievement and the performance of the maternal homemaker role. Men, however, continue to have only one route—occupational achievement. (Fiorentine 1987, 1133-1134)

From this perspective, it is men who are confined by the culture of gender norms with a more limited access to social acceptability and success. Women on the other hand have the option of being successful career women or successful wives and mothers.

Consequently, many have speculated about why and how women choose to either pursue professional careers or tend to their homes and children full time. An article in The New York Times Magazine profiled eight women in an Atlanta book club who left high power professional careers in order to focus on their roles as mothers and homemakers (Belkin 2003). According to Belkin, the eight Princeton-educated women would be a disappointment to feminists of the 60s and 70s because their ambitions do not lie in the world of politics, business, law, commerce etc. Instead, these women said they are happier at home with their children. Belkin sympathizes with the women and characterizes their choices to leave the workforce as "opting out"—a reflection of their preference for the domestic realm and their intent to redefine success in their own feminine terms:

> There is nothing wrong with money or power. But they come at a high price. And lately when women talk about success they use words like satisfaction, balance and sanity … Why don't women run the world? Maybe it's because they don't want to. (Belkin 2003)

"Opting out" implies that women could just as easily opt in—as if women are exercising their modern ability to choose whichever option best serves their own interests. Stone's research, however, rejects this popular media characterization of women choosing to return home and instead demonstrates that high status career women have difficulty negotiating the demands of work and family life and are eventually pushed out of the workplace by the lack of options made available to them:

> In discussing why they quit, women cited jobs, children, and husbands, and within each broad category, there were many variations and themes. For any given woman, the mix of reasons underlying her decision was complex and varied … women's priorities shifted and their engagement with their careers grew more tenuous as events on both the work and the family sides of the equation piled up and pushed or pulled them, respectively, out of the workplace and into the home … we can see … how limited women's options often were, how many aspects of their situation were beyond their control, and how difficult it was for women, once they became mothers, to exercise the kind of agency and strategic thinking they had demonstrated in their education and early careers before they became mothers. In short, we can see the outlines of the choice gap. (Stone 2007, 105-6)

In sum, there seems to be a disparity between the wide range of culturally acceptable roles for women to fill and the limited structural opportunities to negotiate the competing demands of those roles successfully. Women may be less restricted than men when it comes to what is socially acceptable, but they are also less privileged than men when it comes to being socially supported and prioritized in the workplace and in the home.

The Gendered Division of Labor and Work-Family Balance

Difficulties associated with the balance of work and family in today's society are manifold and complex for both men and women. Complications often stem from the fact that time is a limited resource. American workers are expected to conform to the ideal worker norm by prioritizing their work over any and all other commitments (Ely and Meyerson 2000). Workplace culture is often chaotic and stressful, and employers and managers expect their workers to demonstrate strong commitment to company objectives. Workers who choose to neglect personal obligations at home in order to be present for important meetings are often praised by their managers (Martin 1990). These types of practices add extra pressure to employees with increasing commitments at home such as new spouses or children. Typical male workers of the 1950s could more easily disregard domestic responsibilities because their wives were full-time stay-at-home mothers, but today more families are organized according to the dual-earner model in which both parents are employed. Thus, the ideal worker norm born of 1950s workplace culture is indeed a male worker norm and has largely remained the standard by which both male and female employees are measured. The following is a manager's response to his employees' desire for better work-family balance:

> Don't ever bring up "balance" again! I don't want to hear about it! Period! Everybody in this company has to work hard … Just because a few women are concerned about

> balance doesn't mean we change the rules. If they chose this career, they're going to have to pay for it in hours, just like the rest of us. (A. Hochschild 1997, 71)

With the addition of women into the American workforce, families have increasingly faced the pull of not one but two careers, and time has become an even more limited resource.

Workers also face significant demands on their time from their personal lives. Relationships with spouses and children require substantial effort, and day-to-day living involves a whole host of basic chores including cooking, cleaning, shopping, and errand-running. The effort to balance the competing demands of work and home compel women to make considerable trade-off as evidenced by their drastically reduced hours of housework since 1965 (Bianchi, et al. 2000). They turn to professional services such as child care centers and takeout restaurants to help make up the difference, but modern women still face intense pressure to be more involved in their children's lives by participating in events at school, supervising extracurricular activities, and watching for signs of emotional trouble (Glass 2000). Working parents—particularly mothers—are stressed by the inability to control their own work schedules (Barnett and Rivers 1996) and therefore seek employers who offer alternative work arrangements and personal flexibility to manage work-family conflict (Coltrane 1996).

The fact that women are overwhelmingly more likely than men to address the tension between responsibilities at work and commitments at home points to a larger social trend (Sanchez and Thomson 1997):

> Although it is clear that family structure and women's labor force participation have changed dramatically in the twentieth century, the sexual division of domestic labor has not kept pace. Today, about 60 percent of married women share responsibility for the breadwinner role, but men, by and large, have been slower to share domestic responsibilities. (Padavic and Reskin 2002, 159)

Although American men do more housework than they used to, they still do only half as much as their wives (Bianchi, et al. 2000), and there exists an inverse relationship between the number of

hours men work for pay and the number of hours they spend on housework and childcare (Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane 1992). The contemporary gendered division of labor is to the detriment of women's emotional health because the perception of unfairness at home can lead to depression (Bird 1999), and men and women both suffer negative consequences on their marriages because marital satisfaction is linked to men's participation in household responsibilities (Barnett and Hyde 2001). While some evidence shows that younger men are questioning the traditional gendered division of labor and developing more egalitarian attitudes toward housework and childcare (Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000), new fathers take off work an average of only five days following the births of their children (Hyde, Essex and Horton 1993). Thus, the degree to which men's attitudes have changed remains up for debate.

Empirical Work

Dual-Earner Households

Recently work-family scholarship has focused on dual-earner households—those in which married, heterosexual partners both earn income while raising children. Hochschild's landmark study *The Second Shift* analyzes the struggles involved in balancing work and family for both men and women (2003). Along with her associates, Hochschild observed and interviewed families in their homes over the course of several years with a focus on measuring time allotted to paid work, housework, and childcare by married couples. Her findings reveal a disparity in the amount of time men and women spend working each day:

> Most women without children spend much more time than men on housework; with children, they devote more time to both housework and child care. Just as there is a wage gap between men and women in the workplace, there is a "leisure gap" between them at home. Most women work one shift at the office or factory and a "second shift" at home. (Hochschild and Machung 2003, 4)

In what has been called a "stalled revolution," the public sphere of paid labor has changed drastically while the private sphere of domestic work has lagged behind and remained primarily "women's work" (Hochschild and Machung 2003). Put another way, patterns of public and private work for women have radically changed, but men have not compensated by increasing their contribution to domestic work at home. Pleck explains the apparent narrowing of the gendered housework gap by showing that men's proportion of housework has risen primarily because employed women have decreased the amount of housework they do, not because men have changed their paid and unpaid work patterns (Pleck 1977, 419-420). Brines has argued that while wives who are economically dependent on their husbands exchange unpaid household labor for economic support, husbands who are more economically dependent on their wives instead do less housework and thereby "do gender" in a traditionally masculine way (1994).

Han and Moen have found several dimensions of gendered asymmetry in the work-family interface over the life course (1999). First, compared to women, men's career paths tend to be more stable and upward-moving. Second, working women experience more marital instability than do working men and those women with better career tracks experience more marital instability than other women. Finally, wives' work tends to be contingent on their husbands' career trajectories. Work on dual-earner households also examines the gendered nature of various strategies employed by working parents to negotiate the competing demands of work and family (Moen 2000). Becker and Moen have modeled three "scaling back" strategies used by working couples with children over the life course—placing limits, having one-job one-career marriages, and making tradeoffs—and have noted that women practice "scaling back" more than men (1999). These findings illustrate that although most workplaces, professions, and colleges

have been radically transformed by women's entry into the public sphere, the private sphere remains a highly gendered realm in which women are at a disadvantage.

Work Organizations

Another body of literature focuses on workplace variables and their relationship to the work-family interface. Perceived workplace flexibility is beneficial to work-family balance for individuals and to their employers (Hill, et al. 2001). Mothers who perceive their workplaces as organizationally supportive of families and their supervisors as sensitive and flexible report less strain when balancing work and family responsibilities (Warren and Johnson 1995). Also, mothers who take advantage of family-oriented benefits in their workplaces experience less stress related to the fulfillment of work and family demands. Singley and Hynes have observed that after the transition period of giving birth to a new baby, women use and create more flexibility within their work arrangements to accommodate for childcare thereby diminishing the need for their husbands to do the same (2005). In the context of men's greater earning power and women's better access to paid time off, couples tend to follow traditionally gendered patterns of parenting from the start regardless of whether they are influenced by a preference for traditionally gendered parent roles or simply the "logic of gendered choices" (Risman 1998, 29).

Other work has explored the nature of flexible work policies, employees' reactions to them, and the institutional structures that make them more or less accessible. Gendered reactions to such policies in the workplace point to the power of the "masculinized ideal worker norm" and explain ambivalence about whether the policies are actually good or bad (Kelly, Ammons, et al. 2010). Kelly and Kalev argue that human resource managers' "formalized discretion" in matters concerning flexible work arrangements explains low utilization of such benefits and unequal access to them (2006). It is interesting to note that the sample in this study and others

like it is comprised solely of women. The gendered nature of sampling in studies dealing with family friendly work policy is itself evidence of the gendered nature of work-family strategies for dual-earner couples.

Women, Labor Force Participation, and Fertility

Several studies have demonstrated a negative relationship between women's labor force participation and their fertility expectations. In other words, women accommodate plans to have children by limiting their commitment to paid work and accommodate plans to pursue full time careers by limiting the number of children they have. Stolzenberg and Waite show support for the Learning Hypothesis which states that this inverse relationship grows stronger with age as women become more familiar with the demands of motherhood and more knowledgeable about the limiting effects of childbearing and parenting on their employment opportunities and future career plans (1977). For example, a young woman may intend to have three children while maintaining a successful career but after experiencing substantial work-family conflict with her first child may then reconsider having additional children. Such limiting effects on income have been found across multiple cohorts of women for each additional child they give birth to (Avellar and Smock 2003). The effect of becoming a parent on an individual's quality of life is highly gendered. Nomaguchi and Milkie found that while married women experience more housework and marital strain after having children, becoming a parent had little influence on the lives of married men (2003).

Young Adults, Their Aspirations, and Work-Family Issues

In comparison to working families, dual-earner households, and professionals, young adults have received far less attention in the literature on work-family issues. However, Ammons and Kelly have analyzed both the gender and class dimensions of work-family conflicts and

found that compared to lower class young families, higher class young families and especially college-educated women experience the most family-to-work interference (2008). Although college-educated women are likely to experience the most work-family strain, there is little recent work on college students and their plans for negotiating the work-family interface.

Work on young people who are not yet married or raising children, e.g. high school and college students, has typically focused on career plans but not on both career and family plans. Adolescents' career aspirations as they transition into adulthood stem from their value structures which have been informed by their childhoods and parents' influence (Hitlin and Steven 2006). Work-family conflict and dissatisfaction later in life have been shown to result from "value incongruence" between an individual and other family members or between an individual and the work organization (Perrewe and Hochwarter 2001). If value systems developed early in adulthood are important both to career aspirations and balancing work and family, then young adults and their forming attitudes toward work-family conflict are critical to a developed understanding of the work-family interface overall.

Some quantitative studies have explored young peoples' attitudes toward work and family. Sanders et al. applied the Career-Family Attitudes Measure, a 56-item survey, to high school students and found strong preferences for integrating work and family rather than choosing between the two or making tradeoffs (1998). A survey of college women found three distinctive patterns of preferred life scenarios all based on plans for having egalitarian marriages (Deutsch, Kokot and Binder 2007). There is however little to no intensive qualitative work on college students and their attitudes on work-family issues and plans for negotiating conflict between the two.

Gerson has argued that young people will require especially "innovative moral strategies" to overcome persistent gendered notions of work and family (2002), and Coltrane has observed that modern-day professional men and women face a "career advancement double standard" created in part by traditional breadwinner and homemaker gender ideologies (2004). In light of these conditions and the work-family-gender context with which today's college students will soon be confronted, I argue it is pertinent to focus attention on students' attitudes toward work and family and plans for negotiating the work-family interface.

Hypotheses

Because so little qualitative, empirical work on college students and their attitudes toward gender and work-family exists, the purpose of this project is to explore the topic broadly and find themes encompassing important concepts and trends. However, the existing theory and empirical work framing this study have led me to develop four general hypotheses:

1. I expect that men and women will be equally concerned about their immediate and future career-oriented plans and goals e.g. pursuing further education, gaining employment.

2. I expect that women will be more concerned than men about immediate and future family-oriented plans and goals e.g. getting married, having children.

3. I expect that women will be more concerned than men about the constraints of time on both their career and family-oriented plans and goals.

4. I expect that women will be more concerned than men about work-family balance issues and strategies for negotiating the competing demands of work and family life.

Methods

Site and Sample

I have selected Emory University as my research site for two main reasons. First, I have an avid curiosity about my peers, the attitudes they hold, and the plans they have for their futures. In ordinary interaction with friends and acquaintances, I particularly enjoy discussions about future career and family plans. Lofland et al. recommend using one's own biography as a starting point for research (2006), and my research questions are tantamount to a culmination of personal questions I have asked myself. I believe the attitudes my fellow students hold toward family, work, and work-family balance are worthy of study because issues pertaining to work and family are imbedded in the mundane struggles and triumphs of day-to-day living.

Second, Emory University is a community particularly well-suited to both my research questions and my method of data collection. I am interested in the effect gender has on college seniors' family and career plans for the future. Because Emory College is a private, well-ranked four-year liberal arts school that prepares students for futures as professionals, I can be sure that most students will understand the intersection of career commitment and family commitment as relevant to their own imminent life choices. There is approximately the same number of men as women in the undergraduate college, and all are encouraged to pursue professional careers and meaningful work lives by the academic culture on campus. Compared to public universities and community colleges, Emory's admission process is competitive and the cost of tuition is high. I can assume students tend to be from higher socio-economic class backgrounds and will therefore have access to a wider range of work and family choices associated with economic and cultural status and privilege (Walpole 2003).

Emory is also one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse research institutions in the country (ARCHE n/d), which means students' individual views will have been influenced by a wide variety of cultural and societal values. In-depth interviews allow researchers to focus their attention on concepts such as opinions, beliefs, and thought processes that cannot be directly observed. Though these individual beliefs may be personal, the atmosphere of a college campus is one in which participants should feel comfortable talking about their career plans and thoughts about family while contributing to an honor student's research project.

I chose to use quota sampling in order to "achieve sufficient representativeness" of both male and female students (Babbie 2007, 186). The total number of participants is 20 and the composition is 10 males and 10 females. The students are all at least 18 years old with no upper age limit as long as they are currently in their senior year of study at Emory College. This circumvents the ethical issues associated with researching minors and ensures that participants will be finishing their undergraduate careers and considering plans for their futures. The last exclusion criterion for the sample is United States citizenship and/or significant time spent living in the U.S. Because my research questions focus on gender as a variable of analysis, it is necessary to exclude students who are at Emory as visiting foreign students. Gender norms and work-family values in various foreign cultures can be radically different from American ones. My small sample is not comprehensive enough to explore the attitudes of students that have been shaped by social norms in other countries, and including such students would likely skew the data.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants were recruited through email messages on LearnLink (see Appendix 1). I posted a recruitment message to several LearnLink conferences such as those for clubs and

groups to which I belong and classes in which I was enrolled. To reach students outside my circle of acquaintances I had several friends post my recruitment message to other conferences to which they had access. Volunteers were directed to contact me via email if they were interested, at which point we scheduled a time and place of their choosing to conduct the interview. I obtained informed consent from each participant (see Appendix 2) before conducting the interviews which were in-depth, semi-structured, and open-ended. Question topics included biographical background, career plans, family plans, and attitudes toward work-family issues (see Appendix 3). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using MaxQDA. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' identities, I assigned each of the students a pseudonym and also changed the names of any friends or family members who were mentioned.

Because I am a novice researcher with no prior experience coding qualitative data, I initially remained very close to the text and kept an open mind while coding. I was careful to use in vivo codes rather than abstracting my own theoretical codes too hastily. I then coded the transcripts again using a thematic code list derived from my interview guide. The thematic code list consisted of the following: background-parents, background-work, career plans, education plans, family plans, commitment level, work-family plan conflict, gender role attitudes, work-family strategies, and dating relationships. After labeling various sections of the transcripts with these thematic codes, I then returned to them and focused on micro-coding the various concepts and meanings within each theme. The code list eventually consisted of five code categories and seventeen individual codes. I compared coded data bits in each category to one another looking specifically for how gender does and does not matter for different people and different issues. I wrote a series of memos on a variety of themes which later evolved into the final body of my thesis.

There was one methodological issue worth noting. Recruitment of the female half of my sample was much quicker and easier than recruitment of the male half of the sample. For example, of the first eight interviews I conducted, only two of them were with men. By the last couple weeks of data collection, I found myself hastily circulating the recruitment email among various LearnLink conferences with an added note that I specifically needed men to participate in the project. More than once, a male participant would volunteer to participate but fail to ever schedule a date to be interviewed and eventually back out of the study. By contrast, female participants were recruited quickly after posting recruitment emails to specific conferences and more consistently scheduled and kept their interview appointments.

There are at least two possible ways of interpreting this phenomenon. First, it is possible that my status as a female researcher affected the responses from potential participants. Female students may have perceived me as an insider and felt more comfortable talking to me about gender and work-family issues than male students who may have regarded me as an outsider. Second, the gendered response to my recruitment materials may reflect a gendered interest in the topic altogether. Gender and work-family issues likely seem more important or more relevant to female students than to male students. Based on the content of the data gathered during the interviews, I believe the second explanation better accounts for the gendered volunteer response. Given nothing more than a limited explanation of the study's topic, female students demonstrated much more interest and enthusiasm than men—evidence of gendered attitudes toward the importance and relevance of the topic as a whole.

Findings

Alike, but Different

In many ways, college is a context in which gender is increasingly neutralized. Coeducation has been the standard model for institutions of higher learning in the United States since the end of the 19th century (Newcomer 1959), and in 1972 Congress passed Title IX stating:

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.
> (United States Code Section 20 1972)

Male and female college students take classes together, participate in extracurricular activities together, work campus jobs together, form friend groups together—some even live together. Emory recently announced that it will offer a gender neutral housing option beginning fall 2011, making it one of about 50 colleges in America offering similar arrangements (Perry 2011). Emory has long offered co-ed dormitory living with same-sex floors or same-sex rooms, but the new option will allow students of the opposite sex to reside as roommates in the same apartment style dorm. Parents may not be fans of the progressive housing option because it is radically different from the traditional college experience of the not-so-distant past. The change is consistent however with a trend moving away from sex-based discrimination and/or segregation and toward gender neutral ideals. To put things into perspective, there are young women today, representing a 57% gender majority of enrolled college students (American Council on Education 2010), whose own grandmothers may have attended private, all-female colleges (at best) or lacked access to higher education altogether because of sex discrimination (at worst).

And while their grandmothers were in college mainly to become nurses, school teachers, secretaries, or simply well-educated wives, today's female college students are in pursuit of a

wide variety of professional careers no different than their male counterparts (Astin 1998). I found that students' career aspirations did not vary according to gender. Rather, men and women demonstrated very similar interests in professional and/or high status career trajectories. Among my sample were future doctors, software engineers, public officials, lawyers, and business executives just to name a few. I chose Emory as the research site for this project mainly because I expected most students would be both planning to pursue professional careers and planning to have families which would make the work-family interface especially relevant to students' future lives. Just as expected, students at Emory are interested in careers that require professional degrees, specialized skills, and high levels of commitment regardless of gender. They also explained that their careers will be meaningful and enjoyable:

> "I imagine a very vibrant career, something rich, a lot of interaction, not office work obviously. Doing things that I think are really pertinent and time sensitive … Sort of fast-paced and maybe a stress-inducing job, but not something that's sooo stressful. I don't know if a job like that exists (laughter). I hope it does! But I imagine that's what most people would desire. Something that makes you feel fulfilled and energized and things like that."—Jane

Students like Jane demonstrated passion and enthusiasm for pursuing careers which will become integral to their sense of value and purpose as individuals. They view the development of exciting careers as necessary for their sense of satisfaction and happiness. Others emphasized the importance of relationships with future coworkers and the type of overall work environment that would best suit their personalities

> "I really wanted to make sure that I was going to be around smart, interested people who are passionate about the work that they do. Not who are just going to work to do, um, do whatever. Because for me, I really love college. And I consider myself to be an intellectual, but I'm definitely not a scholar … So my biggest priority was that I was going to be around people that, you know, I really enjoyed being around, that questioned me or challenged me or just like I thought were amazing people and looked up to."— David

For men and women both, future careers will be fundamental aspects of their identities.

Participant	Career Aspirations/Post Graduation Plans
Adam	Accounting, finance, auditing
Amy	Public health, international non-profit work
Bryan	Graduate studies in political science, Foreign Service, diplomacy
Beth	Teaching English abroad, urban planning, public policy
Chris	Law school, corporate law, business law, restaurant business
Catherine	Year-long internship in Germany, accounting, finance, business
David	Global online advertising, airline business
Danielle	Ph.D. program in engineering or biomedical engineering
Evan	Law school, politics, public office, business
Emma	Elementary school teaching, Ph.D. program in sociology
Frank	Software engineering
Fiona	Graduate studies in art history, medical school
Greg	Medical school, research, healthcare consulting
Gabi	Working at a hospital, medical school
Harold	Law school, private practice
Helen	Non-profit work, graduate studies in global health, public policy
Ian	Medical school, research, teaching
Ingrid	Law school, social justice, public policy
Joe	Masters program in biology, medical school, geriatric medicine
Jane	Health-related fellowship, public health school

For many students, a particular experience has inspired them to pursue specific career paths related to professional goals. Both positive and negative experiences significantly impact the paths students choose to pursue after college:

> "My aunt works in a law firm. I mean, she's just a legal help. She's not an attorney or anything, but growing up I'd always visit her in the office and the attorneys in the firm kind of had a certain, you know, mystique to them … I'm probably going to end up in corporate law, something like that, at a big law firm. Just because I like business and I like that sort of atmosphere … I like suits (laughter)."—Chris

> "I met a couple of Peace Corps volunteers. They were just generally so disillusioned and really bothered … I helped this one Peace Corps guy paint a mural on this wall and we were painting these hands. These hands said something in French about 'Wash your hands,' and obviously the kids are supposed to be learning French in the school. But I'm not sure how many of them can read it … and actually there's no running water on the entire school grounds. And I'm just like, 'This is silly. I would feel disillusioned too. This is your job? It sucks. I don't want to do that.'"—Beth

These experiences not only helped students explore their interests but also served as important story-telling conventions. Students are accustomed to explaining how they developed particular career interests, and most incorporate a significant experience into the narrative about how they chose a particular career field. In other words, students ground their career pursuits in past experiences and justify their particular choices by recounting the influence of those experiences on their understanding of various career fields.

Students consistently described their future work in terms of "careers," not "jobs." These various careers entail specific paths of experience and promotion along which students will have to follow in order to attain their goals. Most students will not be in their desired position until after several more years of education, training, and entry level work, and they expect the transition from college life to be difficult:

> "I think working will require a lot of long hours as well, and it will definitely reduce the flexibility that I once had with college life, with doing things with friends and other people. So that's going to be tough in that aspect there."—Adam

Students' lofty career goals are tempered by the idea that the pursuit of such goals will entail demanding workloads characteristically different from the workload experience in college.

While both men and women spoke about their careers in terms of paths and ultimate goals, the metaphor of the career ladder and the concept of being consistently promoted into better positions were especially important for men:

> "What's important for me is job prospects. Can I ascend the ladder in the workplace? Can I go places? Is there a low ceiling for me there? … I don't believe that anybody should be in a stagnant job position. I believe that we should be constantly pursuing an upwards momentum of some sort to a next position where we can apply our skills to better benefit the community around us. And, I guess business is a bit individualistic as well, so it's kind of attaining a higher salary, being able to support myself better, being able to potentially support a family in the future."—Adam

This participant seems to think of his own career advancement in terms of the overall betterment of those around him—his family, the community, society in general. He wants to be a part of an overall pattern of growth and have the ability to continue supporting himself well in a community or society that will continue progressing regardless of his career success. If he does not continually advance in his career, he may not be able to keep up with the demands of modern society and the cost of living or be able to support a family at the level he is accustomed to. For some men, career advancement is related more closely to their own identity and the desire to pursue personally fulfilling careers:

> "I guess I'm naturally a little bit competitive, and I think that there's something appealing about working your way up, you know, sort of the ladder and progressing in your career. Yeah, I guess it's just the progression. That's something that I enjoy. I'd hate to feel as though I was stagnant and this is what I was going to be and do for the rest of my life. I'd like to work my way up a little bit."—Chris

This participant described climbing the career ladder as essential to what his life will be about. He will only feel content if he is constantly attaining higher and higher career goals along his

professional path. Feeling as though he is not progressing or has no opportunity to progress at work would likely affect his quality of life and overall sense of happiness.

In contrast to the importance placed on opportunities for career advancement by men, women emphasized the importance of geography and location when choosing where to work. Many women considered where their own families are located and how close or far away from them they would be happy to work:

> "I think geography is important because I do want to be around my family, definitely. However, I see like, that far in the future, my family might be moving around, so I don't want to say necessarily Atlanta. I know my family would love to move back up to Maryland, which hey, would work well (laughter). So I definitely think that location is something."—Gabi

Even when women were not intent on working near their parents or extended families, most were concerned about the kinds of cities or areas in which they would like to work and raise their own families. For them, life quality seems tied more to the geographical area in which they work and the lifestyle it creates than the opportunity to be promoted and advance in their careers.

The most striking gender difference I have found is on the issue of whether students are currently thinking about plans for marriage and children. When asked, "Have you given marriage or family much thought?" women immediately responded in the affirmative and then described at length the plans they are considering and specific issues that are important to them:

> "I imagine getting married in a couple years; I could see it happening in grad school or maybe later. Yeah I wanna get married, I wanna have a husband, I really wanna have kids and I don't wanna do that alone … I do think it's gonna be tricky when I try to figure out childcare and make everything work out when I have to go back to work."—Beth

They also demonstrated complex considerations for their developing attitudes toward various family issues:

> "I have always desired to get married and have a partner work alongside me who's interested in—not necessarily following me but hopefully they would already have those interests so that we can work together and it will be a strong partnership—but I'm

> starting to question about kids (laughter). I think I thought about kids just because it's the norm and everybody gets married and has kids, but I think it will take a little bit more time for me to warm up to that idea. I think I will eventually have kids but I'm just not like 'Oh I really want them' right now. So, I think I'll have them, but if I do it will be like adoption or like have my own kids but also do adoption."—Helen

In comparison, men typically responded by explaining that they are not currently giving a lot of thought to family:

> "I tend not to think about that. I think it's because I'm so focused on my career right now. I generally consider it as something that's going to happen. It's going to be something that's inevitable. You know, I like children. I actually worked at the children's department at JCPenney's over the summer (laughter). But it's really not something that is kind of on my radar right now if that makes sense … It's just not something that's pertinent right now."—Chris

Several men demonstrated a lack of forethought on the issue without explicitly stating that they were not currently considering it. For these men, the interview questions prompted spur-of-the-moment responses which had obviously not received a great deal of recent thought or attention:

> Interviewer: So you mentioned your family being a part of your planning process for your career. Can you tell me about whether you see yourself getting married and having children? Is that sort of, when you think about your family, is that what it looks like? Is that something you've thought about more?
>
> Greg: I want at least 3 kids … Yeah, I never want to get divorced. (Pause)
>
> Interviewer: (Laughter) Wait, really?
>
> Greg: There's so many people getting divorced. I just want to find someone, I don't really care exactly who, as long as she loves me. That's all I really care about.
>
> Interviewer: Uh-huh. So describe what you, like, what you imagine a good marriage would be. What would make you happy?
>
> Greg: A good marriage. Um, I think someone that, like, uh, I mean, like, I just want her, just, to like, I don't know. That's an interesting question.
>
> Interviewer: You don't have to answer if you haven't thought about it.
>
> Greg: No, I want to be able to, like, I want her to be, like, yeah I kind of wish, I want her to have, like, a job or something. I think it would be awesome, just seeing my parents, like, I almost wish she was, like, a physician too, so I could be like, "Yeah, patient in

> 301, what the f--- was he smoking? What was going on with him?" Stuff like that (laughter). But um, probably because my parents did it. But I want her to be working and, you know, when we have, like, kids or whatever, I want her to, like, take care of the kids I guess, while I'm at, uh, work or whatever.
>
> Interviewer: So are you saying you'd like for your wife to have the ability to cut her work hours down or stop working to stay home for awhile?
>
> Greg: Yeah I think so. But at the same time I'm, like, hoping my mom would kind of do the same like my grandmas did, and kind of, like, support the family when in need. Like, be there to, like, take care. But I don't know. I think I just, most of all, I just want her to love me, and, like, never get divorced or anything like that. I feel like it would just be so much for, like, the kids.

When pressed, men elaborated on their general ideas about family. Most said that they do expect to have wives and children, but just do not give much thought to it. Their tones implied that having families is an obvious part of life that happens naturally, echoing Chris's statement that getting married and having children is "something that's inevitable." For these men, the concept of a future family does not include an element of planning or thinking ahead or making choices, at least not now anyway.

Some men were not even able to say what kind of family they look forward to forming and imagine that later in life they will take time to decide:

> "I don't know if I want to be a father actually, I think that's a decision I've kinda put off until later … I think the father question, that's just something I've put off until later because it's not something I need to think about. I'm definitely not gonna have kids in the next five years. It's something I'll think about later down the line."—Bryan

They tend also not to have given much thought to their potential roles as fathers:

> "Yeah, I think it's always easy to go back to what your parents did and see how my parents raised me. And then there's always the things, the flaws, you think your parents had and the ways you would change. Um, I don't know, I'm someone who can't, who's probably not aggressive and strict enough times. I guess I want to be a role model is the big thing. I want to make sure the way I'm living is some way that I'd want them to live. Because I'd want them to … because I know a lot of stuff is done through imitation, and I'd, I don't know, that's difficult … Yeah, I guess I just haven't thought about it much. Um, yeah, I don't know."—Frank

Similarly, some men expect that the woman they become seriously involved with will determine the kind of family they build together. They are leaving a lot of decisions unmade until they meet a woman they would like to marry and plan to defer to her preferences on family issues:

> "I've never put a lot of thought into marriage and there's nobody in my life as of yet, but there's always the thought in my mind that there one day could be or most likely will be … So, in my immediate future, it's not playing as big of a role, but I know that it will later on down the road …That depends on the person I marry …You know, they may want to continue working or may have a job that they'd like to stay in … I definitely want children at some point, and that's something I do look towards … So yeah, like I said, it's very much based specifically on the person and who I choose to marry and what they want from the relationship."—Adam

When asked if they would prefer marrying a career woman or a stay-at-home mom, most men explained that they have no preference for either family arrangement:

> "I mean that's inconsequential. I mean, if they are then I'm fully for that, you know, that's important to want to do something like that, but if not, if they want to, you know, stay home and deal with the kids, that's fine too cause that's how I grew up. And you know, I don't think that's a bad thing so it's like, it really depends if that's something that she wants then I'm not going to hinder that in any way."—Evan

The assumption in this kind of thought process seems to be that women will already have specific desires to work or have children and well-developed plans for negotiating the demands of work life and family life. While this may be an advantage for women in the sense that men are willing to accept a variety of choices that women make for themselves, it can also be interpreted as a disadvantage because women are left with an extra burden of strategizing the balance of family plans and work plans not just for themselves but for their partners as well.

Women typically explained their thoughts on marriage and family plans using time lines that were detailed and rehearsed, indicating that they have given extensive thought to various scenarios before:

> "I've read stuff that says that you know by the time you hit 35 you're sort of hitting the danger zone in terms of giving birth and having kids. Don't get me wrong, people can do it and do do it all the time and that's fine … I feel very comfortable thinking about having

> kids sort of what might be considered later by a lot of folks. I can't really see myself being married any time before like 26, because that's in the next three years (laughter)! But at the same time, I wanna have kids by the time I'm 35 … I wanna have two, run the math … I probably wanna be married by the time I'm 30, that's a pretty short time frame (laughter)."—Beth

These timelines typically involved an element of beginning with an end goal and counting backwards. Most women said they want to be married and have at least one child. From there, they began counting the number of years they would like to have between multiple children, or number of years between having children and getting married. Some women emphasized that having extensive time between getting married and giving birth is important. Finally, women counted how many years they have from the point they would like to be married to their current age and discussed how much time they have before they should be getting married. This line of reasoning indicates not only the pressure to accomplish a long list of things before a certain age, but also time as a limiting factor on their fertility. For many women, the thought that according to their calculations marriage should be happening within the next few years is an alarming one.

Male responses to the idea of time lines or age deadlines were mixed. Some responded negatively to the fundamental concept of setting up timelines and prefer to let things happen without prior planning:

> "Yeah, I guess I'll just kind of, I'm not, like, someone who says 'I have to get married by this date, and if I'm not married, then, you know, my life is over,' you know, and just start going on online dating and everything. I'm just more like, I just feel like, I don't know, if it comes about then it comes about, but it's not like something that I'll force. I guess, I'll actively search, but it's not something I'll say has to happen, is how I feel about it."—Frank

Others have general time frames in mind but still insist that strict timelines will not guide their future decisions to marry or have children:

> "You know, it's not like I'm going to be like, 'Oh no, I'm 27, this is the year I decided I was going to get married so I have to find someone to marry at 27.' But I mean, I don't want to wait forever, but I'm not going to force the issue."—Evan

Still others described feeling significant pressure to marry by a certain age and imagined that not being married by that age would lead to even more anxiety:

> "I have a 30 year pact with one of my friends if we're not married because we're both scared about that date … It's actually semi-serious (laughter). It kind of started out as a joke. We were both studying abroad together, and then we came back and at the end of the following semester we hadn't even really seen each other all that much, and they like reminded me of it (laughter). And I was perfectly ok with it (laughter)."—Ian

It is interesting to note that the age 30 or 35 was mentioned quite often. For women, age 30 or 35 represents a last chance to get pregnant and have children without the concerns of a high risk pregnancy. For men, age 30 or 35 represents a time at which they would still be content as single working men but may begin taking family plans more seriously. There are some variations in the numbers mentioned, such as Evan who considers 40 to be a landmark age, but the gendered trend persists. Women expect to be already having children by the point at which men expect they will finally look to get married.

Not only are women thinking critically about plans to get married and have children, but they are also considering how the desire to start a family may interfere with their career paths or day to day work schedules. For women who like the idea of taking significant time off to raise young children and believe they would enjoy housekeeping and providing childcare, one major concern is what their lives will be like once their young children start to become less dependent on them and they have been away from work for so long:

> "I think it would be wonderful to just be a stay-at-home mom and the like, being able to raise my kids. But then, there's the whole send them to school and what do you do then?"—Gabi

Women desire to have both meaningful careers and happy families and question exactly how they will be able to have both. Even for women who do not want to spend time at home

providing full time childcare, the issue of arranging childcare is one they expect to be difficult. Some women discussed arrangements they have considered as options:

> "My mom was the type who … she had two kids, four years apart, and she took off however much she could take off with us but then she went back to work and she actually kept us in childcare and she chose the childcare center based on where it was located. It was like a 10 minute drive from where she worked. And she picked that one so she could drive over at lunch and breast feed us which is pretty devoted. It's precious. I can see myself doing something sort of similar. I can't see myself being able to enjoy being at home with a baby that much. I just think it would make me go crazy. So I'm not super concerned about having a career where I can take off several years, but I do wanna be able to take off some time."—Beth

Many women talked about having children in terms of the sacrifices they expect to make at work or within their careers. They spoke of "choices," "decisions," and "tradeoffs," and emphasized the importance of being ready for the serious commitment of raising children. One participant explained that she aspires to earn a Ph.D. and pursue a career in academia but would be very willing to work a less prestigious job in order to have children and care for her family:

> "I think I'd be ok teaching high school. I think I'd be very happy if I don't get to be in academia or do research. I think I could find another job that's satisfying that gives me more time with the kids … I think in the end your job's not that important. If you can't have a family, then why are you working so hard?"—Danielle

Another participant explained her intent to choose a field of specialization that supports her personal family aspirations and her plan to time the birth of her children in a way that causes the least interference with her career trajectory:

> "With medicine—this is odd—with medicine I actually do picture more of a family life. Because I don't see myself choosing something that would make that impossible for me. Because I do want a family, I do want to get married one day, and so I can't see myself choosing a specific area in medicine that would make that just unbelievably difficult for me. So I guess I'd always imagined like going to medical school, not being married, getting married (laughter), doing my residency, and um, probably having kids in my thirties or something."—Fiona

Women demonstrated an awareness of the possible consequences of their work and family choices and discussed specific plans as they relate to desired outcomes. Because Fiona knows that she does not want to be in a field of medicine that makes having a family life extremely difficult, she is taking steps now to pursue fields that are more flexible and supportive of workers' families. She can also imagine how difficult it would be to have children during medical school or residency, and has already decided that the most advantageous time to have children would be later in her thirties. Like most of the women in the study, she strategizes about how to pursue both career and family related goals by making thoughtful choices and carefully timing each stage in her life.

When comparing men and women, it is apparent that women are expecting to be confronted with conflicting demands of work life and family life, while men are primarily concerned only with planning their careers and expect that even later, family will be something that requires little planning or negotiation. This is not to say that men do not acknowledge that family life will have an effect on their work lives:

> "I do see myself as a bit of a workaholic, so I'm going to have to learn to manage my time a bit better, manage my relationships. Especially in college, I've been working very hard so I don't always get to see my friends as much, and when it comes down to having a family, I believe that I need to change that mentality. I need to be visible in my home environment, and if a person is not visible then that doesn't necessarily lead to a successful relationship."—Adam

The difference is that men are putting off the task of negotiating the work-family interface while women are confronting it now with a wide range of plans, questions, and concerns.

To summarize, there is remarkable similarity among college men and women. College has provided the opportunity to develop career interests through various academic departments, internships, part-time jobs, and trips abroad to all students regardless of gender. Men and women both want meaningful careers and have exciting opportunities to pursue further education

or employment after graduating. However, there is also a glaring dissimilarity among college men and college women when it comes to work-family issues. Men are focused mainly on taking steps toward reaching their career goals—gaining employment, earning additional degrees, etc.—but women are developing strategies for establishing meaningful careers while also forming happy, healthy families. For men, the time to think about marriage and children is sometime later in life, but for women the time is now.

"It's Doable"

Some male participants elaborated on exactly why and how they made conscious choices to not think about marriage and children until later in life. Many of them observed that forming a family while maintaining a successful career is not impossible and therefore does not require urgent attention. One participant explained that his plan to work for the Foreign Service as a diplomat in foreign countries means he will have a very untraditional lifestyle. Much like a career in the military, he will be assigned to tours lasting approximately two years each in various international locations, many of which will be underdeveloped. At one time he became concerned about the impact such a career would have on his personal life, but after speaking to a mentor who previously worked in the Foreign Service and successfully managed to do so with a wife and children, he was put at ease:

> "I know this is possible. It's possible for me to raise a family and have a wife and have a successful marriage in the Foreign Service. Once I made that decision I sort of stepped back and … just said ok that's not something I need to worry about, how that's going to happen. I don't need to take steps now to make sure that's going to happen … I would never want to set myself up in a situation where I'm like never going to have a family and I can't possibly have a good social life. Because I think the work social balance is very very important."—Bryan

Another participant acknowledged that his intended career in politics would greatly impact his family because he would be away from them for significant parts of the year. He assumes that

because countless other congressmen have managed to sustain both their families and their careers, he will be able to do the same:

> "I mean it's tough, especially on the national level if you're in Congress, just because it really depends. You have to be in DC but you also have to be where you got elected. You go back and forth. So a lot of Congressmen get two homes … You know, there's a tradeoff and it would be sort of tough but, I mean, many people have done it in the past so I think I could figure it out too."—Evan

While female participants made similar observations and assumptions, it was only men who responded by choosing to think about the details of family life later. Women analyzed both the successes and failures of others which led them to think critically about their own future plans. Men however seem to operate with a "Let's cross that bridge when we get to it" mentality and feel as though they have not yet reached the family life bridge. They are encouraged by the fact that others have crossed the bridge successfully and therefore do not view family planning as relevant or important at this stage in their lives.

"When I Was a Kid"

Students overwhelmingly cited their own childhood experiences with parents as having the most influence on their attitudes toward work, family, and work-family balance issues. Most students react to their parents in one of two distinct ways. Those who appreciate and respect their parents' choices plan to make similar ones, and those who resent their parents' choices intend to live very differently. For example, women often referred to their parents' marriages and explained whether they wanted something similar or different in their own relationships:

> "Both of my parents…they've been through a whole lot. They got married in March and by November of that year, they found out my dad had Hodgkin's, which is a type of cancer … They made it through that … Through the years, we've had a lot of family deaths and stuff, and they've always been there for each other, like, just completely … And so, I want that to be how my marriage is. I want it to be 'Okay, whatever you need right now, I'm going to be here for you. I'm not going to start, you know, taking things personally, and I'm not going to try to take your focus away from your parents because I understand.' I think that's really important to me."—Gabi

Having parents who modeled loving support and compromise in their marriage leads students like Gabi to define healthy relationships in concrete terms using examples from personal family events.

In contrast, other women view their parents' failed marriages as examples of relationship dynamics they want to avoid. The following story details an important event that eventually led to the separation and divorce of one student's parents:

> "My dad went to work every day. I thought that was normal. My mom stayed at home. She's a nurse but she didn't work and so she took care of us … She once told me that when I had just been born, it was when they still lived in Michigan, she was like, by that time she had three kids and they were really young and my dad was away in residency working like 80 hours a week, and my mom was like so wanting to get out of the house that she was like … 'If you come home the kids will be here with you and they will be sleeping. Can I go work?' And he said he wouldn't do it … he didn't want to have to make that thought, like he didn't want to have to worry about how there wouldn't be somebody else there with the kids at night if he couldn't. And so she didn't. She just stayed at home. And I think she really, well I know she really resents that. It was really hard for her"—Jane

This incident is only one small part of an entire marriage, but for Jane it epitomizes the relationship between her parents. A lack of support and compromise from her father meant that her mother was left with very few options other than accepting the responsibility of caring for her children and working only the during summers when she could find available grant work and afford to hire a babysitter. Jane places the incident in a wider context by analyzing why and how her mother's circumstances came to be what they were:

> "They met when they were in Honduras. My mom was working as a nurse and my dad was going to medical school there … He was on the conventional path and my mom very much wasn't. I don't think they really realized that. They were both in the same place at the same time, but for very different reasons … I for sure think she would have had second thoughts if she had known absolutely that my dad was like, 'I'm going to go to work and you're going to be the stay-at-home mom.' Like I know that she wouldn't have agreed to that flat out. And so I think they probably just got pregnant and it just kind of

> ended up working out that way. And then years later my mom is like, 'Wait, what? This isn't where I wanted to be …'"—Jane

Jane's own attitudes toward work, relationships, and compromise are informed directly by her mother's experiences. The story about her parents is treated as an example of what can happen to a woman who compromises too many of her own career goals for a man and his aspirations:

> "I guess I'll find somebody, and I imagine marry them and have kids. And I want to work and have a career. I guess mostly I've thought about this more because of talking to my mom … My mom has been telling me for most, well at least half of my life that 'You don't compromise your goals for anyone,' because she really doesn't want what happened to her to happen to either of her daughters … I think as I get older I'm going to be really cognizant of that, very aware every step of the way of what I might be giving up. I think I'm going to be really steadfast and be like 'No, I'm going to work.'"—Jane

Women in the study whose parents are divorced had the most to say about their parents. In most cases they are sympathetic to their mothers and characterize divorce as having especially damaging consequences for women. They told long, detailed stories about their parents' bad choices, misunderstandings, and unexpected discontent. These stories become emblematic for women who are intent on not letting men take advantage of them or not letting opportunities for personal fulfillment get away.

In comparison to women, men are far less analytical and critical of their own parents and childhoods. Most of them portrayed their parents and families positively but gave not as much detail about their parents' relationship or how family dynamics during their childhood shaped their attitudes toward family:

> "I've always had a really good relationship with my parents, I'd say. My dad worked nights growing up, so I wasn't necessarily as close to him as I was to my mother. That's actually kind of changed recently. I've noticed that kind of dynamic has kind of changed a little bit where I'm a little bit closer to my dad now than I am to my mom, but I'm still close to both of them … They divorced about a year ago … could have something to do with it. I mean, I live with my dad now in the summers, but it kind of started even before that. We have more things in common I guess I'd say."—Chris

One male participant did elaborate at length about how his father has greatly influenced his attitudes toward women, dating relationships, and marriage:

> "My dad's probably a little more emotional than all other guys (laughter) … He would always tell me, 'Greg, when you start dating girls, make sure you're a gentleman, respect the woman,' like, all that stuff. Very, like, cordial things … And even when things went, like, really sour with one of my girlfriends, I did everything possible to maintain, like, a really high amount of respect and just kind of, like, I don't know, everything. I never got into the whole, like, random hookup, random sex thing. And I think that definitely has played a role in, like, what I see in a marriage in the future ..."—Greg

The length and depth of Greg's explanation is not exactly typical of male responses in the sample. Most had positive, surface-level things to say about how their parents had raised them but did not give critical accounts of how their parents' choices had shaped their views on family or work. However, Greg's explanation does represent the tendency men had of referencing their fathers as role models. Fathers were often credited with having taught their sons lessons reflecting traditional, romanticized notions about life. One participant described his parents as being models of good moral virtue and his father as specifically modeling good business ethics:

> "Well, I've always thought of both of my parents as role models, figures in my life, and my father is a very business-minded person and has always planned for things well, kept things financially managed well throughout our household … I believe that that was definitely something important that I could observe and something that I could gain from him. Also, when it comes to the accounting professions, one of the things that's very important is being ethical, and I've always looked at my father as a very ethical person, as a very socially responsible person."—Adam

At times, it seemed the interview process caused male participants to consider their childhoods or parents in a way they had not before. My questions probed for more information about how students' interpretation and response to their parents' choices is related to the attitudes and values they hold for their own relationships and future work-life decisions. For some men, the interview questions themselves made that connection for the first time:

> "Both my parents worked and still work. My mom has since talked to me on a couple of occasions asking if I think she made the right decision in continuing to work rather than

> being a stay-at-home mom. She says that it was a very significant decision in her life. My dad works … My mom is an employment lawyer. She is a managing partner of a law firm. And my dad is vice president of a hospital healthcare system … I told her that I thought it was the right decision because I think I managed just fine on my own, and I think that there's a lot of value in having a working mom who is very successful at what she does to look up to."—Bryan

I then asked Bryan if it is important to him to provide a similar role model, a mother who maintains a successful career, to his own children, but he did not have a ready answer:

> "Hm. I hadn't thought about that before. But, I…um…No, I don't think … I mean, I think my mom would have been a great mother if she had decided not to work also. When I said that I had thought that it was a good decision, I didn't mean that it was the only good decision she could have made. Uh, yeah."—Bryan

Bryan had clearly thought about the fact that his mother chose to work while he was young and had even discussed the decision with her more than once. However, he had not thought about how he would feel if his own wife were faced with the same options to either work or stay at home and had not developed a preference for either arrangement. It was only during the interview that he stopped to consider what his opinion would be in regard to his own wife and his own children.

Students with stay-at-home moms generally credited their mothers with having great influence on their ideas about family and expressed appreciation and admiration for the contribution they made to the overall happiness and well-being of their families:

> "Well I think for me, what I really treasure is that my mom stayed at home with us until I was in high school, until middle school, high school, and that's really important because she took really good care of us and that's why we are a very close-knit family because my mom would always be home with my sister and me."—Danielle

Some even attributed their own character development to the fact that their mothers stayed at home and implied that mothers who work do so at the expense of their children's well-being:

> "I see who I am, and I like who I am, and I see who my sister is because of having a stay-at-home mom. And you can see it too. That's the interesting thing, you know, from

> looking at my friends from my youth who had stay-at-home moms versus those who didn't. And you can see how their relationships are with people and with their parents versus those who didn't or who did have stay-at-home moms. So you know, I want to give my kids that, those same opportunities, that experience. Because I've seen the alternative."—David

Students with stay-at-home mothers expressed either that they wanted their own children to have the same or that they wouldn't mind whether their children's mother worked or stayed at home. But not one student was disapproving of his or her mother's decision to stay at home or claimed that having a mother who works is important to the well-being or development of a child. Stay-at-home mothers are considered beneficial by all, essential by some, and harmful by none.

Students' reactions to mothers who worked were mixed. Some talked about their mothers with a sense of awe because of their ability to manage a wide variety of responsibilities in light of limited resources such as time, money, or energy:

> "My mom is Wonder-Woman … she does absolutely everything. Like I remember when she was doing, like, residency, like I had just been born so she was doing, like, the whole 36 hour shifts. But even when she came back, she'd let my grandma go to sleep and then take care of me when I was, like, crying my ass off and stuff. And, uh, I don't know, she literally does everything. Like, my dad's always at the hospital and stuff but she goes to the office, does private practice, then goes to the hospital, then she does nursing homes, then she comes back around, like, 8 or 9. She'll go to, like, a dinner meeting or something if she has to. She'll come back and watch TV and stuff and then she'll, like, she takes care of, like, she's the one that actually takes care of all the bills, like, at our house. She's the one doing all the banking, and she cooks and stuff."—Greg

Others expressed gratitude for mothers who worked even when they would have preferred not to:

> "She worked. And, you know, a lot of my friends' mothers were stay-at-home moms, and that just really wasn't feasible for us. So, I think that that was a sacrifice. She didn't like her job … I think my mom just handled it so well that it wasn't necessarily something that I considered a lot until later in life. But, you know, I did appreciate it. I did appreciate the fact that she was working hard. When we came home, she started working on dinner. You know, it's tough."—Chris

Mothers who chose to pursue careers were extolled, as were mothers who chose to stay at home and focus on their children. Students only expressed regret toward their mothers' situations

when they were not able to do what they desired to do, whether it be working or staying at home. Put simply, each student tended to uphold his or her own mother's attitude toward the issue of whether mothers should or should not work regardless of whether she had the opportunity to actually do what she believed would have been best.

While both men and women pointed to the significant role played by parents in the development of their attitudes toward work, family, and gender, women tended to make the link much more explicitly than men. The depth and seriousness of women's childhood stories revealed that they had already given their parents' choices a considerable amount of thought and scrutiny. Men's shorter responses demonstrated a less critical and less analytical way of thinking about their parents, and in some instances, interview questions actually caused men to consider things they had never thought about before. Men and women alike hold attitudes toward mothers, family, and work which are very similar to those expressed by their own mothers. In some cases, students with mothers who stayed home hope to replicate that experience by providing their own children with a stay-at-home mom as well. While participants understand and respond to their mothers and fathers in a variety of ways, most everyone credits their parents with significantly influencing their ideas about work and family.

Wedding Bells and Baby Bottles

Regardless of the depth or breadth of students' responses to my general inquiry about planning for family, I probed further for specific thoughts on dating, marriage, children etc. When asked to envision married life, most female participants characterized it as a commitment requiring compromise and patience:

> "Married life, um, I think it is about compromise. I know it can be sweet; I don't think it's gonna be hell on earth the way people say you know, 'You've just turned into this monster and now we hate each other.' I don't think about it like that, but I am realistic and I know there will be days where I'm like, 'I can't believe I'm married to you and you

> may feel the same way.' So I think it's just about growing up, maturing, knowing how to compromise, how to handle responsibilities, and that's how I think about it. I don't think about it as a terrible thing, but I don't think about it as a perfect fairy tale either."—Amy

Amy made a point of explaining how she observes others describe marriage and situated her own concept of marriage between two extremes—"hell on earth" and "a perfect fairly tale." Her emphasis on maintaining reasonable expectations is representative of how many women talk about marriage. None of the women I talked to described marriage in extreme terms but instead offered moderate, sensible portrayals of what married life will be. Women also tended to emphasize emotional intimacy and partnership in their descriptions of marriage:

> "I think a marriage is when you know a person's faults and their good side, and you accept everything about them and you love them for who they are. And you support each other. That's the most important thing. I think I want someone who understands me really well and who I can understand. And so whenever there's a problem it's not just one person handling it."—Danielle

Women expect marriage to be a relationship built on the acceptance of one another's flaws and a commitment to working together for the benefit of the family. The focus of a marriage is not on the individuals but on the couple, and the goal is to make choices that benefit the health and success of the relationship and the family as a whole.

Both men and women described the characteristics they desire in a potential spouse, but women's responses were much more detailed and more varied than men's:

> "I've thought about this way too much lately. It's really important that we have some contextual background that is similar. So, I'd really prefer if we were coming from similar backgrounds in terms of economics. Even more than that, I could probably be more specific. I'd prefer they not come from a much richer background than I do because I feel like there would be things about them that would frustrate me. I would prefer we have similar goals in life in terms of we both want children. We both want similar amounts of children. We both want to work and do jobs that the other one finds respectable …"—Beth

Most women listed motivation and ambition as desirable qualities, but characteristics such as socio-economic background or specific personality traits changed from woman to woman. Men's responses were much less varied and typically included little more than a concept of similarity between themselves and their spouses. Some even made a point of not limiting themselves to specific types of women:

> "You know, I think it's kind of difficult to think it through that way because if you kind of limit yourself to certain character traits, then you miss meeting a lot of really interesting people. I tell you what, I would have a hard time living with somebody who couldn't carry a conversation, because I'm a talker. So, there would be that. You know, I don't know. I have no idea what kind of career a potential partner would have. I don't know … I think it's important to marry somebody who has similar interests and, you know, similar life goals because it is a partnership …"—Chris

In comparison to women, men were much more vague when describing the kind of person they imagine marrying. Most men desire a woman who is in some way similar to them and one who loves them. Beyond that, men did not list specific character traits and sometimes joked that they would only be able to describe their future wife after meeting her. Men never admitted to having thought very much about what kind of person they want to marry, whereas women sometimes mentioned having thought and/or talked about the topic recently. Perhaps Fiona put it best when she observed that "this is like all the stuff girls talk about."

Probing for more thoughts on children led several women to talk about pregnancy—a topic which is obviously much more relevant to women than to men. Some expressed anxiety toward the physical and emotional experience of becoming a mother:

> "Of course, like, when I get pregnant I don't know what my body's gonna do (laughter)! You know, who knows?! That's the sacrifice. Emotionally, who knows what I'm gonna go through. Like, how my kids come out, will my kids turn out how I want them to turn out? Will they be healthy?"—Amy

Others communicated concern about the effects pregnancy and motherhood can have on a woman's career:

> "I think people factor that in when they consider hiring you. You're a woman; therefore they're going to have to lose you for different periods of time at different points. And then definitely after that actually happens, they're going to factor that in when they consider promoting you and putting you in positions where you have more responsibility."—Beth

For the women I interviewed, pregnancy and motherhood are unknowns, things yet to be experienced, and are therefore both scary and exciting at the same time. Amy wonders what will happen to her body and hopes her children will be healthy. Beth worries that pregnancy and motherhood will damage her career. Other women are apprehensive about the economic burden of choosing to have a baby or the effect children have on marriages. Regardless of the many questions and concerns women expressed, most are planning to choose to become mothers at some point in their lives. For many women, it is simply difficult to imagine a life without the experience of getting pregnant and having children:

> "I can't really imagine me living my life, like living out my time as a woman without experiencing having children. I think that's a really unique intrinsic part of being a woman, like it's something we have that is valuable and not everyone gets to experience it. I think I want to take advantage of that. I want to mother. I've always assumed in the back of my mind that I would. But I haven't really thought about how or when that will happen. I guess I'll find somebody, and I imagine marry them and have kids."—Jane

Not surprisingly it was women and not men who had thoughts on pregnancy, but both men and women shared their views on childcare. A beginning point for many students was the care provided for them during their own childhoods:

> "My grandparents on my mom's side always lived down here … I went to my grandparent's house all the time when I was little. They acted as my babysitters the rest of my life and then they actually lived next door to us for like ten years or so when I was in middle school and high school and everything."—Gabi

Gabi went on to explain that she hopes she can arrange something similar for her own children. If possible she will settle close to her parents or help them relocate near her own family. She described feeling more comfortable with the idea of leaving her children in the care of her parents than with anyone else. Others considered alternatives to the care provided to them but were hesitant to embrace practices with which they were not accustomed:

> "I am not as set in terms of career goals, but I know specifically that the first thing that pops into my mind is yes, at your job there might be a daycare for your kids, but I grew up with my mom taking care of me so that's the model I have. So I'm like, I want the best for my kids, so sort of, is leaving them to daycare going to bring them up the way that I would want them to, and going to have the same outcomes as like my mom raising me?"—Ingrid

Students like Ingrid find themselves questioning the extent to which their parents' childcare choices affected their own development and overall happiness or success. If students attribute their own outcomes to the care provided by their parents, then they are more likely to doubt alternative forms of childcare. Some students have formed attitudes toward childcare based on experiences with other adults and children in a variety of settings:

> "I'm kind of a believer in childcare. I take care of kids on Sundays at the church that I grew up in. I take care of the nursery … And I think parents who only want to expose their children to certain things, they want to be able to control everything that their kids are exposed to and only want it to be positive, that means that they can't have them staying at some place like childcare. I understand the ideas behind that and can appreciate them, but I just flat out disagree. I really believe in a lot of institutions and I think that kids tend to be better in some ways when they've had more influences from other folks."—Beth

While women tended to voice their opinions on various forms of childcare or express uncertainty about specific options available to them, men talked more about overall family dynamics and the effects various forms of childcare can have on parent-child relationships.

> "Definitely an involved parent but again that also does depend somewhat on the person I marry as well and exactly how we manage our household. Will one of us predominantly take care of them? That is a possibility … I mostly envision us managing our time, so we

> both have an equal participation in our children's life, not just allowing one parent's views to fully influence a child or children of ours."—Adam

Adam's concern was that he simply be a part of whatever care is provided to his children. He explained his fear of becoming a workaholic and said he would have to put forth extra effort to be visible in his home and available to his family. His focus will be on ensuring that he does not neglect his responsibilities at home by allowing his wife to be the sole caregiver. Other male participants also characterized absent parents negatively and insisted that children need interaction with their parents:

> "I think it's important that the kids know who their parents are, so I would never want to rely solely on a daycare or a nanny. It would be nice to eventually settle in a city near some family members. I don't know if that's actually going to happen. But yeah, I've definitely considered alternative options."—Ian

Men were less prone to express preferences for specific forms of childcare, but often demonstrated interest in being a part of arranging care for their children and/or taking on the role of caregiver. They emphasized the importance of being included and involved in their children's lives and criticized parents who are distant or emotionally detached from their children. They also tended to reference their future wives as having the ultimate say in what type of care will be provided to their children which is consistent with their less-discriminating views on specific forms of childcare.

Men's Work and Women's Work, Real Work and House Work

Views on marriage and childcare are part of a larger context of general attitudes toward work and gender. The concept of a division of labor between the public and private spheres was implicit in the language students used to describe various types of labor. The word "work" almost always referred to employment outside the home, not domestic tasks or family responsibilities such as caring for the home or children. One student even emphasized the

difference between paid work and domestic labor when explaining why her father manages the family's money:

> Danielle: I mean, he's worked longer than she has. When he comes home, he works more than my mom because she's doing like house errands and things like that. His job requires him to work more, because he's an associate professor.
>
> Interviewer: So when you say "work more," do you mean that more of what he does is actual, formal work?
>
> Danielle: Yeah.
>
> Interviewer: Compared to what your mom does is work for the family and at home…is that what you're saying?
>
> Danielle: Yeah yeah, I'm making that distinction.

Students also commented on the gendered power dynamics that can develop according to the types of work that men and women do in a family. Both men and women acknowledged that a traditional gendered division of labor has the potential to create animosity, but also admitted that dividing labor in opposition to gender norms could lead to unnecessary tension in a relationship as well:

> "I don't really foresee a situation where I have a wife who just does everything in the house and I just do all the work. I think that would create a kind of weird power dynamic … I think a lot of women who stay at home and have a husband who works, or vice versa, a wife who works and husband who stays at home, the spouse who stays at home feels insecure … I already see that in my family. There's, it's subtle, but there definitely is some tension because my mom makes significantly more money than my dad does."—Bryan

I asked Bryan if he would feel the same way if he were to be in a position like his father with a wife who earns significantly more than him. He admitted that he may feel insecure about it and went on to explain why he believes women are not bothered by earning less than their husbands:

> "I think there is a historical tradition in America, I mean for better or for worse, probably, or definitely for the worse, is that men feel a responsibility to financially provide for their families."—Bryan

Bryan's explanation of the power dynamics associated with his parents' roles reveals two specific types of attitudes that were common to many students in the study. First, students were quick to say that women both can and should work in the public sphere if they choose. Students believe men and women, fathers and mothers, are equally capable of attaining successful careers and providing income for their families. Second, students tended to prioritize the value and status of public employment over that of domestic work. Even when students described the importance of providing a stay-at-home mother or parent for their children, they still referred to feelings of inequality between those who work and those who stay at home. Students also described domestic work as ultimately unfulfilling. Men often said they could not imagine enjoying the role of stay-at-home parent and women often said they could only bear to stay at home for a defined amount of time before returning to a meaningful career. In basic terms, students view men and women as equals but do not view public employment and domestic work as equal occupations.

Another example of this attitude toward domestic work is the fact that not one student described a willingness to take on the responsibility of household chores or childcare alone. Students are open to the idea of a single-earner arrangement perhaps while their children are young and generally accept the idea that one person's employment could support an entire family if need be. However, students are opposed to the idea that one parent, even a stay-at-home parent, should be solely responsible for cooking, cleaning, and providing childcare. They seem to think that such an arrangement would ultimately be demeaning and that household chores should instead be shared:

> "It's actually really funny because on the one hand I have very traditional values and like you know I would like ideally my husband to go work and make lots of money and I stay home and take care of the kids, and I really prioritize taking care of my kids as kind of a motherly responsibility, but at the same time I am very untraditional in lots of other ways,

> like kind of feminist ideas in lots of other ways. I do not want to feel like it's my responsibility to clean house, to cook dinner. I can't cook; I don't like to clean (laughter). I would be so pissed off if I ended up in a marriage with somebody really traditional like that that expected me to be like that. That just would not work out … I also don't want to be the only parent providing care … I would like him to play more of a role than my dad did."—Emma

While students conceptually separate labor into the public and private spheres and place a higher value on public employment than on domestic work, the conceptual assignment of labor to individuals is somewhat blurry because they cannot imagine an arrangement in which one person works solely in the public sphere and another person works solely in the private sphere. They accept the idea of an individual being a stay-at-home parent and therefore doing no public work and earning no income, but they reject the idea of an individual being employed and doing no domestic work for the home or children. Put simply, students believe it is not necessary that the burden to earn income be shared at all times between two parents in a family, however the burden to provide childcare and maintain a home should never be placed on one parent alone.

Women were especially insistent that neither gender nor employment status should determine the amount of responsibility they have at home. Women believe they should have help at home regardless of whether or not they are employed and maintain that simply being female does not mean they should have more domestic responsibility than their husbands:

> "I know for me part of the reason I'm scared about having kids is I know that whenever I love something and whenever I'm passionate about something, I pour my whole self into it. And I know I'm scared about kids but once I have a baby I'm sure I'll be all for the kid and…it will just kind of consume me, so that's why I think it will be a balancing thing … I feel like with the husband thing, I hope he's one to not like adhere to the gender roles too rigidly and say like 'Since you're the mom you're supposed to stay home and you're supposed to take care of the kids,' but we'll equally take on the responsibility."—Helen

Helen intends to pursue a career in the non-profit sector but expects that she will want to quit working for a time after having children. She explained however that she hopes her husband will

look for opportunities to spend less time working as well and believes that he should make significant contributions to the responsibilities of home life. One female participant was able to talk about the division of household labor from firsthand experience because she currently lives with her boyfriend:

> "I think it should be kind of shared except for maybe taking out the trash. I don't see myself taking out the trash (laughter). But yeah, I don't know. My boyfriend and I live together right now and we kind of share all the responsibilities and chores around the house. We cook together and then we take turns washing the dishes. And we go grocery shopping together. But he still takes out the trash because I don't want to do it (laughs). But yeah, so we basically kind of… I don't want to say we divide it up, but we kind of do them together."—Catherine

Women may be interested in putting their careers on hold to be stay-at-home mothers for certain stages in their lives, but they are certainly not interested in being expected to cook, clean, and provide care for their children without help from their husbands. They expect the men in their lives to share domestic duties regardless of their choices to remain employed or stay at home after having children.

The Logic of Traditional Gender Roles

None of the students I interviewed presented themselves as sexists. Rather, they took every opportunity to provide evidence of their progressive and open-minded views on gender roles. Men emphasized their support for women who pursue careers, and women insisted that men should be more involved in home life. Students often joked about traditional gender roles and portrayed themselves as too educated or too modern to let gender dictate their lifestyles or relationships. Students denied holding gendered views on work or family even when asked directly if they believed certain roles are appropriate for men while others are more appropriate for women:

> "Hm. I need to think about that for a second. (Pause) No."—Bryan

Although students rarely admitted to holding gendered attitudes and almost never made explicit sexist remarks, gendered world views are implicit in their comments about work, family, men, and women. Thus, the logic of traditional gender roles persists.

Students' ideas about motherhood pointed to gendered notions of human biology and parent-child relationships:

> "When it does come to children, since the woman is the bearer of the child, I believe that they have a very important connection, especially in early childhood … I do believe that as a man, there's a certain part of an infant's life that I cannot necessarily be directly involved in. But as the child grows a little older, and perhaps a little more, I don't know how you say it, physically detached from the mother type thing, then our roles become more equalized … I want to be involved in my child's life and I feel as though, you know, there's only certain things that a male and a female biologically can contribute to a relationship. We're not talking about necessarily social ideals, you know. Men and women can be very equal in social ideals, but biological ideals… There's, I don't even know how to describe it, I'm not really a medical student nor a science student (laughter), but I just know that there is a difference there that, you know, kind of like it's two people contributing to a relationship, to upbringing a child."—Adam

Adam makes an interesting distinction between social equality and biological difference. He argues that while men and women are equals in society, biology inhibits men from making identical contributions to their children. He characterizes female fertility as an ability to form special bonds with infants and children in a way that men cannot. One male participant used gender as an explanation for why women are more likely than men to stay at home with their children:

> "Now as far as the possibility of me staying at home, I don't know that I could be happy with that. I feel like if I were going to stay at home I would probably have to do something that I could still work while I was at home, because I just don't, I don't feel like I would do well in a situation where I, I don't know, I didn't feel like I was being productive. I don't know, I guess what people always say about stay-at-home mothers is, 'Well, their contribution to society is raising a good family.' And I feel like that's very true. Maybe I'm not selfless enough for that."—Harold

This student associates selflessness and sacrifice with femininity and thereby contextualizes his aversion to staying at home as a masculine trait. He also romanticizes the notion of women

sacrificing their own interests in order to benefit not only their children but the whole of society. Another participant linked the idea of maternal sacrifice to the belief that women are inherently more emotional or sensitive than men. Ian explains that both his mother and father made sacrifices for their family, but that his mother's sacrifices were more intimately tied to the emotional well-being of her children:

> "And I think in terms of moving, as much as it feels like the parents are moving us, I think it's mostly always been my dad's decision. Um, so I think in that sense my mom has always made the sacrifice for what's best for the family. Not that my dad's not sacrificing that as well, but she's just so much more aware of how the move's affecting the kids. So I think she's made a lot of kind of internal sacrifices."—Ian

He went on to explain that children are naturally closer to their mothers because of inherent feminine traits that make women more physically and spiritually connected to their young:

> "I think we've developed this ideal in the 2000's that either parent could play either role perfectly, but … I think it's the physical nature of it honestly. Even if you're sharing or splitting time, especially as the kids are really young, I think inevitably the children are more attached to their mothers, they grew up in them for nine months. I think it's very biological, and beautiful, and spiritual, and healthy."—Ian

At times, students were torn between two opposing ideas and did not seem to know for sure which they believed. My own interpretation based on tone and body language is that some students were genuinely unsure of their own beliefs and that some students simply struggled to admit their honest opinions in light of common expectations to be open-minded or politically correct. I asked David if he felt like he was a different person because of having a stay-at-home mother. After answering, he almost immediately revised his statement and instead attested to the opposite side of his own argument:

> "I don't think I would be as loving and caring as I am now. I don't think I would have these genuine real connections with people … I think a parent and often times a mother has the ability to really shape a child. And I think a lot of that can be missed if you're going to be with a nanny or some caretaker or like a babysitter or something all the time. I mean for me, my mother, yes. I don't know if that's necessarily true for everyone. I mean I think that fathers can absolutely have that same effect … Yeah I mean like, I think

> no, I take that back. I think fathers can absolutely have the same effect that my mother has had on me. So, you know, had it been the reverse and my mom had been working and my dad stayed at home, perhaps I'd be saying all of this about my father."—David

David's comment about something being true for his mother that may not be true for all mothers is a typical line of reasoning employed by students to explain how their gendered statements are not actually based on gendered attitudes. David believes his mother had a unique ability to shape him into an emotional, personable individual but claims that men and women have an equal capacity for parenting. Emma also limited her comments about gender and parenting to her own family and maintained that in general she believes care-giving roles should be gender neutral:

> "I don't think it's important necessarily for it to be the mother. I kind of have egalitarian views on male, female, whatever, whatever they want to do is fine. Like my uncle was the primary caregiver for his two children…they're actually a little bit weird (laughter), but that's because my uncle is weird, not because he's a man (laughter). I think it would be fine, but personally for me, I would not want that because I don't want my kids being closer to their dad than they are to me. So for other people's families that's fine, but that's not happening with my family."—Emma

By presenting their personal values as separate from their overall worldviews, students employ a logic that assumes it is a coincidence women tend to do one thing while men do another. David's idea is that it just so happens his mother was the parent who formed a close, emotional relationship with him, and Emma's idea is that it is just her personal preference to want to stay at home with her children. This logic allows students to make choices consistent with traditional gender norms while simultaneously claiming to hold gender-neutral attitudes toward work and family. Students explain that their inclinations toward traditional roles are results of individual personality traits, not large scale cultural norms:

> "So not, like, a full stay-at-home dad but, like, you know definitely if she wants to, like, not stay at home, I would totally be up for that, you know, if my job allowed me to or whatever. But um, I don't think I would ever be content with myself personally just being a stay-at-home dad."—Greg

Students also qualify their preference for traditional gender roles by emphasizing the autonomy with which they choose to conform to cultural norms. In other words, it is acceptable for women to choose to take on traditionally feminine roles as long as they are not forced or expected to do so. Danielle described her traditional family and highlighted the important element of respect in her parents' relationship:

> "I grew up in a very traditional family where the male was always the head of the household and my dad definitely has a more dominant personality than my mom, and I see that, and I don't have a problem with it. I don't have a problem with gender issues as long as my dad respects my mom. She cooks most of the time, but my dad also cooks. She cleans most of the time, but my dad also cleans … I'm not opposed to doing things that are considered—like for a woman cooking and cleaning and things like that—and I'm ok with my husband not doing those things as long as he brings something else to the table, and as long as he doesn't expect me to do it, as long as he doesn't expect me to fill like a woman's role."—Danielle

It is important to Danielle to feel as though she is taking on a responsibility because she chooses to, not because she has to. She also appreciates flexibility within family roles such as when her father helps her mother clean or cook. Some students described feeling pressure to conform to expected gender roles and questioned how others would respond to a family that breaks the mold:

> "The thing that just popped into my mind is if the mom was working and the dad was staying at home, I feel there are a lot of families that would be like, 'Why are they doing that? Why isn't the mom staying at home and the dad working? He's ruining his career.' Like I'm sure someone would come up with that comment … I personally, no, would not feel that way. But I know other people would feel that way, like, if I was in that position, so I guess your reactions, or your actions, are also affected by other people's reactions. So it's sort of, would you want to put yourself in that position? But also if that was the best decision then it's like, 'You know what? You're doing the best for what your family needs, um, I don't care what you people think.'"—Ingrid

Ultimately, Ingrid is able to imagine justifying an unconventional division of labor with the concept of doing what is best for one's family—another traditional family norm. Her concern for

the general public and its reaction to her personal choices is indicative of another type of logic that leads students to conform to traditional gender roles. The benefits of living a nonconformist lifestyle are weighed against the costs of social ridicule, and in many cases the simplicity of conforming to traditional gender roles within family life wins out. Cultural norms surrounding the gendered division of labor in the public and private spheres permeates even the most nontraditional of families and relationships. For one gay participant, choosing to stay at home with his children will likely be associated with a feminine stereotype even though he is neither a woman nor part of a traditional hetero-normative relationship:

> "I'm not super career driven … Let's say we were both working and we decided that one of us should stay home, I would probably be going to be staying home. And I feel like knowing the type of person I might end up with, I feel like I'm going to be the woman in the relationship. As ridiculous as that sounds, I feel like that could be a good chance … I think that for a while people will constantly think that that's the maternal role. Then again, it depends where I am. If I'm in San Francisco, if I'm living in the Bay Area versus somewhere in Georgia, it's like comparing apples to pregnant oranges."—David

While public opinion can vary according to location or geographic region, social norms are still overwhelmingly influential in the logic students cite for choosing to engage in family arrangements that are consistent with traditional gender roles.

Finally, students explained the ease with which people find themselves following cultural norms regardless of their actual beliefs regarding themselves and others. There is a logic to simply doing what has always been done and accepting things the way they are:

> "It would be really hard for me to stand inside and cook dinner while my wife was doing yard work. You know, there's nothing about, you know, being male that makes me better at doing yard work or fixing the toilet when it breaks or something like that, but I feel like those are things I'll probably end up doing."—Harold

Adhering to readily available social scripts allow people to live "normal" lives without worrying too much about the consequences of their actions. After all, "If everyone is doing it then it must be ok." Students may not be willing to describe their views as gendered, but they do employ

logic revealing beliefs about sex-based differences between men and women. When their values conform to gender role norms, they use a variety of explanations for why they view the world as they do without negating their claims to progressive, gender-neutral attitudes.

"You Can Have it All"

Women treated the concept of work-family conflict as important and the issue of work-family balance as relevant. They discussed a variety of strategies for negotiating the competing goals of pursuing a career and forming a family. They raised questions about possible life choices and available work-family arrangements. Tradeoffs and compromises were hallmarks of their plans to manage both work life and family life. Overall, women demonstrated a willingness to be flexible with their plans in order to accommodate multiple responsibilities and relationships:

> "I think I'm an open person. I'm about doing what's best for everybody, you know what I mean."—Amy

Women often described feeling more committed to their long term family plans than to their long term career plans:

> "I'm not set in my career … I'm going to teach and the plan is to teach and I'll enjoy it, but it's not like I sit around every night dreaming about when I can teach sociology to a bunch of 21 year olds (laughter). That's not gonna make or break my life, whereas like I would be really upset if you know I couldn't have my kids. You know that's something that's way more of a priority to me and so I really wouldn't look at it as a negative sacrifice, it's just something that I would do differently."—Emma

Emma described her plan to teach at an elementary school for one or two years before entering a Ph.D. program in sociology, but also explained that her plan is likely to change. While she can imagine herself being happy and fulfilled as a college professor, she can also imagine herself being happy and fulfilled doing something else. The only thing she can't imagine giving up is

the opportunity to be a mother. Other women described a willingness to sacrifice opportunities at work in order to accommodate their husbands' careers:

> "I think if my husband gets a really good job somewhere that we'd have to move, I'd be ok with moving. And I'd be ok with getting maybe a less-paying job or less-satisfying as long as like we're together … I think I'd expect my husband to do the same."—Danielle

Women spoke about forfeiting their employment opportunities and career aspirations as normal and expected compromise. Danielle made a point of saying that she would expect her husband to do the same for her. In general, women expressed that compromise and sacrifice should be practiced mutually in their relationships and marriages. In light of this expectation, it is interesting that men seemed largely oblivious to the potential conflicts of interest their intended career paths may entail:

> Interviewer: Do you know anything about the ratio of men to women in the Foreign Service? Because you had mentioned something about most of the wives of Foreign Service diplomats… is it mostly men?
>
> Bryan: That's such a sexist comment; you caught me (laughter). I think it is mostly men, yeah.
>
> Interviewer: Ok, so you said that a lot of the women tend to take care of the children and stay at home. Do you think um, this might not be something that you've thought about and it's fine if you haven't, but do you think those women, prior to getting married, maybe had careers that were significant to them and they gave them up, or is that something you've considered?
>
> Bryan: I haven't thought about that, but I'm sure that's true. Yeah.
>
> Interviewer: So, do you imagine it being possible that you would fall in love with a woman, want to marry her, and she may need to give up her career in order to do that?
>
> Bryan: Yeah, it's definitely possible. Yeah.

In other words, men had not yet considered that their commitments to their own career paths may inhibit the career plans of their future wives.

Women not only expect to make sacrifices in order to support their husbands, but they also plan to rearrange their work schedules in order to care for their children. Several women explained how choosing exactly where to work will greatly impact their ability to renegotiate their routines and responsibilities on the job:

> "It's just a matter of being in an institution that has the staff and has the resources to be able to allow you to do research. I mean, if you were in some small community hospital, they're going to say, you know, 'We're not paying you to do research. We don't do that here.' But at a place like Egleston that, you know, is a research university that's attached to a teaching university and medical school, you can put in more hours teaching or something like that, and perhaps take a pay cut, which is fine."—Gabi

Some women even cited support for work-life balance as a reason for choosing a certain career field to begin with:

> "The reason I'm drawn to non-profit work is because the people there are compassionate, and they're understanding and they're not about following the status quo about things. They'll think about life differently. They'll believe mothers and fathers hopefully should have that time off and it won't just be about work."—Helen

Women portrayed work-life balance issues as integral to their future plans, but for men, the topic seemed marginal. They referenced the idea of tradeoffs, but rarely spoke in any great detail about the types of compromises they could see themselves making. Some men qualified the choice to even have a family as a compromise in and of itself:

> "When it comes to marital relationships and family relationships, they will definitely take precedence over my work life … There are definitely tradeoffs. For example, you know, whereas without a family I might be able to ascend the career ladder much quicker, with a family, that might be a little delayed. And I'm fine with accepting that if necessary."—Adam

Adam explains that his family will take priority over his career and that personal relationships will be very serious commitments; however he offers no examples of how he plans to accommodate the needs of his family members by making concessions with his career. The differences in the terms with which men and women discuss work-life conflict indicate that

women have considered the topic in much more depth and breadth than have men. Men acknowledge that conflicts exist, but women go on to explore possible strategies for resolving specific types of conflicts.

Some male participants confessed that they simply are not open to the idea of sacrificing their own ambitions for the sake of someone else's. Sometimes men also added that they would not be comfortable with another person giving up a career aspiration in order to follow them. This dilemma led Ian to question how he could raise children with another person who also has personal career goals and individual pursuits:

> "I don't want someone to have to sacrifice their goals and their dreams in order to let me follow mine, but at this point, I'm not really willing to sacrifice my own, to fully compromise, to follow someone else's dreams. And then, having a family is going to be really important to me, but there is that, like, 'Who's gonna raise the kids?' type thing. If you're both going to be pursuing your dreams … so I do think about these issues … I would never expect my significant other to do that. I think it would be amazing if they did want to (laughter). But I know I can't expect them to do that because I would not do that."—Ian

This predicament demonstrates the tension between the ideals students hold and the practical questions that they are not able to fully answer. Ian believes no one should have to make concessions, and yet he recognizes that two people cannot raise children without making compromises. Women tend to be much more open to making personal sacrifices at this stage in their lives for the sake of relationships that could evolve into marriage and family:

> "I have my dreams, my plans, my goals and everything and I don't really want to sacrifice those. But at the same time, I feel like if you're with a person that could, you know, potentially be your husband, if like ten years down the line you were married and you would make a sacrifice for them then, you know, the only difference is you're not married yet."—Gabi

Women are also planning in advance for the long term in order to decrease potential conflict between their career aspirations and family plans:

> "I mean I hope it's not so much a competition as the need to find a balance. I mean, balance is important … I really do think that if I just transported myself into the future and I had to make a big decision concerning family and career, and I already had a family, I would do what was best for my family. Right now that hasn't happened yet, so I feel like I have slightly more control in where things go, because I can try to choose when I start a family. And I can just, by doing that hopefully put them in a good point in my life where it's meant to be, and it's easiest to balance at that point with my career."—Fiona

Women emphasize much more than men the emotional and intellectual importance of having both fulfilling careers and meaningful family relationships:

> "I want to have a career. I feel as if I've been so lucky to, like, have such a great education so far, and even say that grad school is a possibility, and being able to sort of give back to the world, sort of the intellectual, I guess having a career would foster my intellectual growth. And having a family would foster my emotional and personal growth. And I think both are definitely needed … Um, so it will probably come down to what kind of job I'm in at that time and if there's a possibility if, like, 'Okay, I can either work from home or work during the day while the kids are at school and then come home and, like, help with the after school, like preparing dinner and all that.' And I would hope that my husband helps out too."—Ingrid

For women, the issue of balancing the two major realms of adult life—work and family—is pertinent to the choices they are making as college seniors. They take into consideration the competing demands of work and family when thinking about possible careers. In contrast, men recognize that conflict exists between commitments at work and responsibilities at home, but are not actively considering ways of negotiating the work-family interface at this stage in their lives. Men suggest that such issues will be more important later when they take steps toward settling down and getting married.

Men and women alike pointed to two common concerns about their futures as working adults trying to raise families. First, students recognized that time and energy will be precious and limited resources:

> "Well, thinking that I'm going to be going into big law, I recognize that it's going to be extremely stressful and lot of hours. And I think that will be limiting as far as

> establishing a family or anything like that … There's only so many hours in the day and, you know, pursuing a career takes a lot of energy, takes a lot of work, and also as does raising a family. So I could see where it would be sort of competing goals. That would be something that would be difficult for me just because I value both things so highly. More likely a family would win out. "—Chris

Students expect that their jobs will place significant constraints on their time at the expense of their families. Some imagine what it will be like for their children to have parents with inflexible and demanding schedules:

> "I definitely know that for the rest of my life I'm going to have to work long hours. I'm going to have to miss things that are important and all. I'm going to be on call on Christmas day and you know, not be there in the morning. But, I want my kids to know that they can call me, you know, whenever, for whatever. And, I'll answer and I want them to know that I'll make every single effort that I can to be you know, part of their lives in a huge way."—Gabi

Second, students stressed the importance of having multiple options throughout various stages of their lives and described the need for backup plans in addition to whatever they are currently hoping to do with their lives. Joe explained that developing multiple possible career plans gives him the reassurance that he will be able to find jobs that work for his lifestyle:

> "I have two plans actually for that, but it would be like in a doctor's office, and when you're a doctor working in an office, you still have to work with a hospital. So, you'll have to go check on patients if they're in the hospital and there's also a requirement that you have to sort of be on call for the emergency room just in case. And then the other thing was if I didn't work in a doctor's office, I would try and work with a teaching hospital and work with a university teaching like future residents, future doctors and stuff like that."—Joe

Some women view résumé building as a safety net for unexpected crises such as divorce or economic downturn:

> "I want to have a job and I want to have a career in case if anything were to happen I would have something. Like my mom went back to work after 20 years and that's hard when you're 50. Nobody's going to hire you over somebody's who's 25 and just left an amazing job or with a great degree."—Jane

As Jane and others point out, students cannot plan for everything and must remember that their wants and needs will likely change over time. Some students even poke fun at their own well-rehearsed life plans and admit that things will probably not unfold exactly as they hope:

> "I have a beautiful little plan set out for my life but I think after each stage of my life I have a little question mark because things are likely to change any second."—Adam

Un-Tied Down

Varying stages of independence over the life course is a common theme for students' thoughts on work and family. As children, students were dependent on their families but gradually gained independence with age and maturity. College represents an important time in a young person's life because it provides the opportunity for one to manage his or her own commitments and responsibilities alone for the first time. It also prepares students to make life-altering choices for themselves as they enter the adult world of individual accountability and responsibility. Students look forward to the years immediately following graduation as a chance to enjoy their independence before becoming attached to spouses and children. Frank explained how his sense of freedom and self-determination allowed him to choose among several job offers in different cities:

> "I didn't really feel tied down to a certain location at this point … I didn't really have a lot of attachment or responsibility. I didn't have a family yet or anything like that. I kind of felt like I could go anywhere I want so I should take this opportunity to go to the place that would most interest me … One thing I guess I really value I guess is like independence, um, because I do like to just kind of random, spontaneously do things … Like one time this summer, I just woke up and took a flight to Vegas, and then just took public transportation and just went around Vegas for a day. And I think things like that would be hard for me to give up, because I am someone who likes to just, kind of, free will, independence, do what I want."—Frank

Students value the ability to make travel plans on a whim and expect that they will encounter more opportunities to do so as post-graduates. For many, the next stage in life will be

characterized by more independence than they have ever had in the past or will ever have in the future:

> "I can't imagine myself living forever in another country. I'd like to end up in America … But I would love to live abroad. I feel like that's the time when you've just started to establish your career, before you settle down with a family that is a time when you are able to travel more. I still want to have my career if I have a family, but at that point I won't be able to fly by the seat of my pants you know. You have to make decisions for other people as well."—Jane

Like Jane, many women describe getting married and having children as decisions that will result in the responsibility to incorporate others into their decision-making processes. Women imagine that in the future they will develop a habit of making choices which benefit both their husbands and children. Because of this, many women are in no rush to get married or have children:

> "I don't want to get married anytime soon, and I definitely don't want to have kids before I'm ready to take care of them and put them as my number one priority. So, it would probably be later in life once I've settled down in my career more or less … When I'm young, I want to basically just think of myself and how I want to do things my way and, as far as career goes you know, I want to go abroad, do whatever I want to do, whatever that is. But, once I settle down and decide to have kids, they're going to be like, I'm going to think of them first if that makes sense."—Catherine

Similarly, men imagine their priorities shifting dramatically with each new stage of life:

> "The thing is, we live a life, it's kinda all about us. You know, you can be as altruistic as you want but it's still about us. But when you get married, it's ok, it's about someone else. But when you have a kid, you're no longer the priority. It's the kids, the kids are the priority. If I'm going to have a kid, children, they're going to be the priorities."—David

David sees his adult life as comprising three major stages. In his near future he will make choices independently of other people and enjoy pursuing his own interests. Marriage will mark a new period during which he will live in partnership with someone else, and finally, becoming a father will mean refocusing his attention on making his children the priority. Students are delighted with the opportunity to live independently for a time without the worry of spouses and

children; however some wonder how and when they will meet another person with whom they can share a life:

> "It terrifies me because I want to have a family so much. I want to be able to offer my kids like this wonderful childhood and give them everything that I have and it freaks me out only because in this world that's changed so much in the last fifteen years where everybody is so independent, the idea of finding someone else that's not only gonna complement just my personality but the life I want to live, is scary. I don't know if it's gonna happen (laughter)."—Ian

What Women Think About Men

I have reported extensively on the gendered responses I received from students. Compared to their male counterparts, women spoke much more earnestly about matters related to marriage, children, and work-family balance. There is one more important way in which gender matters significantly for this project—women commented on the attitudes held by their male peers and demonstrated considerable criticism toward what they perceive to be an overall gendered response to work-family issues. Adam's remark typifies the responses from the male half of my sample: "I definitely think in the modern day though, it's very much about equal contribution." Jane told a story illustrating her frustrated response to similar statements made by other male students on campus:

> "I was in a class last semester and our professor was asking us that, like 'Raise your hand if you had mothers who worked when you were kids.' And then 'How many of you think you will want to work or have wives that work?' And all the guys in the class regardless of whether they had mothers who worked or stayed at home, they were like um 'Yeah if my wife wants to work then definitely, I'll support her.' … But then when you stop and ask them, 'Ok, so you support your wife. What if she has a week where she has all these hours, will you be ok? What if that means you have to stay home for two years while she's in residency? Are you ok with that?' And they're like, 'No.' … Guys are quick to be like 'Oh I'm a feminist, I'm all for women's rights.' Well, like you say that, but when it comes to practice, will you step out of your roles?"—Jane

Jane views supportive comments from male peers as little more than politically correct scripts. Because feminist ideals have been incorporated into what is deemed socially appropriate, she doubts whether men speak with sincerity when they talk about women and gender roles. Some women described men's attitudes as immature and naïve compared to the wide variety of more complex questions and concerns expressed by their female peers:

> "I've said that I think it would be preferable that we have two incomes. I mean, if I felt like one was sufficient, that would be great … In terms of primary care giver, I would hope we could find some balance. It's a little too idealistic sometimes considering some conversations I've had with males and their ideas about how that's going to work out or really lack of ideas, lacking any forethought."—Beth

Women like Beth do not claim that men are intentionally choosing to ignore a serious issue; instead they acknowledge that men care about having families and supporting their wives. However women also feel as though men are unaware of the specific types of compromises and tradeoffs that women agonize over.

Ingrid explained that while students in general are considering what their long term plans will be, women bear the burden of addressing the difficult and complicated details alone:

> "I have discussions with classmates and professors about sort of, like, how do we balance it going forward? I think the women going forward are the people who have to make that decision … I think that conversation that's coming up just because of sort of, we're starting a new chapter of our life and, like, and real life is hitting us. So five to ten years down the road it's like 'People, what do you want to do?' 'Well I want to have a career but at the same time I want to settle down.' But you don't go into the nitty gritty of 'Well are you going to have a nine-to-five job and then pick up the kids from school, or is it going to be, I'm going to come home so I can take care of the kids at the same time?' … So it's hard … I think there's that trend of guys just think of it later than girls."—Ingrid

Women's complaints were not confined to the college context. They view gendered attitudes among college students as systematic of a larger cultural problem:

> "Today there are career women and power women … but you see more career women than you see stay-at-home dads."—Jane

In addition to comparing responses from the male and female halves of my sample, I found evidence of gender differences by simply listening to women report on their perceptions of gendered attitudes held by their peers. Cognizant of the effect gender has on students' attitudes toward life planning, women recognize that for the time being they cannot reasonably expect college men to share in their concerns about effectively balancing work and family.

Implications and Discussion

My analysis adds to theories of separate spheres ideology and the work-family interface by demonstrating that the gendered division of labor begins before children are born, before marriages are entered into, and before jobs are sought. The gendered division of labor extends to college students and the work that is required to plan for their futures. Women in college are developing strategies for balancing work and family, but men are instead choosing to wait and think about family later.

I found support for all of my hypotheses. Male and female students were equally concerned about their immediate and long term career plans and goals. They demonstrated ambition and motivation for achieving high status positions and emphasized the significant meaning and self-worth that will be derived from their careers. Compared to men, women were more concerned about family-oriented plans. They discussed dating, marriage, pregnancy, and parenting in much more detail than men. Their remarks indicated that these topics have been on the forefronts of their minds; whereas men seemed to have given them less prior thought. Women conveyed a stronger sensitivity to the pressures of time on their long term career and family aspirations. They intend to have accomplished more than men sooner than men—getting married, attaining a desirable position at work, having children—and commonly imagine age 30 or 35 as an important deadline. Women are also more concerned than men about negotiating the

competing demands of work and home. They are incorporating these concerns into their current decision-making processes in order to diminish future conflict and accomplish all of their goals.

There are a number of possible cultural and structural explanations for these findings. Even when taking into account the criticisms women voiced against their male peers and traditional gender roles in general, students' own specific attitudes and life plans reveal a culture of gender norms that is much more traditional than progressive. Men do not envision themselves making significant tradeoffs at work in order to accommodate the needs of their families nor do they imagine taking on the role of primary caregiver or homemaker. Women described themselves as willing to prioritize their relationships and families over their career aspirations or work commitments. These attitudes are consistent with those observed in numerous dual-earner families in the 80s, 90s, and 2000s (Hochschild and Machung 2003) (Becker and Moen 1999) (Singley and Hynes 2005). In short, it seems the culture of gender roles has changed little in the past three decades. Just like working mothers of the recent past, today's female college students are demonstrating much more concern than men over making tradeoffs and reaching compromises in order to negotiate work-family conflict.

This evidence supports the theory that we are still in the midst of a "stalled revolution" (Hochschild and Machung 2003). Though a number of solutions to work-family conflict are available—e.g. individual solutions, employer-sponsored programs, assistance with childcare, flexible scheduling, government-sponsored programs, family leave policies, and childcare policies—"the burden of this resolution falls more heavily on women than on men because changes in the domestic division of labor have not kept pace with the sexes' converging labor force participation" (Padavic and Reskin 2002, 172-173). Women have joined the public realm of paid work and career development while remaining committed to their former responsibilities

in the home. Meanwhile, men have maintained their roles as breadwinners but largely neglected their fair share of work as childcare providers and housekeepers. Thus, women will continue to bear the burden of negotiating the work-family interface alone until men choose to immerse themselves in the world of childcare and housekeeping and compensate for the currently inequitable gendered division of labor.

My project's gendered responses demonstrate attitudes consistent with the traditional gendered division of labor; however, my findings also point to an awareness of gender disparity on the part of female college students, which is promising. Several women pointed out that alternative work arrangements and generous paternity and maternity leave have become more available, and many of them aspire to marriages in which their husbands make an equal contribution providing childcare and keeping house. Indeed, research shows that younger couples share domestic responsibilities more fairly than did past generations (Robinson and Godbey 1999), and many large companies have found that flexible work arrangements can be cost-neutral or even worth the cost (Galinsky, Friedman and Harnandez 1991). The fact that college women are actively and thoughtfully addressing gendered dimensions of the work-family interface suggests that perhaps even more change will come.

The combination of qualitative interviewing methods and convenience sampling in this study preclude generalizability (Babbie 2007). However, my findings shed light on attitudes and complex thought processes held by Emory College seniors in regards to gender and work-family balance. Because the participants in this study are in many ways similar to other college students at other elite universities, it is likely that their attitudes represent a general trend among such students:

> Insofar as the dynamics of the group we study and the constraints to which they are subjected decide their behavior, we can expect the same behavior from any other group with the same dynamics and the same constraints. (Weiss 1994, 27)

Though I cannot reliably argue generalizability based on the methods at hand, I can reasonably guess that similar attitudes are held by similar students at similar universities. Regardless of the non-representative quality of my sample, I achieved my intended goal by discovering how gender matters for students' views on the work-family interface at Emory. Future research could strengthen this line of inquiry, and survey methods specifically would help achieve generalizability. Work on a variety of other samples such as different age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and education or employment statuses would also help illuminate the complexity of attitudes toward gender and work-family balance.

I also hope that more work-family scholarship focuses on college students and young adults. From my understanding there is a link between the literature on families and the family education community which serves working families with information and tools to improve their success in balancing work and family. For example, Emory offers an array of educational tools and support services to address their employees' needs for work-family balance (Emory WorkLife Resource Center n.d.). Though I do not know much about this community or what it does, I am not aware of any such education that is readily available to college students. Past research has shown that college courses on marriage and family lead students to hold more realistic views about relationships and rely less on common romantic myths (Larson 1988). I believe that if research were to focus on young people and college students, educational tools could be developed and made available to them that could greatly improve their ability to make informed choices about career and family planning and thereby increase their chances of successfully negotiating the work-family interface.

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Appendix 1

Recruitment Email

Dear student,

Hi, my name is Betsie Garner, and I am an undergraduate sociology major. I am currently working on a senior honors thesis about college seniors and how they plan to balance work and family in the future. I am looking for volunteers who are willing to participate in one interview with me which will last no more than one hour. Interviews will take place at a location of your choosing. All information will be kept confidential and your participation will in no way affect your class standing, course grade, graduation status, or standing with any faculty or staff at Emory.

You must be at least 18, a U.S. citizen and a senior in the college to participate in this study. I am unable to offer you compensation, but volunteer participants are crucial to my research project and I would greatly appreciate your help. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact me. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can choose not to participate at any time.

Best of luck with your own academic pursuits!

Thank you,

Betsie Garner
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Appendix 2

Emory University Undergraduate College
Consent to be a Research Subject

Title: Having it All: How Today's College Seniors Plan to Balance Work and Family

Principal Investigator: Tracy L. Scott, Ph.D.
Co-Investigator: Betsie Garner

Introduction
You are being asked to be in a research study. This form is designed to tell you everything you need to think about before you decide to consent (agree) to be in the study or not to be in the study. It is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later on and withdraw from the research study. The decision to join or not join the research study will not affect your class standing, course grade, graduation status, or standing with any faculty or staff at Emory.

You were chosen to participate in this study because you are a senior in the undergraduate college at Emory University, because you are at least 18 years old, and because you are a citizen of the United States. There will be 20 students total participating in this study. You participation in this study would last between 45 minutes and 1 hour. This study is being conducted as part of my Senior Honors Thesis under the direction of Dr. Tracy L. Scott.

Purpose
The scientific purpose of this study is to explore the plans college seniors have for balancing work and family and investigate the effect gender has on attitudes toward work, family, and work-family balance.

Procedures
You will be participating in an in-depth interview in which you will be asked about your thoughts and plans for work, family, and work-family balance. The interview will last between 45 minutes and 1 hour. With your permission, the interview will be taped using an audio recorder. Betsie Garner will be conducting the interview. The interview will take place at a location on campus that is easy for you.

Risks and Discomforts
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study.

Benefits
This study is not designed to benefit you directly. This study is designed to learn more about how college seniors are planning to balance work and family in the future. The study results may be used to help other people in the future. There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant from this study.

Compensation

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Confidentiality

Certain offices and people other than the researchers may look at your study records. Government agencies and Emory employees overseeing proper study conduct may look at your study records. These offices include the Emory Institutional Review Board and the Emory Office of Research Compliance. Emory will keep any research records we produce private to the extent we are required to do so by law.

A study number rather than your name will be used on study records wherever possible. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

Withdrawal from the Study

You have the right to leave a study at any time without penalty. This decision will not affect your class standing, course grade, graduation status, or standing with any faculty or staff at Emory.

Questions

If you have any questions, I invite you to ask them now. If you have any questions about the study later, you may contact me at bkgarne@emory.edu or 865-567-6810. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Tracy L. Scott, at tscott@emory.edu or 404-727-7515.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or 877-503-9797 or irb@emory.edu.

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and get answers that make sense to you.

Nothing in this form can make you give up any legal rights. By signing this form you will not give up any legal rights. You are free to take home an unsigned copy of this form and talk it over with family or friends. Please sign below if you agree to participate in this study.

_____

Name of Subject

_____ _____

Signature of Subject Date Time

_____ _____

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion Date Time

Appendix 3

Interview Guide