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Skylar Kalin April 16, 2014

A New Take On An Age-Old Dilemma

A Study Of Gender As It Applies To The Work Aspirations of Emory University Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

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With societal changes in effect since the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique roughly fifty years ago and the power of choice more apparent, it is increasingly more imperative to look at the role of the individual to understand men and women's differing experiences in the workforce. Specifically, I seek to build off previous research by delving into how gender influences the work aspirations of college seniors as they transition into adulthood and prepare to enter the workforce. First, I present a theoretical framework highlighting the importance of gender norms and cultural schemas, the persistence of the separate sphere ideology, and the normative alternatives approach to understanding the decision-making process of male and female students. Next, I look to the empirical work completed on the matter of gender and work values to discuss any patterns currently mentioned by researchers in the field. I conducted thirty in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seniors at Emory University regarding their decision-making processes and the work values participants draw on when framing their decisions. This paper presents major themes related to gender differences among male and female college students' work aspirations. Despite the expanded freedom of choice indicative of the contemporary labor market, my analysis adds to previous research demonstrating differential work values and continuing adherence to the separate spheres ideology.

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Table of Contents

Introduction **1**

Research Questions **4**

Theoretical Framework & Empirical Work **5**
The Importance of Gender in Work Aspirations 5
Conceptualizing the Decision-Making Process in a Way that is Gendered 8
Gender as it Pertains to Work Values 12

Hypotheses **16**

Methods **16**
Research Design 16
Site and Sample 17
Data Collection 18
Data Analysis 19

Findings **21**
The Next Step: The Start of Something New Or The Beginning of the Future? 23
I Don't Know What The Future Will Bring: Acceptance of Uncertainty 25
The Freedom to be Flexible 28
Work Values: A Few Fundamental Differences 34
Show Me The Money 37
Family: It Could Happen v. I Have A Plan 42

Implications and Discussion **47**

References **53**

Appendices **58**

Figures and Appendices

Figure 1: *Participants Matched With Their Expressed Work Aspirations* 22

Figure 2: *Participant Reactions To Future Career Change By Gender*.....32

Figure 3: *Participant Reactions To Income By Gender*.....38

Figure 4: *Breakdown Of Work Values Emphasized By Male And Female Participants* 41

Figure 5: *Participant Reactions To Family As It Relates To Work Aspirations.*.....43

Appendix A*:* Demographic Breakdown of Sample 58

Appendix B*:* Recruitment Email 60

Appendix C*:* Informed Consent..... 61

Appendix D*:* Interview Guide 64

I. Introduction

In Betty Friedan's 1963 seminal piece, The Feminine Mystique, which brought about the second-wave of feminism, she boldly asserts:

> "The problem that has no name—which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities—is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease…If we continue to produce millions of young mothers who stop their growth and education short of identity, without a strong core of human values to pass on to their children, we are committing, quite simply, genocide, starting with the mass burial of American women and ending with the progressive dehumanization of their sons and daughters" (Friedan 2013: 302).

At the time of her work, women had returned to their roles as wives and mothers after the disruption of World War II pushed them outside their comfort zones and into the workplace in record-breaking numbers. Looking into housewives' psyches for the first time, Friedan uncovered a puzzling phenomenon, the idea that women felt a distinct sense of emptiness. To combat an indescribable lack of purpose, Friedan calls for a major change:

> "A massive attempt must be made by educators and parents—and ministers, magazine editors, manipulators, guidance counselors—to stop the early-marriage movement, stop girls from growing up wanting to be 'just a housewife,' stop it by insisting, with the same attention from childhood on that parents and educators give to boys, that girls develop the resources of self, goals that will permit them to find their own identity" (Friedan 2013: 302).

As a female researcher, Friedan was able to identify a distinct societal problem plaguing women of her generation and proposed a plausible way to stop the vicious cycle of indifference.

Contemporary society has undergone a revolution of sorts in terms of gender expectations in the fifty years since Betty Friedan first published The Feminine Mystique. In the past, there were a limited number of roles filled by men and women. Now, times have changed. Family structures today are nowhere near as restricted as they once were. In fact, the "traditional" family with a working husband and a stay-at-home wife is slowly becoming outdated and replaced by the dual-career family (Kaufman 2005). Currently, there are more than 43.2 million women in

the workforce, compared to the 14.8 million working women in 1967 (Groves 2011). The number of women with a Bachelor's Degree or higher has skyrocketed over the years to the point that the percentage of women holding such degrees has surpassed that of men (Groves 2011).

Sociologists, psychologists, and economists alike have sought to explain the dramatic turnaround. In developing the preference theory, Hakim (2000) specifically identified five social changes in the labor market that paved the way for increased female participation in the late 20th century:

1. Increased use of contraception allowing women to control their own fertility.

2. Passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 barring employment discrimination on the basis of one's sex, as well as other personal attributes.

3. Expanded career opportunities beyond blue-collar work, including professional and service-related fields that typically appeal to women as well as men.

4. The creation of jobs for "secondary earners," people who wish to work but do not necessarily want to take on full-time employment (Hakim 2000:3).

5. Prioritization of the individual, especially in terms of opinions regarding lifestyle choices.

Taken together, the five social changes fostered a greater appreciation for individual preferences, most notably in the career selections of women. Yet, despite the progress, many men and women still cling to traditional gender expectations. For instance, women's participation in the labor force declines as they transition into parenthood and, when mothers do continue to work, they often opt for part-time positions (Stone 2007; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). Comparatively, men's likelihood of being employed remains the same regardless of children present in their households (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1999). What accounts for the

enduring differences? Researchers, including Cecilia Ridgeway, have devoted books toward the discussion of how gender is still relevant in the modern world. For the purpose of this study, I am interested in understanding how gender differences present themselves and continue to foster unique work aspirations.

With the power of choice more apparent, personal preferences are increasingly more important to explore. It is critical to look specifically at the role of the individual, as past research demonstrates that gender differences persist in part because of self-selecting processes in which individuals act on gendered occupational preferences (Okamoto and England 1999; Polavieja and Platt 2010; Ridgeway 2011). Ultimately, individuals are not forced into a given occupation or explicitly excluded from others. Rather, they self-select into a career based on a myriad of different factors, including interests, abilities, and values. Thus, deciding on a career can be seen as a choice in which individuals weigh their desires against practical considerations. To appreciate men and women's differing experiences in the workforce, it is imperative to first understand how they reached their decisions and what specifically drove them down a given path. By studying college students, it is possible to look at the incumbent shift in roles and assess trends that result from the decision-making process. Without knowledge of how individuals select their occupations, it is difficult to fully understand how gender remains relevant in spite of the fundamental changes in the marketplace and the increasing economic and political pressures to eliminate distinctions based on gender (Ridgeway 2011). Thus, I seek to build off previous work by delving into how gender influences work-related aspirations.

By emphasizing the contribution of the individual, I am not discrediting the impact of structural processes, such as the effect of employers' preferences or personnel practices on unequal outcomes (Biebly and Baron 1989; Kennelly 1999; Reskin and McBrier 2000;

Ridgeway 2011). Yet, the study of how social organizations and local contexts influence gender differences in the workplace populates empirical research, leaving individual-level analysis in need of more attention. A gap in research on the issue occurs during the pivotal transition period before entry into the workforce as experienced by college seniors.

From the life course perspective of human development, the transition to adulthood normally coincides with college. It is during this period, typically bracketed between the ages of 18 and 25, that an individual leaves home, finishes school, begins a full-time job, and starts to think about the future possibility of marriage and children. In the past, graduation from college meant individuals would begin their careers and immediately consider starting a family. Current research shows, however, that the previously cut-and-dry transition period has become increasingly individualized due to delays in marriage and child rearing, as well as the extension of formal schooling to encompass the necessity of a graduate degree (Arnett 2006; Murphy et al. 2010). For some, "the increase in opportunities and the decrease of immediate responsibility…[encourages them to] hit the ground running as they exit college, viewing the multitude of options as exciting and empowering" (Murphy et al. 2010:174). For others, the same milestone leaves them "psychologically paralyzed, listless, and in more extreme cases, depressed as they leave college in search of their identity, which is often most clearly manifested in the exploration of a meaningful career" (Murphy et al. 2010:174). The newfound diversity in the transition to adulthood makes studying college seniors of particular interest in contemporary research.

II. Research Questions

1. How does gender influence college seniors' work aspirations?

2. How is gender related to the decision-making process? Which students articulate a longer-term career path? How have students dealt with uncertainty or the prospect of changing their work aspirations in the future?

3. How does gender impact the work values individuals draw on when framing their career decisions? Do students emphasize aspects consistent with the separate spheres ideology?

This study looks into the intersection of gender and work aspirations. First, I present a theoretical framework highlighting the importance of gender norms and cultural schemas, the persistence of the separate spheres ideology, and the normative alternatives approach to understanding the decision-making process of male and female students. I look to the empirical work completed on the matter of gender and work values specifically to discuss any patterns currently mentioned by researchers in the field. I draw on past work when formulating my hypotheses and providing justification for my predictions. I then give a detailed explanation of the methods and protocols with which I conducted the present study, including the rationale behind the selection of Emory University as my site of interest and the operationalization of variables in the code system I created. I go on to explain the meaningful patterns that emerged from my interviews and proceed to discuss the implications of the present findings, as well as how they can be expanded upon in future endeavors.

III. Theoretical Framework & Empirical Work

The Importance of Gender in Work Aspirations

Work aspirations are commonly referenced as "stable prefigurative orientations composed of specific beliefs about one's future trajectory through the educational system and one's ultimate class or status position" (Morgan 2007:1528-1529). They result from a combination of an individual's interests, values, and perceived societal constraints. The

significance of the individualized beliefs about the future lies in the presumption that they "condition current behavior" (Morgan 2007:1529). Although Morgan's (2007) definition of expectations and aspirations treats the two terms independently, with the former representing realistic assessments of the future and the later encompassing more idealistic goals, I am linking the two together as "work aspirations" for the purpose of my research. Since I am interviewing current seniors in college who have not yet begun their careers and asking them questions about the type of position they anticipate having in the future, it is impossible for me to discern realistic versus idealized predictions.

It is Joseph A. Kahl's early sociological study in 1953 that reveals the profound importance of work aspirations for the first time. He reaches this conclusion by conducting in-depth interviews with young boys whose intentions to go to college are unclear, attempting to uncover their decision-making process and the specific factors influencing their career goals. His study effectively debunks the myth that work aspirations are either predetermined by expectations grounded in individuals' class status or by their cognitive abilities. Rather, Kahl (1953) argues that individuals make a conscious and pointed decision at a specific stage in their development. His work highlights the importance of social environment and cultural expectations or norms, and demonstrates that work aspirations cannot be considered in a vacuum. Instead, they must be incorporated into the larger expectations of an individual's life and position in society. Consequently, gender must be considered as an important factor.

Individuals continually add or discard roles in society. For instance, Donald Super (1980) identifies nine primary roles (child, student, "leisurite," citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, pensioner) and four main theaters in which the interdependence of individuals' life roles is enacted (home, community, school, workplace). Yet, despite the

freedom to embody a multitude of different personas throughout their lives, people retain their identity as men or women, regardless of the situational circumstances they find themselves in (West and Zimmerman 1987). Like age or race, gender is a physical characteristic that can be used to categorize an individual. One's gender unconsciously evokes certain stereotypes that inadvertently aid in forming judgments about individuals and expectations of their capabilities (Ridgeway 2011). As such, it is a "diffuse background identity" that acts in combination with other factors pertinent to a given situation (Ridgeway 2011:69). Indeed, society imposes a unique set of expectations on both men and women, which presumably is strengthened over time as new generations are socialized in keeping with the gendered ideals. Since gender is socially constructed and the resulting behavior is subjected to constant scrutiny and evaluation, individuals' statuses as men or women theoretically lead to different cultural expectations for how they will approach the decision-making process and which work values they will prioritize when forming their work aspirations.

For the purpose of this study, I am adopting Kahl's (1953) approach by looking specifically at two dimensions comprising work aspirations—the decision-making process and the work values discussed by the participants. The decision-making process "occurs throughout the life cycle as individuals make a series of decisions that have occupational consequences" (Correll 2001:1693). Although the process encompasses a series of stages beginning early on when individuals select specific activities that are interesting to them, the present study looks at the later phases when individuals are theoretically choosing to enter a specific job. I am particularly interested in whether participants adopt a short-term or long-term approach, their acceptance of uncertainty, and the perceived level of flexibility they deem acceptable at the critical junction in their lives. Additionally, individuals choose occupations based in part on

work values, which can be defined as "attitudes about end states or behaviors that guide the selection and evaluation of behavior or events" (Marini et al. 1996:50). Past research distinguishes between intrinsic work values, attributes dealing directly with the work itself, and extrinsic work values, features that can be separated from the meaning of the task involved (Marini et al 1996). When assessing participants' work values, I am interested in determining whether the values participants emphasize are in keeping with the separate spheres ideology. Mainly, I am concerned with distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation, the importance an individual places on money, and the ways in which participants incorporate the idea of a future family into their present decisions.

Conceptualizing the Decision-Making Process in a Way That is Gendered

Over the years, men and women have remained separate groups and have received different treatment depending on the given context. Beginning in childhood, gender becomes an essential salient identity (Stryker 1968). In our society, men and women are socialized differently and taught to adhere to gender norms, which effectively "provide members of the population with common knowledge about the cues by which to classify self and others according to the code and behaviors and traits that can be expected of someone of that classification" (Ridgeway 2011:37). The importance of impression management and the societal value placed on acting according to gender norms reinforces the need to maintain the social construction of masculinity and femininity one grew up with (Goffman 1959). Additionally, fear of family or community backlash if decisions do not match societal expectations can cause individuals to tailor their decisions accordingly, even when true desires stray from the accepted norm.

The separate spheres ideology arguably encompasses a collection of the most

pervasive gender norms as dictated by society. Ever since industrialization, work and home are treated separately and the ideal of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker has run rampant (Acker 1990; Padavic and Reskin 2002). The belief that men should be responsible for providing financially for their families becomes synonymous with the definition of masculinity. Thus, having a sufficient income to do so is typically a key component of being considered successful (Dyke and Murphy 2006; Kimmel and Messner 2007; Kimmel 2008). Women, on the other hand, are expected to take on roles that involve caring for and nurturing others, leaving their femininity to be defined almost exclusively by their work in the household (Welter 1966; Cott 1977; Dyke and Murphy 2006). While men are not limited to roles in the workforce and women are not restricted to the household, the separate spheres ideology typically characterizes each group in this way (Erikson 1965; Welter 1966; Cott 1977; Kerber 1988). The pervasive expectation that men and women must accept the "work devotion" and "family devotion" schemas respectively plays an important role in guiding their behavior both inside the household and out in the workforce (Blair-Loy 2001:690). The distinct roles are believed to embody the "essential nature" of each gender (West and Zimmerman 1987:144). As such, gender is used as a "primary frame for organizing social relations," which can impact behavior in all aspects of life, including the formation of work aspirations (Ridgeway 2011:28).

The public sphere of work has a long-standing history of being seen as inherently masculine. Although the ideal worker norm is theoretically gender-neutral, it is "implicitly infused with cultural beliefs about gender," which includes the presumption that women will take responsibility for the family, should one become a reality in the future (Ridgeway 2011:101). Economic theory proposes the use of characteristics commonly associated with a group in lieu of information about an individual applicant when making hiring decisions, a phenomenon termed

"statistical discrimination" (Phelps 1972; Arrow 1973; Biebly and Baron 1989; Kennelly 1999). In doing so, employers may attach assumptions to individuals that are unnecessarily negative based solely on societal views of their primary social group, rather than making informed decisions about their competence. The most common image of female workers pictures them in maternal roles, contradicting employers' views of ideal employees, and negatively impacting employers' decisions regarding hiring or promoting women (Kennelly 1999). The belief that women are inherently more suited to the domestic sphere can lead to differential treatment in the workforce, such as increased pressure for them to demonstrate their commitment to their jobs (Coltrane 2004; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). While not necessarily explicit in all aspects of employment, widely held cultural beliefs regarding gender tend to play a significant role in determining which occupations are considered suitable for men and which are appropriate for women.

It is not only employers who rely on the ideal worker norm. Stereotypic views of masculinity and femininity also play into individuals' perceptions of themselves as workers (Rideway 2011). Specifically, widely held cultural norms tying positions to one gender over another may impact the jobs individuals aspire to. A nurse, for instance, is inherently perceived as a female occupation in that it demands seemingly feminine qualities of nurturing and compassion. On the other hand, a marine embodies stereotypically male characteristics, such as physical strength and emotional stoicism (Williams 1989). The ideal worker norm, together with the enduring belief that men and women should take on different responsibilities in the future, may cause both genders to experience distress, either by pressuring men to be highly successful or by making women feel guilty for wanting to obtain a high-power position (Blair-Loy 2001). The cultural expectations may invariably factor into the type of careers men and women pursue,

as well as their commitment to the worker role moving forward.

Even as the percentage of women involved in the contemporary workforce increases over time, differences in cultural expectations regarding how men and women should embody the role of a worker persist. Using premedical students as his sample, Robert Fiorentine (1987) looks to the societal acceptance of women's expanded role to explain the current changes in the workforce. He proposes a normative alternatives approach, which "differs from existing cultural models in that it views the difference in the persistence rate of female and male premedical students not so much as the result of normative *barriers* to female career commitment and success but as the result of normatively appropriate *alternatives* to these demands that are currently afforded women" (Fiorentine 1987:1133). He notes that the growing approval of women in the workforce has resulted in fewer norms surrounding what women should not do, but has not impacted expectations of what they should be doing to the same degree. The lack of guidance leaves women with a plethora of different options, yet carries different implications for men. Specifically, Fiorentine argues "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).

According to Fiorentine's theory, women experience greater freedom when deciding on their future societal role and, as a result, are able to integrate various work aspirations into the cultural schemas they adhere to (Fiorentine 1987). Interestingly, the same changes do not liberate men from the societal constraints of the breadwinner role or the importance of incorporating extrinsic rewards, like power, prestige, and money, into their early career choices. Many studies emphasize the limited options afforded to women, yet Robert Fiorentine opens up the possibility

that it is really men who experience constrained work aspirations arising from socially-constructed views of what is appropriate for them to pursue.

Gender as it Pertains to Work Values

Studies show that gender differences do emerge in individuals' work aspirations (e.g., Morgan, Isaac, and Sansone 2001; Kimmel 2008; Evans and Diekman 2009; Ridgeway 2011). Men and women alike carry their early gendered self-assessments and implicit assumptions resulting from the gender frame with them as they approach pivotal decisions in their careers, such as looking for a first job (Correll 2001; Correll 2004). The internalization of cultural schemas calls upon a unique prioritization of individual characteristics, definitions of success, and work values for men and women when selecting a career, as the reported differences are commonly seen as echoing gender role stereotypes.

Lee (1998) identifies four key characteristics commonly used to differentiate women and men's societal roles in his study of the unequal distribution of men and women who select careers in the Sciences, Math, and Engineering (SME) fields. A woman's role, he finds, typically is expected to involve working with people, relying on emotions, valuing cooperation, and often acting illogically. Conversely, a man's role primarily is associated with working with things, refraining from emotional interactions, acting in an individualistic manner, and maintaining a logical outlook. This socially defined vision of men and women can severely limit an individual's work aspirations by dictating which paths are suitable based largely on gender (Lee 1998).

Jane Sturges' (1999) research takes a somewhat different approach. In her study of how managers depict the meaning of career success, she recognizes four main groups, each of which encompasses different visions of the factors contributing to overall life satisfaction. The

first group is “the climbers,” who define achievement almost exclusively in terms of external criteria, such as status within a company’s hierarchy or level of compensation. Second are “the experts,” a group of individuals who value internal factors, such as reaching high levels of competency or receiving praise, more so than external factors. The next category is labeled “the influencers,” as they seek to positively impact their work environment and equate leaving a mark on the industry with achieving personal career success. Lastly, there are “the self-realisers,” who posit internal conceptions of achievement as the key to career success. The distribution of men and women in the four groups reveals interesting insights into the belief systems across the two genders. Sturges finds that the “climber” group is exclusively male, whereas both the “experts” and “self-realizers” are predominately female, with only three men in her sample in the two categories combined. Thus, the main gender difference is seen when evaluating internal and external criteria of success. Men appear to emphasize external factors and link their self-evaluations primarily to position and pay. Women, on the other hand, are more inclined to stress internal factors, such as feeling a sense of accomplishment or achieving other intangible benefits. When women do mention the importance of external criteria, they refrain from placing them at the center of their definitions of success. From her study, Sturges concludes that women demonstrate broader expectations for their futures, viewing their careers as only one aspect of what they hope to achieve in their lifetimes.

Although employing different techniques, subsequent research reveals similar results to those found in the Lee (1998) and Sturges (1999) studies. Dyke and Murphy (2006), for example, demonstrate women’s propensity to prioritize seeking a career that enables them to strike a balance between their work lives and their sense of responsibility for the home. They too highlight women’s internal focus and men’s external concerns when dealing with conceptions of

success. Within their sample of highly successful workers, most women emphasize the importance of balancing multiple roles and cultivating personal relationships. They are generally uncomfortable defining success purely in terms of a career and only three out of twenty women in their sample mention money at all. Generally, women believe a balanced life complete with successful relationships and interesting pursuits is worth any sacrifices to their careers. Among the men sampled, however, a staggering forty-five percent explicitly mention the importance of material success. In addition to financial prosperity, men commonly include the importance of making a difference and maintaining a sense of independence.

Dyke and Murphy's (2006) results, taken together with Lee's (1998) and Sturges' (1999), lend support to research suggesting that gender has important implications for how people approach their careers. Specifically, men and women tend to hold different work values (Lyson 1984; Bridges 1989; Fiorentine 1992; Marini et al 1996; Morgan et al 2001). Work values are extremely important because they impact individual sources of motivation, which in turn can influence educational pursuits, employment prospects, financial choices, and commitment to the worker role, among other important decisions, by calling upon unique considerations for men and women. The internalization of specific societal gender roles prompts people to express gender typical goals and subsequently self-select into careers in keeping with cultural schemas (Evans and Diekman 2009). Such firmly held beliefs lead men and women along diverging career paths, where women seek to find positions that emphasize their intrinsic work values, such as interpersonal goals, and men tend to pursue high pay and high status careers that align with their extrinsic work values (Morgan et al. 2001; Dyke and Murphy 2006).

Women's preferences for fields of employment that provide altruistic and social rewards and men's inclination toward occupations that afford material resources and a sense of

freedom likely begin well before they enter the workforce (Marini et al. 1996). Starting at a young age and continuing through college, individual preferences for a future career are generally organized along gendered lines. There is a long-standing history of segregated major selection among college students, which has been linked to subsequent occupational segregation and pay differentials between men and women (England and Li 2006). Entire courses of study have traditionally been separated into male and female fields. For instance, a disproportionate number of male students are found in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, as well as in technical fields like Business or Accounting (Bandura et al. 1991; England and Li 2006). Conversely, female students typically gravitate toward traditional feminized fields, such as Education, English, Sociology, Nursing, or, more recently, Psychology and Communications (England and Li 2006). Interestingly, the apparent trends discussed in previous decades of research still carry an element of truth in contemporary society. Between 2009 and 2010, for example, women earned approximately 85% of the degrees issued in Health professions like Nursing, 79.5% in Education, 77% in Psychology, yet only 43% in Mathematics, 34% in Theology and religious vocations, and 16.8% in Engineering (National Center of Education Statistics, 2011). -Additionally, men and women continue to self-select into careers and areas of specialty that reap unequal rewards, even when the overall course of study is the same (Hull and Nelson 2000; Boulis, Jacobs, and Veloski 2001; Snyder and Green 2008; Yim 2009).

Despite the differences referenced above, some research has unveiled increasing similarities in male and female students' work values over time. Since 1969, women have reportedly placed more value on "status-attainment goals," primarily the importance of establishing a sense of authority, receiving recognition from peers, and achieving a high level of financial security (Fiorentine 1988). On the opposite side of the spectrum, men have been shown

to demonstrate a higher degree of consideration for the family than previously suggested by the traditional split of roles indicative of the breadwinner theory (Cinamon and Rich 2002; Bianchi, Raley, and Milkie 2009). Notwithstanding claims that the growing presence of men and women in atypical fields or the convergence of work values implies that the role of gender is waning in importance, men and women continue to form unique work aspirations that are worth studying.

IV. Hypotheses

The works mentioned above have greatly influenced the purpose of the current study, prompting me to focus on gender as it applies to work aspirations by looking specifically at the decision-making process and work values emphasized throughout. The existing theory and empirical work surrounding the study of gender differences in work aspirations have led me to develop a few hypotheses. Mainly, I expect male and female students to frame their work aspirations in keeping with norms and schemas indicative of the separate spheres ideology, particularly in terms of how participants discuss work-family issues. I expect adherence to the separate spheres ideology to be seen in the decision-making processes and work values male and female participants discuss.

V. Methods

Research Design

I conducted in-depth interviews as my research method to assess a possible relationship between gender and work aspirations. Interviews allowed me to collect data from a wide array of undergraduates representing diverse majors and occupational paths, while simultaneously being both time and cost efficient. Since I am interested in descriptive research, which aims to describe apparent patterns or trends that can be used to determine if there is a relationship between various concepts, an unobtrusive qualitative research method, such as a semi-structured

interview, is the most effective method to employ (Babbie 2009). Additionally, given the fact that I am concerned with the responses of students currently undergoing the transition to adulthood, a cross-sectional study consisting of a selected group of undergraduate student participants at a single point in time is appropriate (Babbie 2009).

Site and Sample

I have selected Emory University as my research site because as a top twenty-ranked private university, it boasts a competitive admissions process, extensive career counseling services, and a highly driven student body. As such, I can assume that most students are interested in pursuing some sort of professional career. The student profile initially attracted me to using Emory as my location of choice, as I believe the expectations of seniors across the board are higher than the national average. Since my topic centers on the issue of gender differences in work aspirations, I believe it will be particularly interesting to conduct in-depth interviews with students in a university setting in which there is a 44%/56% split between male and female students and all undergraduates are encouraged to pursue full employment or postsecondary schooling upon graduation (US News College Rankings 2013-2014).

The unit of analysis for the present study is the individual Emory University undergraduate student between the age of 18 and 22 years old. To select a sample for the study, I used a convenience sampling technique, in which I recruited subjects through personal contacts. While compiling a list of individuals, I made a pointed effort to ensure that the sample included students from diverse backgrounds and fields of study. While the sample was not randomly selected and therefore is not representative of the Emory undergraduate community as a whole, it is arguably illustrative of the important factors and influences in male and female students' work aspirations.

Since this study seeks to assess social, and not biological, differences between men and women, the independent variable is gender. Gender encompasses psychological characteristics and traits culturally assumed to be appropriate for women and men (Money, Hampson, and Hampson 1955; West and Zimmerman 1987). Sex, on the other hand, is more biologically driven, referring to physical characteristics unique to an individual (West and Zimmerman 1987). Due to the small size of the sample, only participants readily identifying with the gender corresponding with their sex were included.

The total number of participants in my sample is thirty, consisting of fifteen males and fifteen females. Each student interviewed is at least eighteen years old and currently enrolled in his or her senior year at Emory University. To account for the various programs Emory students have access to, I have included four students, two males and two females, currently enrolled in the Goizueta Business School. Although I sought diversity when recruiting participants, my primary focus was not on making comparisons within racial, ethnic, or social class groups. As such, while I did not exclude participants based on those factors, my sample is not representative enough to allow me to comment specifically on race, ethnicity, or social class. For a demographic breakdown of the present sample, see Appendix A.

Data Collection

After compiling a list of potential interviewees, I recruited participants by sending out an initial recruitment email to their university-provided Microsoft Outlook email account (see Appendix B). Although I included my advisor's contact information, participants were encouraged to respond to me directly regarding the scheduling of a time and place for the interview. Interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed upon location at Emory University. Unless a participant specifically requested a given location, interviews were held in a vacant

room in Tarbutton. Before commencing, I obtained informed consent from the participants (see Appendix C) and verbally told them what their participation entailed. At this time, I presented a brief overview of the study, as well as the fact that my advisor will be contacting them in a year regarding the longitudinal portion of the study she is conducting. I opened the floor to questions and answered any posed before beginning. The interviews typically lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour and a half and consisted of a variety of questions. Specifically, I was interested in exploring each student's work aspirations, including the influence of parents, friends, values, self-concept, and the likelihood of having a family in the future, on his or her current decisions. Thus, topics for the questions ranged from background information, to plans after graduation, to influential factors in the decision-making process (see Appendix D).

I contacted a total of forty-nine individuals, twenty-nine males and twenty females, for a total response rate of 61.2 percent. It is worth noting that my response rate was significantly higher for female participants than for male participants. There are a multitude of possible explanations for this unforeseen occurrence. Given the fact that both my faculty advisor and I are female, we may form stronger bonds with other women such that they feel compelled to respond to the call for participants. It is also possible that female students pay greater attention to formalized emails, or that they are more likely to respond to the requests of others in their academic network. To account for the discrepancy between the response rate of male and female participants, I focused almost exclusively on recruiting men during the second half of my data collection.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and downloaded for review. I used a qualitative software analysis program, MAXQDA, to analyze the information collected from the

interviews. Data was coded using a two-part process. The first phase consisted of deductive analysis, which involved using an initial "start list" of codes modified primarily from my interview guide and conceptual framework (Miles and Huberman 1994:58). My code system originally consisted of the following major topics: background attributes, career plans, reasons for decision, experience with this type of work, informal talking, parents' role, friends' role, other guidance, and the future. After completing the initial coding, I proceeded to the second phase, which shifted to inductive analysis techniques. The inductive nature of the second round of coding allowed patterns and themes to present themselves from the data over time (Miles and Huberman 1994). This next step enabled me to draw on past research when revising my code system and narrow my focus to a few topics.

Of particular interest was parceling out the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic work values. I relied on Amabile et al.'s (1994) Work Preference Inventory to conceptualize the two terms. Thus, I defined intrinsic work values as "the motivation to engage in work primarily for its own sake, because the work itself is interesting, engaging, or in some way satisfying" (Amabile et al. 1994:950). On the other hand, I defined extrinsic work values as "the motivation to work primarily in response to something apart from the work itself, such as reward or recognition or the dictates of other people" (Amabile et al. 1994:950). By synthesizing the work of Harter (1981), Amabile et al. (1994), and Fernandez et al. (2006), I was able to re-categorize my original predictions into three main categories: intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, and striking a balance. Specifically, I coded task involvement, interests, values/beliefs, talents, and interpersonal goals (helping people, work culture, social interaction, lifestyle) as intrinsic work values and money/tangible incentives, status, power, and influence of others (recognition, approval, and constraints) as extrinsic work values.

In the end, the code system I implemented consisted of four large categories (Plan Immediately After Graduation, Work Values, Perceived Flexibility, and Future Considerations) and seventy-nine individual sub-codes. By engaging in both deductive and inductive coding processes, I was not limiting myself to strictly the relationships and variables I initially anticipated, but rather kept an open mind throughout. When approaching both stages, I tried my best to refrain from making inferences beyond what my participants explicitly said. To do so, I acknowledged that I would need to revisit my initial codes and modify them over the course of my analysis. Thus, I was open to adding new codes, discarding irrelevant ones, altering existing ones, and recoding various sections to ensure that I did not overlook meaningful patterns or relationships. Given that gender was my independent variable, I specifically compared the answers of male and female students on all major topics once I completed all stages of coding.

VI. Findings

Given the competitive, pre-professional nature of Emory University, it is not surprising to find that most students expressed the desire to attain a high-status, demanding career in the future. Within this sample specifically, there were future doctors, lawyers, businessmen and women, teachers, and religious leaders:

Participant Pseudonym	Work Aspirations/Plans After Graduation
Adam	Sustainability initiatives
Ashley	Nonprofit work, Teaching
Brandon	Journalism, On-camera anchor, Production
Brittany	Teaching High School Biology, Medical school
Chris	Counseling, Graduate school for a PsyD, Private Practice, Government/Military work
Charlotte	Research fellowship, Medical School
Daniel	Law school in England
Dana	Volunteer work, Law school, Environmental or Constitutional Law
Eric	Residence Hall Director, Nonprofit/social justice work
Eliza	Graduate school for public health, Health promotion
Frank	Work abroad, Law school
Fiona	Graduate school in London for design, Own an antique store
Greg	Service-oriented program, Medical School, Doctor in an underprivileged community
Grace	Teaching High School, Law school
Harrison	Graduate school for public policy and law, Lobbyist
Hallie	Consulting, Graduate school for Anthropology or public health
Isaac	Work in the music or technology industry, Business
Isabelle	Consulting, Nonprofit work
Jake	Program abroad, Medical school, Ophthalmologist
Jessica	Nonprofit work, Graduate school for public health
Kevin	Residence Hall Director, Working Abroad, History teacher
Katie	Medical school
Lucas	Consulting, Business, Author
Lexie	Advertising, Marketing
Mark	Consulting, Real Estate
Maggie	Health, Nutrition, Food Insecurity, Graduate school for public health
Nick	Finance, Law school
Nicole	Fellowship in Scotland, Teaching, Nonprofit work
Oscar	Community-building fellowship, Priest
Olivia	Consulting, Graduate school for Fine Arts, Professor

Figure 1: *Participants Matched With Their Expressed Work Aspirations*

Respondents of both genders acknowledged the importance of their impending career choice, viewing it as the culmination of their four years of college. They appreciated that the career they ultimately selected would occupy a large portion of their time and thus warranted careful consideration:

> I think it's important to have [my career be] somewhat cohesive with my identity, just because you spend so much time at work that if you're not doing something that you're passionate about, I think it's really hard to do it and you might as well not be doing it. So I would like to be doing something that I'm invested in. It doesn't have to be like my life's calling. **–Lexie**

Here, Lexie discussed her intention to select a career that matched her personality. Although she appreciated that work may not always be enjoyable, she intended to consider her passions so that she ultimately selected a career that was both rewarding and enjoyable. Like Lexie, students were often committed to pursuing an occupation that left them happy and personally fulfilled. While the end goal was generally the same for male and female participants, the approach to the decision-making process and expression of individualized work values differed considerably throughout. Of particular interest were the ways in which male and female participants tended to frame their career choices in keeping with traditional gender norms of men taking on the achievement-oriented, provider role and women accepting the nurturing, behind-the-scenes position. Adherence to the idea of separate spheres was most evident in participants' flexibility and the delineation of important factors to consider.

The Next Step: The Start of Something New Or The Beginning of the Future?

When addressing the daunting question of what they were planning on doing directly after graduation, participants generally responded in one of two ways. Either they answered the question by describing a short-term plan that encompassed the next few years or, alternately, by launching into a detailed account of how their next step would set them on the path to attain their

ultimate career goals. Participants opting for the short-term approach often defined the position they would take after graduation as simply a “job”:

> Now, I also say "job." A lot of people are looking to go into a career immediately. I could, but I mean I can potentially see myself doing that, but I’d be very happy with finding a job, something that pays me, something that I can live off of while working on this kind of community aspect of my life…um and not have prospects of advancing in that job for future work for the rest of my life or for the next twenty years or something. That’s not particularly high on my priority list right now. **–Adam**

> I want a job where like even if I can’t see myself there forever, that it gives me experience to continue to do things that I like to do. **–Ashley**

Adam and Ashley viewed graduation as an opportunity to experiment, either in sustainability or politics respectively. By looking for a “job,” they were focused on securing a somewhat temporary occupation rather than committing to a long-term career in their current field of interest. They did not necessarily see themselves remaining in their positions permanently and, like other participants who expressed a short-term approach, they acknowledged that they would ultimately establish themselves in a different career entirely:

> I think it might be fun for a little bit, but I don’t really think I’ll be in advertising and marketing for my whole life. Um, I have no idea what I’m going to do. Like I kind of think it’s going to be one of those things that you never really know, and you kind of just fall into. **–Lexie**

Similarly, Lexie echoed the same desire to find a job doing something “fun” for a few years before seriously considering a long-term career. Despite the level of ambiguity this approach entails, students like Adam, Ashley, and Lexie reported being satisfied thinking solely about the near future and planning to address long-term career decisions as they arose.

Conversely, respondents recounting a longer-term approach expressed their next step after graduation in keeping with a potential career:

> Anyway, I thought about it. And so these are my afterschool plans…eventually I would like to start my own business, which will be sort of a hybrid. I would love to have like a storefront with some antiques, but I would also like to have some employees that

> specialize in appraisals. So, eventually after I get my MA, I will get my...you get certified for appraisals. Basically you take a test, you don't have to go to school for it if you don't want to and I probably won't. So yeah...I would love to do appraisals, maybe the occasional estate sale, but...I don't want to always do that, it was exhausting to sell everything, I would rather narrow it down. **–Fiona**

At the time of the interview, Fiona had already been accepted into a graduate program specializing in design. She remarked that she selected this masters program in particular because it would set her up to achieve her long-term goal of owning an antique store. Fiona gave the impression that she had every step of her future career planned out already. She knew the degrees she needed, as well as the perfect location for her dream store. Unlike students who discussed plans encompassing only the next few years, participants looking long-term tended to have more thought out plans and seemed more certain of their future career aspirations. They generally expressed more concrete ideas and displayed a commitment to pursuing their goals immediately upon graduation.

Overall, there was a relatively even split between women who integrated their next step into the discussion of a career and those who were simply looking for a job upon graduation. A clear majority of men, however, expressed more definitive plans for their careers in the future. The difference in approach taken by male and female students supports my initial hypothesis that men would convey a long-term approach more frequently than women.

I Don't Know What The Future Will Bring: Acceptance of Uncertainty

Due to the variation in experience and timing of the interviews both in the Fall and Spring terms, it was not surprising that most students revealed some form of uncertainty with regard to their career plans. Most participants, regardless of their gender, mentioned a sense of indecision arising from the nature of the contemporary job market. Specifically, they recalled high turnover rates and unpredictability as justification for their indecision:

> It's such a different mentality now. My parents…my dad worked at the same place for twenty-six years, but now people do so many things **–Ashley**

> Whatever you do, like especially in our generation, it's not like we're going and doing what our parents did for the rest of our lives right after we get out of what we're doing now. And so…this is important, and of course you should make the decision you feel is best for you, but it's also like two or three years of your life versus like however many years you're going to be working. **–Olivia**

Both Ashley and Olivia cited their parents as a source of reference. They each acknowledged that times have changed and the prospect of remaining in the same position for the duration of one's career was a thing of the past. Given the unique circumstances of the current job market, it was important to assess the ways in which uncertainty differed from participant to participant. Interestingly, at the time of the interviews, more females reported that they had decided on a next course of action. The fact that more female participants had already signed a job offer, committed themselves to some form of initiative, or enrolled in a graduate school program did not necessarily mean that they were more certain of their long-term work aspirations than males. Many female participants who had made a career decision discussed taking advantage of a "good opportunity" next year, yet made no connection between the position and what they aspired to do in the future:

> **Interviewer:** So tell me about what you're thinking of doing after graduation?
> **Hallie:** I accepted a job with a management consulting firm, and so I'll be an Associate Consultant there in Atlanta. At their Atlanta office
> **Interviewer:**...And when did you decide to do this?
> **Hallie:** Um, pretty haphazardly. I spent this past summer interning with Harvard School of Public Health in the Department of Nutrition, and so I thought I would go more the public health route after college. Um, and I was also looking into PhD programs in Anthropology or in a similar, similar-natured program. And so when I started senior year, I thought that I would be applying to schools and just going straight through, but I got cold feet and decided to apply to any job under the sun to make sure that I was really, that I had a plan.

Although Hallie had secured a great job with a prestigious consulting firm, she did not necessarily connect the position to her future career goals. Instead, she, like many other female

participants, remained committed to taking advantage of the opportunities presented to her and seeing where the position took her. She happily accepted the future uncertainty resulting from her decision and did not discount the idea of going back to her public health roots in a few years.

Additionally, even though male participants were often undecided regarding next year's plans, they were still more inclined to convey certainty about their future work aspirations than their female counterparts. Males overwhelmingly gave the impression that they had carefully weighed the alternatives and selected a path to embark on, whereas females tended to express their uncertainty about the future more overtly. For instance, many participants mentioned the idea of leaving their first job to pursue a graduate degree of some sort. The way the participants discussed this possibility differed substantially by gender. Female participants tended to be open to the possibility of a variety of programs in different fields entirely. They did not shy away from expressing all of their ideas during the interview no matter how seemingly contradictory they appeared:

> I have thought of things from going to get my Masters in Fine Arts to going to become a genetic counselor to re-applying to medical school. It's really up in the air. I have a lot of ideas on the table and I guess I will decide when the time comes. **–Brittany**

Here, Brittany had no qualms discussing the extent of her indecision. Specifically, she recounted the desire to go to graduate school in a year or so, yet was not settled on what she intended to study. At the time of the interview, her options were plentiful and seemingly disconnected to one another. Unlike females such as Brittany, male participants appeared more set on a given track, whether it was to pursue a JD, MBA, MD, or MPH:

> **Interviewer:** Okay. So let's kind of fast-forward into the future. What does that look like?
> **Kevin:** How far into the future are we going?
> **Interviewer:** Just long-term. I would say like past the stall year, if you decide to take it.

> **Kevin:** Oh. Oh, so just like a couple years in the future…I would say within like three years, there's probably a 90% chance of me going to graduate school. Probably to be a teacher. Um… within five years, probably teaching.

Despite his current indecision regarding what to do with his "stall year," Kevin did not hesitate to latch onto the idea of becoming a history teacher when asked about the future. Although he explicitly mentioned the fact that he was currently open to exploring other opportunities, he did not once discuss an alternative to his long-term vision of himself as a teacher. Like Kevin, most of the male participants tended to center the discussion on one possible track and only mentioned other possibilities when directly prompted to do so.

The findings detailed above support my initial hypothesis that female students would recall higher levels of uncertainty. Although more females were currently decided on their next step after graduation than male participants, females still remained more uncertain about their ultimate work aspirations.

The Freedom to be Flexible

Possible career change was the topic participants brought up the most over the course of the interview process. Whether in regard to unfulfilled ambitions or projections for the future, individual participants' perceived flexibility differed tremendously.

When dealing with how their aspirations have shifted over time, male participants often recounted a specific instance that prompted their change in direction. They were eager to justify shifts in their career paths by recalling a meaningful experience, such as a study abroad trip, an internship, or a connection with a professional in the field, which led to their epiphany:

> My internship over the summer was in corporate finance, and I realized corporate finance was very, very slow and process-oriented, and I didn't really like that, because you couldn't really have an impact on the business. So for me I decided to take my skills from that and transition them and try to make them transferrable to consulting, where I felt like I could have a bigger impact, kind of use the analytical skills and tackle challenges. – **Mark**

Specifically, Mark pointed to a summer internship in corporate finance as his moment of clarity. He realized he did not like number crunching, preferring strategic analysis instead, which prompted his switch to consulting. Over the course of the summer, he learned from a real world experience what interested him and what he wanted to avoid in his career going forward.

Many of the males' impactful experiences involved coming to terms with the fact that the career they had dreamed of pursuing would not provide the satisfaction or financial security they had always envisioned:

> **Interviewer:** So you said this summer kind of…you changed a little.
> **Isaac:** Yeah and then I talked to a few people. [One] person who's a family friend who actually works in California at a [record] label. I forget which label. And…[he] told me like, this has been great, I've been doing all sorts of stuff from touring, to management, to office work, and it's a lot of fun, but you have to be down for it and you have to be ready to not make a lot of money at first...It just kind of made me rethink. And then I went to California and discovered the tech industry, and I was like okay, maybe this is a better path for me.

Although Isaac entered college dreaming of a career in the music industry, throughout the interview, he discussed struggling to find a way to both make money and pursue his passion simultaneously. When a personal contact made him realize that he would not be able to support his lifestyle working at a record label, he quickly shifted gears in pursuit of an alternate interest in the technology industry. He was forced to re-evaluate his priorities and change course in keeping with his desire to be in a more lucrative field. Lucas, too, revealed a similar journey:

> I had a Creative Writing professor, my favorite one, who was only here on a fellowship, and after the fellowship they didn't keep her on, and now she's back to like, being a waitress. And so it's like whoa, like she's way better than I would ever be, potentially. She's really good. And she can't even make a living [as an author] because it's a tiny industry, and it's almost a shrinking industry in some ways. **–Lucas**

While initially intending to be an author, Lucas ultimately changed his mind when he realized the harsh realities of achieving success and earning a living by writing. Lucas came to terms with

the fact that his passion did not necessarily have to be his career, and found that a career in business was more suitable to his lifestyle. For males like Isaac and Lucas, their revelations were often seen as presenting obstacles they could not overcome and became the justification for shifting their focus to a new career path.

Female participants tended to approach changes in their work aspirations somewhat differently than their male counterparts. Females were more inclined to discuss pursuing an alternate interest without reference to a pivotal turning point. They often indicated that they were never fully set on a particular path, or that they simply lost interest in a specific subject upon further investigation:

> I guess I first came in thinking of maybe doing the pre-physical therapy track, but everyone's so, um, so pre-med here, so everything was a little intense and a little overwhelming. I wasn't in love with it, and I wasn't willing to make myself that unhappy for something that I didn't really want. **–Lexie**

Lexie initially thought of incorporating her love of sports into a physical therapy career. She was not committed to the idea enough, however, to major in science and be unhappy satisfying the requirements. For her, physical therapy was not worth the sacrifice, and she did not seem the least bit distressed about her shift in focus. Unlike male participants who viewed change as something negative, females did not see changing their minds as a disruption warranting justification. Rather, they framed any diversions from their initial path as remaining flexible and open to exploring their options. Many times, the dramatic shifts were even discussed with excitement:

> I applied to med school actually last summer and didn't get the results I wanted, but was sort of happy about it. Now I'm doing Teach for America for two years…I think…I don't know…it's hard to describe it. It was kind of a relief, but it was also really upsetting. I mean I had been working towards this goal for so long, but at the same time it was like finally I can breathe and look at other options and not have to continue to kill myself to achieve something that I am not sure I want completely. **–Brittany**

Brittany entered college pre-med and continued on that path throughout school. While not getting the results she wanted when she applied to medical school was a distinct obstacle for Brittany, at no point in the interview did she let that get her down. In fact, she was excited about committing herself to helping others in a different manner than she had expected. Like other female participants who explored a new path, Brittany used this opportunity to reassess her motives and latch onto a previously untapped interest.

When discussing the idea of their work aspirations being flexible, most participants acknowledged the realistic possibility of altering their career at some point due to the nature of the contemporary job market, as previously mentioned. Only a few individuals in the sample were resistant to change, remaining committed to achieving the career goals they discussed at the beginning of the interview. For example, Greg was a student who initially expressed the desire to pursue a service-oriented program before going off to medical school. Beyond his commitment to pursuing a career in medicine, Greg remained fixated on working in an underprivileged area as a primary care provider. He did not see himself considering any alternatives, for all of his experiences and interests pointed in one direction:

> **Greg:** So I think as far as like the activities that I've done, though they've been all over the place…They all kind of tell like a thematic, you know, story, like certain populations, and that's, that's what I've been dedicated to not only in college, but throughout my life, I guess you could say. So even though the details of the activities might be a little different…they all center around the underserved. The underserved and inequality to access to certain things.
> **Interviewer:** And that's really where you see yourself.
> **Greg:** 100%. 100%...that is where I see myself. I don't see myself being a surgeon or whatever, I see myself doing primary care or emergency medicine in certain communities.

Unlike Greg and the few individuals who remained fixated on specific work aspirations, the majority of students tolerated the idea of change, at least to a certain degree. Yet, as expected, the reactions differed considerably by gender.

Future Change?	Male Participants	Female Participants
No	Greg	
	Jake	
Yes- Only Within Field	Brandon	Charlotte
	Chris	Dana
	Eric	Eliza
	Frank	Fiona
	Harrison	Katie
	Oscar	
Yes- Completely Open	Adam	Ashley
	Daniel	Brittany
	Isaac	Grace
	Kevin	Hallie
	Lucas	Isabelle
	Mark	Jessica
	Nick	Lexie
		Maggie
		Nicole
		Olivia

Figure 2: *Participant Reactions To Future Career Change By Gender*

As Figure 2 demonstrates, a relatively even split of male and female participants expressed a willingness to slightly modify their plans within a pre-specified field of interest. While they were not vehemently opposed to change, they were by no means comfortable entirely abandoning their direction:

> **Eliza:** After I graduate [with a Masters of Public Health], like I said I might, I was considering maybe a PhD or something. I don't know. Um, but right now I feel like that's far enough—a year, two years, three years into the future—that I don't have to make that decision now. And then at the time, if I don't want to do a PhD, then I figured I can go into the workforce and be marketable enough with an MPH.
> **Interviewer:** What would you do in the workforce?

> **Eliza:** Um…there's so much. So, um, I could work for health departments, I could work at counseling centers, I could work at outreach centers, um, right now it's pretty much open.

For example, Eliza remained set on finding an opportunity that fit with her interest in health promotion. Other than her commitment to her field of interest, she was open to exploring various options. Similarly, for participants pursing a medical degree, the limited acceptance of change often entailed exploring different specialties, while remaining committed to a career as a doctor. Although this finding suggests that a portion of the sample found it difficult to view their careers as elastic, many approached the idea of future change with an open mind and a commitment to remaining flexible. Such participants, the majority of whom were female, often indicated the possibility of pursuing another path entirely and accepted the uncertainty indicative of the major career change:

> I'm seeing it in like two-year increments, so I'll do this for a good – at least a year, and if I enjoy it enough, I'll continue, and if it's for me and it really drives well with what I'm interested in then I'll continue and if not, then…I'll go back to Anthropology, or I'll have another interest that comes up. **–Hallie**

> [Becoming a professor] is still the goal, but I also, I always say to people, I'm totally open to that changing. And I've never really been one of those people that knew from like, age 10 that I wanted to be a doctor or something. I've seen myself at various points in my life doing lots of different careers. **–Nicole**

Both Hallie and Nicole mentioned remaining open to new options going forward. Hallie discussed the realistic possibility of switching from the corporate world of management consulting to a career in public health or a position as an academic in Anthropology. Similarly, Nicole alluded to leaving teaching in the future to pursue a legal career, becoming a community organizer, or devoting herself to working for a nonprofit organization. Clearly, Hallie and Nicole were not afraid of change, but rather embraced the idea of trying new positions every so often. Many of the women even reported that they wanted to change careers multiple times throughout

their professional lives, viewing the possibility as both interesting and exciting. Instead of pigeonholing themselves early on, they preferred to approach their futures with a degree of spontaneity. As such, female participants were often more accepting of present and future change than their male counterparts.

Taken together with the results from the previous section regarding short-term versus long-term approaches, the findings were in keeping with my prediction that females would perceive more flexibility to change their career plans over time than male students. This finding also demonstrated support for Robert Fiorentine's normative alternatives approach. It was clear that male interviewees succumbed to the pressures of deciding on a path early on and sticking to it for their entire careers. Kevin, for example, was one male participant who discussed the pressure he felt as a result of his present indecision:

> I just wish I knew, like then there would be an easy starting line and I could just go to that and start. And like, I'd know exactly who to talk to, I'd know exactly what graduate school I needed, I would know just what to do…a path, that would definitely help.
> **–Kevin**

Kevin viewed having a definitive path as a marker of future success. He, like many other male participants, appeared somewhat unsettled by what he perceived as lack of direction. Females, on the other hand, generally did not adhere strongly to the idea of a linear path the way the male participants did, acknowledging as Grace said: "No, the path is not straight, there are many curves. There may even be loops around. I would love to try a bunch of things and be able to explore." My sample demonstrates that males were somewhat restricted by the need to succeed in the workplace. Females, on the other hand, seemed to enjoy the expanded freedom Robert Fiorentine attributed to having multiple socially acceptable roles to pursue.

Work Values: A Few Fundamental Differences

Important differences emerged when male and female participants were asked to recount the specific work values motivating their aspirations and current decisions. At first, participants' responses appeared surprisingly similar. Both male and female respondents mentioned the importance of pursuing a career that would fulfill their interests:

> So next year…well, there were a couple of really important things. Probably the most important is what sounds interesting to me. Just what seems cool. Um, that would definitely be the most important because I want to try to have like a little bit of fun, even when I'm working. **–Kevin**

> I never wanted to do something I'm not passionate about, because your career is something that you do for the rest of your life, and you spend so much time doing it. And if I didn't enjoy it, that would be…I just didn't even want to get into that. **–Katie**

Kevin and Katie held steadfast to the belief that their careers should be tailored accordingly to their personalities. As such, Kevin channeled his longstanding interest in American history into the desire to become a high school History teacher, while Katie drew on her love of science and passion for helping others when deciding on a career as a doctor. Participants like Kevin and Katie often discussed wanting to enjoy what they did and not settling on a job that would leave them personally unfulfilled:

> Definitely [I want] something that I can feel like I want to go to work each day. And I think that I wouldn't feel that way if I was doing like, something in the business world, like investment banking or something like that. That doesn't sound fun to me at all. I don't care how much money you make. It's just, I need to feel like I have a purpose and I like the work and I like the people I work with. That's important to me. **–Jessica**

Jessica was looking for opportunities in the nonprofit sector. For her, the chance to pursue her passion for making a difference in underprivileged communities was a priority. While she knew all too well that her approach would inevitably come at the expense of a large paycheck, that fact did not faze her in the slightest. She was not willing to forgo her dreams for monetary rewards alone.

In addition to emphasizing their interests, many participants were willing to consider external factors when making their present career decisions. For instance, male and female participants alike stressed the importance of considering lifestyle choices when deciding on a future career path. Men and women often cited location as an important aspect:

> In terms of location, I say I don't care, but I think when it comes down to it I'm going to stay close to home...if not New York, then definitely the North East, like maybe Boston, maybe DC that's not too far…I always said location was not important like when I was looking at colleges, I said I don't care, I could just go to California and tried to play it off like I don't care, but I do want to be near my family. **–Ashley**

> **Interviewer:** So you mentioned that location was important to you…you want to move back home to LA at some point. Is that hard to do here?
> **Chris:** It is…I was really frustrated and just didn't know what to do having a very specific region of interest. And I definitely think that is a limiting factor…I feel like this might be a very East Coast mentality…but I feel like people are really ok ending up in whatever state…So I think I am different in that regard…I have a very specific area that I want to end up working…

Being close to their families was extremely important to some participants, so much so that it often influenced respondents' job prospects by limiting where they were willing to move for a position. Although being near her family in or around New York has affected Ashley's work aspirations only slightly, wanting to move back home served as a main factor preventing Chris from finding a counseling position, which would set him up for graduate school. Location was the main reason for his present indecision, and caused added stress to the decision-making process. Beyond the physical location, participants often emphasized the importance of lifestyle and the surrounding community:

> The question that is never asked is what kind of life do you want to live when you're older, it's just like what do you want to be when you're older? So like, a job is always thought of as the endpoint, but actually, the lifestyle is the endpoint. I mean like…all this hits you fast and you can misunderstand what it's all about…The goal in life is to maximize happiness, in a general sense. **–Frank**

> Personal well-being and happiness and a sense of community are probably on the top of my list because I'm somebody who really thrives in environments where I feel really socially connected to people. **–Nicole**

After his experience abroad, Frank drew more consistently on the idea of finding a career that matched his new outlook on life as a balance between work and play. Along the same vein, Nicole viewed deciding on a career as more than simply selecting the type of work she enjoyed. Rather, she saw her decision as a way to establish roots in a community and foster personal growth. She felt it was necessary to consider the surrounding environment, as much if not more, than the nature of the employment opportunity. Participants like Frank and Nicole wanted their next step to lead toward the lifestyle they desired. To do so, they considered a series of external factors, such as the community where the position was located, and the type of existence their career would support.

Despite the important commonalities, upon reflection, differences between male and female respondents emerged. Of particular interest was the degree to which males and females incorporated tangible markers of success and the prospect of having a family into their work aspirations and current career-related decisions.

Show Me The Money

Almost all of the participants mentioned a desire for financial security during the interview process. Yet, differences arose with regard to the importance individuals placed on attaining this good. Specifically, there were three ways in which participants typically viewed income in relation to their present and future work aspirations.

Income As A Source of Motivation?	Male Participants	Female Participants
No Mention/Not Important	Greg Oscar	Charlotte Hallie Isabelle Jessica Katie Maggie Nicole
Important, But Not Motivating Career Decisions	Adam* Eric Frank Jake Mark	Ashley* Brittany* Dana Eliza Grace* Lexie*
Source of Motivation	Brandon Chris Daniel Harrison Isaac Kevin Lucas Nick	Fiona Olivia*

Figure 3: *Participant Reactions To Income By Gender*
*Participants who view money as it relates to living independently

First, many participants did not see income as a major consideration in their choices. They either did not mention income at all during the interview or, when prompted, emphatically denied its importance. The vast majority of respondents in this category were women. In fact, approximately half of the female participants in the study adopted this viewpoint. In the interview setting, women often responded to the idea of income playing a role in their decisions as follows:

> I think I'd rather live in a cardboard box and be doing good and helping people than making loads of money and not feeling satisfied. **–Maggie**

> I know I'm never really going to make money, but I don't really care, 'cause I'd rather do something I feel passionate about. **–Jessica**

Maggie's desire to educate the public about health and nutrition was more important to her than making money. She was prepared to prioritize fulfilling her interest, even if it was at the direct expense of earning a substantial income or obtaining material possessions. Similarly, Jessica accepted the fact that her career trajectory in the world of nonprofits might not bring her financial rewards in the future. While her projected income would probably not be substantial, she did not see that factor as dissuading her career choice. In addition to mentioning income less frequently than their male counterparts, females were increasingly more willing to deny the fact that income motivated their decisions at all. They often responded negatively to this implication and felt it was necessary to defend their viewpoint.

The second response typically given was the acknowledgement of income's importance. Participants in this category did not shy away from the fact that income was necessary insofar as it would enable them to survive in the real world and exist independently:

> I understand that I will need a job, I would like to be financially independent and so when I am applying for jobs you know, if I have to take something I don't necessarily care about to be able to live alone or to be able to live financially independent, that's okay, but I don't…um…that, like living financially independently is not my top priority. **–Adam**

> I don't want this to be a really big deciding factor, but you also have to think about...I mean I can't be poor as an adult. I do need to pay for where I live and food and all of that. So, you know...I have been trying to think about you know...how can I help people, but still make a living. I don't need to be rich or anything, but you know...having your life being volunteering at a soup kitchen just isn't a thing you are able to do as a job. **–Ashley**

Adam and Ashley both understood the significance of income. While they appreciated that it was a necessary consideration, they still would not allow money to be the primary motivating factor in their respective work aspirations. There was a relatively even split between male and female participants who embraced this position. While they did not discredit the value of having their own money, they fought the urge to prioritize income over factors more intrinsic to their designated career paths, such as helping people or matching their skills to a given position.

Finally, a good portion of the sample viewed money as a definitive source of motivation. They placed great weight on income considerations when deciding on both their short and long term career goals:

> I don't want to be the person to be struggling to pay bills or stressing out about how I'm going to pay for this, or, you know, I want the best for my children, like what I had...And provide… Really, if you do what you love, you probably wouldn't be making that much money. More than likely...So I guess you have to choose if you want to be happy at work or happy at home. That's a decision, so I'm already choosing to be, hopefully, happy at home, and put up with work. Work is work, you know. **–Daniel**

For Daniel, income was the main work value at play throughout his decision-making process, so much so, that he was willing to forgo a career that made him happy for one that provided him with financial stability. He was adamant that the choice between being happy at work or being happy at home was an easy one. He had no qualms putting income and financial security above more intrinsic factors, like pursuing a career he found particularly interesting. Daniel was by no means the only participant who prioritized monetary success to the point that it drastically altered future work aspirations. As previously mentioned, Isaac and Lucas also made the same choices when they opted out of pursuing a career in the music industry or as an author respectively. It is important to note that the majority of participants who viewed income as a major motivating factor were men. Only a few women viewed income in this way. When women did discuss income at length, they took a somewhat different approach than males, viewing it as a source of personal security, rather than a distinct marker of success:

> The most important factor... uh, definitely the security... a lot of people don't think about money, but I have to, and so kind of having that pressure looming, um, I knew I could never slack off at school, because I didn't have a choice. I couldn't go back home and just figure something out. Like I needed to graduate, I needed to get a job. That was just kind of that next step forced upon me. **–Olivia**

Given the hardships endured by her family, the need to be financially stable in the future played a large role in Olivia's current decision-making process, potentially even at the expense of a

position that would provide her with a greater sense of fulfillment. Thus, clear gender differences emerged when looking at which participants actively chose to value income. Overall, male participants were more inclined to discuss income as a source of motivation than female participants, who instead connected the importance of money to a larger ideal of autonomy and independence.

Achieving monetary success served as one of the most cited work values for male participants, along with pursuing an interest and finding a position that matched their skill sets such that they would ultimately be "good" at what they did. Female participants referenced income nowhere near as frequently, instead opting to discuss interests and interpersonal goals, such as helping others, fulfilling social interactions, and satisfying work cultures.

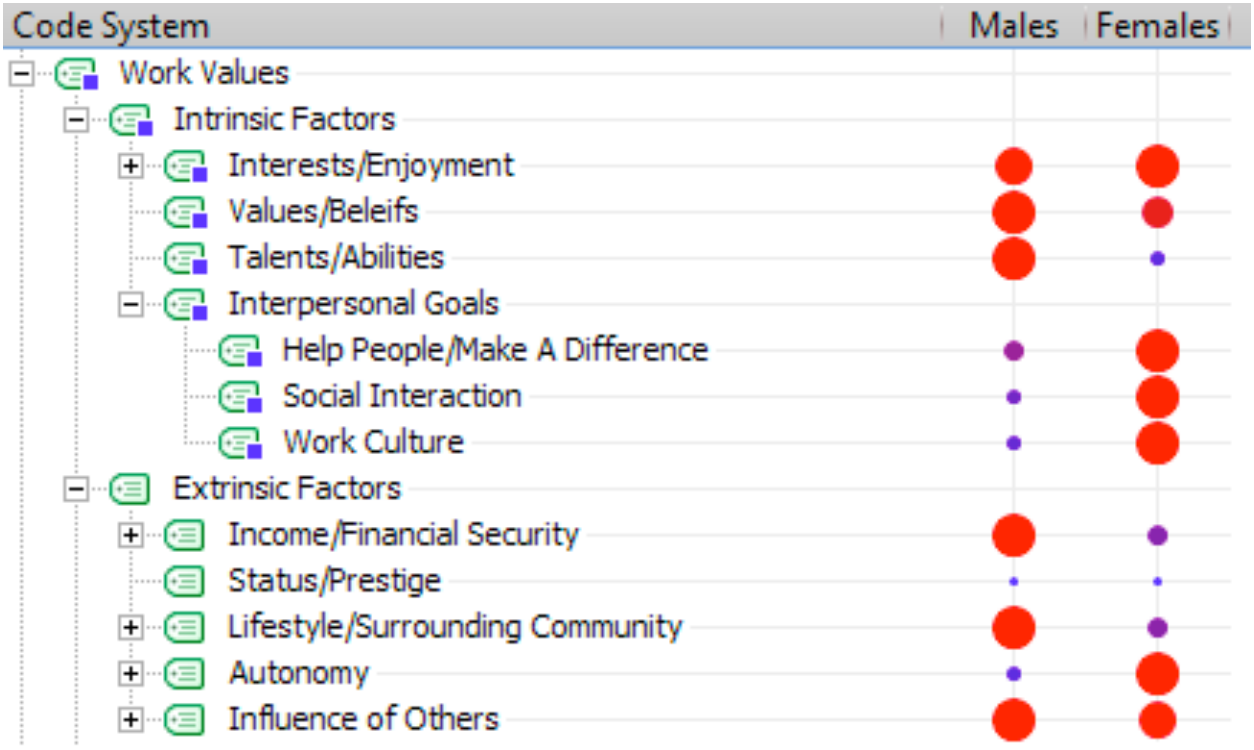

Figure 4: *Breakdown Of Work Values Emphasized By Male And Female Participants*

Topics participants discussed at great length

Topics participants discussed less frequently

Topics participants mentioned only a few times

As demonstrated by Figure 4, male and female participants expressed different values at the core of their work aspirations and current career-related decisions. Although not as pronounced as in previous research studies, these differences reaffirmed my contention that women would prioritize certain intrinsic factors and men would value other factors. Despite similarities in the importance of interests, values, lifestyle, and influence of others, men and women tended to prioritize distinct work values.

Family: It Could Happen v. I Have A Plan

Of all the topics discussed during the interview process, the impact of having a family in the future on career choices had the most variety in responses. Although participants were often not directly questioned about how they planned to incorporate a family into their future work life, most participants mentioned family to some extent when asked to discuss their futures more broadly. Often this line of questioning prompted respondents to recount an individualized vision of what a happy and successful life entailed. For many participants, having a family was incorporated into their idealized vision of the future. Yet, as expected, the degree to which wanting a family factored into their present and future work aspirations differed by gender.

Family As It Relates To Work Aspirations	Male Participants	Female Participants
No Mention Of Family	Lucas	
No Mention Of Impact On Aspirations	Adam Eric Frank Greg Isaac Mark Nick Oscar	Eliza Jessica*
Causes Shift In Priorities	Brandon* Harrison*	Brittany Dana[1] Grace[1] Hallie Maggie Nicole[1]
Incorporated Into Plans	Daniel* Chris* Kevin*[1]	Ashley[1] Charlotte[1] Fiona Isabelle Katie Lexie[1] Olivia[1]

Figure 5: *Participant Reactions To Family As It Relates To Work Aspirations*
*Participants who mentioned the need to provide financially for the family
[1] Participants who mentioned flexibility/time as an important consideration

The majority of male participants alluded to family in some regard. Only one male in the entire sample refrained from discussing the possibility of having a family whatsoever during the interview. Although mentioned at least briefly by most of the participants, some men had given the prospect more thought than others. Roughly half of the male sample discussed their desire to have a family in the future without elaborating on how, or if, the desire would impact their career plans:

> **Interviewer:** What would you say your overall life goals are?
> **Greg:** Um. Well one we've already touched on is to help people…And then…you know…even before that is just to be a good family member and to be a good husband and a good dad. Um so those are – and I know it'll be hard for all of those goals to align, especially if I'm working in like a primary care specialty, which is, you know, high hours, um, but you know hopefully, hopefully I can make it work.

> **Interviewer:** What about a family?
> **Nick:** A what? Everyone always tells me I'm going to be alone. Because I'm a little on the selfish side…I honestly have no idea. Like I guess I want a wife and kids, but it's not something I've ever thought about. I'm not even the type to be in a relationship or date someone. I've tried it and it's just like, no.

Greg and Nick each identified the possibility of having a family as part of their overall life plans, yet neither of them discussed the impact of a family on their work lives. When asked further questions on the topic, males tended to respond that they had not thought extensively about it before. They assumed that they would figure out how to make it work when the time came.

A few men in the sample refrained from adopting this vague and somewhat flippant response; instead, they appreciated that having a family would shift their priorities in the future. Although they did not specifically incorporate a future family into their present career decisions, they understood that their emphasis must eventually change to accommodate a family. Often, the shift in priorities involved viewing financial security as the main factor motivating their career decisions going forward. For example, Brandon recognized that income would become more important when other people were dependent on him. He took this consideration to heart when he expressed the desire to ensure his future family could live comfortably and free from worry. Even participants who were currently settled on a position for next year considered the possibility of altering their careers to successfully provide for a family:

> **Kevin:** If I were to go into teaching, I would try to get into administration later. So principal, vice principal.
> **Interviewer:** And why would you do that?
> **Kevin:** Um, partially for… I think it's just like advancing your career, um, I guess to make more money, too. That'd be something, especially as I got older and probably had a family to think about. Um, that becomes a little bit more important.

Kevin considered the possibility of switching the course of his future career from teaching to administration in the hopes it would enable him to support a family. He knew his priorities

would change as a result of having children and was open to prioritizing income and lifestyle to accommodate them. Chris too discussed how a future family might play into his career decisions:

> Ideally, [I want] to have my own practice and my own clients and be able to set my own schedule…But I have a lot of my family members who work with the military and the government…One of my uncles actually suggested looking into working for the VA because there is such a need for health services and you make a lot of money right out of the gate…so that's appealing to me. Also being able to support a family, which I want to have someday…it would be very nice…the government and military have great benefits for all of that. **–Chris**

The possibility of having a family in the future prompted Chris to seriously consider working for the government or the military to provide them with the financial security and benefits package that accompanies the position. Although the majority of male participants did not express plans that were as extensive as Kevin's or Chris', it appeared that male participants did consider how having a family would impact their future careers, at least somewhat.

On average, the majority of female participants discussed family considerations more thoroughly than their male counterparts. Very few female participants had not given it some forethought. At the very least, female participants mentioned that having a family might shift their priorities from work to home life. Unlike their male peers, who viewed providing financially for a family as the main concern regarding a family going forward, female participants saw having a flexible schedule to be able to care for their children as the most important factor to consider:

> I'm wondering how, just even when I say it right now as influenced by being a woman, and just knowing that I've always wanted a family life and children and how that has to work with my work life, and I think, I wonder if men think about that balance as much…So like, certainly I think putting career on hold, you know would have to be an option if I would want to be the best parent I can be. But if I think I can be the best parent I can be while also working, I see that as an option too. Like not putting it on hold. **–Nicole**

> If kids become a thing obviously you have to take time off to like, have them, and um, maybe like part-time, if that's something I do. But I don't think that I would want to give

> it up completely…Because I know, also, if I do decide to have kids, I'm not going to be one of those families where the parents are never home. Like I don't... there's no point in having kids if that's how you're going to raise them, so. **–Dana**

Both women acknowledged the affect having a family would have on their careers. While they were not set on giving up their careers entirely, they were open to making adjustments so that they would not miss too much time with their children in the future. As Nicole and Dana expressed, the desire to make time for a family often translated into incorporating the idea of taking time off or shifting to part-time work into their current aspirations. While many females saw the idea of taking time off as a necessity when children were involved, not a single male participant so much as hinted at the idea. In fact, only Kevin so much as mentioned the importance of needing to make time for his family.

Overall, female participants were more likely to unveil elaborate plans in which they incorporated a family into their current and future work aspirations. For example, Ashley and Fiona discussed the following plans:

> I don't want to be like ok let me center my whole life around being at home...like I want to be there for my future children, but I want to be a teacher anyway and I think it would work really well. I don't know. I just really liked having my mom around when I was little.... I would like to do that for them also. **–Ashley**

> Having a family is really important to me. First of all, it takes forever to get out of school and then having a family is not really...its kindof like you go to school for all this time and then you have to work and by that time, to have a family it's either like over, you haven't found somebody to have a family with or it's too late like your biological clock is ticking. I mean even if you do have a family, are you going to be able to spend quality time with them with these high in demand jobs...like as a professional with long hours, how can you really balance all that. I really thought about that and thought about...well, that's really far in the future. **–Fiona**

For Ashley and Fiona alike, the prospect of having a family has already weighed heavily on the career path they ultimately decided to pursue. For Ashley, planning to switch careers to become a teacher when she had a family seemed like the perfect opportunity to embody the nurturing,

caretaker role, while still remaining active in the workforce. Fiona's story was somewhat different, as her desire to have a family in the future shifted her focus away from pursuing a joint MD/JD toward owning her own store, which would allow her to be her own boss and have the flexibility she expected to need for a family. As these two examples illustrate, it was increasingly important for female participants to consider their desires for a family ahead of time. The different approaches discussed above corroborated my initial belief that female students would be more concerned than males with incorporating a future family into their current ideas for a career.

VII. Implications & Discussion

The findings presented above further emphasize the importance of the individual in understanding men and women's differing experiences in the workforce. From my sample, it is clear that the transition to adulthood offers a wide variety of paths deemed socially acceptable for students upon graduating from college. The variety in participant reactions to the pivotal transition period corroborates the study of Murphy et al. (2010), in which they discussed the split between students who feel empowered by the multitude of opportunities and those who are overwhelmed by the profound shift in roles. Despite the diversity in experiences and expanded freedom of choice indicative of the contemporary labor market, my analysis adds to previous research demonstrating the continuing importance of gender, especially as it pertains to the workforce. In the present study, I found at least modest support for each of the hypotheses I initially proposed. Indeed, male and female students presented decision-making processes and work values in keeping with the separate spheres ideology when discussing their work aspirations.

My findings indicate that there were key differences between male and female

students' decision-making processes. While there was a relatively even split between women wanting to find a "job" upon graduation and those looking to begin a long-term career, a clear majority of men conveyed a long-term approach to their future career, even when they were currently undecided on a next course of action. Most participants mentioned a degree of uncertainty at some point during the interview. Although more females were currently decided on a plan for next year, they remained uncertain about their work aspirations in the long run, more so than their male counterparts. In fact, females often mentioned taking advantage of an opportunity that was unforeseeably related to what they saw themselves doing in the future. They did not shy away from the ambiguity involved in having multiple, seemingly contradictory ideas, but rather incorporated flexibility into their expected career trajectory. In fact, female participants were increasingly open and excited at the prospect of changing careers multiple times throughout their lifetimes.

The fact that male students in the sample tended to adhere to a more defined, longer-term path and female students opted instead to discuss higher levels of uncertainty and perceived flexibility to change throughout the interviews, supports the normative alternatives approach to understanding the root of gender differences in work aspirations. Using Fiorentine's (1987) explanation, the need to succeed financially and achieve a position of power in the workforce can be seen here as limiting male participants' perception of whether they can afford to be uncertain and the extent to which they are free to change courses in the future. Additionally, the enduring association of women with the home implies that their identity is not bound to their position in the public sphere the way it is for men. Thus, females have a multitude of socially acceptable roles in contemporary society, which can provide female participants with expanded freedom of choice and the flexibility to change their minds over time. While there was no overt mention of

gender guiding their outlooks, participants in the study tended to frame their work aspirations in keeping with traditional gender norms dictated in large part by the separate spheres ideology. It is possible that participant differences in the decision-making process specifically resulted from their comfort in adhering to socially defined visions of men in charge of the public sphere and women in charge of the private sphere respectively.

Similarly, male and female students tended to draw on different work values when discussing the reasons behind their work aspirations. Previous research suggests a clear delineation between men prioritizing extrinsic and women emphasizing intrinsic work values (Sturges 1999; Morgan et al. 2001; Dyke and Murphy 2006). Yet, my findings lead me to believe the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction to be overly simplified. Male and female students both mentioned a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic factors playing into their present and future work aspirations. Specifically, male and female participants alike commonly cited the importance of interests, personal values, lifestyle, and the influence of external actors. Although not as pronounced as previous research suggests, gender differences in the work values emphasized did persist. Women held steadfast to one set of intrinsic work values, while men adhered to other extrinsic work values. In fact, female participants overwhelmingly prioritized interests and interpersonal goals, such as helping others, social interaction, and work environment. Conversely, male participants emphasized other factors, such as income and the type of lifestyle a particular position would foster. Yet, females were not the only participants who prioritized the intangible benefits of employment, and men were by no means alone in their appreciation for factors external to the work itself.

While there is some evidence in support of the contention that women emphasize intrinsic factors and men prioritize extrinsic factors, I propose the difference in work values to be

attributed to enduring gender norms and adherence to the separate spheres ideology as well. Given that "work devotion" and "family devotion" schemas are shown to hold true regardless of employment status, careers serve a fundamentally unique purpose for men and women (Blair-Loy 2001). As such, traditional gender norms and cultural schemas dictate the level of consideration men and women are expected to attribute to making money or setting aside time to care for a future family, among other factors at play when forming work aspirations. As such, male and female students tended to call upon work values that aligned with stereotypical gender norms and expectations. For instance, women can be seen as reorienting their nurturing, caretaker position into the work sphere by seeking a career that values interpersonal goals like helping others and considering taking time off from work or shifting to more flexible careers to accommodate the prospect of a family, whereas men can be seen as holding onto the breadwinner role by emphasizing their talents, abilities, and income when contemplating a career so as to provide financially in the future.

Despite the expected gender differences, a few interesting deviations from my initial hypotheses arose. Although I initially extended my prediction of female uncertainty to encompass immediate decisions upon graduation, women were found to have chosen a next course of action more often than men. Whether it involved signing a job offer, committing to some form of initiative, or enrolling in a graduate school program, the majority of the female sample had a plan at the time of the interview, compared to only a few of the men. While I do not intend to discredit the finding, it is possible that the discrepancy is in large part the result of the timing of the interviews. The thirty in-depth interviews were conducted over a span of four semesters beginning in the Fall 2012 term and ending in the Spring 2014 term. Due to response rate and availability, interviews with male participants occurred throughout the Fall and Spring

terms of both school years, whereas interviews with female students occurred exclusively in the Spring 2013 term. Additionally, some of the interviews in the Fall occurred in the first few months of school. Thus, proximity to graduation may account for some of the discrepancy I found between male and female students' level of present uncertainty.

There are several limitations to keep in mind while assessing the merits of the present study. Specifically, with the small sample size of thirty students, it is possible that the participants selected are not representative of the Emory community at large. In the same vein, since Emory itself is a unique institution situated within the South, the findings may not be as readily applicable to universities of a different caliber or in other regions of the country. Despite the fundamental limitations in the ability to generalize, I can ascertain that the present study unveils important findings regarding the individualized career selection process of college seniors. Thus, the study accomplishes my goal of specifically assessing how gender influences the ways in which college seniors at Emory University form work aspirations.

By implementing in-depth, semi-structured interviews as the primary research method, I acknowledged from the start the restrictions the choice would have on the subsequent results. Drawbacks often include a limited sample size, as interviews generally require more time and resources to complete. Additionally, while the use of open-ended questions provides individuals with unparalleled freedom to provide answers, invariably artificial responses may occur (Babbie 2009). It is possible that participants responded to questions with an idealized vision of their decision-making process, as opposed to a more realistic, practical view. The fact that very few participants have paid work experience, coupled with the cross-sectional nature of the present study, leaves me with no way to judge how accurately students' aspirations will translate into tangible positions in the current workforce. Thus, any comments on the issue of gender

differences in aspirations continuing into the next generation of workers will have to wait until the longitudinal component of the study to be conducted by my research advisor, Dr. Tracy Scott, is completed.

Although the present study looks specifically at the impact of gender, work aspirations are a complex concept that I anticipate to be influenced by a multitude of different factors, such as class, race, parents, and community. Interestingly, during post interview discussions, many of the students I interviewed predicted that the way in which individuals were raised would have a greater impact on their responses than their gender alone. Therefore, I believe it would be worthwhile to assess the gender differences arising from the environment in which individuals grew up in as a continuation of the present study. Moreover, with the growing societal acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, I think it would also be meaningful to look at how gender impacts members of the LGBT community and their work aspirations.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Demographic Breakdown of Sample

Participant Pseudonym	Race	Household	Highest Level of Education Attained By Parents	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
Adam	White	2 parents with siblings	Professional Degree (MD)	Doctor	Doctor
Ashley	White	2 parents with siblings	Bachelor's Degree	Business	Stay-at-home-mom
Brandon	White	2 parents with siblings	Bachelor's Degree	Business	Stay-at-home-mom
Brittany	White	2 parents with siblings	Professional Degree (JD)	Lawyer	Stay-at-home-mom
Chris	African American	2 parents no siblings	Master's Degree	Business	Sales
Charlotte	White	Widowed mother	Professional Degree (MD)	Doctor	Doctor
Daniel	African American	2 parents with siblings	Master's Degree	Lawyer	Stay-at-home-mom
Dana	Asian	2 parents with siblings	Professional Degree (MD)	Computer Engineer	Doctor
Eric	Asian	Divorced	Professional Degree (MD)	Doctor	Doctor
Eliza	African American	Single mom	Associate's Degree	N/A	Various Positions
Frank	African American	2 parents with siblings	Master's Degree	IT	Teacher
Fiona	African American	Single Mom	Technical Degree	N/A	Nurse
Greg	Other	2 parents with siblings	Master's Degree	Non-profit	Social Work
Grace	African American	2 parents with siblings	Bachelor's Degree	Consultant	Stay-at-home-mom
Harrison	White	2 parents with siblings	Professional Degree (JD)	Lobbyist	Lobbyist

Participant Pseudonym	Race	Household	Highest Level of Education Attained By Parents	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
Isaac	White	Divorced	Professional Degree (JD)	Lawyer	Advertising
Isabelle	White	Divorced	Bachelor's Degree	Business	Stay-at-home-mom
Jake	White	2 parents with siblings	Professional Degree (MD)	Doctor	Doctor
Jessica	White	2 parents with siblings	Bachelor's Degree	Business	Stay-at-home-mom
Kevin	White	2 parents with siblings	Master's Degree	Lobbyist	Stay-at-home-mom
Katie	Asian	2 parents with siblings	Professional Degree (MD)	Doctor	Doctor
Lucas	White	2 parents with siblings	Doctoral Degree	IT	Stay-at-home-mom
Lexie	White	Divorced	Master's Degree	Retired	Stay-at-home-mom
Mark	White	2 parents with siblings	Bachelor's Degree	Sales	Stay-at-home-mom
Maggie	White	2 parents with siblings	Doctoral Degree	Non-profit	Designer
Nick	White	2 parents with siblings	Master's Degree	Accountant	Stay-at-home-mom
Nicole	White	2 parents with siblings	Professional Degree (MD)	Doctor	Various Positions
Oscar	White	2 parents with siblings	Master's Degree	Engineer	Engineer
Olivia	Other	Divorced	Master's Degree	Retired	Nurse

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Hi student,

I hope this finds you well! I am conducting a research project with Dr. Scott about career interests among college students as part of my Honors Thesis, and **I would like to ask you to participate.**

We are interviewing a small group of seniors to better understand your thoughts about potential careers and future plans. **We are seeking volunteers with a wide range of interests and plans (including those who are undecided)**. Your participation is completely voluntary and will not affect your studies at Emory in any way.

Your participation would involve an in-person interview with me that will last between 45 minutes and an hour. The interview will be conducted at a time and place of your choosing, or in a private room in the Sociology department (Tarbutton Hall) at Emory University. All information will be kept confidential and we will protect your identity in any published work.

Dr. Scott is also interested in following up with you after graduation to see how your ideas and plans have played out. Thus, she would like to interview you again one to two years after graduation. We realize this may not always be possible, but we want you to understand the potential scope of the project. These interviews would either be conducted via phone, or in person, if one of the researchers is able to travel to your location. Even if you complete the first interview, your participation is still completely voluntary and you can discontinue your participation at any time during the project.

It would really help us a lot if you would agree to be interviewed. This is also an excellent opportunity to share your overall thoughts about the decision-making process to a sympathetic, interested listener!

If you are interested please email me at: skalin@emory.edu

If you are unsure and have questions, please let me know!

Thank you for your consideration!

Skylar Kalin

Department of Sociology
Emory University
Atlanta, GA 30322
Skalin@emory.edu

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Emory University, Department of Sociology
Consent to be a Research Subject

Title: The Career Paths of Undergraduates

Principal Investigator: Dr. Tracy L. Scott
Co-Investigator: Skylar Kalin

Introduction and Purpose
You are being asked to participate as a volunteer in a research study. This research project explores career interests and plans among Emory University seniors. We are interviewing a small group of seniors (40-50 people) to better understand your thoughts about your potential careers and other future plans. We are seeking volunteers with a wide range of interests and those at very different stages in their career decision process. You do not need to have made any decision about a potential career, nor have any concrete plans after graduation to participate. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

Procedures
You will be participating in an in-depth interview in which you will be asked about your thoughts and experiences around career choices after college. This interview will last about 45 to 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be taped using an audio recorder. Skylar Kalin will be conducting the interview with you. The interview will be conducted in a location that is easy for you. If you don't have a preference, a private room in the Sociology department will be used.
We also hope to follow-up with you after graduation to see how your plans have played out and what paths you have taken. Thus, we would like to interview you again one to two years after graduation. We realize this may not always be possible, but we want you to understand the potential scope of the project. This interview would either be conducted via phone, or in person, if one of the researchers is able to travel to your location. Also, even if you complete the first interview, your participation is still completely voluntary and you can discontinue your participation at any time during the project.

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

Benefits
There are also no direct benefits to you, other than helping an important research project. Your responses will increase understanding about factors affecting undergraduate career paths.

Compensation

In appreciation for your time, we will give you a $5 Starbucks Card for your participation in the initial interview.

Confidentiality

We will give you a pseudonym in the study and use this to identify your interview. Your name will not be attached to any notes, transcripts, or digital files. All audio files will be kept on password-protected computers, and will be destroyed as soon as the digital recording is transcribed. One of the study team members will transcribe all audio files, and the transcripts will be password protected and kept on password-protected computers. We will not use your name or any facts that might identify you when we present this study or publish its results.

All the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. Access to the data files will be limited to study personnel. Agencies and Emory units that make rules and policy about how research is done, however, have the right to review study records in order to make sure that studies are conducted and handled correctly. These include the U.S. Office for Human Research Protections, the Emory University Institutional Review Board, and the Emory Office of Research Compliance. We will keep the study records private to the extent allowed by law

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer and the interview can stop at anytime if you do not wish to continue. Please know that your participation will not affect your relationship with the researchers or your status at Emory in any way.

Contact Persons

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research or your participation in it, either now or at any time in the future, please contact Dr. Tracy L. Scott, PhD. by email at tscott@emory.edu or by phone at (404) 727-7515. For problems, questions, complaints, or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, please contact the Emory Institutional Review Board, toll-free at 1-877-503-9797 or (404) 712- 0720; email irb@emory.edu; or write to the office at 1599 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA 30322.

Consent

Please, print your name and sign below if you agree to be in this study. By signing this consent form, you will not give up any of your legal rights. We will give you a copy of the signed consent, to keep.

_____

Name of Subject

_____ _____

Signature of Subject Date

_____ _____

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion Date

Follow-Up Interview Contact Information

If you are willing to be contacted for the follow-up interview, please give us your permanent (non-Emory) email address. Please not that this information will also be confidential, and we will not give this to anyone else.

_____

Permanent Email Address

Appendix D

Interview Guide

☐ Background Information
- → Hometown
- → Household
- → Parents
- → Academic Pursuits (major)

☐ Plan After Graduation
- → What is it?
- → When did you decide?
- → Has it changed?
- → Stories about evolution
- → Experience in field/industry?

☐ Why This Path
- → Most important factors in decision process
  - -Talents, Abilities
- → Motivating Factors
  - -Money, Helping People, Freedom, Etc.

☐ Decision Making Process
- → Talk To Anyone?
  - -Parents, Friends, Teachers, Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Etc.
- → Formal Guidance?
  - -Career Center, Books, Internet
  - -Anything at Emory in particular that helped
- → What Was Most Helpful in Your Decision-Making Process?
- → Any Obstacles?

☐ Reactions To Decision
- → General Reaction
  - -Positive or Negative
- → Specific Reactions
  - -Parents, Friends, Boyfriend/Girlfriend, Teachers

☐ Future Plans
- → What's The Next Step After This One?
- → Future Plans?
- → How Do You Envision Work Life In The Future?
  - -Marriage, Children

☐ Wrap Up
- → Anything I haven't touched on?
- → Any questions?