8-1-1996

Marital and Personal-Life Satisfaction Among Married, Female Graduate Students: A Qualitative Analysis of Value Conflicts

Alecia Gall
Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses
Part of the Education Commons, and the Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/871

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.
MARITAL AND PERSONAL-LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED, FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF VALUE CONFLICTS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Sociology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

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

by
Alecia Faye Gall
August 1996
MARITAL AND PERSONAL-LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED, FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF VALUE CONFLICTS

Date Recommended: June 6, 1996

Stephen B. Groce
Director of Thesis

Dean, Graduate Studies August 1996
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Because I was a married, female graduate student during the data collection and initial data analysis stages of this thesis, the majority of the creative work of this thesis came from within me; however, without the support, encouragement, and inspiration of several important people in my life, this project never could have been completed. It is at this time that I want to recognize those who have helped me the most throughout this research project.

Finishing my undergraduate degree, I, like many other soon-to-be graduates, experienced feelings of confusion, ambiguity, and indecisiveness concerning what I would do next. With an undergraduate degree in English and only a minor in Sociology, I considered a Master of Arts in Sociology but assumed that graduate school was really only intended for the "smarter" or "more studious" students. One day I visited the Sociology Department to say hello and goodbye. During that one short visit both Dr. Kathy Kalab and Dr. Steve Groce inquired as to my future intentions and suggested that I might be graduate material. Initially I laughed, but after their encouraging "words of wisdom" and
votes of confidence in my potential I decided to give it a shot. I thank them for their continual support throughout my graduate career.

Graduate school has undeniably been the most difficult undertaking in my life, not to mention being newly married at the same time. Many times I questioned my abilities and talents as a student, wife, and woman. I would like to thank Dr. Ann Goetting for reminding me that although other things may interfere at times, the important thing is that I do it for myself and for others who may later follow in these same steps, and that "that" is not always interchangeable with "which."

The most tremendous boost to my confidence as a sociologist and as a person was the challenging undertaking of teaching. I thank Dr. Joan Krenzin for giving me that opportunity and for her criticisms and congratulatory remarks; it is an experience that I will treasure always.

People say that if you have one true friend in your life, you are truly blessed. I must take this opportunity to thank my colleagues and friends, Brian Nash and Laura Gipe. Although we did not know each other when we began graduate school, they immediately became essential to my sanity and to my success. I must also thank Cathy Knowles, my best friend, for helping me late at night and for always telling me to get off my butt and get to work. When I first
began college in 1989 I became friends with Paul Anderson. I have always thought that, without his encouragement and friendship during that first semester, I would never have made it through the second. As I complete my work, he remains a true friend—wishing me luck and shaking my hand from across the ocean. They gave me more help and support than I was ever able to give back to them, and they have meant more to me than I or any Hallmark card could ever express. The party will be in June, and you are all invited!

Being a married, female graduate student has been an extremely challenging time in my life, thus far, but being the husband of a married, female graduate student was not a basket of flowers. When I married, I really was not sure as to my future. Graduate school just seemed out of my league, so to speak. Putting up with late night study sessions, frozen dinners, dirty bed sheets, and a stressed-out wife was something I do not know how many people would tolerate. Of course, without being married, I could not have attempted this particular research as my own experiences helped me to empathize with the respondents in a way that made them feel they could open up to me, and I am grateful for the experience. Many times throughout the interviews a woman would say, “I am sure you know this...” or “You know what I mean,” and I did. As I write now, I am all but a court
visit away from divorce. I would have liked to have finished the project prior to the dissolution of my own marriage; however, the intense conflicts of both graduate school and marriage interfered a great deal more than I had anticipated.

Each woman with whom I spoke added a certain depth and humanness to the pages that follow. I learned so much from this experience--far beyond any words I can write in this thesis. I did not expect the openness with which the women spoke to me, a stranger, but their honesty added a dimension to each interview that will make it impossible for me to forget any one of them.

Most important, I must thank my mother and father. Their belief in me and my potential inspired me to go to college, and their unyielding support led me to graduate school. I learned the value of hard work from my father, who always said, "If you are going to do a half-assed job, don't bother doing it at all." Abiding by this motto has landed me a job promotion and several As. He also taught me to be honest in everything I say and do; without honesty I could not have spoken to my respondents or written about being a married, female graduate student or about anything else. An honesty in my writing makes this project a rich, quality product of which I am proud.

Growing up, I never thought of my mother as a feminist,
but it was from her that I acquired the self-esteem as a woman to believe I could and would accomplish anything I wanted. Her friendship has carried me through every tough situation, and she has celebrated every triumph with me. My mother never had the opportunity to go to college herself so I dedicate and owe all of my success to her.

My friends know I believe that every piece of writing carries with it a piece of the author and all those who have had some meaningful contact with the author. To all those with whom I have had the privilege and honor of meeting, laughing, crying, talking to, and becoming friends, I thank you. Without these many unique people and various experiences this project would be but a mere skeleton.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange Theory</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Interactionism</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis of Symbolic Interactionism and Exchange Theory</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH METHODS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample and Data Collection</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits of the Study</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V. FINDINGS: MARRIAGE AND GRADUATE SCHOOL</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Resources</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VI. FINDINGS: VALUES</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Compatibility</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VII. FINDINGS: VALUES CONFLICTS</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure                                      Page

1. Married, Female Graduate Student Enrollment, Fall 1994..........................................................40

2. Age Distribution of Married, Female Graduate Students Enrolled Fall 1994........................................41
Fifteen married, female graduate students enrolled full-time during the fall of 1994 were interviewed and audio-tape recorded, guaranteed confidentiality, and assigned pseudonyms. Questions covered the topics of values, experiences in graduate school and marriage, the impact of children, pressures, conflicts, support systems, and coping strategies.

I obtained a listing of all married, female graduate students enrolled at a regional state university located in the south central United States during the fall semester of 1994. From this list I identified and contacted those full-time students who had taken no more than a five-year break between degrees and were under the age of thirty. Other
respondents were acquired through a snowball technique. Respondents ranged in age from 22 to 29. All respondents were taking at least nine credit hours (a minimum for full-time students) when interviewed, and the majors varied. Only one respondent had been divorced and now re-married. Four respondents had children living with them; all children were under the age of three. The amount of time married varied from seven months to six years.

It was expected that if one suffers as a result of value conflicts associated with simultaneously performing the roles of wife and graduate student, she will express less satisfaction with or perceive poorer performance with that role.

A synthesis of Homans' exchange theory and symbolic interactionism provided the theoretical foundation from which the interviews were analyzed based on the symbolically defined cost/reward, give/take situation of the married, female graduate student.

The women interviewed maintained that although pursuing a graduate degree and striving to be a good wife (and in some cases mother) was a physically and emotionally stressful endeavor, the ultimate rewards were and would ultimately be worth the costs. In an effort to cope or to minimize the costs, these women temporarily altered their value systems in order to lessen the pressures. Three
maintenance strategies were discovered: “comparison,” “reward redefinition,” and “lowering standards.”

The amount and type of support husbands gave their wives, according to respondents, varied and was important to their success as graduate students. Four levels of support were found: “verbal support,” “active support,” “non-argumentative support,” and “nonsupport.”

Overall, respondents reported being satisfied with their marriages, although most wives believed they were not very good wives at the present time. Respondents were less critical about graduate school as a whole and complained about the lack of challenge in specific classes and programs.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Human behavior is a topic that has sparked interest among philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, artists, writers, business and government leaders, magicians, and even fortune tellers. Although the reasons for their intrigue and their findings are as varied as the color spectrum, one question remains in controversy--why do people do what they do? More specifically, the question is raised concerning the factors that influence people's everyday choices. While some everyday choices may appear to be insignificant to the outsider looking in, those choices are likely to be the result of some planning, some decision-making, some exchanging, and possibly, some sacrificing. Value theory recognizes that people's behavior inherently requires these frequent, unavoidable choices due to the unpredictable quality of human life. Choices are constantly being made based on our personal value systems. Symbolic interactionism illuminates these exchanges by stressing the subjective defining of rewards, punishments, costs, and values.
Frequently, we may want two things, but due to conflicts and incompatibilities, must choose only one (Handy 1969). For example, a person cannot decide to wear both a skirt and a pair of pants without repercussions such as ridicule or discomfort, so she is likely to choose just one.

Choices also have to be made between [sic] various ways of satisfying needs, for distorted, inefficient, or otherwise inadequate modes of satisfaction are frequently found. (Handy 1969, p. 159)

Modern American society often forces women to choose between a personally fulfilling domestic life—meaning a family, marriage, or both—and a professionally fulfilling life—meaning personal achievements such as a career (Gerson 1985). On the one hand, women in their twenties and thirties whose mothers lived through the bra burning of the neofeminist movement have been socialized to believe that they can and should accomplish great things professionally. However, at the same time that these women are told they have infinite potential, they are experiencing massive roadblocks due to conflicts resulting from limited resources—time, energy, money, and commitment. Both the role of wife and that of graduate student can be extremely demanding, especially if great value is placed on both roles. The role models for women currently in their twenties and thirties may have been working mothers, but those working mothers, products of the 1950s and 1960s, were likely to commit their
lives first and foremost to their husbands and children. Placing highest priority and value on these roles likely left little room for professional or independent growth. The fairness of the exchanges these women engage in are judged subjectively by each of the women, based on past experience, reference groups, and expectations. Exchange theory points out that people’s behaviors are motivated by a desire to maximize rewards and minimize costs; symbolic interactionism adds a valuable factor to this explanation—the subjective definition of the value of the exchanges. In other words, though exchange theory may explain why a woman cooks dinner for her husband despite having to study for an exam, symbolic interactionism accounts for why she made that particular choice—the rewards gained by cooking dinner were greater or more valuable than anything to be gained by studying.

For some wives the imposing conflicts inherent in today's expectations may result in a devastating compromise, and ultimately the sacrifice of career, family, or both. If a woman chooses to attempt both roles simultaneously, the perceived quality of and satisfaction with both her career and family may also suffer. Our society prescribes values for women and then forces them to make daily choices based on those values. As a result they may suffer negative
societal sanctions or they may sacrifice personal or professional goals. Cooley’s (1964—originally 1902) “Looking-Glass Self” concept indicates that people are motivated to behave in ways that promote a positive self image. Person “A” role-takes in order to see how person “B” sees and judges person “A,” and person “A’s” self-feelings and perceived self image are a result of how person “A” interprets person “B’s” opinion (or what “A” perceives “B’s” opinion to be). Therefore, the exchanges one makes and the value and judgment of those exchanges are motivated by an underlying desire to see one’s self in a positive light. If one does not perceive the exchanges to be fair or reasonable, one’s self image is affected because one would not be motivated to engage in unreasonable behavior as defined by one’s self or by others.

Although the divorce rate seems to have stabilized to 4.7 per 1,000 people or 1.2 million divorces in 1992, that number is still significantly high when compared to 1960 when the divorce rate was only 2.2 per thousand people or 400,000 divorces in America (Aburdene and Naisbitt 1992). Furthermore, a disproportionately high marital disruption rate exists among highly educated women, those with five or more years of college (Houseknecht and Spanier 1980). With an increase in the number of women entering graduate school, value conflicts resulting from the simultaneous valuing of
educational pursuits and domestic pursuits are deserving of sociological attention. Veroff, Kulka, and Douval (1981) found marital problems to be the most frequent reason people seek psychological assistance; therefore, information yielded by this research that pertains to marital satisfaction that this research discovers could be helpful.

The purpose of this research is to examine how value conflicts resulting from women simultaneously performing the roles of wife and graduate student affect the married, female graduate students and their perception of the quality of and satisfaction with their marriages and their education. Focusing on the experiences of married, female graduate students and discovering emerging patterns among their responses and comments about this dual-role experience provides an important contribution to the literature on marriage, education, and women.

This study, unlike others probing the subject of marital and life satisfaction, focuses on wives who are currently pursuing their masters’ degrees and have taken no more than five years off between their bachelors’ and masters’ degrees. These women I expected and found to experience pressure to excel both professionally and personally. This pressure also may have caused some type of value conflict for most of these women. This value conflict, due to the constant demands of both roles, forces wives to
make daily choices between commitment to husband/family versus commitment to educational development.

Married students experience problems with role overload, time management, isolation from fellow students and faculty, and decreased marital communication, sexual gratification, and leisure time...and guilt over “abandoning” children, and conflict about societal expectations of the good spouse/mother. (Fortune 1987, p. 82)

Simple, daily-task decisions are critical; they may result in a sacrifice in the quality of or satisfaction with one of the two conflicting values. From a feminist point of view this exchange is neither fair nor fortunate, as society rarely requires husbands to do the same. The exchange itself, regardless of its societal approval, may not necessarily be in these women's best interests.

The unique feature of the present study is that I questioned women after they had made the choice to be married and to pursue higher education. I questioned them about any value conflicts they experienced, the intensity of those conflicts, and to what extent, if any, they affected their marital and personal-life satisfaction. Looking at the value conflicts of the married, female graduate student gives us a deeper understanding of the power distribution in these marriages.

A feminist perspective on exchange theory provides a foundation from which to explore the married, female graduate students’ experiences. Do they experience value
conflicts? How do they make daily decisions concerning their professional and domestic lives amidst inherent demands and conflicts between the two roles? What influences their choices in commitments? Do their choices somehow affect their satisfaction with and the quality of their marriages, their education, and themselves, and, if so, how? Symbolic interactionism describes how they make these decisions and perceive their circumstances.

The view of feminism used in this project springs from Aburdene and Naisbitt's (1992) definition of feminism, an ideology that values "the full participation of women and the integration of their values, concerns and opinions at every level of society" (p. xii). This definition is most applicable to this project because it emphasizes "full participation," which means that women should have the opportunities and rights to pursue an integration of their values successfully—to learn about and be themselves—without the still present threat of negative social sanctions or personal feelings of guilt.

A qualitative analysis of the value conflicts experienced by married, female graduate students reveals patterns and themes that provide insight into their personal struggles, costs, rewards, and daily events. I believe that the personal interviews and the end product yield valuable clues into what it is like today for wives pursuing higher
education. The ultimate benefit of this study is the collection of a few clues about what makes people do what they do in the circumstances under observation in this study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In America the traditional cultural expectations of marriage include the occupational superiority of the husband and the maintenance of the home and hearth by the wife (Thorne 1982). The traditional marriage is one in which marriage and family life are centered around the occupation and values of the husband (Atkinson and Boles 1984). Although Atkinson and Boles (1984) claim that "husband and wife roles are now less rigidly defined and more open to negotiation than in the past" (p. 868), these authors also state that, even in cases where the marriage is "egalitarian," couples participate in neutralization techniques to decrease the amount of resulting stigma attached to non-traditional marriages. Booth and Edwards (1983) made a supporting conclusion when they found that even when the wife is employed full time, she is typically still responsible for more of the housework than is the husband. Examining women's employment and marital power, Pyke (1994) noted the same situation occurring today and concluded that a wife's choice to remain at home instead of participating in the labor force may be a result of her
still-subordinate power.

Sociologists have identified various independent variables contributing directly and indirectly to marital dissolution and dissatisfaction: inter- and intra-role conflict (Herman and Gyllstrom 1977), a higher occupational status for wives than for their husbands (Atkinson and Boles 1984), wives' labor force participation and race (South and Spitze 1986), amount of interaction between partners (Booth and Edwards 1983), age at marriage (Booth and Edwards 1985), and division of household labor (Pina and Bengston 1993; White 1983). The effects of education, however, have been deemed merely quantifiable predictors of the probability of divorce (Houseknecht and Spanier 1980) or as a secondary consideration (Booth and Edwards 1985).

The majority of research investigating marital satisfaction has focused on the labor-force activities of wives (e.g., Atkinson and Boles 1984; Richardson 1979). Some factors that have been identified as contributors to marital dissolution, marital instability, marital disagreement, or to marital dissatisfaction have been discovered through quantitative studies of wives in the labor force (e.g., Kingston and Nock 1985; Philliber and Hiller 1983).

Houseknecht and Spanier (1980) looked at marital disruption among highly educated women in the United States
and found that

Beyond four years of college, the women showed a marked increase in disruption to 15 percent with five years of college and to 19 percent with six or more years. It is apparent that there is a positive relationship between education and marital disruption beyond the bachelor's level for females. (p. 377)

This relationship persisted across race, income, and occupation. Houseknecht and Spanier (1980) attributed the disproportionate probability of divorce among those with five or more years of college education to economic independence, career commitment over family commitment, non-shared social support systems, and the non-traditional status of those wives.

Employed wives also exhibit a disproportionate amount of marital dissolution (Cherlin 1979; Mott and Moore 1979), especially if they are working forty or more hours per week (Booth, Johnson, White, and Edwards 1984). The fact that employed wives or wives pursuing a higher education have such a high probability of marital dissolution may be a result of the impact of non-traditional employment or higher education on the wives (Cherlin 1979; D'Amico 1983). The comparison of employed wives to wives pursuing higher education is appropriate considering the great deal of time, energy, money, value, and commitment required by both, and it is appropriate considering the relation between education and career. Considering the previous findings, it seems
reasonable to believe that the married, female graduate student experiences some difficulty or conflict in trying to deal with all of these experiences, feelings, and values. Booth et al. (1984) identify the relation between higher education/career and marital dissolution as being one that potentially influences the wife to believe that she has viable alternatives to her current marriage if it is not satisfying. South and Spitze (1986) confirmed this idea in their finding that "early in marriage, wife's education appears to deter divorce, but later in marriage, it is associated with a higher probability of dissolution" (p. 587).

The number of women taking advantage of higher education and professional careers has increased significantly since the 1960s (Gilbert 1993). Mason, Czajka, and Arber (1976) identified education as one of the primary variables influencing sex-role attitudes among women. The influential nature of education in this sense may contribute to the already tremendous change that individuals typically experience in their late teens and twenties. This change, if experienced while married, can cause a divergence in status and values that may ultimately bring strain to the marriage (Morgan and Rindfuss 1985). Booth and Edwards (1985) contributed to a clarification of the impact of education on marriage when they found that
"friends, especially if the husband and wife do not share them, may become an active source of external pressure furthering instability, thus serving as a force to 'pull the couple apart'" (p. 68). In other words, the values of differing reference groups of the husband and wife may cause even greater conflicts in the values of the married, female graduate student.

Today, societal norms presume that both husbands and wives will be employed (Gilbert 1993). "Current norms not only assume wives will work but also consider work and career as an important component of women's identity" (Gilbert, Dancer, and Thorn 1991, p. 107). Covin and Brush (1991) agreed with this notion when they concluded that

Overall, male and female respondents were in agreement regarding the importance of work and family. Men and women as a group indicated that family life was important and likely to have a positive influence on one's work. In addition, both men and women expressed the desire to work. (p. 406)

Spade and Reese (1991) found that despite the fact that men and women have equal commitments to work and family, both also expect women to have the predominant role in the family and men to be primarily dedicated to their roles in the workplace. Naturally, when both the husband and the wife are working, less time is available to spend on the family (Kingston and Nock 1985), which is also assumed to be an American value. Straits (1985) found that, contrary to
popular belief, middle-class college women have a significantly strong commitment to parenting, which might lead to a stronger commitment to family life if a conflict ever arose between career and family.

Due to scarce resources including time, energy, and money, the married, female graduate student must make daily decisions that reflect her value system. When marriage and education/career are valued (non-traditional) and simultaneously attempted, a wife is likely to make decisions that lead to sacrifices on a daily basis. For example, does she spend the time rubbing her husband's back to make him feel good or does she study for the exam she has tomorrow, or can she somehow do them both at the same time? When the decision is made, either the marriage or the education will suffer, if only temporarily. Gerson (1985) noted that women have been forced to choose between a "satisfying personal life" and "satisfying work" (p. 99). Gerson's (1985) interpretation of the effect of the traditional family type on the American wife is summarized as follows: "Thus, through a variety of mechanisms, commitment to a traditional relationship directly and indirectly undermines a woman's work ties" (p. 98). Eccles (1987) notes that if a wife bases her wife-role intentions on the traditional, stereotypical notions of family, she may be making decisions that conflict or are in opposition to her best interests.
Role strain and role conflict have been given much attention by sociologists (e.g., Herman and Gyllstrom (1977), Merton (1957), and Goode (1960)). Role conflict is experienced when the roles required of two statuses conflict with one another. Ritzer (1996) argues that perhaps "role balancing" is a more appropriate term due to the inherent balancing or juggling required to perform the obligations of more than one status. Role strain is experienced when the roles associated with a particular status are conflicting. Goode (1960) defined role strain as "difficulty in meeting given role demands" (p. 485). It is easy to imagine the married, female graduate student experiencing both, considering the imposing deadlines and requirements of graduate school combined with the stresses of marriage and family.

Merton (1957) noted that "status and roles [sic] become concepts serving to connect culturally defined expectations with the patterned conduct and relationship which make up a social structure" (p. 365). Through the term "role-set" he discusses the fact that for each role within each status there is a socially defined set of norms and expectations for behavior. Relevant to this study, society has set forth norms and expectations for the married, female graduate student's behavior which influence her actions accordingly. Of course, these vary according to the value placed on each
status and role, thus allowing for variation in courses of action among actors with similar statuses under similar circumstances.

In her book entitled *Juggling*, Crosby (1991) describes how a working mother experiences great conflict and guilt in her attempts at being superwoman. Indeed, when both employee and wife are statuses that women are expected to achieve and value, such feelings are bound to exist. Crosby (1991) asked her respondents if they felt that being a woman affected how they balanced their careers and private lives compared to most men doing comparable work. Three-quarters of them answered yes and explained that they were always tired and felt as if they were unable to put forth enough effort to excel or even do well at anything.

These negative experiences may lead to marital dissolution or dropping out of school. This choice would be one reflecting the values and resulting from the value conflicts of the woman making the decision.

In her study of achievement-related decisions, Eccles (1987) noted that educational choices (deciding to go to school and what to study) result, in part, from gender-role definitions and the "structure of one's hierarchy of values and interests" (p. 159). In her experimental model of achievement-related choices, Eccles included what she termed "subjective task value," which translates to mean that women
engage in some deliberation over the value they place on what they are deciding, the cost of making that decision, and the "incentive and attainment value" (p. 139). In the case of married women, Eccles (1987) claimed that achievement-related choices were influenced by the way wives answered the following question: "Are the demands assumed to be inherent in the occupation compatible with the individual's other life goals and anticipated activities?" (p. 140). What if the answer is no? What if the answer is yes? What if she imagines the answer to be yes, but it turns out to be no? Some sort of coping strategy will have to take place in order for her to come to terms with and make sense of her situation.

Walker (1990) noted that acting on one commitment may result in a conflict with other values. Her qualitative analysis of work and family in the lives of American women revealed this theme:

They [working women] feel tensions in trying to conform to values about work that stress personal growth, commitment, and achievement AND [personal emphasis] values about family, encouraging their presence in the home to care for their children. (Walker 1990, p. 298)

In other words, as a result of trying to achieve both a satisfying family life and a satisfying personal-life (career/education), wives may experience emotional and physical tension (Hochschild and Machung 1989). This stress associated with fulfilling the conflicting roles of wife and
student may be a result of society's pressure exerted on the wife to maintain her primary status as mother or wife (Safilos-Rothschild 1972) and to keep education or career a secondary consideration.

It may seem as though I have neglected to consider the impact of the parenting role as contributing to the value conflicts of married, female graduate students; however, I perceive the societal expectations concerning the statuses of wife and mother to be similar. Society believes that the roles associated with these statuses should be the woman's primary consideration. Consistent with Crosby's (1991) findings, I believe that most mothers place their children first and foremost in their lives with little deliberation. Highly committed career women have been recorded as saying that they did not experience "significantly higher levels of role strain" associated with their parenting role, but they instead commented that they felt "greater role conflict and time pressure" when their work required longer hours than normal (Guelzow, Bird, and Koball 1991, p. 161). Although I inquired about the presence and impact of children, it is not a primary research consideration here.

Once again, it becomes clear that male values maintain power and control over the life decisions of women. Whether it is obvious to those involved or not, the values that women have adopted restrain, limit, and inhibit them from
pursuing what society has instructed them to do in order to be contributing, functioning members of society. Herman and Gyllstrom (1977) found "women [did] perceive greater conflict between work and home-maintenance roles than men perceived" (p. 319).

However unfortunate it is that some women must make such sacrifices, it is a topic that deserves sociological attention. What are the daily choices that married, female graduate students must make? How do these women deal with conflicting values? Are the conflicts in values associated with dissatisfaction with their marriages or their educations? How do they perceive the fairness of their exchanges? Through this research I have attempted to find answers to those and other questions. Before discussing the findings, it is first necessary to explain the theoretical framework that informs this study.
CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is easier to live through someone else than to become complete yourself. The freedom to lead and plan your own life is frightening if you have never faced it before. It is frightening when a woman finally realizes that there is no answer to the question "who am I" except the voice inside her (Friedan 1963, p. 338).

The women whom Betty Friedan spoke with and wrote about in 1963 felt an emptiness inside from not knowing who they were. This void was a result of living solely for their husbands and families, a norm or ideal that our patriarchal society imposed on American women. Once the Women's Movement began to make professional opportunities available to women, they discovered, or rather rediscovered, a previously squelched desire for "knowing themselves." A career for women took on new meaning; "Career meant more than job. It seemed to mean doing something, being somebody yourself, not just existing in and through others" (Friedan 1963, p. 40). Women today still face that dilemma.

Married women who are pursuing a higher-education degree are in a position in which they must make daily important decisions, which may ultimately affect satisfaction with their lives and marriages. Kennier and
Townley (1986) have studied young, re-entry graduate students and found that for women the major value conflicts were "career versus family" and "commitment to an intimate relationship versus freedom and independence" (p. 18). A feminist perspective on exchange theory provides an appropriate explanation for the minor and major exchanges women in our patriarchal society are forced to make.

A synthesis of exchange theory and symbolic interactionism provides a logical foundation from which to examine the lives of married, female graduate students. What exchange theory lacks, symbolic interactionism offers. Peter Singlemann (1972) noted the importance and compatibility of the two perspectives, but that will be discussed later. First we must understand the basics of both exchange theory and symbolic interaction.

**Exchange Theory**

Exchange theory is based on the notion that people are motivated to engage in behavior based on a desire to maximize rewards and minimize costs. Originating with the work of George C. Homans in the early 1950s, exchange theory is an attempt to explain social behavior focusing on "psychology, people, and the 'elementary forms of social life’" (Ritzer 1996, p. 267). Similar to economic theories (rational choice theory, in particular), Homans used the concepts of rewards and costs to explain motivation for
behavior. The exchanges in which individuals engage to maximize rewards and minimize costs take place between two or more persons; however, as will be explained later, by synthesizing exchange theory with symbolic interactionism one can conceive of the exchanges as also taking place with an individual and his/her "self." In Homans' view, the social actor is one who is goal-oriented and profit-seeking.

Inherent in this theory is the belief that every interaction involves an exchange; it could be an exchange of anything from money, time, or work to self-esteem, a sense of achievement, or love. For example, if someone asks me for a favor I weigh the costs of doing the favor against the possible rewards. If I perceive that the rewards--which might include being owed a favor in the future or having the person think fondly of me for doing it--are worth the costs, I am likely to oblige the person. Homans noted six propositions of exchange theory based on this idea. A discussion of those applicable to this study follows.

The rational choice or rationality proposition of George Homans' exchange theory claimed that one weighs the potential rewards against anticipated costs in order to maximize rewards that are of the most value and are acquired most easily (Homans 1974). In other words, one considers what action to take based on the value of the reward and the probability of acquiring it. Some research (e.g., Hatfield,
Sprecher, Utne, and Hay 1985; Hatfield and Traupmann 1981) has found that the amount and equity of exchanges are very important among couples. They also found that couples who perceive their exchanges to be equitable are more satisfied with their marriages. Exchange theory focuses on the social structures and the change and actions of actors within those structures, addressing such issues as societal norms and implications of exchange, be they equitable or not (Cook, O’Brien, and Kollock 1990).

A feminist perspective, which focuses on the value of "full participation of women and the integration of their values, concerns and opinions at every level of society" (Aburdene and Naisbitt 1992, p. xii), illuminates the inequitable nature of the exchanges and choices that women today are forced to make. Both marriage and education compete for scarce resources such as time, energy, and money, which are manipulated by the married, female graduate student in her best interests as she sees fit. Many women grow up believing, due to the socialization process, that they can and will have it all. However, women are now learning through trial and error that it is not always possible to have it all at the same time. In this situation, the choices may be rational but are not necessarily reasonable.

The exchanges are not reasonable if the wife must
sacrifice personal growth or knowledge, both of the world and of herself. In order to integrate education with marriage successfully she must balance both roles so that neither succeeds at the cost of the other. Central to this notion is Homans' (1974) aggression-approval proposition, which states that if one performs an act and does not receive the anticipated rewards, one is likely to become frustrated. The second part of this proposition states that if one performs an act and receives either no punishment when expected or a greater reward than was anticipated, one will be content and come to value that act even more. Therefore, if the married, female graduate student's education and marriage do not provide the rewards she has expected, she is likely to become frustrated and possibly report less satisfaction with those areas of her life. Margaret Mead (1972) points out that married college students are deprived of the opportunity to grow personally and learn about themselves, deprived of reaching their "true" selves' potential. This deprivation, she says, is due to the inherent responsibilities associated with maintaining a marriage and to the societal norms that force the two partners to work for the good of the couple, not necessarily for the good of each individual. The exchange may become one of self sacrifice for the survival of the marriage, and ultimately a double-edged sword.
The roles that one performs are in constant competition for limited resources. Between work and family, the competition over time is likely to be won by work, due to immediate and ambiguous deadlines, pressures, and sanctions. This situation is also the case in the educational realm. The pressures, deadlines, and reputation maintenance all impose strict limitations on the students' schedules if they are to be successful. For the married, female student, however, society not only traps her into that role but also imposes gender discrimination, as she has been socialized to believe that her commitment to marriage and family should override her commitments to professional developments. She is socialized to value both commitments simultaneously; yet, these two values are often conflicting.

According to Homans' (1974) value proposition, rewards have varying value for different people. The more the rewards of some act are positively valued, the more likely a person is to continue to perform the corresponding act. Therefore, if the rewards of education are highly valued by the married, female graduate student, she is likely to continue to pursue that education despite costs, such as less time available to spend with her husband. The same situation exists if the rewards of marriage are highly valued. What is likely to happen if the rewards of both are highly valued is that the woman will choose between them
based on which role is more deserving or needing of her time, energy, money, and devotion. This choice is ultimately a choice between conflicting values. Values are one of the factors that drive the decision-making process. One could conclude that the simple, daily decisions concerning her marriage and her education made by the married, female graduate student are reflections of her values. It is possible that the conflicts between values could be a major contributing factor to the satisfaction with and performance of both roles.

The value conflict that one may experience while attempting to integrate two such demanding roles as spouse and graduate student is experienced more severely among women than among men. This situation is due primarily to the fact that, although husbands are reporting more egalitarian attitudes toward marriages than in the past, in practice it is the wife who still performs the majority of household tasks (Booth and Edwards 1985; Pyke 1994). This finding may mean that husbands do not place the same value on household chores and home maintenance as do their wives. With such a strong commitment to marriage and family, the wife pursuing a higher education must make sacrifices. The problem is not that sacrifices are made; the problem lies in the perpetual and systematic location of women in a patriarchal society. Although choices must be made, the
result may not be in the best interest of the wife if such choices are made against the status-quo, and produce negative social sanctions. "Feminist sociologists argue that women may find themselves so overwhelmingly limited by their status as women that the idea of projecting their own plans onto the world becomes meaningless in all but theory" (Ritzer 1992, p. 492).

Women in our society, some feminists argue, are not necessarily in control of the choices that must be made between education and marriage because of society's placement and control of women. Because women lack personal control and power, the patriarchal order is perpetuated, and women's careers continue to be "ornaments" to their marriages. By increasing their resources through educational achievements, American wives should experience a dramatic increase in power; however, societal expectations and prescriptions for women deny them that well deserved power. "Forbidden independence, they [women] finally are swallowed in an image of such passive dependence that they want men to make the decisions, even in the home" (Fredian 1963, p. 50). What societal expectations and prescriptions are in the process of accomplishing is not only forbidding women in this situation to reach their full potential as human beings, but also forcing them to make choices--choices that deny women the power of "true" choice.
Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a view of society as an entity composed of social interactions among human beings. Individuals actively engage in symbolic social interactions, and society is a result. Symbolic interactionism rejects any view of humans as passive creatures to whom life just happens. Herman and Reynolds (1994) briefly enumerate the following assumptions:

1. Humans live in a symbolic world of learned meanings.
2. Symbols arise in the social process and are shared;
3. Symbols have motivational significance; meanings and symbols allow individuals to carry out distinctively human action and interaction;
4. The mind is a functional, volitional, teleological entity serving the interests of the individual. Humans, unlike the lower animals, are endowed with the capacity for thought; The capacity for thought is shaped by social interaction;
5. The self is a social construct; just as individuals are born mindless, so too, are they born selfless; our selves arise in social interaction with others;
6. Society is a linguistic or symbolic construct arising out of the social process; it consists of individuals interacting;
7. Sympathetic introspection is a mandatory mode of inquiry. (p. 1)

Individuals engage in symbolic interaction with others and themselves. These interactions, in turn, constantly alter, develop, and change the individual--the self. Because humans are born without a self, life is a series of symbolic interactions that serves the development of the self. Essential to this theory is the notion of subjective
reality. In other words, the symbolism of the interactions lies in the perceptions of individuals. Interactions are not objectively symbolic or inherent, rather they are subjective imputations of individuals. For example, a fit and trim body is not intrinsically defined. Humans define it as important, and as such it is symbolic.

The lives of married, female graduate students consist of symbolic interactions, which serve to develop their "selves." Each action of behavior can be interpreted as a subjective definition of the situation upon which a woman's actions are based. It is in this defining process that we turn to exchange theory to further explain the choices of married, female graduate students.

The Synthesis of Symbolic Interactionism and Exchange Theory

Exchange theory has been criticized for its calculating, self-serving depiction of individuals (Turner 1991). C. Wright Mills (1981—originally 1940) recognized that the great task of predicting behavior could not be accomplished by merely viewing humans as acting on the basis of anticipated rewards and costs:

This nakedly utilitarian schema is inadequate because: (a) the "alternative acts" of social conduct "appear" most often in lingual form, as a question, stated by one's self or by another; (b) it is more adequate to say that individuals act in terms of anticipation of named consequences. (p. 326)
One might question whether or not every, single action is a calculated reaction based on rewards and costs. Central to the synthesis of exchange theory and symbolic interactionism, exchange theory does not necessarily consider the exchanges to be symbolic interactions. Interaction is not a key concept to exchange theory. Herein lies the synthesis of the two theories.

In exchange, men [sic] “produce” themselves through symbolic interpretations of realities and reward-directed, constructive action. Social action is subjectively meaningful and purposive; knowledge of the “objective” bargaining positions of interactants does not enable us to predict their behavior satisfactorily unless we know how they interpret their situation and what value they assign to that which the others have to offer. (Singlemann 1972, p. 422)

Exchange theory offers propositions useful in predicting how a person might act given a specific situation; however, generalizations are not always possible. Symbolic interactionism explains why, by adding that behaviors are subjectively defined as valuable in terms of rewards and costs by individuals through symbolic interactions. For example, exchange theory might explain why one chose to carry an umbrella with him or her to work, even though his or her hands were full: one decided that being able to avoid getting wet was worth the cost of carrying a heavier load. However, symbolic interactionism explains that one must first define getting wet as a
negative consequence of going out in the rain without an umbrella. One's definition of the situation is based on how others might think of him or her when he or she arrives at work soaking wet and how he or she will feel about this judgment.

Prior to making any decision regarding the fairness of an exchange or the probability of a reward, an individual must engage in symbolic interaction—if only with the self—in order to define the value of such a reward. Role-taking is a necessary step, as it is an essential part of the definition process; determining how others see ourselves is part of the defining process. Using reference groups is also key, and they serve as judges in determining the fairness of an exchange.

We define others' actions toward us and in general (rewards and punishments) in terms of how useful they are to us. Situations are defined similarly. In other words, individuals engage in symbolic interactions and translate seemingly objective actions and situations subjectively in terms of the benefits to the individual. Symbolic interactionism adds to exchange theory the idea that rewards can be defined situationally. For example, one may find it more rewarding to look good in another's eyes when asked about one's commitment to one's husband than to tell the truth. The key to synthesizing the two theories is in the
defining of exchanges as symbolic interactions.

A combination of exchange theory and symbolic interactionism is the springboard from which this research was analyzed. This new perspective allowed me to combine the best of both worlds in an effort to best describe the experiences of married, female graduate students. A discussion of research methods used follows.
In exploring the life-worlds of married, female graduate students and the exchanges they make contingent on their commitments to their marriages and to their education, methodological approach is critical. The quantitative approach to gaining knowledge employs survey-type data; calculation of setting, events, and persons; and comparison through statistical analyses. Social phenomena are conceptualized, operationalized, and described as variables, which are then measured and analyzed in an attempt to test some hypothesis that can be generalized to the population through random, representative sampling techniques (Crabtree and Miller 1992).

The qualitative approach, on the other hand, seeks to gain detailed descriptions of the life-worlds, or "everyday world[s] of consciousness" (Knapp 1994, p. 223), of a specific population through ever-evolving research procedures that result in in-depth accounts of social phenomena. In seeking insight into any life-world, the researcher is primarily concerned with gathering information on the "motives, meanings, emotions, and other subjective
aspects of the lives of individuals and groups" (Schwartz and Jacobs 1979, p. 5). It is the subjective point of view of which qualitative sociologists strive to get a glimpse (Schwartz and Jacobs 1979).

Qualitative research uses primarily in-depth interviewing and participant-observation to acquire such specifications (Crabtree and Miller 1992). The qualitative in-depth interviews that I conducted afford me the rich, thick quality of detail that is often impossible in quantitative research (Crabtree and Miller 1992).

Because I began this research as a married, female graduate student, my own experiences were used as a foundation upon which the interview guide was constructed. Throughout the interview process I was able to probe even more deeply into the life-worlds of the respondents due to my similar circumstances. Adler and Adler (1987, p.67) denote this type of researcher as an "opportunistic, complete-member-researcher." It involves a researcher studying a group of individuals of which the researcher is member prior to conducting research. Being a complete-member-researcher, the researcher necessarily shares a commonality with the respondents. In this case, I, too, was married, female, and attending graduate school full-time. I shared similar experiences and feelings with my respondents, which allowed me the privilege of even further
understanding. Frequently, respondents would answer a question and include a statement similar to the following: “Well, you know what it is like.”

In addition to being a complete-member-researcher, I also employed “systematic sociological introspection” (Ronai and Ellis 1989, p. 273). Once the project was near completion, I reflected upon my own marriage during graduate school and asked myself questions similar to those that I asked respondents. After I had completed the interviews, I wrote about my own experiences and feelings and what they meant in relation to my findings here. My account appears in Appendix A.

The goal of this study was to explore how married, female graduate students deal with the pressures of both education and marriage; how they integrate both roles, which may create either satisfying or non-satisfying marriages and graduate careers; what value conflicts they suffer; and how those value conflicts affect their marital and educational/professional satisfaction. The difference between this study and others on marital satisfaction is that I studied women before they become a statistic in the marital disruption literature. This angle allowed me to look at marital and personal-life satisfaction at the very time that any effects or influences of the pursuit of education are occurring.
From these interviews, emerging patterns and themes were analyzed. This analysis of the gathered data is based on the assumption of qualitative research, that any attempt to gain understanding of the subjective realities of actors must approach data analysis from a holistic perspective. A holistic perspective focuses on all interrelated aspects of reality and, by doing so, produces a vivid picture of the life-worlds of actors (Erlander, Harris, Skipper, and Allen 1993). A detailed, vivid picture was exactly what this research is designed to achieve, and the semi-structured interview was the appropriate tool for achieving this goal.

Sample and Data Collection

A random sampling of a population of married, female graduate students would equalize the probability that any one member would be selected (Nachmias and Nachmias 1992). For this study, however, a purposive sampling procedure was used. It was imperative to locate respondents from various majors, with varied demographics, who were able and willing to provide me with the best information possible.

I obtained a listing of all married, female graduate students enrolled at a regional state university located in the south central United States during the fall semester of 1994. From this list I identified and contacted those full-time students who had taken no more than a five-year break between degrees and were under the age of thirty. Other
respondents were acquired through a snowball technique. Although this list allowed me to sample respondents pursuing various degrees, I was unable to get enough respondents to make neat comparison groups. I intended to interview at least twenty respondents; however, locating respondents was most difficult as the university does not require students to admit their marital status. See Figure 1 for comparison of full-time versus part-time enrollment for these women, and see Figure 2 for the age distribution of the married, female graduate students enrolled during the fall semester of 1994. This information is based upon the listing obtained from the university.

From those identified as eligible I acquired a sample of fifteen respondents willing to participate in in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews were conducted primarily in person (a few were conducted over the telephone when meeting was not convenient to the respondent), and they were audio-taped and transcribed. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality, and their names have been altered in this report.

Husbands were not interviewed. My concern is with the perceptions of the wives. Based on W. I. Thomas' (1937) notion of the definition of the situation, the husbands' statements of how they feel are not important; what matters is the wives' perceptions of how their husbands feel. In
other words, if a wife perceives that her husband is supportive of her studies, even if in his mind he is not, any resulting feelings she has are results of her perception.

Respondents ranged in age from 22 to 29 with a mean age of 24.3. In eleven of the fifteen cases the husband was older than the wife; husbands' ages ranged from 23 to 34 with a mean age of 26. All respondents were taking at least nine credit hours (a minimum for full-time students) when interviewed, and the majors varied. See Appendix D for a complete listing of majors. Only one respondent had been divorced and was now re-married. Four respondents had children living with them; all children were under the age of three. The amount of time married varied from seven months to six years.

Although it was my intention to limit the study to respondents with no more than a part-time job or graduate assistantship, it became necessary to include four graduate students who were also teaching full-time as additional eligible respondents could not be located. They allowed me to inquire into the life-worlds of some of the busiest women graduate students today, and they provided a comparison to those working only part-time. Topics of concentration include the following: respondents' values, value conflict, the husband's role, sexual content of relationship,
interaction between spouses, marital satisfaction, wives' goals, wives' educational/professional satisfaction, presence of children, and the effects of the value conflict on the satisfaction and performance of both wife and student roles. The basic interview guide is located in Appendix B.
Figure 1. Married, Female Graduate Student Enrollment, Fall Semester 1994

- Part-Time: 78.8% (149 students)
- Full-Time: 21.2% (40 students)
Figure 2. Age Distribution of Married, Female Graduate Students Enrolled Fall Semester 1994
Limits of the Study

This study was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature, focusing on a small number of respondents in order to devote greater attention to detail; therefore, it is unreasonable to assume that these respondents are representative of all married, female graduate students. Instead, this study provides groundwork for future investigation.

I was unable to consider race as a variable because all the potential respondents were white. There was only one non-white graduate student on the official record of married, female graduate students, and she did not fit the profile for this study. Neither did I consider social class, which may also be a discriminating variable in the value conflicts of this particular group under observation.

The greatest limitation of this study is that I was unable to recontact these women after graduation to see if their dreams of a more "peaceful" lifestyle were realized and actually worth the costs. Seeing light at the end of the tunnel was something to which they all looked forward.

I have also considered that interviewing the married women who began graduate degrees but were unable to finish the degree would add powerful information and depth to this study. After all, nearly all of the women with whom I spoke said that their husbands were proud and supported their
efforts at higher education. Perhaps those students who do not finish drop out because their husbands are not supportive after all.

Some have suggested that I should have interviewed the husbands. Although that would have shown another side of the story, I still maintain that the objectives of this study did not require interviewing the husbands.

Another shortcoming of this study is lack of variation among majors. It seems that the variation in difficulty and demands associated with various programs largely influenced the degree of conflict the student reported. The majority of eligible students were in the field of education, and these students experienced the least stress, despite working full-time as teachers!

Something must also be said for the timing of the interviews. Although in some cases I was able to detect that the woman was presently upset with her husband or something specific regarding graduate school that may have affected her responses to my questions, in other cases I was not so sure. One woman even said, when I asked her about the quality of her marriage, that I had indeed caught her on a good day! Had I been able to interview each respondent on several occasions, perhaps I could have significantly reduced the probability that a recent argument with a husband or frustration with a professor influenced her
responses.

Though these limitations exist in this study, much insight can be gained through careful qualitative exploration of the lives of married, female graduate students. Combining this approach with a sympathetic sociological inspection has provided a vivid description of their struggles, conflicts, and joys during this stressful time of their lives. The remainder of this paper is devoted to the discussion of those details.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS
MARRIAGE AND GRADUATE SCHOOL

Marriage is demanding. Graduate school is demanding. Time, energy, and money are limited resources. What are the expectations and experiences of married, female graduate students? Demanding! Every woman I spoke with recited stories of pressure from themselves, their husbands, their parents, their children, their professors, and society. Each woman has much on her plate. High goals seem to be the norm among these students, and they believe all the effort will be worth it. Symbolic interactionism tells us that actors subjectively define events and objects as meaningful and valuable. Our expectations are based on symbolic interactions with ourselves and others. It is important to discuss the experiences and expectations of these women in order to obtain an accurate view of their situations.

Limited Resources

Before I got married I had always had high goals set for myself, and that hasn't changed. After I finish my master's degree, I want to get my Ph.D. And that's always been my ultimate goal, and it hasn't changed. (Brenda)

Higher education seems to be a decision not really made by the married, female graduate students who spoke to me. In
general, each expressed the belief that coming to college was a natural progression of events after high school, and that the decision to go to graduate school was already made for them by the fields they had chosen and the goals they wanted to achieve.

I knew I wanted to be a health teacher, so I knew I had to go to college. It was just something that, I knew I'd do. Even in high school, you just knew you'd take that route. I knew I would have to get an advanced degree to even teach health, and plus I thought the job security would be better and would give me the opportunity to teach high school and college. (Alice)

Carla felt the same way: "Going to undergraduate [school] I think was just filling expectations. I mean that is just what we did. For graduate school, I knew that to be truly happy I would have to go back to school." As Jenny said, "I never thought about not going." This sentiment was shared by all in relation to going to undergraduate school. In high school society had already instilled in these women the expectation that they were to go to college and be someone. Societal norms seem to have influenced how these women perceived these expectations. All of the students pursuing educational masters' degrees were doing so because it is required for teachers in the state and also means a pay increase.

Thirteen of the fifteen students married before beginning graduate school, and none of them said they
considered the fact that they were married to be a factor in deciding to attend graduate school. As Faye put it, "It [the decision to go to graduate school while married] didn't really have anything to do with school...we were just ready to get married." However, the demands of each were evident, especially to the mothers and teachers. When asked what she spent the majority of her time doing Ellen replied, "Worrying! About everything I have to do for school."

Karen felt as if she spent the majority of her time at school.

I don't know if this makes sense, but when I am home, I am usually doing about ten things at once. I am doing laundry, while at the same time sweeping and playing with the puppy and watching T.V., and thinking about the paper that I have to write that night. My mind is just constantly racing about things that need to be done...The days I am here [home] all day. I try to get as much done as I can because who knows when the next time will be that I can get to it. (Lynn)

Most of the teachers agree that work interferes with graduate school AND that graduate school interferes with work.

I don't feel I am a good enough teacher because of all my other responsibilities. Juggling all the things I have to do at school is the hardest part of my graduate work. (Deidre)

Ingrid was the exception in that she felt "other things" were more important than her graduate work. When asked if she would like to spend more time on graduate school, she said, "I don't need to. If I pay attention in
class, I can do well on a test. Papers are easy for me, so it just doesn't take much." Those students majoring in non-educational fields reported much more difficulty balancing their tasks than did those in the field of education. Role strain is more probable when quantity of work increases or when one perceives the tasks required to be difficult.

Each woman described various details of her life as a married, female graduate student; and although what she gave up in order to be successful seemed to depend on how she prioritized her life, all women explained that their most limited resource was time. "The only thing that I see that I give up more now is not my marriage. It is not school, but it is time for myself." (Brenda) "I don’t have hardly any time alone this semester." (Ellen) Opal had made spending more time on herself a New Year’s resolution because "I tend to spread myself too thin. I think everything/everyone is important and then not take care of myself." Having more time for one’s self not necessarily time to do nothing, but time to do whatever one wants—seemed very important, even to those who felt they had enough time alone. "My schedule does put me by myself—like in the mornings. I can sort of do with that time what I want, even if I do have some housework to do." (Georgie) For those who did not have enough self-time, acquiring more would lessen the pressure: "I feel like I could take care of
a lot of the stress I have right now. I feel like we could maybe get out and enjoy ourselves, which now we don't have time to do that.” (Helen) The desire for more self-time may be indicative of the self’s need for development and balance.

Spending time alone seemed to be important to all of the women, but none talked about that with as much emotion as she did about the amount of intimate time they had with their husbands. Again, ten of the women felt they did not have enough time with their husbands, and they expressed displeasure with this aspect of their marriage; however, the lack of intimate time seemed to have a much greater effect on how they felt about themselves and their marriages.

"With people I know in other programs we always kind of laugh that graduate school is the best kind of birth control you can get!” (Opal) When asked to define “intimate time” respondents included everything from “just talking, catching up on each other’s lives” (Karen), to “sitting together on the couch, watching T.V., going upstairs, cuddling, and being very intimate.” (Helen) Of the fifteen respondents, ten believed that they did not have enough intimate time with their husbands. Not having enough intimate time together seemed to be a real negative to the women. Deidre said that because she is in graduate school and working harder than ever, she and her husband do not have sex as
frequently as before, and that makes her feel insecure: "We are tired. He thinks you should only have sex at night. By 9:15 I’m tired and want to go to bed...We used to have sex all the time. I think that maybe I’m not attractive enough" Helen’s husband comments “twice a week” to her that there is not enough intimate time, making her feel guilty. “I feel bad. I feel guilty. [When he mentions not having enough time] I feel like I am neglecting him. He more or less wonders why I am so tired and am not in the mood.” Marie’s husband makes a “frequent argument” of not having enough intimate time, although she attributes the lack of intimacy to her being so tired, to his working all the time, and to the fact that she has kids: “Kids. That sounds terrible. You used to be able to do anything you wanted to at any time, you know...be it intimate or not.” Her advice to me was, “Don’t have kids for awhile. Finish graduate school, please.”

Opal attributes not having sex much or not having quality sex to the fact that she and her husband have difficulty “coordinating their moods,” which she attributes to school.

It [the relationship between school and coordinating moods] is a drastic inverse relationship! When if he has a test the next day or is worried about something he has to prepare and I am in the mood, even joking around, he might not have the greatest sense of humor, or largely, it is the other way around. That has been really frustrating to me, because I don’t feel like I
am the best. Often he gets the rest of me. He gets the leftovers, and that isn’t fair. I get very frustrated with myself about that. That doesn’t help our relationship.

Having too little intimate time together is Brenda’s biggest source of marital dissatisfaction. “A lot of times if he wants to have sex and I am tired, it isn’t because I don’t want to or don’t love him. A lot of times I go ahead, and sometimes I think gosh! I would like to have more intimate time; I wish I weren’t so tired.”

If the self requires an equilibrium, so to speak, and the exchanges of attending graduate school do not allow for the self to engage in activities to establish that balance, the married, female graduate student is adversely affected; she is dissatisfied with that area of her life. Perceived fairness of exchanges is important in determining satisfaction with certain behaviors. Intimate time was defined as important to these women. It affected how they felt about their marriages and themselves. Having intimate time seemed to provide a sense of security within the marriage and a sense of self-value within the individual. These women did not perceive the cost of lack of intimate time to be a fair exchange for pursuing graduate degrees and were dissatisfied with this aspect.

Expectations

Every woman mentioned that she was experiencing a
difficult time in her life; however, all felt that these particular stresses on their marriages would lessen drastically, if not cease altogether, once they finished graduate school. I will discuss their priorities/values later, but it is presently relevant to mention that the desire for each to complete graduate school originated from an even greater desire to spend more time and energy with and on their husbands and families. It was as though the "light at the end of the tunnel" kept each of them going, despite the strains on their marriages. Ellen said that she and her husband could tell me how many days were left until spring break and the end of the semester: "Only three more months." She was interviewed in February. Faye commented that she thought about how much time she had left every day and compared herself to a non-married, female graduate student in her program.

I think it’ll [marriage] be better [after graduate school]. I do. Right now we live in an apartment. We live in a very nice apartment, and I am very happy with that. I would like a house; no matter how nice an apartment is, it is still not yours. Right now, we can’t travel, and we want to. Also, we’ll have some money. I think it will get better. (Brenda)

Marie anticipates a substantial increase in salary and believes that "it will be easier." As a mother and a teacher she feels much conflict resulting from both of those roles. "Being married alone sounds like wonderful," she commented, as did Nancy: "It will be nice to know what it
feels like to not be in school.” Helen said, “I can see that our marriage will be stronger after I finish my Master’s,” and Opal hoped that her marriage would improve: “Things will change after we get out of school.”

Although each expected graduate school to be a difficult undertaking, each also expected that the end results—pay increases, job opportunities, and accomplishment—would be worth the costs against their marriages. The temporary sacrifices would be worth the long-term rewards. By defining the rewards and costs situationally, the married, female graduate student is able to maintain a positive self image. In other words, if the sacrifices were defined as objectively negative, these women would experience even greater turmoil; however, defined situationally as acceptable on a temporary basis, the costs are reasonable.

Talking with these women I got the distinct impression that once they finished graduate school, they would continue to set additional high goals for themselves. “I will be glad [when] it is over. I’ll be glad I’ve accomplished it. There are several different mountains you have to climb in your lifetime, and that’s one. I’ll be getting ready to climb a new one—getting a job, setting new goals” (Georgie).

Having it all is something that women today consider.
Defining "having it all" proved to be a relatively simple task for respondents—family, career, and children. Some mentioned that having it all included being able to decide what you wanted: stay at home and have children, not have children, work and have children, work and not have children. When asked if it were possible for a woman today to "have it all," eight women said yes, and seven said no. Of those who said yes, four mentioned that it would require help. "I think that it is unrealistic for us to believe that women can be everything to everyone all of the time; I don’t think that is possible" (Opal). Marie expressed similar sentiments: "I guess. It is hard because I see children getting neglected when the woman has a big career, and I see problems in the family. But, yes, I think it is possible... if you have a wonderful man." By defining having it all as possible only "if you have a wonderful man," allows the married, female graduate student to excuse herself if she does not have it all and values it. Blame can be placed on someone other than the self, which helps maintain the self-image.

Nancy described having it all as "Going to work and then just coming home to spend quality time with my family." For Lynn, aspiring for that near perfect life just sets women up for disappointment: "If that is what we strive for, then we are just gonna be let down." She seemed to
recognize the power of definition. In other words, trying to achieve the impossible only creates a greater sense of disappointment when one fails; therefore, it is healthier for the self to set realistic standards. Karen believed that it was not really possible because, in order to have all those things, you have to sacrifice other things that in the long run may not be worth the effort/cost. Again, their expectations appear to be based on what the ultimate rewards/costs might be. Perhaps if the costs were lower, more of these women would feel the desire or need to strive to have everything they deserve.

I think it is hard for a woman to have it all. Housework really bothers me. I’ve read articles where statistics show that even corporate executives, women who bring home the bulk of the money, still do the bulk of the household chores and taking care of children. So I think it’s really hard for women to be equal, but I think it’s possible. (Faye)

The degree of disappointment could be linked to the probability of acquiring the expected resulting rewards. Rejecting having it all as a goal is not necessarily a result of an objective reality regarding the possibility of such an achievement, rather it may be a necessary self-preservation technique. In order for one to feel good about one’s self, it is imperative that realistic goals be set as disappointment is a negative consequence of trying to achieve the impossible. In other words, when one engages in behavior that does not provide the expected rewards, one is
not only disappointed, and thus less likely to repeat such behaviors, but one's self-image is also adversely affected. No one wants to feel as if she is a failure.

Knowing the expectations of married, female graduate students helps us to understand what motivates and limits their behavior. Before discussing how these expectations affect satisfaction with marriage and graduate school, we must first look at the value systems as defined by these women.
CHAPTER VI: FINDINGS

VALUES

Before I can discuss how value conflicts affect the satisfaction with and performance of marriage and graduate school, it is imperative to discuss the value systems of married, female graduate students. How we prioritize our lives influences our daily decisions involving limited resources. For example, if our pet is more important to us than the cleanliness of our home, we might spend our last five dollars on pet food rather than toilet cleaner. If the married, female graduate student values her marriage over her education, she may decide to spend what little time she has left at the end of the day to comfort/support her husband instead of studying. If she values her education more than her marriage, she may write a paper and microwave a frozen dinner for her husband instead of cooking a meal. These decisions are reflections of value systems.

What will she do if she values her marriage more than her education but sees the rewards of studying for a test she desperately needs to pass as a greater reward than clean sheets? The short-term value of the reward might be greater than the short-term cost, and she makes a conscious decision
to postpone the cleaning. This decision affects the woman graduate student, if only temporarily, and understanding these effects is the goal of this research.

Marriage

There is no question that for various reasons marriage and family are the most important aspects of the majority of the married, female graduate students’ lives. Only two did not name their families as most important. I asked each woman what she valued most in life at the time of the interview, and with little thought, each said marriage/family: “the relationship with my family” (Alice); “I value the love I have from my family and my husband and the support they give me,” (Brenda); “My husband would be first” (Deidre); “My husband is the most important thing” (Ellen); “I guess my marriage. My family. I guess I should put my religion first” (Georgie); “Family. Can I say my family I am in is first; my family of origin would be second.” Lynn was unable to separate her love for her husband from her love from her family in terms of value.

Deciding on her top values in life was difficult for Marie: “Of course, my children. My career goals, that sounds really bad doesn’t it? My marriage, I guess would be third. This is really hard. My spiritual world, four.” When I asked her what about her marriage she valued the most, she named her kids. I asked if she could separate her
kids from her marriage, and she said: “Once you have them it is hard. Having a life-long partner is important.”

I got the distinct impression that these marriages were relatively strong and based on a mutual desire to grow together as best friends. I found it intriguing that most of the women (9) named their husbands being their best friends as one of the reasons that their marriages were so valuable. I never asked if their husbands were their best friends, yet nine mentioned it. As I will discuss later, I believe this closeness and friendship is a form of support that helps the married, female graduate student survive the value conflicts in her life.

Why is family/marriage so important? When I asked, they wondered how I could not already know the answer.

I guess the friendship is the most important[regarding the value of her marriage]. That we get along and that we can be open and honest and just be best friends. I think that is the most important thing in any marriage--this is your lifelong best friend. (Ellen)

When asked how not having people with whom to talk about problems would affect her life, Faye said that she would be less satisfied with school and that being less satisfied with school would affect her happiness in marriage: “Anytime you’re less satisfied with an aspect of your life it affects your marriage in some way.” This statement is evidence that marriage is most important.

The importance of a quality marriage and family became
evident when I asked respondents to compare themselves to married, male graduate students. Traditional stereotypes were apparent. All fifteen respondents felt that they balanced their educational/professional and personal lives differently than do most men doing comparable work. "Most men have this feeling that they have to be the supporter" (Ellen). Alice agreed: "Men get so wrapped [up] in their careers they neglect their marriage more. It seems women neglect their careers more than their marriages." These women seemed to believe that men would not give up their careers for graduate school, even temporarily.

However, the most frequently cited reason for graduate school being easier for a married man was that the demands placed on a wife are greater than those placed on a husband. Jenny clearly stated, "It is harder [for women] because of the demands on a wife." "I think a man would be more likely to say [to his wife], 'Hey, look. I am busy, and I've got all this stuff going on. Do for yourself" (Faye). Brenda agreed that, "There are still a lot more responsibilities put on the woman, like doing the household chores." Nancy noted the inequality of the situation: "Women still have to do the chores and child care while men are often time automatically exempt from these chores." Lynn similarly added,

I think I would have to say the male's life is easier
just because the female is expected to take care of the household. If the male was in graduate school, the woman would be even more expected to do that [take care of the house and home]. Like if my husband were in graduate school and I were working, I would feel more pressure than what the men feel.

Respondents agreed that women are still held more responsible for relationship work than are men. Opal made the following comment, which seems to summarize the general view:

I think relating to other typical men...I don’t think they are very concerned with how old they are going to be when they have children. I think career tends to be the overwhelming focus. I don’t feel that women have that same. I feel like they have to juggle more things in terms of family life and relationship—taking more responsibility for relationship, responsible for other parts of life other than career. I have felt the old biological clock even though I am only twenty-five. In terms of life-long plans I was [thinking] a Ph.D. would be [accomplished] in another four to five years. I am not sure if that fits in with what else I want to do in life. I think I will probably choose to stay home [when I have children] and I just don’t know if that [post-graduate work] is gonna be an investment that will pay off in terms of other things I want out of life.

Ingrid and Opal mentioned their spiritual relationships with God as their top priority but mentioned family as a close second. “First of all, I would have to say I value my spiritual relationship with God, and that has also suffered thanks to school, too.” (Opal)

Education

Initially, I did not anticipate a need to operationalize “value”; however, for clarification, the
respondents seemed to differentiate between "value" and "important," which I did not foresee. For example, Alice clearly stated that she valued her family first and foremost, but when asked if her marriage were more important than her education she had difficulty in answering:

Right now yes...ummm...marriage. I think it will always be, but it is just kinda scary because I look at people out there and I think, "How could they work that much and just put aside their family." But I know that I would get really bored if I just concentrated on my family. Right now, my education is more important to me, and I would like to keep that. In order for me to be happy I have to have both....I have to feel like I'm doing something.

Brenda ranked education third after her marriage and her spirituality, and she equated her education with "my drive and ambition." The interesting thing is that only five of the fifteen respondents mentioned education as one of their top values; however, three of those listed career goals. When asked about how important their educations were, they all said very important, but not as important as their marriages. "If I had to give up one, it would be my education," (Carla) "Education is real important to me because that is something that can never be taken away" (Deidre). "It's very important. I enjoy the stuff I'm learning and I feel like a brighter person because of it. My mind has been broadened, and I think that is really important. It's no fun, but it's a good experience." (Faye)

I would put my marriage over my education. To
me it is more important because I will hopefully always have my husband, and I would rather have him than the education because, again, that makes me happy. If I didn’t have him or if I were to lose him, my education wouldn’t be as important. I guess it is more on a feelings level. I guess it is bad to say I value that [marriage] over my education. (Jenny)

Although education was important to all respondents, no one would put her education over her marriage. Marriage represented something that seemed to make the education worthwhile; marriage seemed to add value to the education and all it required. How odd it seemed to me that in a world in which the divorce rate is so high, it is the marriage that was perceived as the life-long achievement.

Role Compatibility

Well, to me, it seems to make me a fully-rounded person, and in definition of content, I would want to have a good marriage and a good career, so yes. Valuing higher education and marriage are compatible. (Jenny)

Despite the costs of money, energy, and time, everyone felt that valuing higher education/graduate school and valuing marriage simultaneously were compatible. Alice even felt that being in school during the first stages of her marriage provided a good adjustment period before entering the “real world.” One variable that was recognized by Brenda that would influence how compatible the values were is the kind of relationship the couple has, and she compared the role of a married, female graduate student without support from her husband to the role of a single parent:
It depends on the relationship. If they have the kind of support from their husband like I do, then I would say go for it. If they have a husband that is not supportive and expects them to do the housework and expects them to do all the cooking and typical women's chores, I would say no. I would not advise it. I don't see how you could do it. I honestly don't know how [you could] and get sleep. I don't know how single parents do it.

Karen agreed: "I think so, because I think your husband can almost make it better. He can help support you through it."

Again, some wondered how they would not be compatible, "Yes, how are they not." (Ingrid)

Yeah. Because I am both of those at the same time. They are compatible in that I really try to be good at both. I don't think I am a bad wife and a good student or a good wife and a bad student. I think I may not spend a lot of time at school, but I still try to do my best. (Georgie)

"I am having trouble understanding why it wouldn't be. I guess I feel that if I wasn't married and in graduate school, I would be facing other issues. I would have just as many problems. They would just be a different kind." (Lynn) "Yeah, I think it is realistic [valuing higher education and marriage simultaneously]. It is hard, but realistic. I think it is important that, when you have opportunities, you take them." (Marie)

The value of the goal is important. Graduate school is not like high school; one chooses to go to graduate school for various reasons. As Nancy said, "I don't understand how they couldn't be [compatible]. You just do what you have to
do when that’s what you want.”

Only one respondent questioned the reasonableness of valuing both, but she seemed to attribute her feelings to the fact that she also works.

I don’t know that it makes sense. To me it would be so much easier to just do one or the other. It is hard to do both. I can see where, if I weren’t married, I could devote a lot of time to school, but, then again, I probably wouldn’t. It would be ideal if you didn’t have to work. You could just go to school, but you have to eat and stuff like that. (Deidre)

It is clear that, although marriage is more valuable to respondents than graduate school (partly because of the societal pressures placed on women to be more responsible for family than careers), education is, nevertheless, important. The symbolic interactions that take place between these women and their “selves” and others and with society as a whole have influenced their perceptions of the appropriate roles for wives and husbands. These women continue to feel that they are more responsible for maintaining a successful marriage than are their husbands, whose primary role is that of bread-winner. The value of their graduate work is depreciated by the fact that the investments/costs involved may not be worth the opportunities awarded, especially given their dedication to marriage. Life-long, family goals hold higher value than do career goals for these women, and they expect to be the primary care givers. If they have to put on hold or give up
their career in order to achieve these family goals, the value of the graduate work diminishes.

In addition to the conflicts discussed in this chapter, other value conflicts affect married, female graduate students, and they must be addressed. A discussion of these conflicts helps to illuminate just how fair the exchanges are in being both married and going to graduate school.
CHAPTER VII: FINDINGS

VALUE CONFLICTS

Married, female graduate students do experience value conflicts to varying degrees, although seemingly not as intensely as I had originally anticipated (perhaps a result of reasons to be discussed later). Due to the demands of graduate school and marriage and due to the fact that these women placed a high degree of value on each of these aspects of their lives, I expected that the daily value conflicts experienced would be very intense and even overwhelming in some cases. However, I did not foresee the tremendous spousal support that the respondents, with one exception, perceived. Nevertheless, these women feel great pressure to strive to be good, if not excel, in both areas of their lives.

Standards

Defining an "equal" marriage proved difficult for the respondents, yet in general they described two types of equality--equality in division of labor and equality in the less rigid sense of taking up the slack for each other, compensating for each other as Brenda and Faye described. Equality in marriage was defined by Deidre as even rather
than equal, and Opal considered equality to be more of an "attitude" rather than a strict "division of labor." For Ingrid and Lynn equity was not a concern; both felt that being independent was a much more important aspect regarding the success and equality of their relationships. For example, in both couples, whoever is most knowledgeable regarding the subject of a decision is primarily the final decision-maker. I perceived a great deal of trust in these relationships. No one felt that the equity in division of labor was a big concern; however, meeting each other in the middle and compensating for one another's shortcomings was very important to all these women. When defined as such, eleven of the respondents felt that type of relationship was not only possible, but close to reality for themselves. However, the majority of students (10) believed that a total division of labor was not unimportant but also nearly impossible, if not totally out of the realm of possibilities.

Although the equality issue, in terms of attitude, appears to be one of considerable importance to the majority of respondents, amazingly several were concerned with "pulling their own weight" within the marriage (despite the fact all except Brenda felt that they completed the vast majority of household tasks with little or no assistance from their husbands). Lynn described the biggest
disadvantage of being both married and in graduate school simultaneously as a "pressure to handle" much more than is actually possible: "I am not really working full-time if you add everything up, so [the biggest disadvantage would be] the struggle with trying to maintain school and feeling like I need to pull the weight around here because he is working more." Ellen says she works as hard as she does because she is married: "I would say that I probably work as much as I do because I am married [and] I feel like I do have to carry my weight around the house."

It is obvious that there are inconsistencies in the fact that equal marriages are important yet these women struggle to insure they are holding their own within the marriage despite the huge workload they have undertaken. Conflict is apparent as a result of changing the rules for the situation. In other words, though a "90s" relationship is of great value, the oppressing characteristics of the "60s" style marriage are continuing to influence the value system and personal goals/expectations of the married, female graduate student today. The definition of "marital contribution" is ambiguous to say the least. By no means can I make a generalization as to what married, female graduate students feel are the major expectations placed upon them due to the ambiguity inherent in the definition of the situation; however, I can and will describe how these
fifteen women experience pressure.

There is no doubt that the pressure to excel exists for these women; however, the pressure seems to originate primarily from within each woman (probably a result of societal pressure, as Jenny noted) rather than from any external forces, i.e., their husbands. "Society is leaning towards not placing those demands on women, but at least in our generation, they still do." (Jenny) Every single student said that she had higher expectations for her performance both professionally and personally than did her husband or instructors.

He doesn't act like he expects me to do anything. He knows he can do for himself. There are things I expect him to do that he doesn't do. I expect him to take care of my car. I don't think I should have to go get my oil changed. I probably shouldn't be that way, but...I guess then I should take care of the house....but I end up taking care of the car. It is one of those things I get mad about. I know he feels he's gonna bring home the bacon. I worry about my job just as much. I worry about how much money I'm gonna be bringing home to help out, although he probably doesn't even think about my piddly little check. (Ellen)

Similarly Alice commented that: "He doesn't expect anything out of me really, except he would like me to be a little bit more organized." According to Deidre, "I think he just expects me to love him, be kind to him. He doesn't expect me to clean and cook. He wouldn't care if I ever cooked. He wouldn't say anything." If such is the case among all but one of the husbands, why do these women, when faced with
such a great challenge as being married and attending graduate school full-time, continue to doubt whether they contribute enough? I can only conclude that either all of these women are sadistically obsessed with perfection, or, more likely, they have been socialized by a system that has failed to consider the best interest of these women. Brenda notes that the high goals she has set for herself are not only self-imposed but also result from a sense of commitment to her mother, as her mother keeps a second job to help Brenda pay for her schooling.

Specific daily tasks regarding graduate school are irrelevant for discussion, as I cannot make a valid comparison based on the variable of field of study. Those students studying noneducational fields reported that they spent on average five to seven hours more per week on school work than those students pursuing educational degrees and experienced greater stress than those studying in the educational field. Nevertheless, the result of the intensity of these pressures can and must be noted as one of significance. My question now is how do these women feel a sense of accomplishment (something that kept me going) on a regular basis with such demands? Is it possible that the exchange is giving up a sense of temporary accomplishment or success for the perceived long-term benefits? We must investigate the exchange based on the husbands'
contributions to and roles within the marriage to obtain a clearer vision of the value attached to what is sacrificed—the perceived costs—and what is gained—the perceived rewards.

Husband's Role

The division of labor within each of the marriages, according to the wives with whom I spoke, was either traditionally divided (the wife performing the majority, if not all, of the household chores and the husband performing either a minimal amount or none of indoor chores but performing the outdoor ones) or shared to varying degrees. Even among those who claimed that the chores were shared (seven), five reported that they probably did more than their fair share of the chores. Eight wives reported that they performed the majority of the household chores while seven said the chores were shared, though not necessarily equally. It is interesting that none of the wives claimed that her husband was responsible for the majority of these chores. Both Karen and Lynn declared that the split was approximately 70-30. It is important to note, as stated in the previous section, that the contribution of the husband, as reported by his wife, may be somewhat influenced by her standards for cleanliness and organization. In other words, if a wife has very high standards for how clean her home
should be--she wants the dishes done immediately after a meal and no dust ever to be found on her furniture--she may report that her husband is not particularly helpful because he does not conform to her standards. However, relatively speaking, he may contribute a great deal to keeping house--doing the laundry, cooking, or cleaning the bathroom.

Georgie seems to be the exception to the rule regarding sharing: "I never have to ask [for help]. I think he really pulls his weight." She was the only respondent to speak so highly of her husband's help.

To those who reported sharing, yet still doing the majority of the chores, the sharing definitely was not an equal split. For example, Brenda claims that she and her husband share a great deal of the household duties though she is sometimes disappointed or dissatisfied with some of his sloppy habits:

If he drinks a glass of tea, the glass will sit there or if he cuts his finger and needs a Bandaid the papers will sit there in the living room, and that drives me crazy. A lot of the times I go behind him and pick things up. But as far as like the laundry being done--we try to keep on top of things. I do a lot of the smaller things, but he does clean the bathroom and vacuum, and he does have a pretty good handle on it. Sometimes I will--it kind of frustrates me because I am used to being in a very, very clean house and sometimes our house gets to be a mess and, you know, it bothers me. I'll say [that] we need to straighten this up, and he will help so it is not so bad.

Similarly, Deidre said she does most of the work primarily because, "he cannot do it to suit me." Her husband is
responsible for the outside chores, but she notes that, "he enjoys it." However, Deidre and her husband take care of washing their own clothes; they have separate clothes hampers: "I think that part of that [separate hampers] is because he would wash everything together no matter what color [it was]." Carla claims that her husband helps out more when she is in school, especially when she is "stressed out" over school. When she gets "really stressed out" she says to her husband that she does "everything...but I don't." Here is a case where the situation has determined the wife's perception of how much work her husband actually is contributing. Opal recognizes that her husband contributes though he is more easily satisfied than is she. In Karen's situation, the chores, "most of the time...don't get done!" She recognizes that though she claims it is a 70-30 division, her husband would "probably beg to differ."

Karen adds,

I get mad to be honest, I get mad quite a bit when he's out working on his bike or something and I am inside doing the work. A lot of time that argument is what throws him to start doing stuff. Maybe that is why I do get upset, because I know if I do [start an argument], he'll start helping more.

Sharing of household duties is not the case for all the wives in this study. Marie has hired a cleaning lady to assist. Even with two children, Marie says, "I do them all. Everything!" When asked how the household chores were
divided, Helen simply responded: "My husband mows." She discusses how much she is displeased with her husband's minimal efforts:

I have to ask for it [help] all the time, and it makes me mad... I take on all that load myself; it doesn't really bother him. I love him, but I resent him for having me take on all that stress.

There are three points that must be made regarding the husband's role and the wife's perception of his help. First, according to all but two wives, there is minimal outdoor work for which the husbands are responsible due to living arrangements--primarily apartments. Therefore, though the chores may be divided into indoor/outdoor tasks, the husband is still not really pulling his weight on a regular basis, as there are far more indoor tasks to be done. In other cases, the men were almost exempt from doing some of the chores just because they were male and did not notice the dirt or expect the same level of cleanliness as the wife. Helen noted:

I don't feel like doing it [chores] a lot of the time, and I don't feel like I can ask my husband. He should be able to walk around the house and see what needs to be done, but he doesn't.

Second, several of the wives noted a difference in what it would take to satisfy their own standards of cleanliness versus their husbands' standards. "He could just walk over a mess and it wouldn't bother him" (Ellen). Jenny says,

I think he does laundry because he runs out of clothes
faster than I do....If I was the one needing laundry he might say that I could find something else to wear.

"I think it [untidiness] bothers me more than it bothers him--definitely" (Karen). Regardless of the fact that these women recognized their own higher standards, they still worried about pulling their weight and keeping things neat for their husbands. It is as if they are "inaccurately empathetic." Ellen illustrates this point well,

Well, there are days when he just kind of sits there, and I am like, "those dishes need to be done." And he says, "I'll do it tomorrow." And that would be great if he just did them right then, but if he wants to wait...I guess that is fine. He has to deal with my books and papers strewn out all over the place, too.

I realize that this point may seem like a personal value judgment on my part; however, after hearing how much lower the husbands' standards were, I find it difficult to imagine any of these husbands being upset with a few books and papers strewn about.

The third point I must stress regarding the wives' perceptions of the amount of help their husbands contribute could be stated as the "most men syndrome." By this phrase I mean that some of these women may be impressed by the "little" efforts of their husbands merely because the reference groups to which the wives compare their husbands have contributed an even smaller amount. As Lynn states,

Of course, I am not happy with 70-30, but I guess it is better than......I know a lot of friends whose husbands don't do squat, so I guess I feel lucky
knowing that he's out there working hard and is dead when he comes home. But he does...I don't know if you are like me, but my view is that men will do things when asked, but I don't like to have to ask. I would like for him just to do it. It is like, well, the floor needs vacuuming, "Can you do it?" Instead of me having to worry about asking him to do stuff, I would like for him just to do them without having to be told. He just doesn't notice the filth. I hate to have to be the one to always point it out--feeling like I am a nag.

Though helping to perform chores is an essential indicator of marital support, emotional support is equally important. Although thirteen of the wives maintained that their husbands were supportive of their endeavors, four distinct levels, though not necessarily ranked, of husbands' support for their wives' educational and professional pursuits emerged: verbal expressions of support (telling his wife he is proud of her), active support (helping her type a paper or clean up around the house), non-argumentative support (non-protesting support), and non-support (no support of any kind).

Six of the wives indicated that their husbands were primarily verbally supportive of their going to graduate school. Brenda's husband emphatically says to her that, "My wife is going to be a Ph.D.!!" Similarly Deidre's husband "always [says] that he is proud of me." Ellen, Georgie, and Karen's husbands express their support for their wives by telling or bragging about them to their friends and/or families. As Ellen said,
I just know some of the things he just says to other people, which he may not say to me. Like I heard him talking to his mom the other day about when I get my Master’s and she's been doing....all this. Although he doesn't act real excited about it, from what other people have told me, he's excited for me. He never really told me, but it is kind of neat that he's talking to someone else about my career.

Faye says that her husband is supportive in that he helps boost her confidence. Though not as convincing, Georgie feels her husband's support when he says to her, "Gee, I am glad you're doing it [graduate school] and not me," and Ingrid said she feels support when her husband tells her that, "I should be easier on myself." Karen commented that she has not consistently received verbal support from her husband,

When we first got married he wasn't as much into school. I would get mad if I had a big test and I would come home that night and he wouldn't ask me how it went. Or if I was getting the test back I would get mad if he didn't ask me how I did. I expected him to remember. But now that he's in school, I forget about his stuff, too.

When asked how their husbands were supportive of their attending graduate school, five of the fifteen respondents said that their husbands were "actively supportive" by listening to their wives' problems (Alice), asking if they need anything when they are studying (Carla), helping with housework (Faye), helping with extracurricular activities at school (Deidre), and by helping with house/school work as Brenda said:
Well, for example, yesterday I had some work to do that I call, "busywork," and we had to read five chapters and make up questions for each other and a bunch of other stuff. Along with that we had to write those questions out on cards to hand in. I was busy preparing something else for class, and I asked him, "Honey, I am really busy. Would you please (I had already typed out the questions) copy these onto the cards?" And he was like, "sure, just give them to me." A lot of times he's basically got my classes memorized, and if he sees I am running late, he'll go get my bookbag ready or grab me like a cup of yogurt. He's really supportive, and it helps.

The third type of support, "non-argumentative support," for lack of a better word, is more difficult to describe. Four of the wives with whom I spoke described their husbands as being supportive though I found the way in which they described that support to be ironic. It is as though these women expected their husbands to put up a fight regarding their academic pursuits, and, because they did not, the wives feel they are being supported. According to Opal her husband is supportive in that, "It wasn't an issue whether or not I would go." Similarly, Helen said her husband was supportive because, "He gives me time to study. He really doesn't....get into an argument with me about it. So, I would say that would be supportive." Karen described her husband's support in a similar fashion,

[He is supportive] just because he lets me do what I need to do to get it accomplished. If I have to go to school at night, that is fine with him. Like I said, he does gripe. Also because he lets me talk about it, complain about it, tell him where I am on it. He understands because he's in school, too.
This kind of support (or nonsupport, as I see it) is the most intriguing. What is it that makes these women perceive that their husbands' lack of protest inherently makes them supportive. I do not think they would use the same standard for their own behavior. For example, if I have a child and feed it enough so that it does not starve, that does not mean that I am supporting that child. Just because I do not put up a fight when my husband regularly visits the local strip club does not mean I approve of his behavior. So, why then do these women feel their husbands are supportive? Two of the respondents (Jenny and Lynn) did not name any of these types of support though they said their husbands were supportive. Instead, they commented that they just felt as if their husbands were supportive. Lynn mentioned that she believed that he understood that it would benefit both of them in the end. Have these women accepted the patriarchal mentality that it really is not a woman's place to be outside the home pursuing "professional" goals, thus making them feel fortunate that they are "allowed" to do so? Perhaps they have accepted the lack of real support from their husbands in exchange for the opportunity to pursue these goals. Either way, their achievements are still credited to their husbands for letting them go to school. Again, the definition of support or the perceived normalcy of support influences the support standards expected to be
fulfilled by the husbands.

"Active support" may relieve some of the stress experienced by those who report that their husbands do not help. For example, when asked how she thought her husband felt about her being in graduate school, Marie replied, "He is pretty resentful right now because it costs so much money and I have not ever made an income. Income is really minimal as an assistant. It just pays for the baby-sitter. Every time we argue about anything it is, "'Well...if you had a real job...you know.'" Marie's husband is neither actively nor verbally supportive. I asked her if she talked to her husband about graduate school, and she said, "No, not really. He's not real interested. It is not really that he's not interested. It is just that after everything else, it is just at the bottom of the list." For those wives who said their husbands were supportive, the support from their husbands was noted as being extremely helpful in reducing the stress associated with marriage and graduate school. Both Lynn and Brenda attributed their success in graduate school to the support of their husbands. "He's been the one that has gotten me where I am, " said Lynn. Brenda said, "Without him, I don't think I could make it through graduate school." Both Nancy and Marie reported that their husbands were not supportive.
Maintenance Strategies

"Sometimes I feel guilty after a day at school and work, and I don't even want to think about dishes or whatever, and he does it for me. I feel like that is really what I am supposed to be doing," (Georgie)

Though not all respondents mentioned the word "guilt" during some point in the interview, all at least made allusions to the fact that they felt it was their responsibility to contribute more, either around the house or financially or directly to their husbands. As Alice said, "In fact, I think I rely on him too much." Guilt is obviously a cost involved in going to graduate school while being married. "I feel bad when the house is a mess. I feel bad when we don't have dinner" (Faye). When asked what has the greatest effect on the quality and quantity of the intimate time spent with her husband, Helen responded, "Me being very tired." I then asked who usually initiated the discussion, and she said that he did. When asked how that made her feel, Helen said, "I feel bad. I feel guilty because I feel like I am neglecting him...He more or less wonders why I am so tired and am not in the mood." Not only do these women experience sensations of guilt, they also experience pressure and stress. How do they deal with these costs? How are they able to keep going to school and maintain a marriage and or family despite the seemingly endless assignments and deadlines? It is not a matter of merely
being efficient in scheduling or being able to do a thousand things at once though both skills would probably significantly reduce the stress levels. I discovered three ways in which what I call "maintenance strategies" were employed by the married, female graduate students in an effort to minimize the costs and maximize the rewards of their present situations.

Goode (1960) discusses methods by which individuals attempt to reduce role strain:

The individual can utilize two main sets of techniques for reducing his [sic] role strain: those which determine whether or when he will enter or leave a role relationship; and those which have to do with the actual role bargain which the individual makes or carries out with another (p. 486).

Although not clearly defined, Goode noted the following six categories as methods to reduce role strain:

"compartmentalization, delegation, elimination of role relationships, extensions, obstacles against the indefinite expansion of ego’s role system, and barriers against intrusion" (pp. 486-487). "Compartmentalization" is employed during a crisis between roles when both cannot be attended to and at least one requires immediate attention. "Delegation" occurs when an actor experiencing role strain assigns tasks to others. "Elimination of role relationships" happens when an actor sacrifices certain roles in order to accomplish others. Important to this
discussion is Goode's acknowledgement that

Aside from social and even legal limits on role curtailment, however, some continuing role interaction is necessary to maintain the individual's self-image and possibly his [sic] personality structure: for example, many people feel "lost" upon retirement--their social existence is no longer validated (p. 486).

This example could be one explanation of why some wives continue graduate school even on a part-time basis despite the corresponding struggles. "Extensions" is defined similarly to "compartmentalization." "The individual may expand his [sic] role relations in order to plead these commitments as an excuse for not fulfilling certain obligations" (p. 486). "Obstacles against the indefinite expansion of ego's role system" explains why one might not take a job promotion if that promotion required many additional roles and requirements. Finally, "Barriers against intrusion" occur when an actor tries to prevent others from engaging or continuing to engage the actor in role relations. For example, one might take a leave of absence to prevent being involved in an upcoming project at work.

Goode's (1960) work on role strain is relevant to the present discussion, despite the fact that I focus on role conflict. Assuming that the symptoms of role strain and role conflict are similar (anxiety, tension, stress), one might also imagine that the methods for relieving those
symptoms to be similar. In other words, if one has a cold and experiences a painful cough, he or she might take cough medicine just as he or she would if suffering from pneumonia. Though arguments are made for Goode's six methods of relieving the symptoms of role strain, this study found little support for them.

Unable to reduce the workload of school and marriage/family, I found that these married, female graduate students compensated for their shortcomings in three ways (comparison, redefining the rewards, and lowering of standards); however, none expressed that maximizing the rewards and minimizing the costs was their intention. Scott and Lymann (1968) recognized that humans give "accounts" for their behaviors which may be in question: "An account is a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to a valuative inquiry" (p. 46). These compensation techniques serve as accounts both to the self and to me, the inquirer. It is a way for the married, female graduate student to maintain her self-image despite her behaviors, including her acceptance of her husband's actions.

The first category of compensation is "comparison." As I noted earlier in the section, Husband's Role, using reference groups to compare oneself seemed a regular practice among some of the respondents—particularly if they described their current situation favorably.
I hear some of these people [graduate students] talking about...Well, I’ve got to go home and cook my husband dinner, and he won’t help me at all, et cetera.”

(Brenda)

When asked how she felt about her own marriage, Ellen compared her own marriage to those of other married friends: “I compare my marriage to some of my friends’ marriages, and mine’s great!” Goode (1960) noted that individuals might expand role relations “as excuses for not fulfilling certain obligations” (p. 486). However, these respondents seemed to be expanding their definitions of a good marriage as opposed to expanding role relations, though it could be considered as an excuse for accepting flaws within their own marriages.

Not only did respondents compare themselves to other non-married students, married students, male students, married non-students, and their parents, but some also compared themselves and their marriages to themselves and their marriages at a previous time. The important thing to consider is not just the fact that they compare themselves to others but how they feel about themselves when they do so. I got the distinct impression that these women compared themselves to other people as a way of justifying their own behaviors or shortcomings. When asked if she felt that in the long run all the stress and hard work will be worth it, Faye responded,

Yeah. I think I would be very unhappy if I wasn't in a relationship and if I was living with my parents. I
probably would have shot myself by now! I'm a much happier person, and I do not think I would be happy in her place [her own place at an earlier time].

Likewise, Deidre can not imagine what her life would be like if she were to have children while going to school: "If I had children, I would resent school a lot." Carla feels her life is in some ways easier than that of a non-married counterpart because, "...she [non-married counterpart] has nobody to help her. When she is feeling down about something, she has nobody to cry to, and I cry to my husband." Opal admitted she does not invest the time in relationships that her non-married counterparts do because the rewards are small:

There are needs for interpersonal relationships because my life is not whole because I don't try to meet people and get those needs fulfilled outside the marriage, and I think that that is what single women are doing. They are forced to look beyond one relationship to fulfill those needs. Why invest now when I know I won't be here much longer to reap the benefits?

Karen pointed out, regarding her non-married cohort, that "They don't have someone there they can talk to. They come home to an empty room. They don't have a long list of like clothes to wash and all." Jenny even laughed at her own attempt to describe the differences between herself and a non-married, female graduate student. After failing to make a definitive remark, she finally said with a laugh, "Maybe we are just well-adjusted?" Faye also recognized that she probably defined her own life as more difficult because that
was the life she was leading:

Obligations. They don't have to check with anyone to do anything. I have obligations at the house, to my husband. I have a lot more bills to pay. They are just thinking of themselves, not in a selfish way, but they only have to tend to themselves. I have more responsibilities...probably. I don't think either lifestyle is necessarily easier, I think they're just different. I do selfishly think mine is somewhat harder, but I think I just think that because it is mine. Grass is always greener on the other side.

The second "maintenance strategy," "reward-definition," involves how each woman defines her situation in order to justify the costs and maximize the rewards. In other words, the respondents seemed to be defining a negative consequence of going to graduate school while being married and redefining it as a reward. For example, Carla spoke about the difficulties of her present situation while at the same time making sure I did not think she felt sorry for herself. She wanted me to know that she chose the lifestyle and would therefore deal with the consequences accordingly:

I have told him that although he is supporting us 100% right now, that if he is ever unhappy with his job I would want him to quit [snaps fingers] like that. We would work it out. If I had to put off graduate school for a semester and we had to work at McDonald's; that would be fine. Our goals are very similar and we don't have just one path to getting there.

Similarly, Brenda pointed out to me a number of times how important it was to her to have the choice and opportunity to go to graduate school, and Ellen said, "I knew what I was getting into." I also found it interesting how these women
described their social lives, or rather non-existent social lives in the majority of the cases:

If you are going out with all the girls and...all that other stuff....Now, I don't have any of that to worry about! I can come home and study and not worry about who's gonna call me and if I'm gonna be doing this or that. (Ellen)

A second way of "redefining the reward" or situation to their advantage is by defining marriage as the priority over school. It was fascinating how all these women described how important graduate school was to them, but all except one (Ingrid) would, hypothetically, give up their education if necessary to keep their husbands/families. Carla says, "My grades and my work come first for me," and two sentences later she says, "No matter what I do, our marriage will be the most important." Opal attributes her success in graduate school to her husband: "My success as a grad student is largely due to the unconditional love I get from my husband. It reaffirms me of who I am as a person and helps me realize that grad school is not my whole world, and that is how it feels right now." By placing more value on her marriage, the married, female graduate student is giving herself the freedom to perform less well in graduate school; she has a "justified" excuse--it is not as important as her marriage. Similarly, by minimizing the importance of graduate school, Alice is able to feel good about her work, despite her disappointments regarding her grades, "Now, I am
really concerned with learning more.” By defining the situation as such, she is maximizing the rewards she values the most and minimizing the costs she despises the most.

Last, a few of the students were able to cope with the stress by “lowering their standards.” Lynn said,

My standards (regarding household chores) used to be really, really high, and I've had to lower them. So, now that they (standards) are lower, they (chores) are done in a timely manner. I can’t keep thinking that everything is gonna be perfect, because then I’d just drive myself crazy.

In other words, Lynn is dealing with the fact that the chores are not getting done in a manner acceptable by consciously changing what is important—changing the rewards. By defining the reward as a clean and tidy home that she cannot achieve, she would be setting herself up for constant disappointment; however, by lowering her standards, she can accept a less neat home as a reward and still also reduce the guilt of ignoring her husband or have other rewards, such as more time to spend with her husband. Marie also had to lower her standards though she spoke regrettably about it: "I had to kind of lower my standards. I can't be perfect at everything. I had to kind of realize that."

Alice noted that she changed her standards regarding her performance in graduate school: “I used to be really, really competitive about getting As, but now I am really concerned about learning more.” Opal came to the same conclusion:
"When I came here, I was determined to get a 4.0, but I kind of had to stop and think if that was necessary in order for me to be happy, and it is not."

"Elimination of role relationships," one of Goode’s (1960) methods for decreasing role strain, seems similar on the surface to what I found; however, these respondents did not eliminate any roles, they just lowered their standards for those roles. I found no support for his technique of “delegation,” as respondents maintained that they did not expect their husbands to do the work for them.

C. Wright Mills’ ([1940] 1981) work on “motives” is useful in understanding the “maintenance strategies” used by these women. “Motives” are accepted explanations for behaviors. It is reasonable to think that motives were used by respondents in anticipation of my questioning their comments. There were more than a few occasions in which respondents gave conflicting accounts. In other words, it is conceivable that they described their situations as better than they may actually perceive them to be in order to make themselves look better. Motives can be given to oneself in an effort to convince one that one’s behaviors are acceptable.

Although I did not ask respondents how they perceived me, one might say, based on the responses given, that they believed me to be a “90s woman,” meaning that I had non-
traditional values. Their opinions may have been derived from the particular questions I asked, the probes I employed, or my demeanor during the interviews. Regardless of how they acquired a view of me as interviewer, how they defined the situation is essential. They may have wanted me to perceive them a certain way, thus employing "motive talk" to achieve this goal.

"Maintenance strategies" are a means by which married, female graduate students are able to subjectively define their situations favorably and maintain positive self images. "Maintenance strategies" can be thought of as examples of "motives" or "accounts" used by these women to maximize their rewards. Spousal support seems to be paramount to these women's concepts of self and to their success due to the tremendous value they place on marriage. It is important to consider here the power associated with defining the situation. By subjectively defining the situation married, female graduate students give themselves permission to feel good about behaviors that might not be objectively defined as good.

Reality is subjective. This chapter illuminates the notion that rewards and costs are not objectively defined, rather beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. Despite these efforts to satisfy the self's desire for equilibrium and fair exchanges, value conflicts still occur. The
question now must be asked: How do these value conflicts affect the married, female graduate student’s perceptions of and satisfaction with her marriage and education.
CHAPTER VIII: FINDINGS

MARITAL AND PROFESSIONAL-LIFE SATISFACTION

"If my coffee cake flops, I am not a failure as a woman or a wife." (Opal)

Understanding how the conflicts, stress, and costs associated with simultaneously performing both the role of graduate student and the role of wife influence perceptions of performance as both a wife and graduate student and satisfaction with these areas can be found by analyzing all of the previous chapters so carefully that one acquires a detailed knowledge of how these women live day to day. Comparing those details to their feelings about their performance and satisfaction will provide an even further understanding. I anticipated that the degree of value conflict experienced would influence her feelings of performance of and satisfaction with her marriage and graduate school. In other words, if a married, female graduate student perceived a significant degree of value conflict on a daily basis, I anticipated that she would report less satisfaction with one or both of the roles and that she would perceive her performance to be below standard--particularly for the role on which she placed the
greater value.

Studies on role conflict have demonstrated that the greater the number of roles, the greater the probability of conflict. It has also been noted that the greater the number of tasks associated with a particular role, the greater the probability of role strain. The information contained in the preceding pages shows evidence of both. Role conflict and strain have both been linked to dissatisfaction. Exchange theory supports this claim when role conflict and strain are viewed as costs or punishments for behavior. Whether expected or not, when a reward is expected and not given or a punishment is given, one is likely to become frustrated (Homans 1974). The key to understanding how much conflict and strain it takes to frustrate or dissatisfy a married, female graduate student lies in the symbolic interactions which define rewards, punishments, and costs and which determine the value of each.

Performance

Only three of the fifteen wives reported that they believed they were not doing very well at being wives. Marie said, "I could be better; more understanding. He'd probably say I could do a little better." Karen also regretted, "I am not the best wife because I do stay very busy with my other activities, but I think he knows I love
him." Then she told me the following regarding what most impacts how much time she gets to spend with her husband:

School. Just all the things that I have to do. Most of the research I have to do on campus, plus I tutor in the lab. And the assistantship takes up a lot of time. He complains sometimes. [He complains] two or three times a week--not bad like he is mad, but he just gripes about it quite a bit. Last night we tried to decide what we had eaten every night that week. He said, "Well, in case you haven't realized, we haven't even seen each other until tonight!" Just little remarks like that. Sometimes it is okay. Usually, I can let it go over my head, but sometimes it does make me mad--especially because the main reason I do all the extra things is that they will look good on my resume. His biggest comment now that I am working is that he can't wait until I have "just a job" working sixty hours a week so he can finally get to see me. He thinks he'll be able to see me more when I have "just a job." Sometimes that makes me mad. I know I got a little "teed" last night when he said that in front of some friends. I try hard to get here as soon as I can; he goes to bed by 8:30 or 9:00 anyway.

Helen was the most critical of herself: "Right now, I don't feel like I am a very good wife. I don't have enough time to do the things a good wife should do and be." Graduate school was stated as the cause of not having enough time to be a better wife.

Although these three believed they were not particularly "good wives," twelve others felt they could definitely do a better job. As Opal put it, "[I do] okay, sometimes good. I think I am a real bitch sometimes--largely because of the stress at school." Carla noted that, "in comparison to most people...we do outstanding, but I
would like to be able to do more." It seemed as though these women placed a high value on being a good wife and regretted not being able to do a better job though no one reported that her husband complained. "In general, [I do] okay I don’t always live up to my expectations for myself. Probably, a lot of people would see me as selfish because I don’t wait on my husband hand and foot" (Deidre). It did not seem to me that all these women wished they could wait on their husbands, but they did leave me with the impression that they deserved an “A” only for effort—not for actual performance. When discussing the quality and quantity of intimate time spent with her husband Brenda felt that she was not performing the role of wife as well as she felt she should. She questioned whether or not she was being a “good wife.”

He says that before we got married we used to spend so much time together and “you used to be just all over me.” And I am like, “My God, I don’t have the energy!” That is one of the things that I probably should work on more in my marriage. Sometimes I sit back, and I think, “Well, am I being a good wife? Am I putting school before my husband?” And a lot of times the answer is yes.

Graduate school seemed to have taken its toll on how well these women felt they could perform the roles associated with being a wife, and its toll did not go unnoticed. I have to wonder, though, how many husbands ask themselves if they are being good husbands by sometimes
putting their own work before their wives? Is this merely a
gendered behavior, or is it the influence of our patriarchal
society? I think the latter is most definitely the case.

Although Lynn stated, “I couldn’t do much better [at
being a wife],” she also stressed that she did not strive
for perfection. Not striving for perfection seems to be a
way in which these women can be more satisfied with less.
As I previously noted, these women appear to be redefining
many standards in an effort to maximize rewards and to
minimize costs. I had anticipated that these women would be
more displeased with their performance as wives, due to the
daily stresses; however, their high ratings may not be
entirely accurate reflections of their true feelings when
other variables are taken into consideration. In other
words, were they not employing the previously mentioned
“maintenance strategies,” perhaps their views of their
performances would be different.

In a similar way I expected that the stress resulting
from the value conflicts would also impact how well these
wives believed they were performing as graduate students.
Such did not prove to be the case. No one said that she was
not at least doing okay as a graduate student, and no grade
point average was below a 3.0. Despite these high marks,
all but three (Brenda, Deidre, and Karen) said that they
could do much better if given the time and motivation or
different priorities. As Helen said, "I feel like I had to do better if I had more time, but my son comes first."

Their marriages and families would occupy any additional time were it available. Marriage and family, because of the value placed upon them, took precedence over educational pursuits. Ellen noted, "Sometimes something else more important comes up."

How can I explain that they did not believe they should be better graduate students but that they should be better wives but felt they could not? It seems obvious that it is a matter of value of the rewards; the rewards of marriage and family were more valuable than those resulting from graduate school, thus they felt more pressure to excel in their personal lives than in their professional ones. Again, as our patriarchal society has dictated for many years, this response is the appropriate one for women. Another explanation could be that these women did not want me, the researcher, to get the impression that anything, especially graduate school, would come between them and their families--a potential bias of the research. As someone working on her master's degree, I, myself, would not want to be perceived as someone who did not value marriage to the appropriate degree, nor would I want to be perceived as being married to someone who is not supportive of my endeavors in this day and age--particularly if that someone
were of similar status.

Satisfaction

Ellen noted that in some areas of her marriage she does "pretty good," but other areas suffer. When asked about how much intimate time she spent with her husband she confessed:

Gosh, none. I really think that I just lead a stressful life right now. Intimacy is like the furthest thing from my mind. I don’t know if I have a one-track mind or what, but school is just a priority right now. We don’t have much romance right now, and it seems to be fine with both of us. We cuddle in bed...does that count? Actually, it is probably because we are cold, but really that is the only intimacy we get. As far as romantic, we just haven’t done anything like that in a while. Maybe we are in a comfortable routine now. Maybe we take each other for granted.

Again, I was surprised to discover that all but one respondent (Marie) were at least content with the present state of their marriages. They attributed their satisfaction to the fact that their husbands were their best friends (Ellen, Jenny), to the quality of communication (Nancy, Opal, Ingrid), to the fact that trivial things are the subject of the majority of arguments (Faye). Lynn mentioned that she was “really satisfied [with her marriage overall] with the exception of housework.” Karen noted that the efforts made to improve her marriage have paid off: “He wasn’t real good at letting me know he was mad until like three weeks later. Now that we’ve gone from not having it to having it [good communication], it has made it become
valuable.” Perhaps this is another reason why these women are so looking forward to the expected improvements in their marriages as a result of their finishing their schooling.

It is interesting to note that though they are—as a group—relatively satisfied with their performance of graduate work, they were less satisfied with graduate school in general. I cannot attribute this dissatisfaction to the stresses associated with being married, however. Although no one claimed dissatisfaction with graduate school overall, they were not as proud of their programs as they were of their own work in them. Alice mentioned a “lack of challenge in variety” in her program, and Opal discussed that “So many areas of my life are put on hold because of school.” If anything, they blamed graduate school for problems in other areas of their personal lives. Again, I perceive this to be a result of the higher value placed on marital happiness and success as opposed to graduate school. Karen said that she was “somewhat happy” with graduate school overall, but that, “If I had to pay for it, I wouldn’t be real happy.”

One possible explanation for the fact that overall they did not report great satisfaction with graduate school is that they have not yet received/experienced the rewards and are instead only paying the costs—financial, stress, time, and taking away from their marriages (the rewards of which
are reaped on a more regular basis). According to Homans’ (1974) aggression-approval proposition, if one performs an act and does not receive the anticipated rewards, one is likely to become frustrated. These women did seem somewhat frustrated with graduate school overall and with specific areas of it, even though no one said she was entirely dissatisfied (which is probably due to the fact that were there no rewards to graduate school, no one would go). These women, who are still in graduate school, must look toward the future for their rewards as the daily experience of graduate school does not provide them with many perceived rewards.

One might also conclude that the greater the degree of role conflict and strain experienced, the less satisfied the married, female graduate student would be with her marriage and graduate school. Because greater value is placed on marriage, it is logical that greater role strain than role conflict is experienced within the wife role. These women definitely experience more role strain than conflict due to their value systems. Through “maintenance strategies” they have decreased the amount of role conflict and thus reduced their dissatisfaction with both roles.

Satisfaction is based on how well we perceive we fare in our exchanges. If we are getting expected rewards or greater or receive no punishment when one is expected, we
are likely to be satisfied because getting such rewards is an accomplishment in which the self can take pride.

I asked respondents if they perceived a relation between marital success and success with graduate school. All believed that how successful they were in their marriages affected their success in graduate school, if only on a short-term basis; however, the reverse was not perceived as true. Being successful at graduate school seemed to affect how these women felt about themselves, which might then affect their marriages. Brenda noted: "Being successful in my marriage, I have the love, I have the support which enables me to be able to do my work. If I didn’t do good in graduate school, I don’t think I would feel very good about myself. That might interfere with my marriage" Opal concurred that, [being successful as a graduate student] affects how I am feeling about myself as a person, and I bring that home."

It seemed easier to deal with disappointment at graduate school than at home. "If you don’t have the basic home life, if you have a lot of home stresses it would be really, really hard to leave that at home. It is just harder on you" (Marie). Again, I attribute this belief to the fact that marriage is more valuable than education. As Karen said, "Even though school is an important factor in my life, it is nowhere as important to me as my marriage."
Carla agreed: "No matter what I do, our marriage will be the most important." Lynn said, "If I am unhappy at home it will affect my everyday living. If I don’t have a happy marriage, it will affect how I see the world." Georgie added,

It is no question to me that my marriage is my priority. I think that at school they would hope that school would be your priority, especially the professors I have encountered. Marriage was my first choice. Other students don’t have the responsibilities that I do, but of course, that was my choice. School is a priority to me, but it is not the highest thing on my list.

The accounts given by respondents clearly show that satisfaction and perception of performance is determined, at least in part, by the value systems of individuals. These women are much less satisfied with their performances in marriage than with their performances in graduate school because marriage is more important to them. Though they perceive graduate school to be a necessary priority, it does not take precedence over marriage. Combining exchange theory and symbolic interactionism it is clear that how we define rewards and values affects not only our choice of action but also our satisfaction with our choices and with ourselves. The self is rewarded if rewards are acquired and are perceived to be fair exchanges. These married, female graduate students feel good about themselves if they perceive that their sacrifices made (exchanges) are somehow
ultimately beneficial to their "selves."

The next task is to combine the key points of this study and put in perspective the findings. The conclusions follow.
CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSIONS

Although I did experience a great sense of accomplishment from finishing the first draft of this thesis, I also relived the costs involved. As I sat squinting through bloodshot eyes at the countless words on my computer screen, my back aching, fingers sore, and brain tired, my feelings were what I imagine to be similar to those of the factory worker at the end of the day— it is over, at least for today. These married, female graduate students felt similarly strained at the end of their long days of classes, assistantship, homework, dishes, dirty diapers, and back rubs for their husbands. What makes the difference in how we feel about what we have done for the day is how much value we place on our accomplishments. While rubbing a husband’s back or cooking him dinner may not have provided a wife with much immediate pleasure, the satisfaction of knowing she contributed to the marriage may well be an adequate reward; however, the satisfaction of knowing she finished retyping a paper for the fourth time or read five chapters in one evening may not be reward enough to value that accomplishment over other tasks performed for
"love," at least not on a daily basis.

The rewards of graduate school are primarily postponed until graduation—when the diploma is in hand, when the dream job materializes while the hug and kiss before bed are immediately gratifying. Homans' (1974) value proposition maintains that rewards have varying values for different people. The more the rewards of some act are positively valued, the more likely a person is to perform the corresponding act. It seems obvious that the rewards associated with performing the role of wife are more positively valued than are the rewards associated with performing the role of graduate student, thus explaining why these women, given the opportunity, would invest any gift of time in their husbands and families instead of their school work—even if school could use that attention.

Though I cannot conclude that the value conflicts suffered by the married, female graduate student cause her to be significantly less satisfied with her performance of either role, I can conclude that value conflicts are experienced. I can conclude that this group of women, even in 1995, continues to wish to be successful at marriage moreso than successful professionally. This group of women, though claiming that their marriages were rather non-traditional, expressed the feeling that their value systems were primarily traditional. These women wanted to be better
wives, not better graduate students.

I can also provide evidence supporting Homans' (1974) exchange theory. For example, as a whole, respondents were satisfied with their marriages due to the resulting rewards and the value placed on them. Conflict arose when the exchanges were not perceived as fair; and, when such was the case, respondents were frustrated. Respondents varied in their perceptions of value. In many cases, respondents seemed to expect their husbands to openly object to their wives' pursuit of graduate school. When this did not prove to be the case, wives felt happy; they reported their husbands as supportive.

By synthesizing exchange theory and symbolic interactionism the findings in this study are even more interesting. I was able to look deeply into the life-worlds of respondents to get a better understanding of how they defined their situations. While exchange theory provides a basis for predicting certain behaviors given specific circumstances, symbolic interactionism adds a necessary dimension to the model. Saying that people assign varying values to different behaviors is important, but being able to note that these assignments are subjectively defined based on symbolic interactions is paramount to understanding human behavior.

I found that, in an effort to deal with the conflicts,
married, female graduate students engaged in three types of “maintenance strategies.” “Comparison” is a means by which respondents used reference groups and past experiences to perceive their current situations favorably. By “redefining the reward” respondents were able to redefine behaviors they found rewarding; this strategy allowed them to feel good about their own behaviors despite their original or underlying values. The third type, “lowering standards,” involved changing the expectations placed on the self as a result of trial and error. This method also provided the married, female graduate student with relief when she could not accomplish all that she truly wanted.

This research was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature; in this task I have succeeded. Due to the dissolution of my own marriage during the course of this research, I have come to realize the value of the information, not present in this research, to be gained from those women whose marriages also failed during the course of their graduate work or from those wives who did not complete their graduate degrees. Recently, while talking to a graduate student friend about my own experience as a married, female graduate student, he pointed out that in nearly every instance in which I had complained about my own stress or my husband’s lack of active support, that I had ended up defending my husband (much to my own surprise).
Perhaps my own research suffers from a similar bias; it is possible that many of these women emphasized the better qualities of their relationships in an effort to justify their and their husbands' behaviors. In other words, as I did to my friend, maybe they alleviated some of their perceived stress/shortcomings/failures by emphasizing or placing added value on the good qualities.

Regardless of what this research failed to prove, it was beneficial--both to my own personal development and to sociological literature. I hope that these insights and descriptions will help to further the cause of social research and help future married, female graduate students. Though my research may be helpful, other methods and perspectives may enhance what knowledge is presented here.

Suggestions for Future Research

A number of future research projects could assist in our understanding of married, female graduate students' lives. Most important, I would suggest conducting a longitudinal study of women who were/are married during their graduate/post-graduate careers. A longitudinal study would contribute a great deal to a synthesis of exchange theory and symbolic interactionism as perceived changes in the self could be noted and analyzed via that framework. This method would also provide a more diverse group of respondents as some of them would inevitably divorce. I
believe a comparison group between those who remained married and those who did not and between those who completed their degrees and those who did not would be extremely beneficial.

Another way to improve upon this research topic would be to interview married women who did not complete their degrees and compare them with those who continue to attend and with those who finished. This cross-sectional sampling method could also give important insights into the life-worlds of married, female graduate students that this study was unable to provide.

I was unable to make comparisons based on majors; however, I did find that the amount of time spent on graduate school seemed to be related to the difficulty level of the program and that difficulty level had an effect on the level of perceived conflict. The degree of conflict, I believe, is at least partially based on the difficulty of the program and, in combination with other factors, impacts the self-image of the student.

I would also like to see a dialogue take place between the researcher and the respondents that would be more like a conversation than an interview. Many times during the interviews I yearned to question more directly the truthfulness of certain statements, yet I remained a good listener. I suspect that a conversation-directed discussion
might break down some of the tendencies a respondent feels to uphold her self as perceived by the researcher and get closer to the “truth.”

In conclusion, the lives of married, female graduate students deserve attention. Having a life with which one can be proud is important to these women, and being a productive and compassionate person is a goal which many strive to attain. Obstacles are inevitable, yet they make individuals stronger when they conquer such barriers. Analyzing the details of how these triumphs occur will allow future generations to learn from the experiences of the present generation.

Barbara Walters, a woman for whom I have tremendous respect, was quoted as saying, “To feel valued, to know, even if only once in a while, that you can do a job well is an absolutely marvelous feeling.” (Beilenson and Tenenbaum 1986, p. 53) I believe that the “marvelous feeling” I have as I complete this project is because I honestly feel that the effort involved in writing this thesis was worth the blood, sweat, and occasional tears. This study has provided important descriptive results in the initial stages of social research. Research which has yet to be conducted will benefit from these details.

Details are the little things that make experiences more intense and feelings more passionate, though they are
often overlooked in our busy lives. Too frequently we spent
time frustrated that traffic will not move, that stains will
not come out of our clothes, that research will not prove
our hypotheses, or that the man of our dreams has not yet
entered our lives. Yet, at the same time, babies are being
born, girls are getting kissed for the first time, elderly
ladies are packing Tic-Tacs and Kleenex in their pocketbooks
"just in case," and married, female graduate students are
struggling to find happiness amidst trials and tribulations.
We must not ignore the graffiti on the bathroom walls, lest
life will pass us by, and we will not have taken time to
contribute our knowledge to the generations yet to come:
"Nobody sees a flower--really--it is so small--we haven't
time--and to see takes time like to have a friend takes
time." (Georgia O’Keeffe)
APPENDIX A

SYSTEMATIC SOCIOLOGICAL INTROSPECTION

Deciding a thesis topic proved to be less difficult than I was making it during the first year of graduate school. Having labored over topics that were too simple, too complex, too confusing, and simply too unworkable, I was frustrated. One afternoon after class I was sitting outside talking to a professor complaining about my plight as a married, female graduate student, though not in those words. I described how my laundry was piling up, how I had articles I desperately needed to read for which I could not find the time, how I was tired of feeling as if I were not contributing to marriage because I was not bringing home a substantial paycheck, and how I was simply frustrated. Much to my surprise, it was suggested that I go home and write down everything I had just said and all the other details I excluded in an effort to be “polite.” The professor had listened carefully to all that I had said and, as a good sociologist, recognized the potential for research.

Initially, I thought the idea was absurd. Write my thesis about a group of women’s complaints about graduate school and their husbands, I thought. Well, after I wrote
down all the things that I felt about the situation, I also
realized that this idea was definitely not a bad one. The
details of that blast of contemplation and writing quickly
became a rough draft of an interview guide, which was later
enhanced through diligent research.

Ahead lies the most difficult task of sifting through
my feelings and frustrations yet again, as I complete the
project. My husband and I separated before my last semester
of graduate work and were divorced recently. Due to these
changes in my life, it has become appropriate that my own
story be included and analyzed in the research.

I recall making casseroles for dinner and freezing them
so that I would be able to conduct the interviews when it
was convenient for the respondents—which turned out was
when they, too, were baking pre-made casseroles. I suppose
initially I was anticipating meeting the respondents and
hearing their dreadful tales of neglect and frustration,
which, of course, could only make me feel better about my
situation. Quickly, I realized that these women were not
going to uplift my spirits. Oftentimes I was surprised to
hear how helpful a husband was or how few hours a student
spent on homework. Many times I was simply jealous as hell,
for I seemed to be riding a totally different animal. I
struggled to finish interviewing all fifteen respondents
because the more I spoke with them, the more envious I
became. Why was I not as apparently satisfied with my life? Why did my husband not offer a beverage to me when I was up late studying? It seemed as though I did not have as much in common with these women as I had thought.

During the analysis stages of research I began to piece together conflicting elements of the interviews. Oftentimes I found that respondents contradicted previous statements about their happiness. Some would say that they were really happy with their marriages but later complain in detail and with some regret that their husbands did not pick up after themselves or that there was not enough intimate time. I did not feel so bad after all.

How did it feel to be a married, female graduate student? Lists became my best friends instead of real people. Sleep became more valuable than money. Winning the lottery seemed more likely than having sex. The flu seemed to be my shadow. I forgot what it was like to just do one thing at a time and do it really, really well. I became the best casserole cook in the South. Laundry was not something to which I devoted a day; it was a daily task. Baths were entertainment. Reading for recreation was impossible. In short, at the time it seemed like a wicked endurance test. Looking back, what I missed the most was my self. I kept thinking that once I finished graduate school, everything would be better—my marriage would once again be the
fulfilling experience it initially was. I kept thinking that once I finished graduate school, I would find myself again in the reorganization process. The problem was, I now realize, that graduate school had changed me so drastically and deeply that I would never again recognize the old me.

Graduate school was a never-ending bombardment of classes, papers, and late, late nights at the computer lab, but at the same time it was exhilarating. It was exhilarating because I knew that whatever effort I put into it, I was getting the same amount back in the form of a sense of accomplishment and development. The skills and knowledge I took with me from graduate school will remain with me my entire life and enhance all other experiences. My self-confidence grew like the spring daffodils--suddenly blossoming, seemingly without ever germinating and always a surprise. I read Betty Freidan, Gloria Steinem, and Clarissa Pinkola Estes for the first time during graduate school. Frequently I found myself searching for that inner peace or mystical Self about which they had taught me.

My marriage was more like a contractual agreement to live together with the following arrangements: my husband was to provide financial support; I was to perform all household duties (though this was brought on by me as my husband never cared if anything was clean or if there were ever food in the refrigerator); I was allowed to postpone a
career in order to attend graduate school (though I never asked permission); and we were to pursue our own lives. This arrangement did not suddenly become the way of life when I entered graduate school, as my friends will tell you. I was happily married at the beginning. It seems as though the more graduate school drained from me, the less I received from my husband. The more I achieved, the less I was deserving of trivial awards for my wifely duties. By the last year of marriage, we were nothing more than roommates. I had struggled to save the marriage over and over, yet I was unable to gather the strength or energy to give it one more shot.

Fellow graduate students became my support group along with my commuting friend, Lisa. We drove to school together for the first year and a half of my graduate career (We lived an hour from school, and she graduated before I completed graduate school). Lisa was also married and we spent the majority of the commute drinking coffee while complaining about how we stayed up doing laundry and still had clothes left in the dryer. Lisa was a great source of support to me. She always made me feel good about myself, and we always agreed that our husbands were fools for treating us the way they did. My husband was not a monster, by any means. I was well taken care of, as I like to say now. Never did I want for anything that could be purchased
or acquired. What I lacked were the rewards I expected. After all, I worked hard at being a wife. I deserved a little bit of what you see in the movies. After a while we started to believe that that kind of happiness and romance was fictitious. Near the end of my marriage, I questioned this conclusion.

My marriage ended because I gave myself the power to choose, and I did just that. I decided that if the institution of marriage is no better than what I had experienced, it simply was not worth the effort. I decided that marriage should be, for me, about two people who enhance each other’s lives; two people wanting to see the other grow and develop; two people who take up the slack for one another; two people willing to make sacrifices but who realize that sacrifices of the self are never productive. Though the thought of divorce was horrifying, I told myself that if I could get through graduate school I could get through divorce.

In relation to this study my own situation is important. I was never willing to say that my marriage was more important than graduate school because saying that would mean that I was saying that my marriage was more important than myself. On the surface this seems selfish, but knowing yourself is paramount to being able to give yourself to marriage. When and where I got these feelings
is undeterminable. My own mother was always there to pick me up from school. When other kids were sick at school they would call my mother instead of their own mothers, who were working or unreachable. Of this fact I was always proud. My mom worked part-time while raising my sister and me yet was always there for us. My dad worked a lot but was always available when necessary. I always considered us to be a traditional family though the older I got, the more non-traditional it seemed. Marriage was never something my parents nagged about. The most prominent discussions were about college and what my sister and I would do with our lives.

The divorce became inevitable when I realized that what I was going to do with my life seemed to be decreasing in significance. I had expected to be rewarded for my hard work in school by my husband. I always wanted him to be proud of me, but I came to rely on myself for that kind of support when his was not forthcoming. At the time I never felt as though I were a very good wife or graduate student. It seemed that no matter how hard I tried, no matter how much I accomplished and juggled, the expected rewards were illusive. There has never been a time in my life that I felt so bad about myself, even counting when the fourth graders called me “elephant.” I was proud of myself, but the lack of evidence that my husband was proud of me made me
less concerned with making him proud of me, and eventually I ceased to care at all. Nothing was more frustrating than studying for an exam until early morning, taking the test, and then not being asked how I did. It seemed as though his only concern was with my finishing so I could financially contribute and cease to be so busy.

The marriage lasted three and a half years. Many of my respondents had not been married as long as I had, but several had been married longer. I have spent much time contemplating why they claimed to be so happy and satisfied with their marriages and their performances as graduate students. I identified with many comments of the respondents but could not identify with their overall sentiments. It seems to come down to a matter of value. If I say that my marriage is more important to me than graduate school, then I justify working harder on the marriage than on graduate school—something I was unwilling to do. If I cannot do it right, it is not worth doing it at all. Merely doing it right is sometimes reward enough for me. I wanted to be good at both, and I believe now that I was. Why did I feel as though I was not good at both at the time? I think it is because I did not feel successful, and the sensation of success is based on rewards. Often I would complain about my husband and invariably, I have been told, I would resort to defending him when the listener agreed with me.
Somehow, I wanted to believe I was doing the right thing, and I wanted the listener to agree. Admitting defeat would be too painful, and I do not think I was defeated, actually. I just had different priorities deep down inside that, at the time, seemed horribly selfish. There were actually a few respondents who made comments to the effect that they were selfish because of their priorities and they felt guilty about it. My own surface priorities were reinforced at that point, but the real priority—my self—still existed.

At the end of this project it is my self that I treasure above any degree. The development of my self as a compassionate human being is the greatest reward. I live with no regrets; I have learned much from experience, good and bad. In *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Estes (1992) tells the tale of Bluebeard—the archetypal predator of the self. In the story a young woman is charmed into marrying someone who is detrimental (his blue-colored beard is warning enough to those who are enlightened) to her development of self. She is “given” freedom, but that freedom is false as it is bound by his rules. He goes away for a while and tells her to do as she pleases within his confines. She may do whatever she wishes except open one particular door in his castle. Curiosity and the unconscious desire to acquire knowledge open that door.
Inside were decapitated bodies of all his previous wives. This story, according to Estes, describes the naive woman who has not yet learned to protect herself from predators, both internal and external. About these young uninitiated women she writes that they have spent much time saying, “His beard isn’t really so blue” (p. 50). I, like many of my respondents, did just that.
APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Background Questions

1. What is your major?
2. What is your minor?
3. How many graduate credits have you earned?
4. What is your age?
5. What is your husband's age?

General Orientation Questions

1. How much education does your husband have?
2. Do you think he would like to have more? Why?
3. Did you begin college before or after you married? Why?
4. What was your primary reason for coming to college?
5. Were there others?
6. What were they?
7. Are your initial reasons for coming to college the same reasons you continue to pursue your education while married?
8. If not, how have they changed? Why?
9. Has being married affected your pursuit of education? How? Why? Can you give me an example? How do you feel about the effects?
10. Tell me about your typical day during the semester.
11. What do you spend most of your time doing, in general? Why?
12. How much time do you spend on school related activities?
13. Would you like to spend more or less? Why?
14. How would your life change if you could change this allocation of time?
15. Does your husband work? What does he do?
16. How many hours per week?
17. How do you feel about his working that amount? Why?
18. Does his working that amount affect you? How? Why? Can you give me an example?
19. How do you feel about this effect?
20. Is your husband in school?
21. What degree is he pursuing? In what?
22. How much time does he spend doing school related activities?
23. How do household chores, including indoor/outdoor chores, get accomplished?
24. Are they accomplished in a timely manner for your standards? How? Why or why not? How could they be done more to your satisfaction?
25. How did this system, if any, come to be?
26. Whose idea was it?
27. Why did it come about?
28. When your husband is at home, what is he usually doing?
   Why? Give me an example.
29. When you are at home, what are you usually doing? Why?
   Give me an example.
30. How are most of the decisions in the marriage made?
31. Who makes them? Why?
32. Can you give me an example using a major decision you
   have made as a couple?
33. Do you talk about your school activities with your
   husband? Why or why not?
34. If not, do you have someone else with whom you talk
   about these kinds of things? Who? Why?
35. How important to you is (are) that (those) person(s)?
   Why?
36. How much do you think your husband knows about your
   education?
37. Do you wish he knew more? Why?
38. How do you think your husband feels about your being in
   college?
39. What has he done to indicate or express this?
40. Why do you think he feels this way?
41. Do you want to change this? Do you think you can?
   How?
42. How much time do you and your husband spend together?
43. Is this adequate for your needs? Why or why not?
44. What limitations impact the amount of time spent together? Can you give me an example?
45. When you spend time together, what do you usually do? Why?
46. How much of it is leisure time?
47. Is this adequate for your needs?
48. Have you tried to change this? Why? How?
50. Was it successful? Why or why not?
51. How do you feel about the quality of your leisure time spent together? Why?
52. Is this something you have tried to change?
53. Was it successful? Why or why not?
54. How much intimate time do you get together? What limits this?
55. Is this adequate?
56. Have you tried to improve or change this?
57. Was it successful? Why or why not?
58. What do you think has an effect on the quality and quantity of your intimate time? How? Why? Could you give me an example?
59. How do you think your husband feels about the quantity and quality of your intimate time?
60. Has he expressed this? How? Why? Could you give me an example?
61. What has happened to make you feel he feels that way, if he hasn't explicitly made it clear? Why? Could you give me an example?

62. Do you value your education equally with your marriage? Why? In what respect?

63. How strongly do you value your education? Why?

64. What about your education do you value most? Why?

65. How strongly do you value your marriage? Why?

66. What about your marriage do you value most? Why?

67. Overall, how satisfied are you with your education? Why?

68. What are you most satisfied with? Why?

69. What are you least satisfied with? Why?

70. Overall, how satisfied are you with your marriage? Why?

71. What are you most satisfied with? Why?

72. What are you least satisfied with? Why?

73. Do you feel that these are compatible values? Why?

74. How would you define a truly equal marriage? Why?

75. Do you think that a truly equal marriage is possible? Why?

76. Do you think you have an equal marriage? Why or why not?

77. What would it take to make an equal marriage for you and your husband? Why?
78. What do you feel are the pros and cons of attempting to be married and pursue a master's degree simultaneously? Why?

79. Do you believe a woman today can have it all? Why?

80. Do you have it all? Why?

81. Describe what having it all would look like for you.

82. How well are you doing in school, by your standards? What are those standards? Why?

83. How well are you doing at marriage, by your standards? What are your standards? Why?

84. What is your current G.P.A.?

85. Do you have children living with you?

86. How many?

87. What impact do your children have on your time? Why?

88. If you have children what will you tell them about being married and going to graduate school? Why?

89. Do you feel that having children contributes to your satisfaction with your marriage? Your education?

90. Do you see more alternatives available to you now more so than before you started graduate school? Why?

91. Do you believe that, for reasons that relate to your being a woman, you balance your education and private life differently than most men you know doing comparable work? Why?

92. Does being a successful graduate student affect how
successful you are in your marriage? Why?

93. Does being a successful wife affect how successful you are in graduate school? Why?

94. Is there anything else that I have failed to ask that you think may be important for me to know about the topic?
Appendix C

Marital and Personal-Life Satisfaction among
Married, Female Graduate Students: A Qualitative
Analysis of Value Conflicts

In Completion of Master's Thesis
Western Kentucky University 1995

---------------------------RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM---------------------------

The purpose of this research project is to examine how value conflicts resulting from simultaneously performing the roles of wife and graduate student affect the married, female graduate student's perception of the quality of and satisfaction with her marriage and her education. This project is being conducted in an effort to complete a Master of Arts Degree in Sociology.

Respondents will be asked a series of questions concerning the research topic, and their responses will be recorded onto audio cassette. Although some of the questions may be viewed as personal, answering will not in any way affect the respondent’s reputation as confidentiality is guaranteed by the researcher, Alecia F. 131
Gall. Respondents' identities will be known only to the researcher, and all real names will be replaced with pseudonyms at the completion of the data collection process.

Participation is completely voluntary, and respondents may refuse to answer any particular question or discontinue participation at any time. By participating, respondents give the researcher the right to use any information in completion of her master's thesis or for other publication purposes.

This study has been satisfactorily explained to me. I understand that I may request a copy of this consent form at any time. I understand what my participation will involve, and I agree to participate according to the provisions stated. I may also request further information by contacting Alecia Gall at (615)445-9099.

RESPONDENT'S NAME_____________________________________________________

RESPONDENT'S SIGNATURE______________________________________________

DATE_________________________________________________________________
Respondents' Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Husband’s Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Finishing Masters’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education: Speech &amp; Hearing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jr. Undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>School Psychology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bachelors’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deidre</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Secondary Guidance Counseling</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Masters’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>School Psychology</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bachelors’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgie</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bachelors’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bachelors’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>School Psychology</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Working on Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Some Undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Marriage &amp; Family Counseling</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opal</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Clinical Psychology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly finished Bachelors’

Masters’

Pharmacist’s Degree

Working on Masters’
## APPENDIX D

Respondents' Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Husband's Job</th>
<th>Time Married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>Pregnant</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>2 1/4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deidre</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1 1/2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Co-Op Program</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sign Painter</td>
<td>2 1/4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgie</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Insurance Agent</td>
<td>9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1(2 yrs.)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Factory Worker</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1(22 mos.)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>5 1/4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Part-time Unloader</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hog Farmer</td>
<td>7 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Hospital Admin.</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>2(1,2 yrs.)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1 (2 yrs.)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opal</td>
<td>Assistantship</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 1/2 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


