

# The Influence Of Feminist Mothers On Their Adolescent Daughters' Career Aspirations

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# THE INFLUENCE OF FEMINIST MOTHERS ON THEIR ADOLESCENT DAUGHTERS' CAREER ASPIRATIONS

by

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## (ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to examine (a) the ways in which employed feminist mothers of adolescent daughters share information about the world of work, and (b) how daughters are influenced by the communication they have with their mothers about careers. The research was conducted in a series of qualitative interviews with eight mother-daughter dyads and two mother-daughter triads. The mothers and adolescent daughters lived in one of two communities in the Southeastern United States. Mothers and daughters were interviewed together and separately.

In the process of analyzing data from the interviews, 30 themes emerged. The themes in the category of "Mothers' Attitudes" were: 1) earlier career goals, 2) barriers to occupations, 3) sex discrimination at work, 4) sexual harassment, 5) positive professional experiences, 6) balancing work and family, 7) expectations of others, 8) something to fall back on, 9) division of labor at home, 10) influencing daughters' choices, 11) assessment of daughters' strengths and struggles, 12) workplace challenges daughters may face, 13) definitions of feminism, 14) comfort level with feminist label, 15) developing a feminist consciousness, and 16) feminism and child rearing. "Daughters' Attitudes" were coded: 1) dream job, 2) roads not to be taken, 3) career goals and objectives, 4) attitudes toward subjects in school, 5) influence of teachers and others, 6) perceptions of mothers' expectations, 7) perceptions of mothers' work life, 8) career awareness and exploration, 9) fifteen years from now, 10) projected division of labor at home, 11) definitions of feminism, and 12) comfort level with feminist label. "Mother-Daughter Interaction" yielded two themes: 1) frequency and location of communication, and 2) advice and support for daughters' career choices.

Recommendations for action included (a) that school personnel recognize mothers' contributions to career development, and (b) that schools and parents work together on eradicating sexism in schools. Some suggestions for areas for future research were (a) math teaching strategies, (b) parents and daughters in extra-curricular activities, (c) mothers in nontraditional careers, and (d) mothers and daughters in different cultures.

## DEDICATION

To the memory of my mother, Esther Porter Lane,  
and to my daughter, Shonali, with love.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“The cathexis between mother and daughter--essential, distorted, misused--is the great unwritten story.”

Adrienne Rich (1976)

“As daughters and mothers, we have for generations been trapped in a dark web we did not spin. But once we are aware of the myth-threads that form the web, as we tell our mothers’ stories and our own, we can begin to sort them out and pick apart the web.”

Paula J. Caplan (1989)

A great deal of research and interest has been directed toward the mother-daughter relationship and the experiences of adolescent girls in the years since Rich and Caplan wrote those words. Research has also been directed toward the ways in which daughters as schoolgirls have experienced the worlds of family, school, and work in ways that may have "shortchanged" them (AAUW, 1992). In academic journals and in the popular press, the focus has been on finding ways to improve access to education and employment for girls in an effort to address the inequities they have faced for so many years. In the United States in the 1990s, empowered women who have been brought up believing that we're all "free to be you and me" (Thomas, 1974) are bearing children of their own. The messages they send their children may be very different from the messages they themselves received from society when they were growing up. Some of the difference may be explained by feminism's influence on American society since the 1960s and on American women's workplace participation. Some of the barriers to employment that women faced in the 60s, 70s and 80s have crumbled; some are still present. There is an urgent need to see which barriers to full employment remain. It is important to examine these barriers as experienced by women who now have daughters of their own. In shedding light on the workplace situations of mothers, I hope to shine a guiding light on the paths their daughters will follow. The ways in which mothers themselves influence and illuminate their daughters’ paths are explored. In this endeavor I hope that David Sadker’s prophecy will not come true: "if the cure for cancer is in the mind of a girl, we may never find it" (AAUW video, 1991).

#### Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the feminist theory of women's and girls' psychological development, as articulated by Apter (1990), Gilligan (1982), Miller (1976), Brown and Gilligan (1992), Chodorow (1978), and Rich (1976). The postmodernist feminist perspectives of Lather (1991) and Baber and Allen (1992) have informed this study, as well as the contributions of the "education feminists" (Gilligan, Dill, Greene, Houston, Martin, Nicholson et al.) claimed and named by Stone (1994). Stone describes the current state of feminist theory as one " that mirrors



the multiplicity of postmodernism: feminism is feminisms...Underlying this pluralization, however, are some common tenets and recognizable phases of theorizing" (Stone, 1994, pp.4-5). There are four common tenets of theory and practice that I find essential to feminist theorizing. First, gender is a social construction, and gender affects the way culture is experienced. Second, women have been oppressed and discriminated against across time and cultures. Third, there is truth in the slogan of the 1970s, "the personal is political," and women's own experiences are important. "Feminism's grassroots...credo is premised on the sturdy sureness that, given enabling conditions, every woman has something important to say about the disjunctures in her own life and the means necessary for change" (Lather, 1991, p. xviii). Fourth, women's stories have been left out of the picture historically. "Universal feminisms pose that women are biologically and culturally equal to men but are historically denied equality" (Stone, 1994, p.6).

Another concept that builds on these feminist frameworks and informs this study is Ruddick's (1989) theory of maternal thinking. "In Ruddick's model the labor of mothering is in response to the three demands of raising children: to preserve their lives, to nurture them and foster their growth as unique human beings, and to train them to be acceptable members of society" (Walker, 1994, p. 86). The ways in which mothers foster their daughters' aspirations for the future certainly contribute to their growth as unique human beings, as Ruddick calls them.

These demands on mothers that Ruddick names may be in competition with each other at times; the third one, training children to be acceptable members of society, is the most problematic. In the *institution* of motherhood, children must be raised to fit in to the life in a patriarchal culture. "It becomes the task of a mother to train her child in the ways and desires of unquestioning obedience to 'them'" (Ruddick, p. 113).

But as Adrienne Rich (1976) observed, caring for children and motherhood as an institution are not the same thing:

The institution of motherhood is not identical with bearing and caring for children, any more than the institution of heterosexuality is identical with intimacy and sexual love. Both create the prescriptions and the conditions in which choices are made or blocked; they are not "reality" but they have shaped the circumstances of our lives (p. 24).

In order to nurture children, then, mothers may have to struggle against authority and patriarchy. Mothers may feel powerless in the face of patriarchal authority. "Often, however, mothers display a sturdy independence of mind and the courage to stand up for their children even when this means standing against Fathers they love and fear" (p. 116). A strategy for resisting the demand of merely making children into acceptable members of society may be, according to Ruddick's model, the development of the capacity for "reflective judgement" in themselves and their children.

In aid of reflectiveness, they will likely develop conversational habits that are

valuable when...they speak with, not at, their children. Reflective conversations allow for reinterpretation as well as revision of choices...Mothers and children, in conversation, can experimentally and tentatively envision current options and future life prospects that are attractive to a child and acceptable to a mother, though she might never have imagined, let alone chosen, them. (Ruddick, p. 118).

To do research grounded in feminism means "to put the social construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry" (Lather, 1991, p. 71). It is impossible for this researcher not to be aware of the ways in which gender "profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives.... Through the questions that feminism poses and the absences it locates, feminism argues the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as the distribution of power and privilege" (Lather, 1991, p.71). It is difficult to name one particular "brand" of feminism as the guiding framework for this study. Some theorists might name the assumptions at the heart of this study "liberal feminism," but the contributions from feminist psychology suggest a deeper analysis, and a blending of feminist perspectives.

### Purpose of the Study

The two-fold purpose of the study is to examine:(a) the ways in which employed feminist mothers of adolescent daughters share information and attitudes about the world of work, and (b) how daughters are influenced by the communication they have with their mothers about job opportunities and career choices.

In previous generations, the influence of fathers has been a factor in the lives of women who have achieved success in their occupations, especially in nontraditional fields (Helson, 1971; Oliver, 1975; Birnbaum, 1975; cited in Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p.45). Current research points to the role of the mother being an important factor in her daughter's career development. Stephenson (1996) notes that "The positive influence of a male role model upon nontraditional career choice has been a consistent theme in the literature," and observes the emergence of the theme of women's influence as role models for nontraditional career choice. In Stephenson's study of 8 women who had chosen to enter nontraditional occupational programs, the importance of their mothers emerged. "Mothers' influence was a consistent theme throughout the interviews. Every co-researcher talked about her mother as a strong woman" (p. 77). As one of Stephenson's co-researchers expressed this influence, "I want to be strong like my mom. I want to make a difference for myself" (p.77).

A daughter with a mother who works outside the home can learn the importance of work from her mother's example; she may decide to emulate her mother. Working mothers provide a model to their daughters because they are pursuing careers, and because they are integrating work and family roles (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

A daughter could absorb these lessons from her mother without much discussion; perhaps adolescents observe their mothers and form opinions about the workplace. It remains to be seen

whether these opinions are internalized or made explicit in discussion with others. An assumption of this study, however, is that a great deal of communication between mothers and daughters occurs during the adolescent years. A further assumption is that information and attitudes are exchanged within the context of mother-daughter interaction. It is the purpose of this study to make explicit the communication about the world of work within the participating mother-daughter dyads.

There have been previous studies on the influence of employed mothers on career development. Douvan (1976) noted that employed mothers provide role models that could inspire their daughters' subsequent career achievements. The way mothers were able to successfully combine work and family was examined by DiSabitino (1976). These studies led Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) to conclude that "research has suggested that... working mothers are an important and positive influence on their daughters' career development" (1987, p.44). Further studies of the specific ways in which this influence is exerted are needed, however. An interesting finding of earlier researchers suggests that daughters are more likely to follow nontraditional careers if their mothers work outside the home than if their mothers are full-time homemakers (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). We need to know more about the ways mothers act as role models for their daughters. Current research also should reflect the changes in family structures over the last decade (Baber & Allen, 1992; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Hochschild, 1989).

The following research questions are at the heart of this study:

1. How do the work experiences of feminist mothers shape their attitudes and visions of their daughters' future experiences in the workplace?
2. How do mothers frame these experiences and communicate with their adolescent daughters?
3. How are mothers' messages received by daughters? What impact do daughters report that their mothers have on their hopes, dreams, plans and goals for the future?

These questions were explored through a qualitative study. In this study, the researcher selected ten mother-daughter dyads as participants. The mothers were currently employed women who identify themselves as feminists. The daughters were middle school or high school students, or first-year college students. This age group was chosen because recent research has brought this period of time in women's lives into sharp relief (Apter, 1990; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; AAUW, 1992, 1995, 1996; Mann, 1994; Orenstein, 1994; Pipher, 1994). Brown and Gilligan describe this as a time of "heightened psychological risk," and note that girls during adolescence "have been observed to lose their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, their sense of themselves and their character" (1992, p. 2). But adolescence can also be a time of realizing opportunities and looking forward to the future, including future participation in the work force. The research of Farmer (1985) on the interacting influences on adolescents' career motivation and Fassinger's (1985) look at factors influencing young women's career decisions pointed to this as a fruitful time of career exploration for girls.

## Significance of the Study

The data that emerge from this study have implications for the fields of vocational and technical education, parenting education, and career counseling, among others. The findings contribute to an understanding of the ways in which adolescent girls value and work to sustain the connection they feel with their mothers. This understanding could be of use to psychologists. According to Apter (1990): "We need a new model of adolescent development, one which makes sense of the continued love between child and parent, and one which makes sense of the continued support an adolescent seeks from her parent" (p.3). Professionals who work with adolescents need to understand the factors involved in acquiring information about job opportunities and making choices about career paths. Among the suggestions made by Betz (1987) to those who counsel women was: "Counselors should be knowledgeable in the area of women's career development, *including knowledge of research on factors influencing that development* and of counselor and test biases which perpetuate stereotyped roles and limited options for women" (p. 253, italics added).

Betz and Fitzgerald's (1987) historical view of vocational psychology reminds us that girls and women have been absent from the picture in the field's first few decades:

The field of vocational or career psychology can be said to have begun with the work of Frank Parsons, who in his 1909 book *Choosing a Vocation*, outlined the "matching men and jobs" approach to career decision-making. This approach...became a foundation of the field and a central basis for vocational counseling.

While the field...has had tremendous theoretical and applied utility, its focus has until recently been primarily on the career development of men...There are probably many reasons for the lack of attention to women, including assumptions that women didn't "work" since their "place" was in the home, and that if they did work, theories of career development generated with men in mind would be sufficient for the description of women's vocational behavior. (p. 3)

Current research points to the possibility of more and more mothers' voices becoming influential when their daughters make vocational decisions, now that more and more mothers are in the work force themselves (Eccles, 1987). This study describes the experiences of these particular mother-daughter dyads and their thoughts about the current and future workplace. While the focus is on the widened career opportunities that the adolescent girls have before them, the feminist mothers' responses provide previously unrecorded personal chronicles of change.

The silence surrounding a mother's desire for meaningful work...needs to be broken through truth-telling. What were a mother's dreams as a girl? How were her desires to act in the world diverted or realized? What made it difficult for a mother to work...? By telling these truths, a mother gives her daughter a deeper consciousness of how the culture forces women to make limiting choices, affirms

another realm of desire, and encourages her daughter to begin shaping a life outside of the romance story. (Debold, Wilson & Malave, 1993, p. 191)

### Study Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions have been adopted:

Adolescent: An adolescent is a person between the ages of 11 and 21 (Apter, 1990).

Career: A career refers to an individual's paid employment outside the home (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

Connectedness: Connectedness is a way of seeing the self in relation to others, locating oneself in relation to the world and measuring one's worth in terms of contributing to an "ideal of care"(Gilligan, 1982, p.35).

Gender: Gender is the term used for the socially constructed concepts of masculine and feminine roles in our culture, as opposed to the biological distinction between male and female.

Gender Equity: The concept of fairness and the absence of discrimination on the basis of gender is known as gender equity (AAUW, 1992).

Individuation: When a child sees herself as a separate human being, different from her mother, it is called individuation (Mahler, 1975, in Apter, 1990.)

Maternal thinking: The attentive love that comes from the practice of mothering (caring for "a fragile being") was called "maternal thinking" by Ruddick (1989).

Nontraditional Occupation: When women make up 25% or less of the workers in an occupation, it is nontraditional for them (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991).

Separation: Separation occurs when a young person pulls away from his or her mother, recognizing the boundary between self and other (Mahler,1975, in Apter, 1990).

Second shift: The time spent on maintaining a home and family when added to the work performed outside the home is called the second shift (Hochschild, 1989).

Sexual harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or (b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting him or her, or (c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile

or offensive work environment (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1994).

Work-family interaction: The attempt by dual-wage-earner families to balance the responsibilities of the home--including child and elder care--with those of the workplace Smolowe, 1996).

#### Parameters

Reinharz (1992) defined research as the "production of a publicly scrutinizable analysis of a phenomenon with the intent of clarification" (p.9). A study of this nature is certainly scrutinizable; one factor, of course, with a sample of 10 dyads is that the study is not generalizable to other individuals or groups. It is not the purpose of this study to produce generalizable findings; the focus of the research is deliberately on a small group of people. This facilitates an in-depth study, as opposed to a limited study of a larger group. Ten dyads were selected, based on the recommendations by McCracken (1988) on the optimal number of participants for a qualitative study.

In any study of this nature, the issue of bias becomes a concern. As a feminist mother with a 19-year-old daughter, I am considered an "insider" in the research process. This can be viewed as a liability; "...being too close to the subject matter threatens the objectivity and detachment that typically are thought to make research 'good science'" (Daly, 1992, p.108).

Although all researchers enter the field with predetermined assumptions and expectations, insiders perhaps are unique in the degree to which their taken-for-granted realities shape their expectations...I would argue that for insiders these past-related experiences are essential parts of research processes, and they demand not just acknowledgment, but conscious and deliberate inclusion" (Daly, p. 109).

While the possibility of bias must be recognized, insider status might be considered more of an asset than a liability in this study. Fine (1992) states that feminist researchers "need to resituate our political struggles and our personal passions at the very center of our work, exploring, rather than denying, the nexus of activism and scholarship" (p. x). In response to this charge, I feel compelled state that my experiences as a daughter and a mother inform and shape this research in ways that contribute caring and urgency to the research process. Since I am a feminist mother trying to raise a strong, confident daughter in this culture in the 1990s, bonds of empathy and a sense of shared struggle were implicit in the interviews. This helped generate richer data, perhaps, than if this study had been conducted by someone without the same shared perceptions and understanding of the task. As one co-researcher observed, talking about our hopes for our daughters' futures is "so close to something that just hits you in your heart."

This is a study of white, middle-class mothers and daughters. As McMahon (1995) observed, "There is...no single meaning or given experience of motherhood" (p. 3). McMahon studied white middle- and working-class mothers in Toronto; she pointed out how their experiences were different from the ones described by the Black single mothers in Solinger's 1992 study, *Wake Up*,

*Little Susie*. I considered enriching the study by increasing diversity, but decided to focus instead on this homogeneous group of women. The inclusion of one or two African American, Hispanic, or Asian mother-daughter dyads would indeed have brought in different voices that need to be heard. However, this would have called for a much broader discussion of race, which was beyond the scope of this study. As Joseph (1981) has argued:

“to engage in a discussion of Black mothers and daughters... without also including the important relevancy of racial oppression... would necessitate forcing Black mother/daughter relationships into pigeonholes designed for understanding white models”(in Stone, 1994, p. 48).

### Organization of the Study

This chapter has presented an overview of the study. Chapter two provides a review of the extant literature. Chapter three provides the methodology for the study.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study. Chapter five presents conclusions and recommendations for further research and practice.

### Summary

Although there have been studies on women in the workplace as well as studies on mother-daughter interactions, few attempts have been made to bring these two spheres of interest together. When the research in the fields of work and family studies and career development is added, a rich source of overlapping interests emerges. This study has its roots in the work of feminist theory and how it informs models career development. The world of work which is the reality for feminist mothers of the present, and the ways in which they experience and share this world with their daughters, is the focus of this study.

This is a qualitative study in which the voices of feminist mothers and their daughters emerged through in-depth interviews. The purpose of the study was to examine the ways in which employed mothers of adolescent daughters share information and attitudes about the world of work, and how their daughters' career choices are influenced by this communication. The study could have implications for vocational and parenting education and career counseling.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the topics guiding and shaping this study: feminist theory, psychology of women, adolescent daughters and their mothers, career development, and work and family studies. The purpose of the chapter is to describe the literature that sets the stage for looking at the ways feminist mothers and daughters share ideas and experiences about career choice. A discussion of the intersection of feminist theory and motherhood is contained in the first section. Section two describes research on adolescence and the mother-daughter relationship; section three deals with the subset of mothers who identify as feminist and their daughters. Section four contains a brief discussion of the influence of school on girls. In section five we move into a review of the literature of women's career development. The fifth and final section summarizes literature on a variety of workplace issues, including the interaction of employment and family roles.

#### Feminist Theories and Motherhood

There can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women's oppression, that does not take into account women's role as a mother of daughters and as a daughter of mothers, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent generations of women, and that does not study that relationship in the wider context in which it takes place: the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structures of family and society. Any full study of mother-daughter relationships, in whatever field, is by definition both feminist and interdisciplinary (Hirsch, 1990, p. 179).

Feminist theory informs and shapes this study. It is constricting to narrow the definition of feminist theory to a single sentence, especially with so many "feminisms" emerging in the 1990s. However, there are constructs that are basic to an understanding of the feminist theory shared by the participants and co-researchers in this study. Simply put, the assumptions behind a feminist theoretical perspective are (a) we are currently living in a patriarchal society; (b) gender is socially constructed, not biologically determined; (c) women and girls have been discriminated against in schools or in the workplace.

Feminists generally see social institutions and social attitudes as the basis for women's position in society. Because in sexist societies these institutions have created structured inequities between women and men, feminists believe in transforming institutions to generate liberating social change on behalf of women...Feminism is a way of both thinking and acting.(Andersen, 1993, p. 7)

Some participants in the study may identify with one or more labels within feminism (e.g. "radical feminist" or "socialist feminist"). More important than the label one chooses or rejects is the way



that theory drives behavior, attitudes and beliefs that help us interpret experience and are then passed on from mother to daughter.

There are many concepts that fit under the feminist theory rubric in the USA in the 1990s. As the interviews with the mothers and daughters in this study show, feminism can be defined in many different ways. When the mothers in this study speak of feminism in terms of the women's movement, however, they are speaking of the forces that shaped their lives in the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. The changes brought about by the women's movement were grounded in liberal feminist theory. It is because of the changes the women's movement made in society, in families, and in the workplace that there is now a generation of women whose lives have been transformed, and who now have adolescent children of their own.

The testimony to that movement includes women who... work in the law offices, the...schools, the universities, the women's health collectives and shelters, public and private institutions of every description, and in places where women were not to be found before. It includes a new sensitivity, however besieged, to women's issues in the courts, among legislators, in literature. In all the crevices of society one finds many women who...acknowledge the influence of feminism and continue its battles in their private and public lives. (Glickman,1993, p. xiii).

The "second wave" of feminism (Taylor & Whittier, 1993) was a political movement. It emerged in the 1970s from the liberal, left-wing political movements of the 1960s and the radical politics of that era. Wandersee (1988) discusses how the differences between factions eventually merged in the eyes of society to become "the women's movement," a broad term that encompassed "women's rights" and "women's liberation." Phrases like "the personal is political" meant that new issues, like abortion, and violence against women, had to be addressed by the mainstream politicians and society.

During the 1970s the lives of many women changed dramatically...The changes in sexual mores and family life, the opening up of educational and economic opportunity, the changing image of women in the media, and the visibility of women in places where they had previously been barred--these were all factors that had a direct and immediate impact on women's lives, whether or not they were feminists. (Wandersee, 1988, p. xv).

When scholars began doing more research on women and their "ways of knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger,& Tarule, 1986), the movement expanded to include major revisions in the study of female psychology (Apter, 1990). Apter cites Chodorow's 1978 work, *The Reproduction of Mothering* as one of the most influential theories of female psychological development because it "extensively reworks the dynamics of the female Oedipal situation" (Apter, p. 53). Chodorow tells us that female developmental issues are different for boys than for girls, and that "a girl does not simply identify with her mother or want to be like her mother. Rather, mother and daughter maintain elements of their primary relationship which means they

will feel alike in fundamental ways” (p. 116). Hirsch (1990) summarizes Chodorow’s phrase, “reproduction of mothering,” as the case of a woman becoming a mother to make up for the fact that she is in a relationship with a man who values separation while she values connection, and to get back a sense of being mothered, herself. “In her relationship with her daughter, a mother works out her unresolved relationship to her own mother” (p. 183).

Another researcher who has had influence on the way we think about mothers and mothering is Sara Ruddick. When mothers speak of their care and hopes for their daughters, the concepts articulated by Ruddick (1989) are illuminated. She speaks of “maternal practice,” which she defines as the work mothers do when they meet the demands of their children: “These three demands--for *preservation, growth, and social acceptability*--constitute maternal work; to be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands by works of preservative love, nurturance, and training” (p. 17). Maternal thinking, then, is the planning of strategies to meet these demands (p.23). Ruddick writes about the tension between feminists and mothers, but observes that this tension has been misguided, as feminism has improved the lives of mothers.

Although some feminists have indeed been guilty of contempt for mothers, no other movement has...worked so effectively to ensure women’s economic and psychological ability to engage in mothering without undue sacrifice of physical health and nonmaternal projects. Organizing women workers, fighting for day-care centers, adequate health care, and maternal and parental leave... In these and many other struggles feminists have proved... that, as partisans of women, they are sturdy allies of mothers (p. 236).

Although Ruddick and Hirsch argue for the basic and important connections between feminism and motherhood, there is evidence further exploration is needed on these two themes. Baker and Kline (1996) write that motherhood is still ignored by feminists “because it complicates the role of the emancipated woman.” Even in the 1990s there is a great deal of ambivalence about motherhood issues. Baker and Kline note that 85% of American women bear children, so if feminism ignores mothers, millions of women are excluded (p. xv). In Roiphe’s (1996) personal and political narrative on the intersection of feminism and motherhood, she reflects upon the tensions between the two in the early days of the women’s movement:

We thought of motherhood as a thing one did on the side...We each made our own arrangements and struggled with the consequences. If we thought about motherhood politically at all it was in connection with surrogacy or custody issues...We missed the boat. We should have talked about mother love, what does it mean, what price does it exact, what do we share in common, what can we do to make our mothering better, our children’s lives better? (p. 113)

#### Adolescence, Mothers and Daughters

Despite attempts to make women feel guilty about working outside the home and therefore neglecting their children, research shows that children as a whole have not suffered when their

mothers have entered the workplace (Aburdeen & Naisbitt, 1992; Faludi, 1991; Hochschild, 1989). Daughters can benefit when their mothers work, as Chodorow (1978) found. “Mother-daughter relationships in which the mother is supported by a network of women kin and friends, and has meaningful work and self-esteem, produce daughters with capacities for nurturance and a strong sense of self” (p. 213).

Working mothers provide role models for their daughters. Studies of maternal employment consistently show that if a daughter’s mother worked outside the home, there is a greater probability that the daughter will do the same. (Sandifer, 1993; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984).

### Feminist Mothers and Their Daughters

A 1996 study from Canada (Webb, 1992) of 102 adolescent daughters’ perceptions of their relationships with their mothers found that “the majority of daughters who have a good relationship with their mothers see both themselves and their mothers as feminist” (cited in Debold, Wilson & Malave, 1993).

Glickman (1995) interviewed 50 American women who grew up with feminist mothers. Her goal was to find out from the responses of these women “what it was like to be the child of a mother actively engaged in redrawing the human map, simultaneously catapulted forward by a new consciousness and restrained by the ponderous weight of traditions no longer satisfactory but secure” (p. xiv). Apparently the women Glickman interviewed were past adolescence; she never explicitly states the age range of her sample, but clearly the participants are already embarked upon careers and relationships. Glickman indirectly defines this cohort in this way: “In a profound sense all women roughly between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, whether they embrace or reject feminism, are the daughters of feminism, heir to its struggles, failures, and successes; inheritors, willy-nilly, of the heroic phase of the modern women’s movement” (p. xiii). Glickman found that the daughters she studied enjoyed intimate closeness with their feminist mothers. Speaking of the daughters, Glickman asserts that “...they all seem to be unaware of the imperative of the mothers’ generation to wrench themselves from their mothers’ stifling ministrations” (p. 142). She found that the collective action that was a cornerstone of the women’s movement the mothers in her study experienced was not present in the daughters’ world (p. 188). However, “the mothers’ legacy of broad social commitment powerfully influences their choices of occupation” (p. 189).

Baker and Kline (1996) interviewed 65 women, all mothers and daughters, about “living feminism.” Many of the mothers in their study were well-known feminist writers and activists, such as Eleanor Smeal, Tillie Olsen, and Barbara Ehrenreich. The researchers reported that for most of the mothers they talked to, “feminism was the tool that enabled them to dictate their own stories, reinvent their lives, and create more equal relationships” (p. xxii). The daughters in the study

generally share their mothers' values...Many who do not consider themselves feminist activists are active feminists, carrying on the feminist legacy in their own ways. If not marching in the streets, they are pursuing change for women in the workplace, in interpersonal relationships, and in the courts. Feminism has become the fabric of their lives (p x).

### Outside Influences--Girls in School

Mothers and daughters do not interact in a vacuum. In addition to parental influences, children are socialized by their peers and teachers in school. In 1992, the American Association of University Women published a compilation of research on girls experiences in schools, entitled *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (AAUW, 1992). The report found that girls' experiences in school are not the same as boys' experiences:

Whether one looks at achievement scores, curriculum design, self-esteem levels, or staffing patterns, it is clear that sex and gender make a difference in the nation's public elementary and secondary schools. There is clear evidence that the educational system is not meeting girls' needs (AAUW, 1992, p.2).

Carol Gilligan's (1982) contributions to feminist theory in terms of the psychology of women and girls have had a profound effect on the way we look at girls' thinking. In her ground breaking book, *In a Different Voice* (1982), Gilligan looked at the moral development of girls and challenged the way this had been measured. Gilligan demonstrated that girls were being judged on their moral maturity only by male models. In a later study (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) the focus was on 100 adolescent girls at the Laurel School for Girls in Cleveland. In the course of the study, the researchers decided to throw out their structured research design and develop, instead, a Listener's Guide: "a voice-sensitive way of working that allowed us to follow girls' thoughts and feelings and to hear girls' struggle at adolescence" (p. 16).

### Women's Career Development

Gutek and Larwook (1989) observed that despite the fact that some women worked all their lives, Americans in the 20th century have continued to believe that women only worked until they got married and had children.

Conveniently, employers offered women jobs that were easy to enter and that required little training and afforded little potential for advancement. Thus there was little reason to study the career development of women. It was easily summarized: There was none. Men had careers; women had temporary employment or jobs that took second place to family interests and obligations (p.8).

Traditional career development theorists (i.e. Super, 1957) based their studies on male subjects for the most part. Gilligan (1982) showed that girls' psychological development is different than

boys. Clearly, a girl's view of herself in relation to others--their connectedness--would come into play when she begins to think about choosing a career. "Women's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which in turn she relies," Gilligan observed (p. 17). The implications for meeting the demands of work and family roles, discussed later in this chapter, are implicit in that statement as well.

There is sometimes an impatience expressed by adolescents when issues of gender inequality at school or work are discussed:

Our students sometimes feel that the studies or statistics in their books are out of date and that sex inequality has disappeared. As a matter of fact, one of sociologists' most persistent findings on this issue is that sex inequality has eroded very, very slowly (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. xiii).

### Envisioning the Workplace of the Future

What will the workplace that adolescent girls will enter in a few years look like? Reskin and Padavic (1994) identify four changes in the workplace that will have an effect on the work lives of women and men in the next century: (a) economic restructuring (b) upgrading and deskilling of jobs (c) increasing part-time and temporary work and (d) growing diversity in the workforce (p. 169). These changes will affect young women in ways that their mothers may not even be able to envision.

Aburdeen and Naisbitt (1992) are optimistic about the future of women in the workplace. They cite opportunities for women in their top ten list of "hot career areas for women." These areas include: health care; finance; "traditional jobs revisited" (nurses, teachers, and secretaries); high tech/science; food-related (chefs, restaurant-owners, caterers); law; medicine; "male-dominated jobs," like law enforcement and construction; the media.

When adolescent girls start to explore the world of work, mothers are among those they turn to for information and opinion. Youniss and Smollar (1985) found that when asked to choose between four significant others (mother, father, close female friend, close male friend) the person they were most likely to talk to about each of 22 topics, adolescent girls most frequently selected their mothers when the topic was *my career goals*.

### The Interaction of Work and Family

Way and Rossman (1994) outlined research needs in this area, and observed that "preparation for work life simply can no longer be disconnected from other key life roles, most especially family work roles" (p.17). Way and Rossman identified key issues that are involved in the connections between work and family. These include gender concerns and work-family interactions, community and informal networks related to work and family, and public policies on education for work and family.

The needs of the family and the demands of the workplace often come into conflict. Hays (1996) describes this as a “cultural contradiction” with a long history in our society. Hays points out that when women were held responsible for the home sphere and men for the work sphere, this tension was under control. Mothers were encouraged to stay home with their children; over the past 50 years, however, more mothers have joined the work force.

Since 1950, the number of employed women with young children has more than quadrupled: 58% of mothers with children under six years of age worked in the paid labor force in 1993 as compared to 12% in 1950. While no social consensus has been reached regarding the desirability of women with young children working outside the home, there has been a general acceptance of this trend (Greenberger & O’Neil 1990; Weiner 1985). In this social context, white, middle-class women in particular have become more and more committed to pursuing careers. Many of these women are entering the paid labor force not just reluctantly, or out of necessity, but because they *want* to. And when they chose a career over a job, they make a long-term commitment to a path that does not allow them to come and go at will but instead requires ongoing dedication to life in the world outside the home. (Hays, 1996, pp. 3-4)

Adolescent girls ignore the issue of balancing the future demands of work and family at their peril. While feminists would sharply disagree with the assumption that the home and family are the sole responsibility of the mother, the current situation in most American homes is still far from egalitarian. Hochschild (1989) found that while married couples may claim to share responsibilities for child care and other household work, the truth of the matter is that women are still doing most of it. Many women put in a full day in the workplace, then tackle the major share of the tasks waiting at home--the “second shift” that Hochschild described.

If a young woman eventually finds herself heading a single-parent family, there are further problems to add to the balance. As Burge (1991) observed, “For women, development of a positive identity as single parents is a hurdle often linked with poor ability to support their families financially. Single-parent mothers...experience higher rates of poverty than those in any other marital category.” (p. 13) Currently 25% of all family groups with children in the United States are headed by one parent (Burge, 1991).

Several authors point to the progress women have made in the workplace in the last 30 years or so, and look forward to continued improvement. Reskin and Padavic (1994) illustrated this observation with an example of the changes brought about within one organization, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) who did a self-study in 1993, comparing female and male employment. When the study showed men earned more than women at almost every rank and that women were less likely than men with the same credentials to be promoted, major changes were made:

The director and her subordinates immediately took action: They instituted a formal policy regarding sex discrimination in job ladders, implemented a family-

leave policy, vowed to bring women's salaries in line with men's, and formed a commission to recommend ways to discipline employees who engaged in discrimination or sexual harassment. (p. 177)

Such a study would not have been done 30 years ago, the authors point out, and NIH had a woman in charge when the 1993 study was done. Most organizations do not have women in charge, of course. Reskin and Padavic noted that the large number of educated women who entered the workforce in the late 1960s were the ones who brought about change.

They sued employers for discrimination and pressured federal agencies to enforce laws against sex discrimination. They demanded and sometimes won flexible work schedules and led the appeal for affordable...child care. And they organized for pay equity, a concept--like sexual harassment--that was not even in the dictionary 20 years ago. (p. 177)

In Seidel's (1990) series of in-depth interviews with young women between 12 and 25 years of age, she looked at how they perceive "the American Dream." The responses to her interviews led her to divide her respondents into three approximately equal groups. One group she called the "new American Dreamers," who see a bright future for themselves, with careers and independence. A second group consists of the "Neotraditionalists," who often plan careers or realize they'll probably have to work, but they put their commitment to their future families first, and voice concern about balancing work and family. Seidel's third group she calls "Outsiders," who "see few choices or hopes for the future at all"(p. 10). Seidel concludes her study by discussing the changes that need to occur in society for the American Dream to work for these young women. In order for these young women to be able to lead productive lives, Seidel argues for changes in the workplace that will benefit women, such as "alternative paths" to promotions, that will "neither leave women once again at the bottom of the career ladder without real power and equal rewards nor force them to choose between a demanding work life and a demanding personal life" (p. 229). Seidel would like us to recognize the value of human service professions by raising the pay of young people who enter these professions (teaching, child care, nursing, etc.), establishing parental leave policies, involving fathers in care-giving, and instituting comprehensive sex education and contraception programs to reduce teen pregnancies. She concluded:

We need a vision of America that recognizes that we must reorganize our social institutions--our family life, our schools, our places of work, and our communities--to enable all people to care for one another, to enable all people to work and to participate in the public life of the nation. Our courageous, insightful, persevering, and often wise young women deserve no less.(pp. 242-243)

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study was designed to examine the ways in which feminist mothers of adolescent daughters share information and attitudes about the world of work. The ways in which daughters are influenced by this communication will also be examined. An exploration of the attitudes and beliefs held by adolescent girls about occupational areas and careers was conducted, with a focus on the effect of their mothers' contributions toward shaping those beliefs and attitudes. The way the girls envision their future lives in the workplace and how they anticipate balancing the demands of work and family were also a part of the study.

In order to allow the voices of these mothers and daughters to emerge, in-depth interviews were conducted with each of 10 dyads. Before conducting these interviews, the proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects for review and approval. Then, an initial pilot study was conducted with one mother-daughter dyad to test the interview instruments.

#### Selection of Participants

This research was conducted in two communities in the Southeastern United States. In order to find feminist mothers with adolescent daughters to be my co-researchers in this study, I contacted people who are current members of clearly identified feminist groups in these communities and asked them to suggest possible participants. These groups included a chapter of the National Organization of Women; a branch of the American Association of University Women; the faculty advisors of the Women's Studies Club in a high school; the Women's Network and the Organization of Women Faculty, and the Women's Studies Advisory Board at the universities.

The reason for using two sites for this research was to further protect the confidentiality of the co-researchers. When a mother and daughter are described, even with fictitious names, they could possibly be identified by a reader from the same community. By using two communities, identification becomes more difficult.

Two selection methods were employed in this study. In order to obtain some diversity in the sample in terms of family's economic background, mother's occupation, and daughter's age within the adolescent range, I used purposive sampling (Gilgun, Daly & Handel, 1992; see Criteria, below). In order to get the 10 dyads required for the study, I also used the "snowball" method of participant selection. Early participants in the study were asked if they could suggest friends who met the selection criteria and who might be willing to participate in the study. A letter was sent to each potential mother-daughter dyad, asking them if they would be willing to participate in the study and requesting some background demographic information. Appendices



A and B present copies of the solicitation letter and demographic questionnaire.

### Criteria for Participants

The mothers in the study had to have been gainfully employed outside the home in a full or part-time (20 to 40 hours per week) position for at least the last five years. The rationale for this criteria was the importance of consistency of temporal experience among the participants, and the importance of their being able to reflect upon recent, up-to-date workplace environments in the 1990s. The ages of the women in the study varied, depending on the age of the adolescent daughter and the age at which the mother gave birth. In order to enrich the study, an effort was made to find women who have been employed in a variety of occupations, including gender nontraditional ones, in which 75% or more of the workers are male (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991). This attempt was unsuccessful, however.

The daughters in the study had to be adolescents, between the ages of 12 and 20. A further criteria was that the daughters had to have been living in the same household as their mothers for the past five years. The reason for this criteria was to ensure that there had been sufficient time for the mother/daughter dyads to establish communication patterns.

Since the study is grounded in feminist theory and was planned as a study of feminist mothers and their daughters, it was important that the mothers embrace the term "feminist" to describe themselves. There is no single definition of this term, no "litmus test" for calling oneself a feminist. As Reinharz (1992) observed:

Differences in the definition of feminism exist among people of different classes, races, generations...Differences exist between academic and activist feminists as well...My solution to the practical problem of a working definition is to use people's self-definition...This approach rejects the notion of a transcendent authority that decides what constitutes "feminist," consistent with the antihierarchical nature of many feminist organizations and much feminist spirit (pp. 6-7).

Although Reinharz was using "feminist" as a descriptive adjective for research in the passage above, I find her argument works with the term "feminist" as a noun, and I adopted her idea of self-definition for the potential participants in my study. In other words, a woman is a feminist mother if she declares herself to be one. This criterion was important for this study because it was critical that the mothers be women who acknowledge the influence that the women's movement has had on their lives. Since current research suggests that mothers' influence on daughters' career choice has increased since mothers have had careers themselves, the currently employed women reflect societal changes in the workforce. These changes have been affected in profound ways by the women's movement, and the focus of this study is on the ways in which the women whose lives have been affected reflect upon their own experiences, and the ways in which they share them with their daughters.

## Participants as Co-Researchers

As current feminist research practice suggests (Reinharz, 1992; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Reinharz, 1992; Rubin & Rubin, 1995), participants in a study are part of the process and must be respected and valued. They are not merely "informants," but true co-researchers with the author of the study. Therefore, the terms "participant" and "co-researcher" are used interchangeably in this study, to focus on the collaborative nature of this work (Stephenson, 1995). The co-researchers are viewed as "conversational partners," as described by Rubin and Rubin (1995): "interviewees in qualitative interviews share in the work of the interview, sometimes guiding it in channels of their own choosing. They are treated as *partners* rather than as objects of research" (p. 10). It follows that a summary of study results will be provided to all co-researchers when the study is completed.

## Data Collection/Interview Schedules

### Pilot Study

A mother-daughter dyad who fit the criteria for selection in the main study were chosen by the researcher to test the interview guide and the techniques of audio-taping and accurately transcribing data. After conducting the interview sessions with the mother and daughter together and separately, they were asked to comment on the interview guides. I noted their suggestions and refined the interviewing guides accordingly. I made revisions that the participants in the pilot study believed would facilitate the interview. I also made changes based on my experience and reaction to the data yielded by the time spent with this mother-daughter dyad. After I transcribed sections of the taped interviews from the pilot study, a researcher who was unfamiliar with the study checked the sections for accuracy of transcription.

### Procedures

The proposal for this study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. After review and approval by the IRB, the procedures outlined below were followed.

Mothers suggested by the feminist organizations listed previously received a letter from the researcher, presented in Appendix A, as well as a form for providing some basic demographic data, presented in Appendix B. A stamped envelope addressed to the researcher was included in the mailing to prospective participants. Selection of participants was made from among the responses received.

After a mother and daughter were selected for the study, these steps were followed:

1. The mother was contacted by telephone, to verify her willingness (and her daughter's willingness) to participate in this research.

2. Appointments were set up for interviewing. Each mother and daughter were first interviewed together, to establish their trust and to give them a chance to hear each other's views. The interview guide presented in Appendix C was followed. The mother was then interviewed by herself, according to the guide provided in Appendix D. Then the researcher conducted an interview with the daughter alone, using the interview guide in Appendix E. At the initial meeting with the participants, the study was explained and the co-researchers were encouraged to ask any questions about the consent form, presented in Appendices F and G. Since the initial interview was with the mother and daughter together, an emphasis was placed on establishing rapport with the mothers and daughters and putting them at ease. There was no fixed order of responses, but both parties were encouraged to respond to each of the questions if they wished. The participants were told that they need not respond to a question if they preferred not to. The interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, unless they suggested another location. One mother and daughter were interviewed in the mother's workplace.
3. Interviews were tape-recorded in their entirety and transcribed for analysis. Another researcher (unfamiliar with this study) was asked to check a portion of the tapes and transcriptions for accuracy. Fictitious names were assigned to all of the participants. The results of the pilot study were used to construct revised versions of the interview instruments in the study. The interview schedules which appear in Appendices C, D and E provide only a point of departure, however. For each of the interviews with the mother-daughter pairs, the semi-structured interview method described by Reinharz (1992) was employed. Reinharz defines this approach as one in which "the researcher plans to ask questions about a given topic but allows the data-gathering conversation itself to determine how the information is obtained" (p. 281). The assumption behind this way of interviewing was expressed by Gilligan in 1982 in her classic work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. "The way people talk about their lives is of significance...the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act" (p.2). I was also guided by the "Listener's Guide" of Brown and Gilligan (1992), "a voice-sensitive way of working that allowed us to follow girls' thoughts and feelings and to hear girls' struggle at adolescence" (p.16)
4. During the period of time when the interview was being conducted, I kept a journal in addition to the taped transcriptions. The data recorded in this journal included dates, locations, impressions, ideas and other pertinent contributions to the study.
5. After a set of interviews with a mother-daughter dyad was completed, the co-researchers were provided with copies of the transcripts of their individual and joint interviews, which they could read privately. (The contents of the daughter's separate interview were not disclosed to her mother, nor the contents of the mother's interview to her daughter.) I checked with each of them individually to be sure that I had accurately captured the information they communicated during the interview. I discussed emerging themes with the mother-daughter dyads who are my co-researchers in this study, and elicited their comments on the study. I

asked the first 6 dyads I interviewed for suggestions of other mother-daughter pairs to interview. The intent of this study was to do participatory research, so that the mothers and daughters could truly acknowledge themselves as part of the process rather than merely objects of investigation.

### Data Analysis

In analyzing the data collected in the interviews, I followed the procedure described by Tesch (1990) and Allen (1994, personal communication). I listened attentively to the tape-recorded interviews several times, following the model established by Brown and Gilligan (1992). I transcribed most of the tapes personally, keeping in mind Seitz's (1995) observation:

I have come to realize that it was important to have the person who was involved in the interaction do the actual transcription. Because I came to know the women and their speech patterns, I could be more responsive to expression, intonation, pauses, emotion, and other non-verbal clues (p.24).

Due to time constraints, a transcriber was hired to type some of the interviews. After transcribing the tapes, I read through the text several times, in the procedure Tesch (1990) describes as "inductive analysis." I looked for emerging themes that revealed patterns in the data, to help me interpret the meaning of what the participants were saying. The criteria for naming a concept a "theme" of the research was:(a) it appears over and over, or (b) it confirms findings in current research literature,(c) it contradicts findings in current research literature. Or (d) it was highly emphasized by the co-researchers. I attempted to draw conclusions from the data and let the results guide me in drawing conclusions (see Chapter 4.) When writing about the interviews, I used the notes from my journal to frame the interview and comment upon the content. The actual words of the co-researchers were used whenever possible in reporting the results of the interviews, so that the voices of the mothers and daughters illuminate the study.

### Summary

This research was conducted in a qualitative series of interviews with 10 sets of currently employed feminist mothers and their adolescent daughters. The mothers and daughters were interviewed together first, then separately. The focus of the research was to examine both the ways in which feminist mothers of adolescent daughters communicate about work-related issues and the ways in which daughters are influenced by their mothers' messages. Through the process of conducting a pilot study, I refined the interview instruments, which were then used when collaborating with mothers and daughters on this voyage of discovery. The co-researchers charted the way as we explored together attitudes about the workplace of the present and future.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

In this chapter a brief summary of the research questions and methods used in the study are presented. The co-researchers are described. The themes that emerged from carefully analyzing the 32 interview sessions are presented, followed by a summary of the chapter.

The purpose of this study, as outlined in Chapter One, was to examine both the ways in which feminist mothers share information and attitudes about careers with their adolescent daughters and the ways in which the daughters are influenced by these messages from their mothers. The research questions driving the study were the following:

1. How do the work experiences of feminist mothers shape their attitudes and visions of their daughters' future experiences in the workplace?
2. How do mothers frame these experiences and communicate with their adolescent daughters?
3. How do these messages influence the daughters?

#### Description of the Co-researchers

Participants for the study were chosen by recommendations from individuals from organizations identified as "feminist," and by the snowball method of selection (see Chapter 3, p. 46, for a full description of the selection process). Many more mother-daughter pairs were suggested than were needed for the study. The participants in this study are white, middle-class feminist mothers and their adolescent daughters. This section contains a description of each of the mother-daughter dyads. The mother's current occupation and her hopes for her daughter's future are discussed briefly. Each of the daughter's current thoughts about what path she might take in the future are included. Household configurations (siblings, etc.) are described. The voices of the mothers and daughters emerge through direct quotes from the conversations we shared. Table 1 presents the identifying descriptors for each co-researcher.

Table 1

Identifying Descriptors of the Co-Researchers

<u>Mother</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Career</u>	<u>Daughter</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Career Goal</u>
<u>Cathy</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>nurse</u>	<u>Regina</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>graphic designer</u>
<u>Donna</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>professor</u>	<u>Jody</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>lawyer</u>
<u>Kim</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>attorney</u>	<u>Elizabeth</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>doctor</u>
<u>Helen</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>secretary</u>	<u>Alice</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>biologist</u>
<u>Joanna</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>librarian</u>	<u>Julie</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>art therapist</u>
<u>Virginia</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>professor</u>	<u>Leslie</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>anthropologist</u>
<u>Teresa</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>professor</u>	<u>Margaret</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>doctor</u>
<u>Roxanne</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>preschool</u> <u>teacher</u>	<u>Sharon</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>film maker,</u> <u>anthropologist</u>
<u>Holly</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>teacher</u>	<u>Lydia</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>politician</u>
			<u>Belinda</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>architect</u>
<u>Serena</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>therapist</u>	<u>Robin</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>health care worker</u>
			<u>Katie</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>veterinarian</u>

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### Cathy and Regina

Cathy, 42, is a registered nurse. She cares for terminally ill patients and their families 40 hours a week. Regina is Cathy's 19-year-old daughter. She is a first-year student at a community college, where she is in a Graphic Design program. This can be completed in two years, when an Associate of Arts degree is awarded. Regina took a career development class in high school, which she described as "...just a bunch of inventory profiles and stuff. However, during the class she had an opportunity to shadow someone in a computer programming job. Since she had always liked art in high school ("...conventional art, like ceramics and flatwork and painting") and became interested in computers through her job-shadowing experience, she decided to merge the two. *I figured if I could put the computer and art together, then that would probably be a good job for me. So, [graphic design] is what I came up with.*

Regina had thought about going into architecture. When asked what her "dream job" would be, she mentions what she would do: *"I kind of always wanted to be an architect but, like, help less fortunate people out. You know, like in the Peace Corps, or some day build houses or help make plans to build houses for people like that.*

At the time of our interview, Regina had been living in an apartment with friends for about six months. Prior to that, she lived at home with Cathy, Regina's younger brother Matthew, and her stepfather, Jeff.

### Donna and Jody

Donna, 49, is a professor in an academic department on a university campus. Donna is aware of the possibility of her own bias against certain fields open to her daughter, and tries to compensate for this:

*I think we bend over backwards not to push in directions, but try to make explorations of all possibilities. So I think that I (I try hard not to, but I probably do, subconsciously) discourage more in math and science-related areas, because they were never of interest to me, and I never felt like I was very good in those areas. So I try extra-hard to promote them, but I think that it probably doesn't really come off that way, because I'm not naturally interested in them. Even though I make a conscious effort to do as much to try to help her with math and science, I find myself much more excited by other things. And so I think that I am steering her toward more people-related occupations.*

Jody is a 13-year-old, in the final year of middle school (eighth grade.) She is an excellent student, and has a passion for horses. At the time of the interview, she and her parents were going through the process of selecting which classes to take in high school. Jody is planning to attend college, and has already considered and rejected several career options. At the present time her career goals seem quite clear:

*I d really like to be a lawyer. For a while I wanted to go into medicine, but I just decided I didn t really want to and for a long time I wanted to do animal care, and like -- a large animal vet -- stuff that would help me with the horses, too. But I went to a clinic at the vet school, and I had to dissect all kinds of animals, and I just decided it wasn t for me.*

Jody knows that law is a lucrative profession, and she is quite practical. Her mother, Donna, predicts that Jody will be “a very high up-keep woman who expects a lot of material goods, and who s going to want to earn a lot of money.” Jody speaks a bit wistfully when asked about what her “dream job” might be:

*I guess my favorite job, that I d really like to do, but would kind of be hard, would be to be an artist. And just kind of paint, and sculpt, and stuff. But you have to be really good, I think. And probably have a lot of money to start with. So if you weren t successful, you could still succeed.*

Jody is an only child. She and Donna live with Jody’s father, Melvin.

### Kim and Elizabeth

Kim, 45, is an attorney. Most of her clients are university students. She has been a lawyer for more than 20 years. She is disillusioned with the practice of law, and is currently taking courses to prepare herself for a mid-life career change: she plans to become a middle school teacher. Her feelings about being an attorney are overtly conveyed to her daughter, while other interests are encouraged:

*I definitely try to pull her away from law Ever since she read To Kill a Mockingbird, she s been in this lawyer stage. And we try and talk her out of that There are certain things that we push her towards Music, for instance, she s very talented at music. And we try and give her the lessons, and push her towards practicing. I think, when we see an interest in something that we think she s going to be good at, we do try and bring it up a little more often. When she s expressed an interest in architecture, we try to do a little with that. When she s into her writing kick...(a few months ago it was medical research) we try and talk about it. We just try not to eliminate things, other than the law.[laughs]*

Elizabeth has, for the moment, decided to enter the medical profession. She says that she would like to be a doctor because ...*I like people, and then I would be able to help some people and cure them.* She pictures herself as *a family doctor not a surgeon, I wouldn t want to operate on people.*

Elizabeth and Kim share their home with Elizabeth’s father, James, 44, and her younger brother.



### Helen and Alice

Helen, 48, is a program support technician at a university. She has been in the workforce for 24 years. Of all the women in the study, Helen talks most about unpleasant workplace experiences, including sexual discrimination and harassment. She has hopes that her daughter, Alice, will be able to avoid office work:

*As far as things to stay away from, I suspect I've just modeled it. Because I've talked about how hard it is to do some of the repetitive things I do. How I just want to leave the office and not think about it. [I tell her] I try to make the best of it, but you can do better.*

One strategy Helen talks about employing with her daughter is helping Alice make connections between the things she is good at and the professions those skills could lead to. When Alice enjoyed a high school excursion to a coastal region, Helen talked with her about it, making this link visible to her:

*Look at that. You liked the people on this trip. You like what they do. Maybe this is something -- this is telling you something, you know? And I kept kind of reinforcing that. I'd say, Maybe you're the kind of person who likes to throw her hair up in her hat. Maybe you can be out there in the muck and the mud, you know, this is what you like! You like camping, you like being outside. Maybe this is something you can do with your life!*

Alice, 19, lived at home with her mother and father, Dan, until this year, when she entered a state university. When asked what her dream job would be, Alice says she's not sure, but "something that's outside." Her concept of a boring job is one that requires "sitting at a desk, for full-time work...sitting at a computer for the computer for the whole day." At college Alice is currently planning to pursue a major in a program built around several concentrations, such as biology, biotechnology, and environmental science. Alice is not sure about which one she will choose, but she's leaning toward biology; it was her favorite subject in high school.

### Joanna and Julie

Joanna, 48, works in a public library. She has been in the workforce "about 30 years, with breaks for when my children were young." Joanna and her husband Matthew, 50, have two children: Julie, 18, and a younger brother, Mike. Joanna feels that she has not tried to influence her daughter's career choices in a directive way:

*I'm not even interested in the money at this point. I've kind of worked in reverse, trying to figure out how to help her figure out who she is and how she can discover that. And then, within that framework, see the career choices and not say to her, You can't be an artist, because you might not make money.*

*Because the reverse could very well be true. She could make a heck of a lot of money. So we re not going along any practical way.*

Julie is a high school senior. At the time of our interview, she was facing the pleasant task of choosing which of five art schools to choose to attend, starting this fall. She had been accepted by all the ones she applied to; financial considerations were still to be factored into the decision. Julie is an excellent student -- after our interview, she got dressed up and went back over to the local high school, to participate in a ceremony honoring the juniors and seniors with the top grade point averages. Julie has always liked art, and is very glad that her mother has always been encouraging of her choice to pursue this field. Speaking of her mother, Julie says, *she s been real supportive and helped me, you know, with my applications and getting art work together.* When asked what her dream job would be, Julie replies, *I d love to be an art therapist, which really, you know, combines my interest with like, helping people, with art. And also, photojournalist, that would be great. You d get to travel and take pictures and do that.*

### Virginia and Leslie

Virginia, 54, is a divorced single parent, currently living with her son, 15, and a partner. Her daughter, Leslie, is 20, and lives in an apartment with roommates on campus, but spends her weekends at her mother's home. Virginia is a professor. She supports any career choice her daughter might make, but as she sees Leslie begin to follow in her own footsteps into an academic career (in English or the social sciences) she voices concerns about her financial future.

*I guess what I ve tried to do is, I ve tried to question her, and make her raise questions. I ve certainly questioned why she would want to go into a career that isn t more lucrative financially I ve made her aware, and I ve made her wonder and question.*

Reflecting on her daughter's high school years, Virginia talks about how she did try to direct Leslie toward different fields than the ones to which she is now drawn:

*Well, she went to the I.B.[International Baccalaureate] program, so she didn t have a whole lot of choice in the courses she took I remember when she had decisions to make I remember she wanted to take typing. And I said, Yeah, that s a good thing to learn how to do, for whatever career you want to do. And she took physics, and chemistry, and all the sciences, and all the math and I really encouraged her to do that kind of thing. To no avail. [laughs]*

Leslie is a second year student at a state university. She is exploring various career paths, and when asked about a dream job, said that she changes her mind quite often about what that would be. Her dream job at the moment would be to be an anthropologist/ethnographer, which she envisions in this way:

*Right now my dream job would be: going out among people of other cultures, and collecting information about them, and interacting with them. Information about their language, their folklore, their literature, their music. Collecting that information, writing about it, doing things with them. Playing music with them. Writing with them. Learning all I can about other cultures. Being able to travel a lot. Just constantly growing and learning -- kind of like school.*

### Teresa and Margaret

Teresa, is a 41-year-old single parent. She has two daughters: Margaret, 13, in the eighth grade, and an 8-year-old younger sister, Marie. Teresa is a professor in a university, involved with administrative tasks, research, and teaching. On the demographic information form, in response to the item "Number of hours you work per week, Teresa wrote *virtually all my waking hours, >80 hours/week.*" Although she clearly is dedicated to her duties at the university, she is a very involved parent to her two daughters. She stated that she feels *"pretty segmented most of the time,"* and that *being a single feminist with two children is the kiss of death....so I have no social life, assuming I had time for one!* Teresa believes that an overemphasis on choosing a profession is not something she wants to give her daughters:

*I think most people(like my ex-husband) who think they are being egalitarian will try to push their girls toward, you know Careers, with a capital C. And I am far less like that You know, what s so good about a profession. don t think that those are meaningful in and of themselves at all.*

Margaret says that she would like to be a doctor. *I definitely don t want to be a pediatrician, because I think all pediatricians are corny. I want to be, like, a family doctor. Because it seems like everybody trusts the doctor.* Margaret is keeping her options open; she has a second career in mind. *"This year when I started taking Latin, we started learning about Troy, and ancient Rome, and all that stuff. So this year I ve started thinking about what it might be like to be an archeologist, because that sounds cool.*

### Roxanne and Sharon

Roxanne, 54, has been a teacher for 38 years. She does not consider teaching to be a good career choice, however, and is looking forward to retirement.

*I teach pre-school children, ages 3, 4, and 5, in a public school setting, who have varying exceptionalities -- which means they have different disabilities (cognitive, physical, emotional, developmentally delayed) I enjoy working with young children [but] the pay is very low, and the hours seem to be exceptionally long.*

Roxanne is known in her school district as being a strong advocate for young children with special needs. She works outside of school hours to obtain grants and involve university and community

groups in the education process. Roxanne has advised her own daughter, and the daughters of friends, not to go into the teaching profession.

Roxanne's daughter, Sharon, is 19 years old. Sharon is a first year student at a community college. Despite the fact that she never actually received her high school diploma (she was lacking credits for two math courses), she has ambitious career goals: *I d like to make films. I d like to direct movies half time, and I d like to devote the other part of my life to anthropology.* Sharon and her mother help each other and enjoy each other's company, but Sharon expressed the desire to move into an apartment with friends as soon as she has a chance to do so. She has been out of high school for a year, and feels the need to move out of the nest.

### Holly, Lydia, Belinda

Holly, 40, is on a temporary leave of absence from the workforce. During the past three years, she was the coordinator of programs for the gifted for public schools in her county. For five years before that, she taught math, science and technology in a middle school. Holly and her husband, Paul, have two adolescent daughters, Lydia, 15, in the 10th grade, and Belinda, 13, in the 8th grade. Since both girls were intrigued by the study, both were included as co-researchers. When asked if there were career areas that she pushed her daughters toward or pulled them away from, Holly replied,

*I unashamedly direct them away from careers that traditionally are female, [like] teaching. Belinda seems to be very science-oriented. So, I m supporting that. Lydia seems to be interested in politics being socially, politically aware. And so, her interest in the law -- I think that ll be a career where she can go where she wants to go: into politics.*

Holly questions herself for making judgments and encouraging her daughters to avoid gender-stereotyped fields:

*It s kind of...you know, can you be a feminist and stay at home? I don t know, can you? Can you be a feminist and work in a traditionally pink-collar job? Can you be a feminist and be a secretary? What are we devaluing, the woman or the job? I don t know. So, I don t know that I am doing the right thing.*

Belinda, the 13-year-old, is crazy about horses, but realizes that you can't make much money as a horse trainer. At present, she is torn between becoming a horse barn manager or an architect. She will start high school this coming fall, and she plans to take a drafting course, so that she can start learning to make floor plans.

Holly's eldest daughter, Lydia, when asked about the job she'd like, answers, "*President of the United States of America.*" She says her friends don't believe she is serious when she writes *Lydia for President, 2020*" in their yearbooks, but that she really does want to go into politics,

and become “*a senator or something.*” At the age of 15, she describes herself as *career-driven.*” She is active in debate tournaments, and is working on improving her (already high) grade point average, so that she will have a better chance of getting into Georgetown or Emory, the colleges that top her list.

### Serena, Robin, and Katie

The second triad in this study is made up of Serena, 45, a therapist; Robin, her 17-year old daughter; and Katie, her 13-year-old daughter. Serena has been married twice, once to the father of both girls, and then, briefly, to another man. She is now engaged to a college professor, with whom she and her daughters live. Serena describes her own work in this way:

*I work primarily with individuals (a lot of teenagers, women and men. Various problems--from adjustment to death, loss of loved ones, to adjustments to divorce, to ongoing depression, sexual abuse, adult children of alcoholics--a wide spectrum. I like my work a lot. I like to see clients make progress and begin to feel better. That's always rewarding.*

Serena is aware of her daughters' career aspirations, and tries to encourage them in whatever they choose to do.

Robin, a senior in high school, is planning to attend college this fall. Eventually she would like to have a career with lots of travel and international opportunities. Robin's dream job:

*It'd be in a Spanish-speaking country, where it's hot all the time, in a small village where there are no computers. And it'd be a health worker. It'd be, like, a doctor, but I would use natural remedies, rather than synthetic drugs made in laboratories.*

Thirteen-year-old Katie loves animals and talks of being a veterinarian. Although Serena wants to be supportive of both of her daughters' choices about areas of study and eventual careers, she has told Katie that vet school is “hard.” Katie echoed this opinion when she talked about becoming a vet; she says her mom wants her to be a teacher.

### Themes

In order to analyze all the data from interviews with the mothers and daughters, I coded the data using methods outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Taylor and Bogdan (1984), and Allen (1989). There were 30 individual themes that emerged during data analysis. The complete list of themes is presented in Appendix H. An idea was considered to be a theme if it either confirmed or contradicted the extant literature, or came up again and again, or was highly stressed by the co-researchers. These themes were grouped into three general areas: (a) mothers' attitudes (b) daughters' attitudes (c) mother-daughter interaction.

Each of the 30 themes is discussed in this section. The voices of the 10 mothers and 12 daughters are utilized as frequently as possible, to illustrate and illuminate each theme.

## Mothers' Attitudes

### Mothers' Early Career Goals

Sometimes the dreams that the mothers in the study had for their own lives were thwarted, for various reasons. One was disapproval or hesitancy from family members about the career the women wanted to pursue.

When Donna was a senior in high school, she wanted to be a social worker, but her parents did not approve. Donna perceived that her father, particularly, refused to support this choice:

*He didn't think that was an appropriate kind of work for his daughter. He felt that I should have a nicer job, where I would be in a safer environment, and deal with nicer people, not the kind of people that have serious problems, like the kind a social worker might face. And so he said he wouldn't pay for college, for me to pursue a major like that.*

Donna then shifted her major to home economics, a field that was much more acceptable to her family. Roxanne, 5 years older than Donna and growing up in the South, had a similar response from her family when she told them of her plan to take up social work. Roxanne's parents told her that they would not pay for college unless she would agree to be an elementary school teacher, rather than a social worker. *I think it was because they felt the neighborhoods I would be going into might be rough, or a dangerous clientele, that sort of thing. That it wasn't ladylike to be doing that,* Roxanne says.

When Cathy, the nurse, was a young woman, she wanted to have a career in art (an interest shared by her daughter, Regina, who is preparing for a career in graphic design). Cathy had won awards in high school for her art work, and got an opportunity to attend Pratt, a prestigious art school. Her family refused to allow her to go, because *"there are communists in art schools."*

When Kim was in the seventh grade, as her daughter Elizabeth is now, she wanted to be a writer or an archeologist. Teresa, too, considered a career in archeology, as her daughter Margaret does today. *"I always thought that would be really cool, until I found out that archeologists really just spend forever looking in dirt you don't just discover stuff right away!"*

Joanna remembers two early career goals:

*I always thought it would be wonderful to go to Africa as a missionary. But then I kind of realized I might not do that. And then, the other was to teach. And so I went to school in special education for about five years. But I didn't ever teach. I thought that would be nice for a while, until I figured out I probably wouldn't be*

*the best teacher. I don't think it was really what I wanted to do.*

Several mothers spoke ruefully of their lack of career goals when they were the age their daughters are now.

*I didn't have career goals. I didn't think in terms of a career, and it didn't occur to me that I would even be working. If you were working, it might be because you weren't married. You might be working because you were married but you didn't have any children. (Helen)*

*I had two brothers, an older brother and a younger brother. And a very traditional father. My father had his own company--founder, CEO, major stockholder. And that came first, family was somewhere third or fourth down. So, my mother devoted herself to taking care of everything, so my father wouldn't be distracted, and could pursue his lofty goals. And, I just think there weren't any aspirations for me. And I guess I wasn't smart enough, or aware enough, to come up with aspirations for myself. So, at the age of 13 or 15, I don't remember wanting to be anything. (Holly)*

### Barriers to Occupations

Several mothers in the study commented with bitterness on how limited their career options were, at the time they entered the work force. This would have been during the late 1960s and the 1970s. When the mothers were asked whether there were jobs that they were denied access to at the time they entered the workforce, most said they didn't even dream of entering fields that were nontraditional for women. Since they didn't see women in a variety of roles, they didn't imagine themselves in anything other than traditional roles.

*I never even thought about it...In my day--you know, I graduated from high school in 1960, so that's a while ago--women were either nurses or teachers. And I'm a Christian Scientist, so I wasn't going to be a nurse. So there really wasn't any choice. (Virginia)*

Others echo this. Roxanne lists the entire range of occupations she felt were available to her, in the early 1960s: "Nurse, secretary, getting married, teacher, or bank teller. Most of the mothers in the study, when asked if there were jobs that they or their friends were denied access to when they entered the workforce because they were female, responded that they didn't even think about outside traditional roles at that time.

*I didn't really consider any of the jobs that would have been closed. My areas of interest, I guess, were guided so closely that I didn't even think, at that time, about any field other than teaching or social work there really were very few career choices. I knew I didn't want to be a nurse or a secretary. I even refused*

*to learn to type, because I was so afraid that I would get into one of those programs and not be able to ever get out from that kind of job! (Donna)*

Kim, who graduated from college in 1973, claims that doors were open to women in medical and law schools by the time she and her friends were ready to apply. Different workplace skills, however, were expected for males and females. Kim recalls, “*A great majority of my friends and I, when we went for jobs, were asked to take typing tests. This was not true of most of the men we knew.*

Cathy, who went to New York City over her parents’ objections, found that

*Jobs that were offered to me were traditionally female roles. In New York they had job brokers where you would go and find out about jobs. And so I would go, and the jobs that would be offered to me would always be traditional, clerical-type positions.*

Joanna observed the price her friend paid for entering the corporate world, in 1970.

*This is a friend who is now a top executive at IBM. And she really wanted a career, always. And she was a teacher at the University of Texas, in computers. She got in on the ground floor with that, and just basically fought her way through. She had ulcers. I was hard for her. She had to really stand up to a lot of people.*

*When I entered the workforce, I was just grateful for a paycheck. I had not even thought of it having anything to do with gender. But I was aware that there were jobs that were for males—even in the small little world where I worked, males were bellhops, females were desk clerks. Males were never desk clerks, and females were never bellhops. So I was aware of that. But I didn’t want to be a bellhop! (Helen)*

### Sex Discrimination at Work

The mothers in the study encountered various forms of bias in areas such as hiring and promotion, and in more subtle ways, as well. Most of them have felt discriminated against on the basis of gender in some form.

*I felt there was a lot of favoritism toward the men where I worked. They were given a little more leniency. There was a bit of unfairness. You know, because there weren’t very many men where I was working. The people who come in to the library sometimes treat the women who work there, who are helping them, a little different from [the way they treat] the men who work there. (Joanna)*

Virginia, a professor in a College of Education, discusses why her salary is lower than that of



many male professors at her university:

*I still have a low salary compared to men at this institution, but not compared to men--well, yes, compared to men in the College of Education, because the men that get high salaries are in administration and supervision, and I'm in curriculum, and that's a lower field, a feminine field.*

Teresa feels that she encounters discrimination “daily.” For her, this is revealed in the way in which students interact with her and evaluate her; in comments about her appearance (including being called “Chubs” by a male colleague while she was in the late stages of pregnancy); not being listened to or taken seriously in committee meetings with other faculty; and being yelled at and berated by a male faculty member.

When asked if she had even encountered bias at work, Helen replied, *It's difficult for me to remember NOT encountering it.* Examples of discriminatory behavior Helen mentions include the practice of hiring only young and attractive women for certain jobs and male faculty members yelling at female subordinates. Helen described a financial position she held, which required a lot of concentration. When Helen was in the position, she had to share an office with the secretaries there. When she left, to give birth to her second child, a state-wide search was conducted to find someone to fill her position. The man who was eventually hired was given his own office.

Cathy describes leaving a job at a Japanese import/export firm, rather than trying to break through the proverbial glass ceiling. *“There were a lot of cultural biases against women. You were female. You were only going to get so far, you know, only do so much. It was very male-dominated.”*

### Sexual Harassment

All but one of the mothers in this study had experienced sexual harassment at some time in their lives, even if they did not name it at the time, or report it, or confront the harasser. Some of them remember being harassed while they were students. Kim’s professor told her that she could either have an affair with him, or she could expect to receive a “C” in his class. (She took the “C,” and didn’t report him, although she did talk about the incident. By talking with others, she learned that she was not the only woman to be treated this way by this professor.)

Teresa’s experience of being sexually harassed is the reason she chose not to attend UCLA, although she was accepted there.

*I had a bad experience when I was a high school senior, going to a class at UCLA. We had to work in a group, and I got paired with a thirty-three-year-old male. And I never went back. He scared me so much, I just never went back to class.*

The workplace incidents of sexual harassment reported by the mothers in the study were numerous and varied. Joanna still does not name her experience as sexual harassment:

*Well, I had an experience at work which really wasn't sexual, it was more like an assault-type thing that was from a male who I feel had a problem with women. And I kind of stood up to him. I took the heat.*

Cathy describes what happened on one of her first jobs:

*I was a 15-year-old kid, working in an ice cream store. And the owner of the store would come up and bump the women in the store Bump and grind, and, you know, just get in people's personal space, touch your body and not ask I told him to keep his hands off and I quit.*

Serena experienced sexual harassment from a physician, who was her supervisor, and ended up testifying before the Board of Medicine about him.

*We had been talking about my Dad's death, and I thought he went to hug me, to give me some comfort about that. Instead, he kissed me And I just kind of blew it off, you know. But years later, it came out that he had also done this with other staff and patients.*

Helen has experienced reported numerous instances of sexual harassment over the years, of the "hostile environment" variety. Men who were in a supervisory position have made inappropriate comments, both verbally and in writing. Helen doesn't even count off-color jokes anymore, since they have always been part of her everyday workplace, and she says she and other women she knows just deal with it.

*But I have seen women promoted because they have had a sexual relationship with the boss. I've had duties of mine taken away actually I've kept them, and even had other staff promoted based on my accomplishments, even though I am still doing the work, still carrying out those tasks and those responsibilities. Other women have been given credit for them, just based on their relationship with the person who has the power to promote and fire.*

### Positive Professional Experiences

Despite all the problems encountered in the workplace, most of the co-researchers reported receiving personal satisfaction in their careers. In spite of all the problems, they are able to reap some rewards, even if they are intangible. The therapist, nurse, the professors and the teachers all report feeling good when they are able to help people. Even Helen, stuck in a staff position at a university, receives some job satisfaction. *Parts of it I enjoy. Anytime there's something that's project-related, where you start with nothing and build it, step by step, till you have a completed*

*process I always like that.*

### Balancing Work and Family

When asked “How have you managed to balance work and family responsibilities?” Teresa replied, “*I don't think I do. I think I cope. I think most of us exist in a constant state of guilt.* This was a typical response. None of the mothers in the study seemed to feel that they had achieved success in this area.

*Not well. I never could do it and not feel resentful. I tried I admire and envy those who can maintain their sense of serenity and peace and contentment with the world and work fifty hours at a job outside the home, and come in and do all the child care, cleaning, yard work, social calendar organizing, laundry They can do it and not be resentful. I haven't figured it out. (Holly)*

*It's a constant juggle. Always will be, I think. I really don't regard it as a balance. It's constant change, every day. Like many women I know, I just pray that my children won't call in sick that day. (Kim)*

*I always felt it was not balanced, but was glad if there wasn't something thrown in like chicken pox, or some bad thing--you know--a car wreck. You know, if you could just get through. (Helen)*

The mothers offer the disclaimers, the protests that they are merely getting by day-to-day, with fragile support networks that can fall apart at any moment. Ultimately, however, the stories behind these disclaimers reveal creative combinations of hard work, organization, and sacrifice. Joanna took a job that paid less than others she might have gotten because of the flexible hours that went with it. Kim also works flexible hours so that she can be with her kids after school; she goes in to work one night a week. *But there's definitely been a sacrifice,* Kim says, “*which is time for myself and time for friendships.*” When Cathy was going through a divorce and her children were small, she was on call as a hospice nurse.

*There have been times where I picked my children up, put them in the back of the van, sleeping I would drive to someone's house at two o'clock in the morning. Lock the doors and be with their family, while there was a death occurring. And stay until the body was out, and everyone was coping. And then I would get back in my van, and bring my children home, and tuck them into bed.*

*My strategy for balancing work and home was two-fold: One was to work really, really hard, spend hours and hours and hours on my job. And the other was to try to integrate the two as much as I could. So I used my experiences as a parent as an integral part of reading, and balancing, and writing. (Virginia)*

### Expectations of Others

If, as some mothers in the study have observed, girls in the 1960s and 70s were not encouraged to think about careers, there were other expectations of them that were communicated in overt or subtle ways. Many would nod their heads in agreement with Virginia, *When I was 20, I got married. Because it was what little girls do. And I had been, all my life, somebody who tried to please other people. I m still somewhat like that.*

Sometimes the mothers in the study do recall societal or familial expectations that they would pursue careers, although for most of them the choices were limited, as we have seen in the exploration of the theme, “Barriers to occupations,” above. Teresa remembered,

*I think I always somehow was told that I was supposed to do something But at that time, you know, you had to be a doctor or lawyer. And I hated blood. [laughs] I still do. So I knew I d never be a doctor. So, right up until my junior year of college, I thought I would be a lawyer. (Teresa)*

### Something to Fall Back On

One expectation that several mothers in the study articulated was that even women who planned to be homemakers all their lives were often encouraged to develop some skill “to fall back on.” Holly remembers, in 1974, *“We took typing, because secretarial work was always decent job. It would supplement your husband s income.”* Joanna felt she was expected to marry, but “something to fall back on” was the reason she was supposed to go to college. *“So, you don t have to really worry, but just as a safeguard, you might want to get a college education. If you ever did have to work, you d have something to fall back on.*

*We never articulated that that meant death of a spouse or divorce. We never said that. But it was just understood And my mother never said what career that might be, that you could be out of for 20 years, and then go into. That would save you and your family in case you were divorced. What career that was, she never told me. (Helen)*

### Division of Labor at Home

The participants report differing ways of organizing the chores at home. At least three of the families reported the practice of hiring someone to do house cleaning once a week, as everyone is busy. None of the mothers claim to be working a full “second shift” (Hochschild, 1989) at home, but it seems as if the mothers are, in fact, taking responsibility for keeping the household running smoothly.

*I did all the traditional wife stuff. In fact, one of the things that infuriated me about my marriage was that my husband would say, That s women s work.*

*You know, I don't do that, that's women's work. Of course he did help, he did--HELP, you know, HELP! That, in itself, is offensive!--he did laundry, he did some vacuuming and stuff like that. (Virginia)*

One of the daughters, Julie, made the observation that kids help out more in houses where both parents work. Children seem to have more assigned chores in the single parent homes in the study than in the homes with both parents present, in her opinion.

### Influencing Daughters' Choices

The mothers report varying situations in which they attempt to exert influence over their daughters' choices -- in friendships, school or college courses.

In the area of career choice, most of the mothers let their daughters take the lead in discovering where their interests might lie. When a daughter began talking about a particular field, the mothers often helped them get more information about it. Sometimes mothers helped daughters make connections between interests and careers, like Helen's response to her daughter's field trip to the coast.

Some mothers mentioned encountering resistance from their daughters when they tried to influence their choices.

*Leslie's pretty strong-minded. There's not much I can do to influence her. And I don't think there has been, since she was three. She basically gets on her own track, and does what she's gonna do, and falls flat on her own face (Virginia)*

*I don't think anything I can do at this stage of my daughter's life is going to have much influence -- she's chosen to--not really openly rebel--but to just do her own path. I think you do it by lifestyle. You support them in choices that you think are good ones and you push, discreetly, on different things. (Kim)*

Among the things Kim pushes her daughter on are skills in areas that Elizabeth may temporarily lose interest in, but will ultimately benefit her, like sports, and playing a musical instrument.

There were very few career areas that mothers said they deliberately steered their children away from. Cathy, Holly, and Roxanne said that they actively discouraged their daughters from teaching careers. Kim is adamant about not wanting Elizabeth to become an attorney, like she is. Serena would discourage either of her daughters from military careers, although neither daughter has expressed an interest in joining the armed services. Serena may be unconsciously discouraging her younger daughter's interest in becoming a veterinarian, by stressing how hard it is to get into vet school.

The mothers talked of exercising restraint in influencing their daughters' career goals, or of doing it in subtle ways. *I've tried to present all options as open, and anything that she expresses*

*interest in trying to follow through, to give her experiences and try to show her a variety of role models. (Donna)*

Sometimes the mothers' reflections contained an awareness that they could have been more directive about their influence over their daughters choices, and the feeling that perhaps they should have attempted to exert more influence.

*I remember how easy math was for Leslie. And she got really good grades. And yet, she hated it. And she ended up in English or anthropology, traditionally feminine fields--low pay, repeating the cycle of poverty that women are so prone to do. And I just always wondered what I could have done when she made this choice. She could have been an all-star chemist! She could have made a mint! (Virginia)*

### Assessment of Daughter's Strengths, Struggles

I loved seeing the mothers' faces light up when they were given an invitation to assess their daughters' strengths. The question asked of each mother was "What are some of [your daughter's] skills and abilities that will serve her well in the workplace?"

*Alice wants to get along with everybody, and wants them to like her. She wants to like them back, and just get the job done. I think in team kinds of projects, Alice ll just shine .And as more of the marketplace goes to that, I think that will be a real strength for her. (Helen)*

*She s warm and charming, and her analysis of others--her ability to observe the social pieces of the workplace--are extremely well-developed She also has a lot of artistic ability...She s really good in math, too But perhaps language arts, and the arts in general, are her strengths. (Donna)*

Kim, Teresa, Donna, Joanna, and Roxanne all emphasized their daughters' creativity. Several mothers discussed skills and qualities their daughters have that could be considered both strengths and liabilities at work. *Margaret tries to be her own person [which has] caused her a lot more emotional distress, because she doesn t conform very well But I think that will serve her well in the workplace. (Teresa)* Joanna said of Julie, *"She s very honest. And I think that will help her make choices sometimes when she needs to, when something is not right. And it may make it very hard for her.*

*Regina has a good sense of justice and fairness for everyone and she is able not to be intimidated, and to speak to that. That might not be a good thing either, might get her into a lot of trouble, too. But she s a very reliable and very steadfast kind of person and can work through adversities. (Cathy)*

*Leslie's got a job now, at the library, and they're in love with her. She's meticulous, she's responsible, she's trustworthy she's bright, she's articulate, she's extremely sensitive to other people [But] her brilliance makes her intolerant of people who aren't. Her sensitivity makes her way over-sensitive, and therefore her self-esteem is not as good as it should be. She sets very high expectations for herself, and when she doesn't meet them she feels bad about herself. (Virginia)*

Holly's perceptions of her daughters' strengths included these observations:

*I think they're both articulate and can speak up for themselves, and WILL speak up for themselves. Lydia is very competitive, very assertive, and very aggressive. And I do not discourage any of those. She'll get discouraged enough. And whereas aggression has a negative connotation, so few females have it. Belinda doesn't have a competitive bone in her body, and it worries me. I mean, she's too willing to say, Oh, you win. Oh, you're better. Oh, I can't do this. And I have a real hard time dealing with that.*

#### Workplace Challenges Daughters May Face

When mothers think about the workplace of the 1990s and beyond, they are both optimistic and concerned. Several mentioned one challenge their daughters will face: getting their first job! *"I think it's going to be harder for this generation to get jobs...competition and technology have downsized many places. A lot of hospitals and agencies have downsized. So the competition is greater. (Serena)*

*Getting the first job. Getting ... a professional job is going to be hard. The challenge is going to be the same balancing that our generation has had. Hoping that it's not adding the sandwich generation to it. (Kim was referring here to the generation in the middle, who may find themselves caring for aging parents at the same time as they are caring for their young children.)*

Some challenges are present in the individual profession a daughter may choose. *I think art is a highly competitive field. She will find it hard to come upon closed doors. If she has to compete with someone for a certain job and doesn't get that job, that's going to be very hard for her. (Joanna)* Virginia felt that her daughter Leslie's greatest challenge in the workplace would be *"getting up in the morning. On a more serious note, she added:*

*I think she'll have social challenges. Drawing away from home, and developing her own identity and her own apartment has been extremely hard to do. So I think her challenges will be putting up with and accepting people who might not put as much into the job as she does. They'll be people challenges.*

Teresa expressed concern that occupational segregation (by gender) still exists, and affirmative action is under attack. *“I am firmly convinced that affirmative action does matter, and without it companies wouldn't do what they do”* [to help women and minorities]. Teresa thinks Margaret will face *“the kinds of harder-to-see and subtle inequalities that I face. I don't really see that changing a lot in the near future.”* Helen, on the other hand, sounds an optimistic note:

*There's still resistance to women in the workplace, but it's more from the fundamentalist group God's role for women. Now it's much more accepted that women are there, we're able to talk about what choices are available.*

### Feminism/Comfort Level with the Label

Participants were encouraged to formulate their own expression of what being a feminist meant to each of them. To Cathy, it meant *“believing in the worth of women, to be valuable and important. And the potential of women is realized on our planet. In every way and any culture, women are valuable and validated in an equal way.”*

*Being a feminist means being true to my gender. I mean, being proud to be a woman, respecting myself as a woman. Acknowledging my strength and my power, and the gifts that women give the earth: intuition, healing, caring, the beauty that we possess and share with others. And not to feel that we, as women, need to be in the shadow of anyone; that we should stand up and be ourselves, and honor ourselves daily. (Roxanne)*

Some of the co-researchers were clearly uncomfortable with proclaiming themselves as feminists, although they shared the basic beliefs of liberal feminism. Some, like Kim, object to labels of any kind. Holly, obviously raising her daughters according to deeply held principles that I would easily call feminist, objects to the “baggage” the word has for other people. *I think people make a lot of assumptions that go along with it--liberal, Democrat--a lot of things I'm not. And I don't want people to make those assumptions about me.* Virginia defined herself as a feminist for the purposes of participating in the study, but explained her preference for a different label.

*I guess I don't consider myself necessarily a feminist as I consider myself somebody who is an advocate for affirmation of diversity of all kinds. In any group that is under represented, or discriminated against, I want to be an advocate for all those kinds of people, so that this world is much less judgmental, and much more cooperative, and much more supportive to all peoples. So that's what being a feminist is to me.*

### Developing a Feminist Consciousness/ Feminism and Child Rearing

One way the participants' understanding of feminism deepened was through the process of having children and becoming aware of the issues those children face as they grow up in this culture.



*You could not see the girls cross-country team or the girls track team out there without oversized T-shirts on. And these are women in top physical condition so self-conscious about their bodies. And it was amazing to me. Alice told me one time, All my friends are on diets. I couldn't believe it! Even the coaches talk to the kids about weight. And I'm thinking, Oh, there's no escaping it, if you're a girl.*

Feminist child-rearing has implications for sons as well as daughters. Half of the mothers in the study (Kim, Cathy, Helen, Joanna, and Virginia) had raised boys as well as girls, and they all commented on how their feminist attitudes had affected the boys. Kim said that she dealt with feminist issues more with her son than with her daughter, *because he's more of a chauvinist and I want him to know that there are strong women out there.* Joanna wanted her son, Mike, to realize that he could explore nontraditional career choices, and that *"He's a responsible partner in parenthood. I've made that very clear to him, to have him be very nurturing. He had dolls. And he has to be a nurturing male, as well as a strong male.*

Donna reflected upon her thoughts when she learned the gender of her child:

*I had to have amniocentesis, before Jody was born. So I found out that I was going to have a daughter by way of a letter. I was alone--and I was so happy that I was going to have a girl. It was such an emotional moment, opening that letter. And I can remember just crying with joy, because I wanted a daughter so much. And also just crying with fear and sadness, thinking about what it was going to be like to have this daughter. I think that my overwhelming fear was whether we would be able to combat all the societal forces that make it hard for women to have a full life.*

## Daughters' Attitudes

### Dream Job

The girls' responses to questions about what their dream jobs would be is discussed in the first part of this chapter, in the section in which each dyad or triad is introduced.

### Roads Not to be Taken

Some careers were clearly unappealing, for a variety of reasons. These were among the jobs listed by the adolescents as boring, uninteresting: clerical work, housecleaning, working for the sanitation department, working at a fast food restaurant, being a seamstress, and teaching. Belinda has shadowed a secretary: *"It's just like, everything you do is for somebody else. Going to get somebody else's mail, or taking somebody else's phone calls. Your whole job is not for yourself.* Her sister, Lydia, had this objection to becoming a lawyer: *"If I was a lawyer, I would be afraid that I'd have to defend someone that I really didn't agree with or someone that I*

*thought was morally wrong.*

Even jobs that are appealing are to be avoided sometimes. Reasons vary, but one is the fear that the career would not yield enough money to live on (being an artist, raising horses). Leslie enjoys music; she sings and plays the piano. She rejected a career in music, however, because *I would have to teach, or perform, and I m not very good at either of those.*

### Career Goals/Objectives

The specific jobs that the daughters are considering are discussed in the first part of this chapter. Of course, those jobs were what the girls were considering at the time they were interviewed, during the first few months of 1997. Even by now, some of the girls may have completely changed their career aspirations. Leslie commented that her “dream job” changes frequently, in her mind. This theme examines the general things that the girls talk about looking for in a job, rather than job titles and requirements.

Alice has decided that she wants a job that allows her to be outside, rather than tied to a desk. For Robin, the opportunity to travel is an objective. Most of the young women talk about looking for a way to help people, to make a difference. Leslie said, “*I would like a job where I could simply focus on expressing myself.*

*I would prefer not to be in a job in a position of subordination I like to be in charge of things. I like to be able to tell other people what to do, rather than having to listen The more I learn about the world around me, the more I want to have a say in it. Affecting things, rather than just kind of sitting around having things affect me. (Lydia)*

### Attitudes Toward Subjects in School

Among this group of 12 young women, ranging in age from 12 to 20 years of age, there was a decided preference for language arts subjects, with room for creativity--art, music, and English--were popular. Belinda, Elizabeth and Margaret are all taking Latin in middle school, and reported that they enjoy it. Robin loves Spanish, and hopes to become bi-lingual.

There was interest and enthusiasm for science expressed by many of the girls. In middle school, Katie said that science is “*a neat subject, doing a lot of different experiments.*” Among the co-researchers in high school or the first year of college it was usually biology, not chemistry or physics, that was popular. Biology was Alice’s favorite subject. *It was interesting, studying living organisms and how they function. And we went into a lot of detail.*

*I love biology. I love it! I am a vegetarian, but I like dissecting things. [laughs] I know there s some irony there. But, you know, I really like seeing how things work, and being able to touch things and grow things (Robin)*

Fully half of the participants in the study said that they dislike math, which was startling to this researcher. Two disliked history. Two disliked gym. The attitudes expressed toward subjects in schools seem inextricably linked to the teachers of those subjects, in the opinions of these young women. If they said that they generally disliked a subject, they could get past that dislike if they had a good teacher. If the teacher was not good, they would cease to enjoy a subject that had appealed to them in the past.

### Influences of Teachers and Others

The participants mentioned teachers who had been encouraging to them. Lydia recalled a fifth grade teacher:

*“She s the one who got me using the Internet, using e-mail and stuff for the first time. And she encouraged me a lot with computers, which I still like.*

Teachers can be discouraging influences, as well. If any young woman in the study was not happy with the way a teacher treated students, the subject matter completely lost its appeal for her.

*I had one math teacher who was very, very discouraging. He yelled at me in class, and berated me for things like not paying attention, or not putting as much effort as he felt I should have into the work. And that discouraged me a great deal. (Leslie)*

*I m taking Advanced Placement Biology And I wanted to be involved in Marine Biology for a long time, but now I have no interest in it. Because she doesn t really teach, she writes notes up on the board and she s really just unenthusiastic. She can t control her class the guys are disrupting so much, I can t even concentrate anymore. (Julie)*

Julie had more positive experiences with other teachers, and said that she talked to her chemistry teacher and her art teachers about her future plans and goals. Jody also mentioned talking to teachers about her future.

Fathers were among the other people with whom the adolescents said they discuss career choice. In this study, only 5 of the 12 girls lived in a home with both parents. Margaret, Sharon, and Robin and Katy all lived with single mothers. (Robin and Katy’s mother shared a house with her fiancé.) Alice, Regina and Leslie had all moved away from home this year; Alice’s father was still at home, and she mentioned talking with him when she went home for visits. Regina’s parents were divorced, and her mother lived with Regina’s stepfather. Leslie’s parents were divorced, and although he lives in the same community that she and her mother do, Leslie only occasionally discussed her thoughts about her future career with her father.

*I don t ask him for advice as often. Nor does he offer it as often. I feel that he*

*doesn't know as much about me, is probably why. He doesn't really know how I feel about my classes, and my job, and things like that. But I don't communicate well with my father at all. Especially compared to my mother--but I talk to my mother about everything, so it's not just about jobs*

Jody, Belinda and Lydia, Julie, Alice, and Margaret said that they did talk with their dads about their future plans. Margaret thought that her dad had some investment in her future: *He's the one who's paying for my college, so that kind of helps.* Margaret was the only co-researcher who expressed the feeling that her father's expectations for her might differ from her mother's of her own. *"He probably wants me to go into something that has to do with science or math, something geeky, because that's what I'm good at. But I'm also good at writing, so whatever.*

Margaret and Leslie talked about their grandmothers as influences in their lives, and people they talk to about careers. Lydia mentioned her grandparents, and all the girls said they talk about career dreams and goals with their friends.

#### Perceptions of Mothers' Expectations/Influences

*I always felt that my mother thought that my learning was very important. But I also felt that she was very much interested in my grades, although I know that was not necessarily because she thought that was the most important thing for me, but because that was the most important thing for my future, for the colleges. For the career, in other words. So I knew the difference there. And I didn't feel, when I made a bad grade, that it was that damaging to myself. And I think that was because she was very clear about that; the learning was important. (Leslie)*

Belinda felt that her mother has been supportive of the career choices she has considered so far. Before Belinda changed her mind about being a vet-- *I don't really like to see animals in pain that much* --her mother told her to work hard in school, so that she could go on to college and study vet medicine.

*Most recently -- well, I've always wanted to do something with horses, and she's encouraged me very much by supporting my horse activities. Everything that I've said that I've wanted to be, or just had an interest in, she's encouraged me to work hard for that.*

Jody felt sure that her mother would support her plan of becoming a lawyer; she thought her mother would also be supportive if Jody pursued a medical career. Jody said that her mom *"talks a lot about how she would like to be a museum curator, but she doesn't necessarily say that I should be.*

Julie was very appreciative of the ways her mother supported and encouraged her decision to

enter Art School this coming fall. Regina, who is studying graphic design in a community college, also felt her mother supported her choice.

Lydia expressed the thought that her mother had not only not pushed her toward a particular career, but also had not assumed that college had to be part of Lydia's future.

*My mom hasn't really tried to influence me one way. I mean, she's pretty laid back about the whole thing. Sometimes she talks about how I don't even have to go to college. She says too many people are too bent on a college education. There's stuff you can do without one. She's encouraged me to do anything that I want to do, but she's never really said anything like, "Oh, wouldn't it be nice for you to try this."*

Alice said that her Mom reinforced her choices about subject areas to major in at college. Alice is very aware of the fact that her mother wants a more exciting career for Alice than she, Helen, has.

*Well, she wants me to go to college. But then she wants me to do whatever I feel comfortable with. But she wants me to do something that will make humanity better; she wants me to help people. I remember once when I was little, I asked her, "What do you want me to be when I grow up?" And she said something after thinking about it for a long time. She just said, "Well, as long as you do something that you're happy with and that helps people, I'm happy with it, and I support you in it." (Margaret)*

Kim reported on the discussions she's had with her mother, in which her mother attempted to influence Kim's career aspirations:

*I used to want to be a lawyer, but she said, "No. Because she's a lawyer now, and she knows it's not that great. And so, she made me promise not to be a lawyer. [laughs] She said that I was good at basketball playing, but I told her "No. And she said I was good at math, but I told her "No" on that, too. [laughs]*

### Perceptions of Mothers' Work Experiences

I asked the young women in the study, "What are some of the things your mom tells you about her job?" Responses varied, but all of the adolescents seemed to know not only what their mothers did, but how their mothers felt about their work.

*She tells me everything about her job. She tells me who she works with, who she teaches, the books and materials she's using, her problems, her successes, the papers she's writing, everything. (Leslie)*

*I don't even know her title, so I just have to kind of summarize it. I think she's*

*kind of like an assistant to her boss, like proof-reading papers and proposals, and I know she's a secretary, but I don't know the exact work that she does. I know from stuff she's come home and told me. A lot of it is real negative. (Alice)*

Robin and Katie's mother, Serena, is a therapist, and the girls are aware that she can't discuss the details of her cases. "She can't tell me a whole lot about who she sees, and stuff like that," Robin said. Robin thought that her mother liked her job, but "It's clients, all the time. And I think it can be very draining on her. So, she comes home tired, quite a bit. She works hard.

Julie felt that her mother's career as a librarian was not the one that she might have chosen, had she not decided to have a family.

*Well, she really didn't want to be a librarian when she graduated from college. I mean, I don't think she ever saw herself as doing that type of thing, because she was interested in photography and anthropology. I sometimes wish she would have pursued that, you know, because I know that she really would have enjoyed it. But I know having children has kind of affected her career choices.*

### Career Awareness and Exploration

Although most of the adolescents had been exposed to some kinds of career development information in school, they were not very enthusiastic about its impact on them. Several of the young women mentioned having taken interest inventories, to help them start thinking about future goals.

Although these tests are not used as predictors of specific jobs, they are interpreted that way by the students.

*We had to take that test for what you like, and what you should be, and I always end up being a lumberjack, or a truck-driver, or something. So that doesn't really help. They have all these different questions they ask you, and you circle the things you like, and the things you don't like, and whether you'd like to work with a lot of people, or just a few people, or by yourself. And you add it all together and find out what you're supposed to be. I don't think that really works for anybody. I don't know anybody who's gotten what they think they want to be. (Jody)*

Regina described the career development class she took in high school as "Just a bunch of inventory profiles and stuff that, like, tell you about your personality and what jobs would be suited for you." Lilly remembered an exercise of matching interests with careers, conducted in the fall of her year in seventh grade.

*At the beginning of the year we had to fill out a bunch of papers on what kind of*

*jobs we wanted to do when we grew up. And what kind of things we did for fun. And they d decide what kinds of jobs we would go into.*

In addition to these introductions to careers provided in schools, the young women in this study learned about careers by (a) observing a relative, a friend, or a friend's parent in the workplace, (b) participating in outside-class career-focused experiences, like "Take Our Daughters to Work Day," or more hands-on experiences (like Jody's opportunity to dissect animals at the university's vet school), (c) job-shadowing (the experience that led Regina to the field of graphic design, (d) reading or seeing films with insights into or descriptions of careers, or (e) taking part-time jobs while they are still in school or college.

### Fifteen Years From Now/Projected Division of Labor at Home

I asked the adolescent girls to project themselves 15 years into the future, and asked what kind of living configuration they pictured themselves in. I also asked them how they imagined dividing up the responsibilities of caring for the house, and children, if they had any. Two of them, Sharon and Jody, saw themselves as unmarried career women 15 years from now, although Jody thought marriage would be a possibility. Five of the 12 young women saw themselves married, without children, in 15 years. (Robin, who will be 32 at that time, said that she might be "a newly-wed.") Regina said that she might be married, "or living with a guy," and that she would have children when she was older. Katie, Belinda and Alice saw themselves married, with children, in 15 years. Belinda noted that she had heard of marriages that didn't last, but added, "*I ve never experienced--with my relatives or adults that I know--anyone having really bad marriages. I ve only seen good ones that have worked well. And so, I would like to be married.*"

Sharon has a different view:

*I kind of don t want to get married, because Mom made a really lousy choice for a husband I don t want that to happen to me. So I d rather not get married than risk of having someone like my father.*

Belinda's sister, Lydia, voiced a different perspective from all the other co-researchers:

*This could probably change, but I really don t want to have children It s totally selfish, I realize, but to get ahead in the career that I want, and pursue the life that I want, I don t think children really fit in there. And as for marriage, I realize that I ll probably want someone to spend my life with I recognize the fact that if I want to be the President, I m going to have to get married, because our country is just not going to elect an unmarried woman.*

Leslie said that she was not certain that she believed in getting married, but that she could see herself "*in a permanent relationship, with children, and with an exciting career. In other words, I want it all.*"

All of the young women in the study pictured themselves in a career of some kind. None of them imagined that they would be content to be full-time homemakers. A couple of them could imagine being employed or self-employed, with their home as a work space. Jody said she could work at home if she were an artist; Leslie said that she could work at home if she were telecommuting.

*I m not trying to devalue being a homemaker I mean, my grandmother was one for a long time, and I recognize that it s really important. Because my Mom, she put her career on hold for a long time while my sister and I were real young. I think that really helped us, having one of our parents at home with us. But I really don t feel that s what I want to do stay home and just work around the house. (Lydia)*

All but one of the young women said that they could picture themselves going to work while a partner stayed home and took care of the house and children. Only half of them, however, (Jody, Robin, Margaret, Regina, Sharon and Belinda) seemed completely comfortable with the idea. Sharon, in fact, was adamant that her partner would have to do it all. “*If I have a husband, its going to be his responsibility to take care of the house.*” Robin said that she thought it was unusual “*when there s a house where the father stays home with the kids you just don t see it as much.*” She could see herself in an arrangement like that, however.

*I have had a very serious, steady boyfriend for a while, and he and I talked about it, and he said he wouldn t want to work outside the home if we had kids. He d want to stay home and have a garden. It kind of shocked me for a second, you know. But I think it s a neat idea. I think it s fine.*

Five of the adolescents (Julie, Leslie, Alice, Elizabeth, and Katie) felt uneasy about the idea, and said that they would prefer that their partners would also be working outside the home. The only co-researcher who objected to the idea of going outside the home to work while her partner took care of house and children was Lydia.

*I think that would be sort of weird. Because, I just think it s odd for a person to NOT have a career, outside of their children. I could picture one of us putting our career on hold for a few years, and then the other one putting their career on hold. o we could kind of split the burden of taking care of the kids. But, I mean, it s just hard for me to picture anyone, whether it s me or my partner, giving up everything for the home.*

When the co-researchers started thinking about work and family responsibilities that might be in there future, they were asked to speculate about how they would divide the chores of daily life in the home. All of them said they would like an equal division of labor within the home (except for Sharon, who wants her future husband to take care of the house).



## Feminism: Definitions/Comfort with the Label

The opinions and attitudes among the young women in this study varied more within this category than in any other. Some of the younger adolescents (Belinda, Elizabeth, Katie) had only a vague idea of what feminism was. Others of the younger adolescents (Jody, Margaret) were quite knowledgeable about feminism. Jody said that she calls herself a feminist.

*Just like that T-shirt that says Feminism is the idea that women are people. I still believe that there are things that need to be accomplished in order for everybody to be equal I guess, less problems in the workplace for women Or men with higher jobs harassing women that have lower jobs. I think there needs to be more done in order to have as much place in the world as men do. And just trying to improve the lives of everybody, and work together with people.*

Among the older adolescents, the wish to identify as a feminist was stronger in some participants than others. Some, like Regina and Alice, were comfortable saying that they were feminists, but they resisted being publicly identified in that way. Others, like Julie, Leslie and Robin, had already “gone public” with their identification with feminism. They did this by founding a Women’s Studies Club or a chapter of the National Organization for Women at their respective high schools. The comfort level (or lack of it) that the adolescents expressed varied widely among them.

## Mother-Daughter Interaction

### Frequency and Location

The mothers and daughters in this study communicate with each other as often as their schedules permit. To all of the participants, communication between mother and daughter was a valued, cherished commodity. None of the mother-daughter dyads or triads reported setting aside a formal time for “mother-daughter bonding,” but all of them felt there was a continuous exchange of talk between them. Julie said that she and her mother communicate “*nonstop*.” Joanna agreed, “*We talk all the time. We re relentless.*” Many, like Kim and Elizabeth, carried on conversations in the car regularly. For the adolescents who are living at home, there were patterns or habitual times of increased communication.

*Usually when Mom gets home we have a nice talk, and then we talk a lot over dinner and dessert. And then sometimes we ll do a puzzle together, or I ll work on the computer while Mom and my sister do a puzzle. So, we re all in the den, and we all talk.*(Margaret)

For the adolescents who have just moved away from home, communication continues via frequent weekend visits, E-mail messages, and phone calls.

## Support for Daughters' Career Choices/Advice

Most of the mothers in the study expressed willingness to support their daughters' career choices, even though sometimes these were not the choices they would have made for them. Their misgivings about the paths their daughters are about to take (or have already taken) were usually grounded in worries about the practicality of these decisions. For example, Virginia voiced concern that her daughter Leslie had turned away from the more lucrative fields of math or science, in which she could have excelled. Virginia will encourage Leslie to do anything she wants, but she will have that nagging sense that she might have steered her in a different direction.

One of the last questions I asked most of the co-researchers was whether they had any advice or words of wisdom for their daughters. The actual interview question was, "What have you told your daughter about ways to prepare for or handle challenges in work and life?" Here are some of their replies:

*I've told her a lot. I'm always talking to her about these things. That she be honest with herself. And not to get real disappointed if things don't totally [work out] I know this is very hard, but you know, she's so young. Just to realize that things change. (Joanna)*

*I just wanted her to know that even though there were going to be things she could not fix, that would remain unfair, that she needed to be fearful of, and that she needed to protect herself against, she had a right to be mad about it. Because she was entitled. That feeling in her that this is not right was true. And even though you can't fix it, don't lose that feeling. (Helen)*

*Just to be ethical, and do the best that she can do. Plan what she wants to do, and have the strength to be able to carry those plans out. And to have alternatives in mind, in case what she planned to do doesn't come to fruition. (Roxanne)*

## Summary

In this chapter, the major themes that emerged from close analysis of the transcriptions of the interviews with mothers and daughters were discussed. The themes were presented in three sets, (a) mothers' attitudes (b) daughters' attitudes, and (c) mother-daughter interaction. The voices of the mothers and daughters were employed throughout, to bring to life the themes that emerged.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary of the Study

Although it has been assumed that parents are important influences, “relatively little research has been available to help examine the role families play in preparing individuals for work” (Way & Rossmann, 1996, p. 3).

This research was designed to explore the ways in which feminism and the women’s movement have shaped the consciousness of American mothers, and the ways in which they convey their career choice messages to their adolescent daughters. How are these messages heard, perceived, internalized, and then acted upon by these daughters? The research questions, described in chapter one as the heart of this study, were:

1. How do the attitudes of feminist mothers shape their attitudes and visions of their daughters’ future experiences in the workplace?
2. How do mothers frame these experiences and communicate with their adolescent daughters?
3. How are mothers’ messages received by daughters? What impact do daughters report that their mothers have on their hopes, dreams, plans and goals for the future?

These questions guided the interview procedures and the analysis process. This process began with a pilot interview with a mother-daughter dyad, to test the research instruments (see Appendices C, D, and E). The interview questions were modified after the pilot interviews were conducted. After receiving clearance from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, a series of interviews took place over a period of 3 months in two university communities. The interviews were conducted with 8 mother-daughter dyads and 2 mother-daughter triads. The daughters were all adolescents, ranging in age from 12 to 20 years of age. The mothers were all between 40 and 54 years old. The mothers were all currently employed at least 30 hours per week (one mother was on a leave of absence from her position this year). The careers of the mothers were diverse: nurse, secretary, teacher of pre-school children with special needs, attorney, therapist, librarian, middle school teacher, and college professor.

#### Conclusions

In this discussion of the findings from the interviews reported in chapter four, I have returned to the research questions once more, to see what conclusions may be drawn from the responses of the co-researchers in this study. The data were rich and complex, and the process of coding and analysis yielded a great deal of information. I have attempted to organize this discussion of the themes that emerged in the interviews into a series of 10 conclusions. Each of the conclusions is listed under the research question it most clearly addresses.

Research Question #1: How do the attitudes of feminist mothers shape their attitudes and visions of their daughters' future experiences in the workplace?

Conclusion #1: The mothers in this study want better work experiences for their daughters than they have had.

“The dreams of parents for their children,...the way they handle conflict and communication, and the feelings of parents toward work and learning may have powerful effects on the development of skills and attitudes necessary to succeed” (Way & Rossmann, 1996, p. 3). Feminist mothers who have experienced the difficulties of working outside the home are keenly aware of the dangers that may lie ahead for their daughters (Debold, Wilson & Malave, 1993; Pipher, 1994; Roiphe, 1996). The mothers in this study had high hopes for their daughters' success in life. Although they foresee challenges for their daughters, they all hope that there will be more opportunities for their daughters in the workplace, more egalitarian home situations, and more help from society than they experienced.

*I think Alice s generation will have a completely different kind of career path. Even if they take a break to have children, it will not have the impact on them that ours did. You know, their career choices--they won t say, I want to be a teacher, so I can have summers off. And who they marry will have to be a part of this thing. Who they marry isn t going to say, Well, yeah, you re going to be the one who sacrifices the career. (Helen)*

Conclusion #2: The feminist mothers in this study are aware of the dollar values of various careers, and want their daughters to also be aware.

While the mothers in the study may not have been able to reel off all 10 of the job areas on “The Megatrends List of Hot Career Areas for Women” (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992, p. 63) they are knowledgeable about the money that various careers bring in. They are aware (often through personal experience) of the fact that jobs that are traditionally considered “male” bring in more money than jobs that are considered “female,” and they want their daughters to be aware of this, too. Virginia reflected, “*I know how hard it is to live on very little money. I come from a relatively poor background. And it hasn t bothered me much, except that, you know, I think about it.*”

(Virginia was the mother who wondered whether she ought to have pushed her daughter Leslie toward science or math in high school. *She could have been an all-star chemist! She could have made a mint! )*

*I hope the economic rewards for fields Jody s interested in are enhanced by the time she s in the workplace, so that she has a good opportunity to do the kind of work she wants to do. (Donna)*

Conclusion #3: A feminist consciousness, once achieved, informs and permeates the practice of mothering.

The journeys that the mothers in this study describe toward feminist consciousness have often been difficult. As Fine (1991) observed, "...our own unsatisfactory pasts return as the 'before' picture, demanding that the 'after' picture of current adolescent females measure all the gains of the women's movement" (p. 175). When the mothers reflected upon their own experiences as part of the research process of the study, they were looking at these experiences through the lens of what they now know about the social construction of gender. Their reflections added poignancy to their observations of their daughters' struggles. The desire for a better "after" picture for adolescent females is intensified when those adolescent females are your own children. When the co-researchers looked back to their own adolescence, they often had what Mann (1994) described as "painful recollections that invariably had to do with a sense of lost self, a silencing of their own voice, a loss of self-confidence and identity" (p. 191). Brown and Gilligan (1992) described the process in another way. "We came to remember the forgetting of our girlhood by going back through the disconnections of adolescence" (p.17) Virginia and others remember how limited their career options were in the 1960s; Donna, Roxanne and Cathy remember how parental disapproval kept them from following their professional dreams; Holly remembers the resentment she felt over the privileging of her brothers' opportunities; and all but one of the mothers in this study have ugly memories of gender bias, discrimination, and sexual harassment.

Feminist mothers believe that it is part of the job of raising children to give their daughters--and their sons--a critique of the prevailing cultural attitudes on gender, and alternative behavioral choices. "Raising a daughter in a society that has been largely constructed by white men and is still, for the most part, run by them...is a political act" (Debold, Wilson & Malave, 1993, p. 6).

Research Question #2: How do mothers frame their experiences and communicate with their adolescent daughters?

Conclusion #1: Mothers share their own workplace experiences with their daughters, and give advice them about how to prepare for and deal with life.

The communication between the mothers and daughters in this study flows back and forth, continuously. They talk after work, at dinner, in the car on the way to the dentist. Even the three who have moved away from home are linked to their mothers by phone and E-mail, and they all visit home frequently (two of them live in the same communities as their mothers, the third is less than two hours away). They communicate about school, about friends, and about issues. One of those issues is sexual harassment.

Nine of the ten mothers in this study reported having been sexually harassed, either in an educational setting or in the workplace. It is interesting to note Reskin and Padavic's (1994) observation that concepts like pay equity and sexual harassment were not part of our collective vocabulary 20 years ago.

*I think there's a likelihood that Jody, or at least Jody's child, may face less harassment and discrimination. Because now people are talking about these things. When I was entering the workforce, they weren't even topics in any kind of workforce preparation, and they weren't topics people talked about through a good part of my work life. But now, open a newspaper or turn on the news, and people are talking--and I think that's a first stage. (Donna)*

*You know, we didn't put a name on sexual harassment, but it was there. We just dealt with it. [Regina's] generation has a name for it, and there's a law against it. There is, at least, recourse, there's at least something that one can do if one feels discriminated against. (Cathy)*

Now that the mothers can identify and name sexual harassment, they are better equipped to give their daughters some strategies for dealing with it, if and when they encounter it. Holly advises her daughters to deal with sexual harassment firmly, but with compassion.

*Sexual harassment is unacceptable, and you need to let him know that it's unacceptable to you. Don't smile at it. Don't encourage it. And don't just lay into them verbally. Because they're products of society. Maybe they thought that's what you wanted to hear. So, try to let them know that's NOT what you wanted to hear--you or any other female.*

Conclusion #2: Feminist mothers may be sending mixed messages to their children about career areas to explore.

In the mutual blaming engaged in by school officials and parents, mothers have sometimes been singled out for reinforcing stereotypical negative attitudes toward math and science (Orenstein, 1994; J. Utin, personal communication, January 30, 1996). This kind of message is expressed as something like, "Well, I was never good at math, so why would I expect my daughter to do well in that subject?" We have moved away from the blatantly discouraging messages of the past. (Among the pieces of evidence for this is the negative reaction against blatantly sexist occurrences, such as the outcry when "Teen-Talk Barbie" was put on the market, telling girls, "Math is hard" a few years ago.) But mothers may still send subtly discouraging messages, like Serena's message to her daughter Katie that maybe she should be a teacher, because vet school is "hard," rather than telling her to "Go for it!"

Some of the mothers in the study are exemplars of the "do as I say, not as I do" philosophy. That is, while they verbally encourage their daughter's entry into nontraditional fields, they undercut this encouragement by their own example or by failing to provide opportunities for the daughters to seriously explore alternatives to more traditional paths. Donna made this tension explicit when she observed that subconsciously she probably discouraged her daughter more in math and science-related areas, "because they were never of interest to me, and I never felt like I was very good in those areas." Because of her acute awareness of possible discouragement, Donna tries

hard to be more encouraging of her daughter's work in math and science, but she admits that *"it probably doesn't come off that way.* Virginia ruefully laments the fact that Leslie is more taken with English and anthropology than math or science. However, Virginia has been very happy as a professor, and she has conveyed her enthusiasm to her daughter in very overt ways. Leslie has always seen her mother as a person who is happy in her profession; she is intimately aware of all facets of her mother's work life, and has seen that it is a pleasant way to make a living. It is not surprising that she seems to be choosing to follow in her mother's footsteps.

Another area of ambivalence, or mixed messages, is the recurring theme in the data of the value placed on having jobs that "help people." The feminist mothers in this study who make their daughters feel that their jobs should be of benefit to society may be reinforcing stereotypical thinking (Gilligan, 1982) about what we value in girls. I do not mean to imply that this is a bad thing. Nor do I mean to imply that helping people might not also be conveyed to boys as a worthwhile factor in career choice. However, "helping people," as worthy a goal as it may be, becomes problematic if it is valued over other considerations, such as earning a good salary, or pursuing a career area of more interest. Sometimes the message is conveyed by example, as the mothers talk about the satisfaction they get from being able to help people as part of their jobs. Sometimes the message is overt, as in Margaret's interpretation of her mother's expectation: *"She wants me to do something that will make humanity better she wants me to help people.* When the "helping people" message is internalized, it affects career choice. Julie, a talented artist, looks for ways to combine art and helping people, so she's thinking of becoming an art therapist.

Research Question #3: How are mothers' messages received by daughters? What impact do daughters report that their mothers have on their hopes, dreams, plans and goals for the future?

Conclusion #1: Daughters carefully observe the ways their mothers deal with home and the workplace, and learn from the experiences their mothers share with them.

The adolescent girls closely observe their mothers, and listen to their workplace experiences. They see things about their mothers' lives that they like, and things they would want to change in their own lives. *I don't think my mom is as career-driven as I am right now I guess we just have different goals,* said Lydia. Julie is aware that her mother was once interested in photography and anthropology, and that she probably didn't want to be a librarian, but has made sacrifices in order to raise two children. When asked if she would want her mother's life, Julie replied, *I don't really think I'd be quite satisfied with it. Because I don't really see myself as being quite as nurturing as a mother but who knows, I could change.*

The daughters are aware of the stress factors in their mothers' work lives. *I think sometimes she feels that she's being closed in a box. Sometimes she has to make unfair compromises I need my space more than she does.* (Margaret). Elizabeth knows her mother hates her job, because *she sees too many stupid students.*

Leslie, on the other hand, wouldn't mind a life very much like her mother's, and has already found

characteristics of her mother's working style to emulate.

*I look to her as a definite model for the way I hope to work someday, when I get a full-time job. The way that she always tries to fulfill completely any commitment that she makes. The way she really tries to get things in on time, and to get things done completely, so as not to inconvenience other people. I really do admire the way in which she makes an effort at everything she does at work. (Laurel)*

Conclusion #2: The daughters in this study appear to internalize feminist messages and adopt feminist perspectives, whether or not they name them as such.

One example of attitudes being shaped or changed has to do with gender-stereotyping of occupations. While the mothers grew up in the days of "Help Wanted: Male" and "Help Wanted: Female" in the classified ads of the daily newspapers, they no longer believe that any jobs should be held only by males or only by females--and neither do the daughters. Both mothers and daughters pointed out careers that are still considered nontraditional for females--garbage collectors, construction workers, professional baseball players--but no one believed that the segregation of occupations by gender was a good idea.

*A man came to talk to us at school, and he said he was a registered nurse. And people started giggling, you know. That a man would be a nurse. I think there's still that huge stereotype about only women are nurses. But I think for a woman to be a doctor, that's so much more accepted than a man to be a nurse. (Robin)*

A related concept is the awareness among some of the daughters that it is now considered to be a good thing for them to at least consider choosing careers in fields that have been nontraditional for females. They seem to know that if they choose a career in math or science, for example, they will probably (a) make more money than they will in more traditional areas, and (b) please their mothers. Lydia told me, "*I know this is going to sound stereotypical, but I really don't like math and science very much.*" In high school Leslie knew that she could have succeeded in any academic area

*...but I always enjoyed the liberal arts-oriented fields much more than the math or science. I felt occasionally a little guilty about that, because I knew I could have been a role-breaker, and been good at some of the jobs or fields that males usually do more of.*

A third important area of awareness that seems to have gotten through to adolescent daughters is sexual harassment--how to recognize it, and what to do about it if it happens to them. All but one of the dyads reported having discussed this topic, at length and over time. Two of the adolescents, Margaret and Alice, had written papers on the topic, and had sought help and input from their mothers in that process. Some adolescent participants had already experienced some form of sexual harassment in school.



*I was in middle school, in eighth grade, and there was this one guy that consistently harassed, like, every girl in the school. And I went and reported him. Mostly, it was just incredibly lewd and crude comments [With] some girls he would even graduate to physical harassment. He never tried that with me. But I just felt like it was totally degrading to have him act like this. (Lydia)*

*I remember when I was younger, when I was in elementary school, something happened with a boy. And I told my Mom. She talked to me about it. It was, like, the first time .he had touched me somewhere. And I didn't really know what to think about it. But I told my mom, eventually. She's been really supportive about that kind of stuff. (Robin)*

### Conclusion #3: Adolescent daughters of feminist mothers may embrace or reject the “feminist” label.

The daughters in this study were more comfortable agreeing with the principles of feminism, but there was some tension and ambivalence around embracing the label, “feminist.” Andersen (1993) notes that most American women do support feminist issues like reduced violence against women, more opportunities for women, equal pay for equal work, better child care, etc., but sometimes won't call themselves feminists because they misunderstand the term.

Feminism is often equated with being a lesbian which, in turn, is equated with man hating; thus, for many, rejection of feminism is linked to fears and stereotypes about lesbians. Others feel it is risky to become a feminist, fearing that friends or lovers may reject or tease them. These reactions show how threatened people can be by a movement that advocates change in women's lives. (Andersen, p. 7)

Some of the adolescents said that they probably would call themselves feminists, but that they didn't proclaim themselves to be so. Some have found that their peers do misunderstand the term, as Andersen suggests. Julie, a member of a feminist organization at her high school, has been called a “feminist slut” in the halls of her school. She reports that some classmates say “*Oh, don't listen to her. She's a radical man-hater.*” Julie feels that these classmates are *really outraged at the way we think but that's just coming from not knowing about anything.*

An interesting phenomenon observed with some of the adolescents, particularly the older ones, occurs when the daughters take the lead in feminist activism. As Webb (1992) pointed out, “The reality is that as daughters become adults they assume more of their part in the interaction... mother and daughter can become friends, and their friendship can turn from mother mentoring daughter to daughter mentoring mother” (p.35). Robin told me that she and her mother, together, had recently become more active on feminist issues.

*I think there was a while when [my mom] wasn't as active in a lot of things, but now she works with Planned Parenthood, and works with a lot of females, and*

*works with people with eating disorders, and has groups on that I think we've both kind of grown together with her activism.*

Conclusion #4: Young women learn about careers in a variety of ways.

The mothers are not the only ones influencing their daughters about their futures. It is clear that school factors--teachers, subject matter, and school-sponsored career exploration experiences--all have played an important role in the lives of these young women, in relation to career development.

In the light of what we know from Gilligan (1982) about how girls are concerned with the community of care and personal relationships, it should not have been surprising to hear, over and over again, how important the relationship to a teacher is to an adolescent girl. This was evident in this study in two forms (a) positive influence of teachers, and (b) negative influence.

According to the data gathered in this study, if a young woman likes her teacher, she will work hard and try to do well, even in a subject she claims to dislike.

*My junior year, in chemistry, I had Ms. G. She was one of my favorite teachers. And chemistry wasn't exactly my favorite subject. But I just think every class should be taught the way she taught her classes. She really wanted her students to learn. She really took an interest, and she wanted her students to understand.*  
(Alice)

On the other hand, if an adolescent girl does not think her teacher is good, she may lose interest in a subject, even if it has been one of her favorite subjects in the past. The most extreme case of this occurrence was when Julie was so bored and disgusted by her classroom experience in a biology class this year that she abandoned her previous career goal: to study marine biology. The young women in the study were aware of the teachers who wanted to know them as people, and were sharply critical of teachers who did not convey this interest. *Like my 11th grade history teacher--he never learned our names. He'd always call us by our last names, you know. He never really got to know us on an individual basis.* (Alice)

*The teachers that were the best, to me, were always female; usually in subjects that I liked, like English, language arts. And they always took the time to listen to me, and talk with me personally. And the teachers that I really disliked were usually men. So a lot of that could have been my personal bias, and not relating to the way men would teach a subject as much.* (Leslie)

As we have seen, teachers have a strong impact on students' attitudes toward subject matter that the students are learning about. This becomes important when we consider that the students' attitudes toward the subjects they are exposed to will impact the careers they choose to pursue.

One unsettling finding in this study was the number of young women who said they did not like math. In the most extreme case, Sharon's distaste for math has kept her from receiving her high school diploma. (She was allowed to begin taking courses at a community college, although she was lacking two math credits.) Orenstein (1994) observed that girls' confidence in their ability to do math drops significantly in middle school. This belief then takes on the role of a self-fulfilling prophecy, since lack of confidence affects achievement. The voices of the adolescents in the study echo this observation.

*I used to like math a whole lot, but it doesn't capture me the way some of my other subjects do. You know, maybe it's some of the teachers I've had. It's just kind of monotonous, you know? (Robin)*

*I just have trouble with math, because that's a very hard subject. (Katie)*

*I don't like math that much this year. But I'm in algebra this year, and I guess I don't like it that much because it's harder, and I don't like my teacher that much. (Elizabeth)*

*Math really wasn't any fun at all, because it was just numbers—nothing more than numbers, to me. (Leslie)*

Conclusion #5: These feminist mothers work to help develop their daughters' strong sense of self-worth.

It is a definite priority of the feminist mothers in this study to nurture self-esteem in their daughters. The mothers may feel they need to counteract the damaging or hostile environment of school and society.

*If anything, [Lydia] needs to work on a little humility. But I figure the people out there will take care of taking her down a notch or two. I don't need to do that. (Holly)*

*Alice just expects to be treated better. And she has a right to. She will, in a relationship, expect that she's entitled to share more responsibility. I think partners will share more—that will just be an expectation. It won't be changing a diaper and everybody stands up and applauds. It will just be understood, That's my child, I change diapers. If we're divorced, I'm still responsible for this child. (Helen)*

Unfortunately, feminist mothers cannot do it all. They can appreciate the strengths and skills that their daughters are developing, and they can work to improve their daughters' self-esteem in all the supportive ways they can. They are still surrounded by a “dangerous, sexualized, and media-saturated...girl-poisoning culture” (Pipher, 1994, p. 12). Schools and the media may be sending

such powerful messages that it becomes too overwhelming for feminist parents to counteract.

### Recommendations for Practice

The voices of the mothers and daughters in this study offer convincing evidence that mothers are important contributors to the career development culture. This is a message that should be understood by school administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors. If my belief that feminist mothers feel they have to counteract messages that their daughters are getting from school and society is correct, the implication for practice might be the need for renewed cooperative effort between parents and schools. Parents have “a moral obligation to be advocates for their daughters” (S. Culver, personal communication, January 28, 1997), but feminist mothers may tire of feeling that their principles compel them to be in an adversarial relationship with the teachers and administrators at the schools their daughters attend, and that they are always cast in the role of “the gender police.” Agonito (1993) described the experience of supporting her daughter’s tentative decision to take carpentry in high school. She would have been the only girl in class, and the teacher was male. “In the end, the prodding of her feminist parents came to nothing in the face of the barriers as she saw them. She gave up carpentry before she began it” (p. 26). Agonito visited her children’s school, with similarly discouraging results.

I would tediously page through the textbooks, noting the endless sexist examples, pictures, and approaches. I’d try to convince the staff that these books had to be changed...but the same textbooks kept coming home year after year...(p. 26)

Similar experiences are reported by other mothers who attempt to engage in dialogue around feminist issues with school authorities, both in the literature and by the co-researchers in this study (AAUW, 1992; Mann, 1994; Orenstein, 1994)

*Teresa: Margaret did lots of reports in school, on Sojourner Truth and stuff like that. And one of the reports that she did that I think I had an influence on is research that she did on women composers. Because that was for her, I think, a real turning point. Because she went out and did the research after her teacher told her there weren’t any women composers.*

*Margaret: The teacher basically told me just to get a life and pick a guy composer. So I went to [a professor of humanities] and got the names of some excellent women composers. And there was one, Fanny Mendelssohn, and her brother, Felix Mendelssohn, a lot of people know. It turns out that it was actually Fanny that wrote most of his songs. And he just stuck his name on it and turned it in!*

There is plenty of mutual blaming by parents and school administrators and teachers, but not enough genuine dialogue and sharing of concerns about sexist attitudes and assumptions being perpetuated at school and in some homes. If feminist mothers can direct their activism toward

working on these issues in partnership with school personnel, the climate for adolescents should improve. The American Association of University Women (1995) and other groups provide strategies and blueprints for collective action along these lines.

Another implication for practice that can be heard in the voices of the girls in this study has to do with instruction in math. Teachers need to work on finding strategies for keeping girls engaged in math, so that the girls won't decide that they don't like the subject, and then refuse to take higher level classes. Implications for guidance counselors and teachers who work with students may be found, as well, in the girls' disparaging comments about the use of interest inventories. Perhaps it is time to cease using them, or to do a better job of letting students know how to interpret the results.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Despite all the gender equity work being done in various pockets in the country (AAUW, 1996) the girls' responses in the interviews indicating their dislike for math suggest that further research is needed on ways to engage girls in the math classroom, and to close the "confidence gap" between girls and boys in math.

As we have seen, young women learn about careers in a variety of ways, often outside of school. Another area of research that could prove fruitful would be to study some of the sub-groups of young women and their parents who participate in some organized extra-curricular activities, such as basketball, softball, volleyball, tennis, soccer, track, or swim teams; horseback riding; debate; band. These are often intense worlds-unto-themselves, requiring time, money and commitment from parents and daughters alike.

It would be interesting to conduct a qualitative study within these worlds, to see if any of the experiences were connected to future career goals, and to see if lessons learned from the dedication and perseverance required in these activities had anything important to tell us about getting young women ready to face the challenges of the workplace.

Other research that could emerge from this study would be to replicate it with mother-daughter dyads in which the mother was in a field that is still considered nontraditional for women, to see if different workplace experiences generated different messages about career choice from the ones being communicated by the mothers in this study. It would be interesting to do a study like this one cross-culturally, as well. Within a completely different cultural context, where the expectations for women's role at home and at work are completely different, an exploration of the kinds of messages are being exchanged between mothers and daughters might yield a very different set of summary statements. In China, or India, or Botswana, or Finland, there may be some words of wisdom from mothers that would appear to be universal, and there may be areas (expectations and assumptions about balancing work and family, for example) that might be completely culture-specific.

Another potentially interesting area of research suggested by this study would be the need for contrasting the messages girls are receiving about career opportunities with the messages that boys are receiving. It might be found that boys and girls are receiving similar messages, but that some career areas and skills are emphasized more for one gender than another. For example, it would be interesting to know if boys are receiving messages about the importance of choosing a career in order to help others.

### Affirmations

The joy of conducting this research has been the opportunity to share the reflections of mothers about this most emotionally engaging task of mothering. Rich (1976) described the mother/daughter relationship as “the great unwritten story” (p. 226). Apter (1990) added that the unwritten part of the story was about “how connection between mother and daughter...remains a strength, not an immaturity” (p. 1). Ruddick (1989) described maternal voices as *developing* voices, struggling to be heard. As mothers struggle to express their experiences as mothers, “they will transform the thought they are beginning to articulate and the knowledge they are determined to share” (p.40) It seems fitting, therefore, to give “the last word” to the mothers.

*I ve tried to support her academically, so she could be the smartest and brightest she could be. And I told her be true to yourself, and do what you are passionate about. Whatever that is, find your passion, and do that for your work. (Cathy)*

*I don t know that things will be much better, and I don t know that they won t be dealing with the same things we did, but I hope they re going to go out there equipped well enough to still feel good about themselves, still continue to succeed, and deal with a problem that s really the guys problem. (Holly)*

*Sharon is bright, she s articulate. She knows what she feels, and she has very strong opinions. She stands up for herself. (Roxanne)*

*Margaret s quite verbal, she s an excellent writer, and very creative. She tries to be her own person. (Teresa)*

*[Leslie] is meticulous, she s responsible, she s trustworthy, she s a pretty hard worker when she wants to be, she s bright, she s articulate, she s extremely sensitive to other people. (Virginia)*

*Alice ll just shine. (Helen)*

*I ve been so fortunate in the kind of person Jody has turned out to be. It s just wonderful to get up every day and be able to truly admire your child, and say, I like living with this person! I enjoy seeing her talents unfold. What an adventure, to have that child out there in the world! I treasure the time I get to*

*share with her. I feel like having a daughter as much as it s painful, having a daughter and knowing about her facing the world, it s just so delightful, sharing with her, too. (Donna)*

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APPENDIX A

January 5, 1997

Name

Address

Dear (name):

“Raising a daughter in a society that has been largely constructed by white men and is still, for the most part, run by them and by their desires is a political act.” Do you agree with that statement (from Mother Daughter Revolution by Debold, Wilson and Malave, 1993)? Let me explain why I’m asking this question.

I am a graduate student in the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech, where I also work in The Women’s Center. I am interested in talking to currently employed feminist mothers and their adolescent daughters about the ways we talk about occupations. Your names were suggested to me as possible participants in this study.

I’m asking mothers and daughters each to talk with me together in one interview session, then in one separate session each. Each of the interviews will last about an hour. I’ll come to your house or another place that you suggest, at a time you choose. If you would be willing to be part of this project, please return the enclosed form in the attached envelope. Your names will not be used in this study. Your help in the project could improve career education and other programs in the future by helping us understand the ways we think and talk about work-related issues. I’ll be happy to answer any questions. Please call me at (540) 951-8484 or send e-mail to [sshome@vt.edu](mailto:sshome@vt.edu)

Sincerely,

Susan L. Shome

## APPENDIX B

### MOTHER'S DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Thank you for agreeing to share your time, thoughts and experiences to be part of this study. Please fill out this form and return it in the enclosed stamped envelope. Please feel free to call me at (540) 951-8484 with any questions. I look forward to talking with you soon.

1. Name:
2. Home address:
3. Home phone number:
4. Place of Employment:
5. Work address:
6. Work phone number:
7. Where would you prefer to be contacted by phone, at home or at work? What days and times are best to reach you?
8. Your age:
9. Your marital status:
10. Number of hours you work per week:
11. Number of years you have been in the workforce:
12. Your adolescent daughter's name:
13. Daughter's age, school and grade:
14. Names and ages of others who live in your home, and their relationship to you and your daughter:
15. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Please mail this form in the enclosed envelope. I'll be calling you soon! Thank you very much.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Guide -- Mother and Daughter

1. When do the two of you find time to talk together? Could you tell me about some times or places you find opportunities to communicate with each other?
2. Who does the chores in your house? Which chores do you each enjoy doing, and which do you dislike doing?
3. What do you each think about what it's like to combine working outside and inside the home? Is it going to be harder or easier for (daughter) than it was for (mother) to combine these roles?
4. What kinds of jobs available today do you think would be the most fun? Most interesting? Most boring? Bring in the most money?
5. Are there any occupations you think of as "men's work"? What are they? How about "women's work"?
6. Have you two talked about sexual harassment in the workplace? What were some of the things you discussed?
7. In what ways do you influence each other?
8. What else would you like to tell me about?

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Guide -- Mother

1. Tell me about the work you do. Do you enjoy your job? If so, what are some things you like about it? If not, why?
2. When you were your daughter's age, what were your career goals and dreams?
3. When you entered the workforce, were there any jobs of interest to you that were closed to you because you were female?
4. Did you ever encounter sexual discrimination or harassment at work?
5. How have you managed to balance work and family responsibilities?
6. How has your feminism affected the way you brought up your child/children?
7. How have you tried to influence your daughter's choices?
8. Are there career areas that you find you direct your daughter toward?
9. Are there career areas that you pull her away from?
10. What are some of your daughters skills and abilities that might serve her well in the workplace?
11. What are some of her internal struggles/obstacles?
12. What are some of the challenges you expect your daughter to face when she enters the workforce?
13. What have you told your daughter about ways to prepare for or handle challenges in work and life?
14. What have you said to your daughter about sexual harassment in the workplace, if anything?
15. What does being a feminist mean to you? What do you think it means to your daughter and her friends?



## APPENDIX E

### Interview Guide -- Daughter

1. Tell me about a job that one of your relatives has. What are some of the things about that job that you think might appeal to you?
2. What are some of the things about that job that you think you wouldn't like?
3. What are your favorite subjects in school? Why?
4. Are there any subjects you dislike? Why?
5. What kinds of careers do you think your Mom would like you to pursue when you finish high school? What has she said to you about your future?
6. Besides your Mom, who are some people you talk to about your future?
7. That would your "dream job" be?
8. Fifteen years from now, which of these do you think you'd like to be?
  - A homemaker with no children?
  - A homemaker with children?
  - An unmarried career woman?
  - A married career woman, without children?
  - A married career woman with children?
  - Other? (Living in an apartment with friends, for example)?
9. you have a life partner, how do you think you'll share cleaning, cooking and child care at home?
10. Could you see yourself NOT working outside your home?
11. Could you imagine going to work while your partner cared for your children?
12. What's your Mom's job? What are some of the things she tells you about it?
13. Would you want your mother's life?

14. Do you call yourself a feminist, the way your mother calls herself one? If so, why? If not, why not?
15. Is being a feminist different for you and your friends than it is for your mother and her friends? Why?

## APPENDIX F

### Informed Consent and Parental Consent Form – Mother

#### VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE & STATE UNIVERSITY

Title of Project: The Influence of Feminist Mothers on Their Adolescent Daughters' Career Aspirations

Investigator: Susan Lane Shome

- I. The Purpose of this research project is to examine a.) the ways in which feminist mothers of adolescent daughters share information and attitudes about the world of work, and b.) how daughters are influenced by the communication they have with their mothers about job opportunities and career choices.
- II. Procedures: The participants will each have two in-depth interviews with the investigator, each lasting about one hour. The mother-daughter pair will be interviewed together. Then the mother will have a separate interview, and the daughter will have a separate interview.

The participants names will be changed to fictitious ones in all written and spoken presentations emerging from this research. The interviews will be tape recorded, and the tapes will be the property of the investigator during the study. After the tapes have been transcribed and the study is completed, the tapes will be destroyed.

Each participant will be given a summary of each interview, so that she can check the investigator's interpretation for accuracy and add any information that she would like.

- III. Risks: This study involves minimal risk to participants. They will be discussing their opinions and experiences on the subjects of career aspirations and mother-daughter exchanges of information and beliefs about occupations.
- IV. Benefits of this Project: This study will contribute to the understanding of the way adolescent girls make choices about career areas. The study has implications for further research and practice in the fields of vocational education, parenting education, and career counseling. The participants in the study will not receive tangible benefits.
- V. Confidentiality/Anonymity: The participants will be identified by fictitious names, and any specific details about the mothers' current occupational status will be changed to protect anonymity. Quotations will be published anonymously.
- VI. Compensation. Participants will not be compensated for being part of this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw: Subjects are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

VIII. Approval of Research: This research has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

IX. Subject's Responsibilities: I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

X. Subject's Permission: I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. All my questions have been answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent to participate in this study. I also give my voluntary consent for my daughter to participate in this study.

If I participate, I may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Should I have any questions about this research project, I may contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

Susan Lane Shome, Investigator

(540) 951-8484

Phone

\_\_\_\_\_

Penny L. Burge, Faculty Adviser

(540) 231-7806

Phone

## APPENDIX G

### Informed Consent Form -- Daughter

#### VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE & STATE UNIVERSITY

Title of Project: The Influence of Feminist Mothers on Their Adolescent Daughters' Career Aspirations

Investigator: Susan Lane Shome

- I. The Purpose of this research project is to examine a.) the ways in which feminist mothers of adolescent daughters share information and attitudes about the world of work, and b.) how daughters are influenced by the communication they have with their mothers about job opportunities and career choices.
- II. Procedures: The participants will each have two in-depth interviews with the investigator. The mother and daughter will be interviewed together. Then the mother will have a separate interview, followed by a separate interview with her daughter. Each interview will last one hour or less.

The participants names will be changed to fictitious ones in all written and spoken presentations emerging from this research. The interviews will be tape recorded, and the tapes will be the property of the investigator during the study. After the tapes have been transcribed and the study is completed, the tapes will be destroyed.

Each participant will be given a summary of each interview, so that she can check the investigator's interpretation for accuracy and add any information that she would like.

- I. Risks: This study involves minimal risk to participants. They will be discussing their opinions and experiences on the subjects of career aspirations and mother-daughter exchanges of information and beliefs about occupations.
- II. Benefits of this Project: This study will contribute to the understanding of the way adolescent girls make choices about career areas. The study has implications for further research and practice in the fields of vocational education, parenting education, and career counseling. The participants in the study will not receive tangible benefits.
- III. Confidentiality/Anonymity: The participants will be identified by fictitious names, and any specific details about the mothers' current occupational status will be changed to protect anonymity. Quotations will be published anonymously.
- IV. Compensation. Participants will not be compensated for being part of this study.
- V. Freedom to Withdraw: Subjects are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

VI. Approval of Research: This research has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

VII. Subject's Responsibilities: I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

VIII. Subject's Permission: I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. All my questions have been answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent to participate in this study.

If I participate, I may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Should I have any questions about this research project, I may contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

Susan Lane Shome, Investigator

(540) 951-8484

Phone

\_\_\_\_\_

Penny L. Burge, Faculty Adviser

(540) 231-7806

Phone

## APPENDIX H

### Coding Categories

#### A. Mothers' Attitudes

##### 100 Workplace experiences

- 101 Earlier career goals
- 102 Barriers to occupations
- 103 Sex discrimination at work
- 104 Sexual harassment
- 105 Positive professional experiences

##### 200 Work and Family Issues

- 206 Balancing work and family
- 207 Expectations of others
- 208 Something to fall back on
- 209 Division of labor at home

##### 300 Influencing Daughters

- 310 Influencing daughters' choices
- 311 Assessment of daughters' strengths, struggles
- 312 Workplace challenges daughters may face

##### 400 Feminism

- 413 Definitions
- 414 Comfort level with label
- 415 Developing a feminist consciousness
- 416 Feminism and child rearing

## B. Daughters' Attitudes

### 500 Career Aspirations

- 517 Dream job
- 518 Roads not to be taken
- 519 Career goals/objectives

### 600 Current Experiences

- 620 Attitudes toward subjects in school
- 621 Influence of teachers and others
- 622 Perceptions of mothers' expectations
- 623 Perceptions of mothers' work experiences
- 624 Career awareness/exploration

### 700 Work and Family Issues

- 725 Fifteen years from now
- 726 Projected division of labor at home

### 800 Feminism

- 827 Definitions
- 828 Comfort level with label

## C. Communication Between Mothers and Daughters

### 900 Mother-Daughter Interaction

- 929 Frequency and location
- 930 Support for daughters' career choice/advice



Susan Lane Shome

June, 1997

Professional Address:

The Women's Center  
Price House  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute  
and State University  
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0270  
Phone: (540) 231-7635, 231-7806  
FAX: (540) 231-6767  
e-mail: sshome@vt.edu

Residence

2000 Lombardi Drive  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
Phone:(540) 951-8484

Educational Background:

Ph.D., 1997, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Human Resources and Education.  
M.A.,1989, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, English.

M.A., 1972, University of Hawaii, English as a Second Language.

B.A., 1968, University of Florida, Education.

Professional Experience:

Graduate Assistant, The Women's Center, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia (June 1994 to present). Plan educational programming for the Women's Center; write and edit articles for the Women at Virginia Tech newsletter, work with other women's organizations on and off campus.

Instructor, Women's Studies Program, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia (fall semester, 1992; fall and spring, 1993; fall 1994; summer, 1995). Taught WS 1824, "Introduction to Women's Studies" course to undergraduate students.

Associate Coordinator, Women in World Development Program, and Business Manager, Association for Women in Development Secretariat, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia (January 1989 to June 1992). Planned programs for campus and community on Women in Development issues; maintained membership records, mailings, and distribution of AWID newsletter.

Instructor, English as a Second Language Program, Cranwell International Center, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia (1984-1989).

Director, The Playschool, a child care center for pre-school children, Gainesville, Florida (1980-1983).

Teacher, Sulochanadevi Singhanian High School, Bombay, India (1973-1974).

Instructor, English Language Institute, and College of Continuing Education Programs, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii (1971-1972).

Peace Corps Volunteer, Tiruchirappali, Tamil Nadu, South India. (1969-1971). Provided teacher training and English instruction.

#### Membership in Honorary Societies and Professional Organizations

Omicron Tau Theta, National Vocational Education Honor Society

Phi Delta Kappa, National Education Honor Society

American Vocational Association

National Association of Women in Education

American Association of University Women, State Chair, Initiative for Educational Equity, 1995-1996; Local Chair, 1992-1997

#### Publications

Lasonen, J., Shome, S., & Burge, P. (1994). Qualifications of caregivers. Reports from the Vocational Teacher Education College of Jyvaskyl,42-50.

Shome, S. (1990). Listening to women's voices: Guatemala and Nicaragua. Women's Research Institute Newsletter, 2.

#### Presentations

Burge, P., Lisker, D., Shome, S. (1997, June). Programming and activism at campus-based women's centers. Workshop to be presented at the National Women's Studies Association Conference, St. Louis, Missouri.

Shome, S. (1997, April). Feminist mothers, adolescent daughters: Perspectives on feminism. Paper presented at Radford University Student Research Conference on Gender, Radford, Virginia.

Greenberg, P., Schubert, B., Shome, S., Stone, T., Usita, S., & Wilcox, K.(1997, March). Doing feminist research: A group process. Panel presented for Women's Month, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Shome, S., Mehrotra, M., & Patel, S. (1996, September). Globalizing the curriculum: Women's voices from India. Panel presented at the Virginia Women's Studies Association Conference, Roanoke, Virginia.

Lisker, P., Shome, S., Burge, P., Kirkland, C. (1995, December). Addressing sexual assault on Virginia's college campuses: From programs to policies. Workshop presented at "Advancing Peace--Ensuring Justice: Strengthening Virginia's Response to Violence Against Women" Conference, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Shome, S. (1995, October). University-based women's centers. Presentation at the Graduate Student Feminist Research Forum, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Shome, S. (1995, June). Campus-based women's centers: Confronting the backlash. Paper presented at the AAUW Symposium on Gender Equity, Orlando, Florida.

Shome, S. (1994, October). The women's center at Virginia Tech: An update. Women's Studies Fall Seminar Series, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Lasonen, J., Shome, S. & Burge, P. L.(1993, October). Qualifications of caregivers. Paper presented at the Sixth International Forum, Association for Women in Development, Washington, DC.

### Grants and Awards

Recipient, Student Activist of the Year Award, Women's Month, 1997

The use of a woman's center to improve campus environment. Funded by the Affirmative Action Incentive Grants Projects, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, \$1,000, July 1, 1994 to June 30, 1995.

Recipient, AAUW Named Grant, AAUW Foundation, 1993.

Recipient, AAUW Initiative for Educational Equity Grant, Virginia AAUW, 1992.

Recipient, Virginia NOW Equality Day Award, 1990.