

“If I Was a Dude This Decision Would Be Easy”
The Early Emergence of the Gender Leadership Gap Among College Seniors.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
CHAPTER 1: SIGNIFICANCE	7
<i>FIGURE 1. PUBLIC OPINION OVER ROLE OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS</i>	12
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
<i>FIGURE 2. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF WOMEN WITH CHILDREN BY AGE, MARITAL STATUS, AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION.</i>	21
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	22
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS	27
PARENTAL INFLUENCE	29
CHANGING CAREER GOALS	36
TRADEOFFS	44
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	52
LIMITATIONS	56
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	56
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY	63
APPENDIX	65

Abstract

During the last 10 years, much attention has been given to women who “opt out” of the workforce. Researchers, Op-Eds, and popular media have turned to the issue of highly educated, highly paid women who leave the workforce and do not return, seeking to discover why and how they make these decisions. Still, consensus has not been reached and meanwhile, valuable members of the labor force fail to reach the pinnacle of their careers or abandon the workforce all together. One fact that everyone tends to agree on is that adults face new, challenging demands after having children. They must decide how to manage a finite amount of time. Do you trade your career for your family or your family for your career? Is there a middle ground? These are often questions that factor into a woman’s decision to leave the workforce.

Yet, what happens *before* women have children? At what point do both women and men begin thinking about how their careers will affect their family lives in the future? Little research has been conducted with college seniors who are about to begin their first full time career. As a member of this cohort, I was curious about what other college students had to say about these questions. I wanted to know whether others had given thought to what they wanted their future work and family life to look like. Therefore, I interviewed a random sample of seniors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Upon analyzing their responses through qualitative data software, I discovered that most men had given at least rudimentary thought to these questions. However, females had given significantly greater thought to them, so much so that many reported having already changed their career goals as a result. There was a clear divide between female and male responses, with their perspectives and answers to my questions being largely dependent on their gender. The interviews showed that if the gender leadership gap is to be closed by my generation or the one that follows us, policymakers must support initiatives that

help men think progressively about the desires of their female counterparts while simultaneously helping women feel that they will be able to navigate their careers without sacrificing their desire for a family. Importantly, policy changes will not be effective if they only target those who are already in the workforce. My study revealed that women are especially likely to change their career paths and goals as early as college and thus, policy must be responsive to this trend.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not be possible without the support of a number of people who have supported me along the way. First, thank you to my friends and especially my parents who have long engaged me in the conversations that spurred my interest in these issues in the first place. Likewise, although she'll never know it, Sheryl Sandberg and others like her who reached the pinnacle of their careers while also exceling in motherhood serve as important and inspirational models for young women such as myself. Although not the CEO of a major corporation, my own mother instilled a sense of independence and perseverance in me and gave me firsthand experience with a mom who seemed to “have it all.” For that and other conversations that have inspired and pushed me along the way, I am truly grateful. Additionally, a sincere thank you goes to my dad, for being a real-life example of what it means to be a supportive partner to your spouse and for selflessly giving his time and energy to the many endeavors I have dragged him into.

I would also like to thank Dr. Douglas Lauen for encouraging me to pursue a topic that was outside my previous academic pursuits. I initially asked him to advise me in a thesis regarding education policy, a passion I have pursued throughout college. When I read *Lean In* and proposed switching topics, Dr. Lauen was nothing but supportive, even when I had my doubts about whether I made the right decision. Thank you also for reading many drafts and giving much needed advice throughout the past year. Likewise, I would like to thank Kari Kozlowski for teaching me how to collect, analyze, and write about qualitative data. You have been a huge help not only with the content of my thesis but also as someone who is equally passionate about the topic I wrote about.

Finally, I would like to thank the students who volunteered their time to be interviewed for this research. They and others of my generation are crucial to any progress that will be made to close the gender leadership gap, and I wish them all the best of luck in their future pursuits. While I enjoyed interviewing these students, it was very time consuming to transcribe and analyze their responses. Therefore, I am extraordinarily grateful to the Gump Family Undergraduate Research Award for awarding me with a grant that covered the cost of 11 transcriptions, data analysis software, and an audio recorder. I would never have finished my thesis without these resources, and I owe the timely completion of this research to their generosity.

Chapter 1: Significance

On March 11, 2013, Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg published her first book, “*Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead.*” Merely two weeks later it ranked number one on Amazon’s best selling books list and the New York Times nonfiction list. Sandberg’s book focuses on the plight of high achieving women aspiring to successful careers in business. She offers advice for finding a mentor, moving through the ranks, and navigating to the top of a male-dominated corporation. Her work is specifically geared toward women in high paying, high-ranking professional environments or those who aspire to such positions. Her personal experiences have led her to believe that women unintentionally hold themselves back, passing up opportunities for greater responsibility or leaving the workforce before they have to. Among other things, she encourages women to choose a supportive partner, take risks, and “sit at the table” with men. This advice is accompanied by a plethora of research showing a gender ambition gap, leadership gap, and largely stalled progress toward closing gender disparities in the workforce (Sandberg, 2013).

Sandberg’s book was met with a firestorm of debate. It has been criticized for placing the burden for change on women rather than policymakers or society at large. In addition, her focus on women in the corporate world means that she fails to represent other struggling women in the workforce. Sandberg recognizes this fact in her book, admitting that it pertains mostly to women with some degree of agency in their jobs and the ability to pay for quality childcare. Still, her book has brought to life important questions about women in leadership positions, or the lack thereof.

Since March, media outlets as *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The Atlantic* have published a variety of perspectives on the issues raised in *Lean In*, while older

articles have received renewed attention. For instance, in 2003 *The New York Times* published a story entitled “The Opt Out Revolution,” in which Lisa Belkin describes how successful women are choosing full-time motherhood over full-time work. In the article she asks, “Why don’t more women run the world?” Her answer, “Maybe it’s because they don’t want to” (Belkin, 2003, 3). The 2013 New York Times follow-up, entitled, “The Opt Out Revolution Wants Back In” offers a different take. Author Judith Warner follows up with the women interviewed in 2003 and finds that many are dissatisfied, divorced, or unsuccessfully trying to find work in industries that they stood at the top of 10 years ago (Warner, 2013).

What does all this mean for young women who are on the precipice of finding their first job? They face a barrage of media messages, from those like Sandberg who are cheerleaders for self-efficacy and individual change, to those such as Anne-Marie Slaughter who contend that “Women Still Can’t Have It All” (Slaughter, 2012). Additionally, are these messages influencing men?

This thesis seeks to answer these questions and explore the underrepresentation of women leaders in the professional world. Research shows that women earn 57% of Bachelor’s degrees and 60% of Masters degrees, yet among Fortune 500 companies they make up less than 3% of CEO’s and less than 7% of Executive Officer top earning positions (“Targeting inequality: The,” 2010). This trend, whereby women are obtaining graduate degrees but failing to progress to the top of the leadership ladder in their respective fields, is not limited to Fortune 500 companies but rather is present in a variety of professions. For instance, US women earn 39.9% of MBA’s yet they represent only 4.2% of business CEOs and 8.1% of top earners (“Women’s share of,” 2013, “US women in,” 2013). In accounting, women earn 53.9% of master’s degrees (compared to 46.1% of men) and while they are 60.9% of all accountants and auditors in the US,

they are only 21% of partners at firms (“Women in accounting,” 2013). Finally, consider education, a field that is known to be female dominated. As of 2005, females made up 75% of the teaching force but represented only 18% of school superintendents (Mitchell & Hoff, 2011). Thus, after obtaining their undergraduate degrees, women are pursuing professional degrees and careers but often failing to reach top leadership positions. With these facts in mind, I look to students in their last year of school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to share their experiences and explore factors that may contribute to these trends later in life.

The interviews were conducted with students pursuing a variety of professions since the focus of this study is on leadership attainment in the professional world rather than the specific career they ultimately pursue. In addition, we dismissed other factors that may influence workforce participation and attainment of senior leadership positions. For instance, with regard to cultural factors, studies show that adults whose mothers were employed during childhood are more likely to have positive beliefs about working mothers. This reinforces Sandberg’s hope that more women will remain in the workforce and serve as role models for both their children and aspiring young women. I will explore whether UNC students have also been influenced by their mothers’ participation in the workforce.

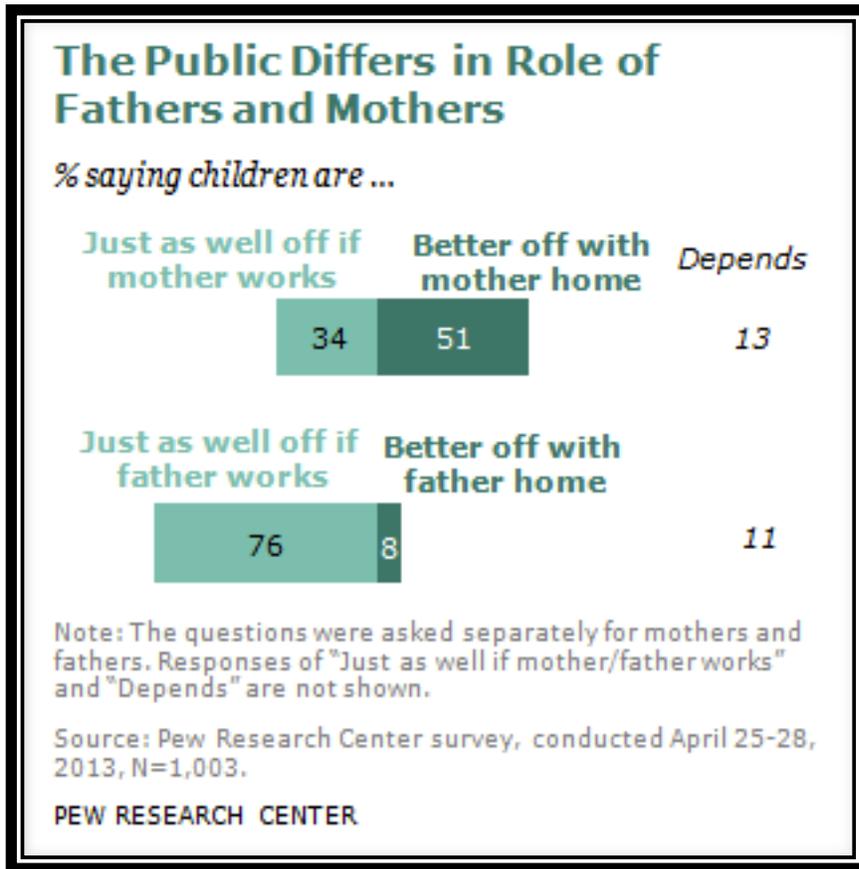
A major goal of the study is to assess opportunity for policymakers to address the underrepresentation of female leaders in the workforce. Aside from equity concerns, there is a major economic impact caused when professional women exit the workforce. As women continue to receive undergraduate and graduate degrees at higher rates than men, there is increased economic interest in changing the structure of the workforce to allow more professional women to continue on in their careers.

Policymakers may need to consider a solution that addresses these issues at both a micro (individual or business) and macro (policy and societal) level. Consider recent studies showing that nearly 30% of women report experiencing discrimination in the workplace, with those at the top of their professions being 45% more likely to experience it than those at the bottom (Covert, 2013). Yet at the same time Jhana, an online resource for major corporations, recently published an article to help women deal with unwanted sexual advances. Their solutions involve women changing their clothing, body language, and manner of speaking to combat it, rather than talking to a boss or taking legal action (Covert, 2013). Finally, from a societal perspective, a recent Pew study found that 51% of respondents believe that children are better off when the mother in the family stays at home, whereas only 8% believe that children are better off when the father stays at home (Figure 1) (Wang, Parker, and Taylor, 2013). Thus, it appears that a variety of societal and cultural factors contribute to the gender leadership gap and that a variety of issues will have to be addressed if the gap is to be closed.

With these factors in mind, I conducted interviews with seniors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to explore whether women begin to prioritize work-life balance considerations at a younger age than men. Other aspects of the interview inquire about gender roles, working outside the home, and aspirations to senior management positions based on gender, previous work experience, and whether or not their own their mothers were employed during their childhood. Chapter 2 will analyze existing data in the field to identify the scope and results of previous research, as well as any gaps in the literature. Chapter 3 will discuss the methods of the study, including how it was conducted and how it will be analyzed. This chapter will also discuss limitations and advantages of the study procedure used. Chapter 4 will convey the results of the study, describing major themes from the interviews and relevance to the current

body of literature. Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude with the findings and compare them to my original research questions. I will discuss implications of the findings and the applicability of policy change or further research.

Figure 1. Public Opinion Over Role of Fathers and Mothers



Source: Pew Research Center, May 29, 2013. *The Public Differs in Role of Fathers and Mothers*, p. 1.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The late 20th Century saw unprecedented numbers of females entering the workforce. In the early 1900s it was highly uncommon for a woman in the middle or upper classes to work, and if she did it was before marriage and certainly before the birth of a child. Indeed, trends in female workforce participation are almost always considered by demographic factors such as age, with the common assumption that women in their mid twenties through mid thirties will have the highest childbearing and marital rates. Thus, the increase in female workforce participation is most dramatically represented by considering that in 1950, 34% of women aged 25-34 were in the labor force; less than 50 years later, the number was 76% (Fullerton, 1999). Across all ages, the aggregate number of women in the labor force peaked in 1999 at 60% (“Women in the labor force,” 2013), compared to 20% in 1900, 30% in 1940 and 50% in 1970 (Oppenheimer, 1973). Today, the labor force participation rate of women stands at 57% (“Labor force participation,” 2013).

Why the dramatic change? One of the most widely accepted explanations is that demand for female workers increased in the post WWII period, and the number of historically acceptable working women (young and unmarried) could not meet the demand. Thus, employers were forced to hire women of all ages and marital statuses to fill the demand for work in rapidly growing careers such as nursing, teaching, typing, and other clerical operations (Oppenheimer, 1973). Demographic trends such as a declining number of single women and a rising number of girls enrolled in school may have also contributed to such rapid social change in hiring practices. In any case, it seems that market forces accelerated a societal shift that would have otherwise taken many years (Oppenheimer, 1973).

Understandably, many articles published in the 80s and 90s praised these large increases in female workforce participation. Several even predicted trends for the future, using projections issued by the Bureau of Labor Statistics to assert that female workforce participation would continue to grow, although at a less rapid pace (Lichter & Costanzo 1987; Fullerton, 1999). One such prediction by a senior demographic statistician at the BLS predicted that in 2015, the percentage of females in the labor force would rise to 61.9 before dropping to 58.1 in 2025, mostly due to projections of an aging population (Fullerton, 1999). A few decades later, what is the actual trend? The percentage of women in the workforce dropped to 58.1% in 2011 and now stands at 57.3% (“Women in the,” 2013; “Labor force participation,” 2013).

What factors are thought to affect female workforce participation? Among others, demographic factors such as age, education, marital status, and presence/age of children are often considered important elements of female labor force participation. Figure two looks specifically at women with children under six years old. It shows that among women aged 25-29 with at least 16 years of education, there has been a 7% decrease in labor force participation since the mid 1990s (Macunovich, 2010). In every age group of this demographic, there is a distinct gap between the labor force participation rate of highly educated single and married women. This divergence is greatest at the 35-39 age range, when highly educated, single women with young children are much more likely to remain in the workforce than their married counterparts (Figure 2). This demographic evidence suggests that an increasing number of highly educated, married mothers are leaving the work force, and as a result, popular media has begun to question why these women are “opting out” of work.

Although there is little evidence of an “Opt Out *Revolution*,” as proposed by *The New York Times*’ Lisa Belkin, there is certainly evidence that the labor force is not improving its

ability to retain highly educated women, and that the advancement of women in the workforce has stalled. For example, in her research on female labor supply, Diane Macunovich discusses Saul Hoffman's study of the female labor force between 1984 and 2004. He found that "single women were more likely to work in 2004 than in 1984, while married women with children were less likely to do so" (Macunovich, 2010, 17). Macunovich also references survey data from Louise Story, which shows that many women at elite colleges report already planning to put aside their careers in favor of raising children (Macunovich, 2010). These plans appear to become reality, as 43% of highly qualified women leave their careers for some period of time after having children (Sandberg, 2013).

Level of education is highly correlated with income, another predictor of whether or not women will leave the workforce. Indeed, 40% of women who are married to men with high incomes are out of the labor force (Sandberg, 2013). The trend holds true for women with elite degrees but not for their male counterparts. Among Yale graduates who are now in their 40s, only 56% of females are still in the labor force, compared to 90% of males (Sandberg, 2013). Thus, the relationship between education and income has a significant effect on labor force participation.

How about women who plan to return to the labor force? Although many women who leave the labor force may assume that they will later rejoin it, studies show that only 74% of women actually do and only 40% return in a full time capacity. For the women who do return, they face a competitive job market and a high probability of reduced wages. On average, women's earnings decrease by 20% after just one year out of the workforce (Sandberg, 2013).

Thus, national media has alighted with a firestorm of articles and op-eds considering the extent to which women are opting out, why they are choosing to do so, and what can be done to

reverse the trend. Yet, they are preceded in their quest by a number of authors who are already attempting to address this question and adding substantive evidence to any anecdotal claims on the part of mass media.

Qualitative analysis can be particularly useful in determining why these trends have appeared. One-on-one interviews offer unique insight on the issue, as women are given the chance to explain their choices. For example, Pamela Stone interviewed 54 women who were previously high-powered professionals (now stay at home moms) in order to understand the rationale behind “opting out.” The interviewees were former employees in a variety of professions such as consulting, medicine, and nonprofit administration. Approximately 50% of respondents were in their 30s while the other half were in their 40s. She found that many came to the realization that the schedule and values of the workplace is at odds with family life. Sixty percent noted that their husbands were a key factor in their decision to leave with many husbands saying “it’s your choice,” which Stone argues is the equivalent of “it’s your problem.” (Stone, 2007, 17) Ultimately, it appeared that women were not *choosing* to leave the workforce so much as they were being pushed into it as a result of inflexible work arrangements and long hours being a byproduct of high-status jobs. These issues are aggravated when husbands are unwilling to accept increased responsibility at home and when there is a dearth of female role models at the top of the corporate ladder who can help other women navigate work-life balance concerns (Ibid, 2007).

Sarah Damaske reaches a similar conclusion after interviewing 80 women from across the socioeconomic spectrum. Damaske concludes that society wrongly believes that female labor force participation is based on money, noting that women at the bottom of the income ladder are often unemployed. Instead, she argues that the reason is far more complicated and

often includes considerations such as whether the work is interesting, provides a sense of accomplishment, is flexible, and includes the possibility for advancement. She also reports that the women who expected to be continual workers (as opposed to occasionally taking breaks from the workforce) but instead left the workforce were entirely from the upper middle class and mostly white. The women explained their decision as a combination of factors, including a husband who was unwilling to spend additional time on household chores or childcare and professional pressure to work 50-60 hours per week (Damaske, 2011).

Taking a slightly different approach, Rosabeth Kanter offered insight into the corporate world that has received vast attention since its publication in 1977. Kanter observed a prominent corporation, Indsco (an alias), for five years and discovered the brutality of the corporate world where many men, but especially women, are locked into dead end, devalued jobs. For women, this meant being hired for a clerical position that often held little potential for upward mobility within the corporation. Indeed, Indsco graded a worker's job on a scale from one to twenty-four according to title hierarchy. Jobs with management-related duties began at grade 9, and Kanter reports that only a minuscule number of women held jobs above grade 10. Thus, women were essentially tracked into low-prestige, low-paying jobs within the corporation and there was no path for natural progression through the ranks. In addition, women were hindered by popular beliefs about societal expectations for males and females. Kanter writes, "Perhaps the most pervasive stereotype of women in organizations is that they are 'too emotional,' whereas men hold the monopoly on rational thought. Women represent the antithesis of the rational manager." (Kanter, 1977, 25)

Kanter's conclusions focus on the impact of societal expectations and how this relates to female ambition. She concludes that women feel especially devalued by the corporate world,

where they are perceived as lacking ambition. Yet, in reality, they are trapped by a sense of powerlessness that stems from a lack of upward mobility for females in the corporation. They sense that they have reached the highest achievable rank and subsequently refrain from striving further. Both Damaske and Kanter show a particular interest in the interaction between opportunities for advancement and the availability of interesting work as a means of keeping women in the workforce. Female presence in lower to mid-level managerial positions has increased drastically since 1977, yet only 2.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women (“Targeting inequality: The,” 2010). Thus, Kanter’s concerns about women in the corporate world remain relevant. Still, her emphasis on the correlation between female ambition, societal expectations, and upward mobility have largely been ignored in subsequent studies, and research has instead focused on issues related to work-life balance, gender expectations, and financial factors (Kanter 1977).

Social pressures and psychological factors may be additional considerations that contribute to a woman’s decision to leave the workforce. Unlike men, women report feeling extreme guilt when they are working rather than being with their children. Women are also more likely to blame themselves for marital problems that arise from work-life balance issues (Simon, 1995). Even so, many fast track women who leave the workforce report agonizing over their decision. Many believe that they will return to work in at least a part-time capacity, but few actually do and those who find part-time work are often dissatisfied with the impact of the work (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004).

Clearly, there are a plethora of plausible explanations for the exodus of high achieving female professionals. There has been little research conducted with college students and much of the data collected from such studies focuses on a single aspect, such as gender differences in

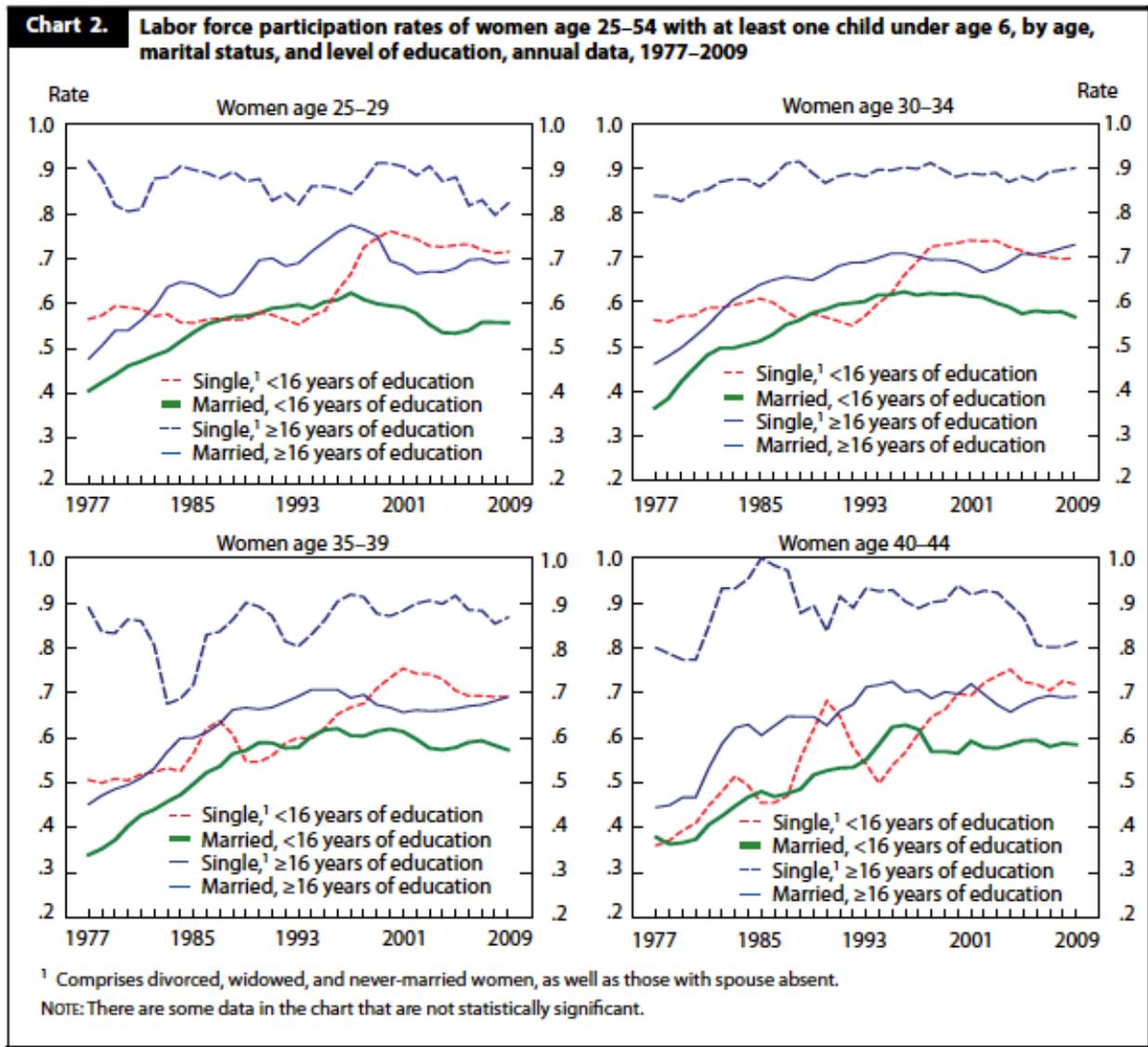
ambition, intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, expectations of future family life, and social norms. It is likely that college students are excluded from research because most have yet to enter the workforce in a full time capacity, marry, or have children of their own. Yet, while in college, young adults make important decisions about their careers and begin to form opinions and ideals about what they want their future to look like. Thus, they may be able to give insight into the gender leadership gap by describing the decisions they have made in college and hypothesizing about what their future career and family life will look like.

Research conducted with other populations may examine a broader array of factors but is almost always quantitative in nature. In fact, such research is almost always derived from closed-answer surveys, statistical facts about the labor force, and company-level information regarding females in each strata of their workforce. Few studies examine these factors collectively using qualitative methods and a random sample of college students. Yet, this type of holistic approach to interviewing college students could help determine whether any, or a combination of these factors will influence their career trajectories.

Certainly, data collected from college students is limited because they have yet to actually enter the workforce in a full-time capacity. Most are not married and it is possible that some have given little consideration to work-life balance concerns down the road. Yet, students in their final year of college offer a unique perspective, as they are on the precipice of entering the workforce and have an idealized vision of what their future life will look like. Many are looking for their first job and are exceptionally good at articulating what they seek, even if they do not know whether their dream job actually exists. They have spent the previous four years preparing for this moment and are arguably more introspective about their lives and futures than their adult counterparts. Therefore, their candid explanations of where they are, where they are

going, and what has influenced them along the way will supplement existing research around labor force participation of women, and may specifically shed light on why women continue to be underrepresented in top leadership positions of the professional world.

Figure 2. Labor Force Participation Rates of Women with Children by Age, Marital Status, and Level of Education.



Source: Macunovich, Diane, November 2010. *Labor force participation rates of women Age 25-54 with at least one child under age 6, by age, marital status, and level of education, annual data, 1977-2009*, p. 21.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that influence the career paths, aspirations, and expectations of young adults enrolled in their final year of college and how these factors and other lived experiences and perspectives differ based on gender. I use a qualitative study design and an open interview format which allows respondents to explain their decision-making process and expand upon their answers. I note in chapter two that existing research fails to integrate multiple theories about the leadership gap and instead focuses on one or two popular explanations. Additionally, most existing research is quantitative in nature. While such research is valuable, a qualitative study allows the investigator to interview participants one-on-one, ask open ended questions and probe responses with follow up questions. Allowing participants to answer questions related to a number of current theories permits exploring multiple explanations for young adults' career ambitions, familial desires and other considerations that may later contribute to the gender leadership gap in today's society. In addition, by limiting the sample to seniors I increased the likelihood that students had chosen a major and given thought to what they want their future job to look like.

The study collects qualitative data using interviews with a random sample of 20 college students in their final year at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). The sample size was limited to 20 students for a number of reasons. First, the study had strict resource constraints and I was unable to transcribe and analyze more than 20 interviews. Further, the purpose of the study was not to create a sample that was large enough to be representative of an entire population but rather to explore individual experiences and behaviors. Still, all participants were randomly chosen from a list of UNC seniors provided by the registrar's office.

The UNC registrar's office pulled a random sample of 100 students with senior status. I then emailed the first 30 students on the list, requesting volunteers to describe "what seniors value in a future job, how they search for jobs, and what they expect their future work and family life to look like." Interested students were asked to contact me at the email address provided and fill out a Doodle poll indicating their availability to be interviewed. Students were only eligible for participation if they expected to graduate in December 2013 or May 2014 or were 21 or 22 years old. I interviewed both males and females since the target sample was 10 males and 10 females. Initially, a higher rate of men responded to my emails. I later sent a second round of emails to only females. Over the course of two weeks I contacted all 100 people on the list provided by the registrar's office. Thirty-three people responded to either the initial email or a follow up email that I sent three days after the first email. However, a number of the respondents were either not seniors or were unavailable for interview. In total, I interviewed 18 individuals from the original random sample, 16 of whom met the research criteria. In order to reach the goal of 20 respondents, I requested an additional random sample of 100 students from the registrar's office. Again, a number of people on the list were not actually seniors. Still, I was able to complete the target number of interviews by reaching out to 35 people on the list, 4 of whom agreed to be interviewed. Notably, there were between 5 and 10 people on each random sample list with whom I was previously acquainted. I did not contact these people to request an interview since I felt that interviewees would be more candid when talking to a stranger. In contrast, friends and acquaintances might have prior knowledge of my opinions on some of the subject matter and be hesitant to offer a conflicting opinion for fear that others might find out or that my knowledge of their opinion might affect our friendship.

Reflecting the demographics of the UNC campus community, the random sample did not yield a racially diverse population. Of the interviewees, all were Caucasian with the exception of one Asian male and one Asian female. I did not ask any demographic questions regarding socioeconomic status or state residency, as my study was not designed to investigate the influence of such factors. The fundamental research questions are with regard to differences in career aspirations, work-family expectations, and perspective based on *gender*. While factors such as race are undoubtedly an important area to explore, they are not included in the scope of this study.

All interviews were conducted at the Student Union, a central spot on campus. This was chosen as a meeting spot because it has a number of tables that are conducive to conversation, but it is also a public area where students would feel comfortable meeting a stranger. After setting up the meeting time and location, I forwarded information regarding the scope of my thesis and explaining how information from the interviews will be used (for the purpose of writing a senior thesis in public policy). The participant was also advised that the interviews would be audio-recorded. I sent them a consent form that they could review. I then printed a copy of the consent form which they signed before we began the interview. If the participant had questions, I answered them before beginning the interview. The participants were aware that anything they said would be used only to inform my senior thesis. The interviewee's names were replaced with pseudonyms immediately after the interview took place, so that their identity could not be matched to their interview responses. The participants are referred to by their pseudonyms in this paper. As previously noted, the research study is under tight financial constraints and therefore interviewees did not receive financial compensation for participating in the study.

After ensuring that there were no further questions or concerns on behalf of the participant, I began the interview. The interview was semi-structured, so that relevant questions were addressed while also allowing the interviewer to probe with follow-up questions and explore unexpected themes that appeared. This interview format allowed me to ask for specific descriptions and examples to provide a more complete answer to the question.

The questioning began with broader questions such as “What is your major? How (if at all) do you think your degree will relate to your future job?” The questions gradually became more narrowly tailored, such as, “If you had the opportunity to become a stay at home parent, would this appeal to you? Describe the benefits or drawbacks of such a decision.” The interview questionnaire can be found in the Appendix although it should be noted that amendments to this guide could have been made during the interview if it was relevant to ask additional questions. Probe questions may differ based on interviewee responses in an effort to elicit additional information about the topic.

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were informed more fully of the premise of the study. I relayed information about the assertions of *Lean In* and popular media and explained my interest in speaking to college students to learn whether these issues have any bearing on their lives at this point in time. I then asked if the participant had any additional concerns about the interview or how their responses would be used. I also informed them that they could contact me in the future if they later had additional questions or concerns.

All of the interviews were later transcribed, coded, and analyzed. I was very grateful to receive the Gump Family Undergraduate Research Award which funded the audio recorder used in the interviews and also allowed me to outsource the transcription of 11 audio files. I transcribed the other 9 interviews. Also with the help of the Gump Family Undergraduate

Research Award, I purchased Dedoose coding software. I uploaded all 20 interviews and coded the interviewee's responses. The coding software allowed me to produce charts and statistics about the responses and more fully understand trends in the data. I was able to pull out relevant quotes as well as compare responses by gender and the working status of the respondents' parents.

It is important to note that, like all researchers, I possess certain qualities, perspectives, and life experiences that bias the research process. As a young female, it is possible that female respondents felt more comfortable answering my questions than did young males, who may have been uncomfortable discussing children and marriage one-on-one with a young woman. Additionally, I have the perspective of a female and self-proclaimed feminist who has always been ambitious and highly motivated to succeed. I will soon be employed full-time in the business sector and consequently the questions raised in these interviews hold great importance for me. I have discussed them with friends, family, and coworkers in an attempt to understand how ambitious women are able to reach the pinnacle of their careers while also having a family. While I did not reveal anything about myself to the interviewees, it is possible that these elements of researcher bias were present in the types of questions that were generated for the interview. Finally, in coding the responses of the interviewees, I had full discretion over the code descriptions and how the codes would be compared and analyzed. Again, it is possible that my perception of interviewee responses may differ from someone with a different background.

Chapter 4: Analysis

An analysis of the interviews revealed three themes that offer insight into the research questions at hand. First, nearly all interviewees revealed a high degree of parental influence. This influence was important not only with regard to the chosen career area of the participant, but also in relation to their expectations for a future family life. In the area of parental influence, participants' responses were differentiated by their parents' employment status (either having two working parents or a stay at home parent), and by gender. Second, the interviewees discussed the extent to which they expected or did not expect their career goals to change in the future as a result of having a family. These responses were highly dependent on gender, with males largely reporting that they did not expect their career goals to change while women reported that their career goals would or had *already* changed as a result of family considerations. Finally, the interviewees offered valuable insight regarding whether men and women make tradeoffs about work and family differently. Nearly all respondents reported that men and women do make these tradeoffs differently. Yet, it is their explanations of this phenomenon that prove interesting and ultimately show a significant divide in perspective between males and females. Thus, among a variety of interesting commentary from the interviews, we find these three themes: parental influence, changing career goals, and tradeoffs. They provide the most valuable insights into the types of beliefs and considerations that these young adults currently possess and which may influence their future career and familial endeavors. A common thread links these themes. College-age males and females exhibit very different expectations and perspectives regarding family and careers even before accepting their first full-time job. Males had given little thought to many of the questions raised in the interview, while females had considered many of them to some degree before. As a result, males

and females had very different concerns before entering the workforce, a trend that had already led to contrasting decision making processes and that will likely continue in the future.

I will begin by first noting some aspects of the interviews that may not be clear from simply reading quotes from the respondents. On the whole, females were much more verbose in their responses, expressing enthusiasm for the questions and interest in the conversation. Conversely, males often had to pause to think about the questions before responding because they were generally taken aback by the questions. For example, my first interview was with a male respondent who looked like a deer in the headlights when asked whether he had given any consideration to having a family in the future. After a few seconds of silence he replied, “Honestly, no. I don’t want to think that far ahead.” Contrast this with female responses to this question, which largely mimicked that of Anne who said, “I definitely want to have a family. I don't have any timeline, I guess, for when I want that to happen. Yes. But I do want to have a family down the line. Yes.” Additionally, consider the following conversation with Steve, whose response to the question is indicative of the other males that I interviewed.

Interviewer: “Do you think that your career goals have been at all influenced by the future expectation of a family?”

Steve: “No.”

Interviewer: “Not at all?”

Steve: (pauses) “No.”

Contrast Steve’s answer to this question with that of Mary, paying attention to the vast difference in specificity and length of response.

Interviewer: Do you think that your career goals have been influenced by the future expectation of a family?

Mary: Yes and no. I would say that probably in previous years, it's influenced it more so than it has now. And I think the reason for that is I'm pretty confident in generally what realm I'm supposed to be working in, or pursuing a career in. I think with that, just because it's so unstable, and starting a business requires a lot of time and a lot of effort, I don't think it's very fair to a husband or to children to try and do that simultaneously. Unless I do and it works out and that's fine. But I think that more so now, that has like, my career has influenced the timing of a family, rather than the timing of a family has influenced my career. Does that make sense? Does that answer your question?

The differences in prior thought and enthusiasm for the questions at hand were so great that as a researcher, I found myself looking forward to the female interviews. The male interviews were much more difficult, akin to pulling teeth. As will be explored throughout the analysis, men had simply not given much thought to the topics posed in the interviews and indeed did not seem overly enthusiastic about considering them for the first time. In contrast, females were eager to converse about these issues, as many had given previous thought to them and enjoyed the opportunity to speak with someone about their concerns.

Parental Influence

Overall, nearly every interviewee discussed childhood as a factor in his or her perceptions of what work-family life should look like. These experiences helped shape their ideas about a prospective decision to opt out or remain in the workforce. Eight participants had a stay at home parent throughout their childhood, or for a significant portion of their childhood. Twelve had two working parents throughout their childhood. When asked about the benefits of having

working parents, most interviewees who had two working parents described how their parents conveyed the importance of a strong work ethic. They felt that children with a stay at home parent might be sheltered from independent tasks and experiences or lack an understanding of personal finance and hard work. For instance, Joseph felt there were considerable drawbacks to having a stay at home parent such as, “being overprotective and not letting [their kids] kind of, experience life is a stupid way to put it, but kind of like try and fail instead of having someone constantly watching over them, micromanaging their life.” To Joseph, stay at home parenting was synonymous with giving children more attention, an action that he believed would actually be detrimental to their individual development.

Respondents with two working parents also expressed an admiration for their parents’ ability to balance their work life and their home life. For instance, William aspires to work in marine biology or research. His parents were both computer programmers and he explains that a benefit of having two working parents was that, “you get the experience and knowledge from two careers, they both built careers and had to make that path in life, um another benefit is they went through the experience of both working and trying to spend time with family. So you can use them as a resource when you’re trying to figure that out if that’s what you want to do.”

Although the majority of respondents with two working parents were open to the thought of having a stay at home parent, few saw themselves taking on such a role. In fact, while only 4 of 8 interviewees who had stay at home parents said that they themselves would not want to be a stay at home parent, 9 of 12 respondents with working parents said they would not want to be a stay at home parent. Many of the common explanations were that they felt they would be bored if they stayed at home or that they felt personally motivated to be a full time worker. Some described a need to be around adults rather than children all day in order to maintain a certain

level of sanity and happiness. Jessica expressed the belief that if you left the workforce, it was unlikely that you would return later saying, “I don't want to be one of those people who like take years off. Yeah I just, I think you need a few months. But I think if you take too much off, I don't think you'll go back to work. It's kind of like the whole if you don't go to grad school right after college you're probably not gonna go back.” This shows both a desire to remain in the workforce and an understanding of the pressures of work and family that could keep you out of the labor force for much longer than you originally intended. This is an important insight, as research shows that merely 74% of women who leave the labor force will rejoin it in any capacity, and only 40% will return in a full time capacity (Sandberg, 2013). Still, Jessica was the only respondent who mentioned this as a consideration.

Seven of the twelve interviewees with two working parents were male and six of these seven reported an aversion to becoming a stay at home parent later in life. Consider John, who plans to pursue a finance or consulting career. His response highlighted several of the trends that were evident throughout the interviews. When asked whether he would like to become a stay at home parent if given the option he replied, “Probably not to be honest um I don't know I just am not one of those people who likes to sit down and live super passively. I like to be challenged and you know work and stuff so... I guess it's kind of selfish but I don't think I could... One I cant really think about having kids right now and two shoot I guess someone's gotta stay home but uh... yeah I just couldn't see myself doing that.” Firstly, John envisions stay at home parenting as an easy, “passive” lifestyle that would not require a great deal of skill or intellectual stimulation. In contrast, while some female respondents also believed that stay at home parenting would lack intellectual stimulation, they were quick to note that they believed parenting was an important and difficult skill. Finally, John admits that he has a difficult time

envisioning himself as a parent at this stage in his life. He seems to understand at a rudimentary level that someone would have to take care of his children, but he is unwavering in his assertion that it would not be him. William gave a similar response saying, “Like I said I would get really bored... unless I’m feeling that I’m really directly having an impact on society, or doing something good that I think is worthwhile, not being very happy. And so that’s a very important part of my life, and my career choices so although spending time with your kids is really important and does have an impact on society it is a little too far off for me to consider it more important than having a job.” Like John, William does not view parenting as a task that would make him feel fulfilled and it is clear that at this stage in life, his career is his utmost priority. Both John and William’s undeveloped conception of having a family and unwavering commitment to remaining in the workforce differ from the female respondents. Although a few females specifically said that having a family was their first priority, nearly all reported concerns about being able to build a career that was conducive to family life. The female respondents had given much more consideration to having a family in the future, with several having thought extensively about it.

Even the females who reported an aversion to being a stay at home parent were much less certain about whether they would continue to remain in the workforce after having children. Such was the case with Serena, a business major who said, “...Right now I'm like, oh God, I could not do that all day, every day. But I mean when you have your own kids I'm sure it's a different story, so who knows.” While Serena has no desire to be a stay at home parent in this stage of her life, she acknowledges that this sentiment might change and expresses much less certainty about her preferences than John and William. This shows an important gender divide wherein males, especially those who had two working parents during childhood are likely to give

little consideration to being a stay at home parent in the future. In contrast females, even those who report not wanting to become a stay at home parent, expressed a belief that this preference may change in the future.

Interviewees who had two working parents reported few drawbacks. They discussed times when a parent was unable to watch a sports game or pick them up from school due to work constraints. They also discussed the negatives of not having a parent at home after school or on days off from school. On the whole, while they acknowledged these constraints, they did not disclose any negative feelings associated with such an experience.

In contrast, respondents who had a stay at home parent expressed a belief that the children of working parents did not get as much attention from their parents. They also felt that these children had to fend for themselves at a younger age, learning responsibility more quickly and having a less expansive support system at home. A common refrain was that having a stay at home parent allowed for more flexibility since a parent was available if some need on the part of the child were to arise. Jackie presented an interesting dichotomy, as she is a high achieving and driven young woman whose three siblings and father are all doctors. She is also preparing to enter the medical field. Jackie noted the discrepancy between her desire to continue working as a doctor after having children and her positive experience having a stay at home mom. Jackie explains, "I'm sitting here saying I'm gonna have this awesome career but it was really awesome to have my mom at home. It was just a huge support system like if you forget your lunch- ok sweet I can call mom and she'll bring it- you forget your cleats for soccer practice mom can bring it." She contrasts this experience with that of her friends who did not have a stay at home mom, saying "It kinda sucked to be them because a lot of our parents were stay at home moms and I remember this one girl and it really sucked for her because any time she forget something it

was like ok well I don't know what she's gonna do I guess she's not gonna start the next game because she didn't practice today because she didn't bring her stuff and her mom can't bring it. And she had babysitters all the time... it was kind of weird going over to her house with the babysitter there." Jackie's description shows that she and the other children almost felt sorry for their peers who did not have a stay at home parent and even seems to suggest that this status caused others to not want to spend time at the home of such children. She saw her mother's ability to bring her the things she forgot as a positive rather than a negative aspect of her development. In contrast, the children of working parents tended to view this type of dependency as a drawback for the child, who would not be developing personal responsibility.

All respondents who had a stay at home parent reported having a positive experience, although a few noted that they felt closer to their mother because of the long hours worked by their fathers. For instance, Nate's Dad opened his own business when Nate was a child. Nate explained, "I wasn't close to my dad because he was always working. Now I'm actually closer to my dad than my mom. We text all the time and talk. But I mean, since you don't see [the working parent] as often you don't know them as well as the parent who stays home." These respondents were mostly male and reported a desire for their children to have more equal exposure to both parents. Still, this sentiment was not accompanied by distaste for having one parent who chooses to stay at home. Dan is in the process of applying to medical school and plans to be a doctor. These conflicting ideas are evident in his explanation of how he would make a decision to opt out or remain in the workforce, "I'm thinking about... in a lot of families it's only one parent who does the main raising of the kids and in that case, you have to work, and you're probably working a lot harder in that situation. In which case, I guess you probably wouldn't get to spend as much time with the kids, but at the same time, it's kind of like you have to do that to take care of the

kid.” These juxtaposing ideas were present in several male responses, as it was important to them to monetarily provide for their families. Although they had a desire to spend time with their children, this did not appear to be strong enough to merit leaving the work force to do so.

Several interviewees who had a stay at home parent acknowledged that there might be benefits to having two working parents, such as increased income for the family, greater learned independence on the part of the child, and spending a more equal amount of time with both parents. Two respondents with stay at home moms were unable to articulate any drawbacks to having a stay at home parent. Almost all respondents from both groups reported concern over sending their children to daycare or finding responsible childcare in the event that both parents worked.

Overall, most respondents recognized both benefits and drawbacks to having working parents or a stay at home parent. However, the working status of their own parents seemed to affect their personal opinions about the impact on children and whether they themselves would consider opting out of the workforce. Respondents who were raised by two working parents were more likely to report an aversion to becoming a stay at home parent later in life, especially if they were male. This appears to be related to the importance males placed on financially providing for their families, even if this meant spending less time with their children. Female respondents with both stay at home parents and working parents appeared more conflicted about the decision, sharing Jackie’s belief that children could benefit from having a stay at home parent, but feeling a personal desire to remain in the workforce. All respondents used personal examples from their childhood to evidence their opinions about the benefits or drawbacks of opting out of the workforce. This reveals that these early childhood experiences continue to influence the respondents’ perspective on these issues and may play a role in any future

decisions to remain in or opt out of the workforce. Further, the gender divide regarding previous thought about having children and whether to be a stay at home parent show that females are at least somewhat concerned with these issues at this stage of life, while males are not. As we will see, this difference does not wait until the birth of a child to have implications, but rather begins as early as college, when women begin altering their career paths based on these considerations.

Changing Career Goals

Although the participants have yet to actually begin working a full-time, year-round job, they were still able to envision how their career goals might change as a result of having a family. A number of female respondents even reported that their career goals had already been changed by their expectation to have a family in the future. Consider Jackie, who as previously mentioned is planning to pursue medical school. She opted to accept a job offer with Teach for America as a 2-year stopgap before enrollment. Jackie discusses the considerations of females in the medical field saying, “I think like you have to make certain um like cutbacks so, let’s just say- I don’t think I am but- like smart enough to be a surgeon and I was like I’m gonna be a surgeon and I love surgery you know I think women have to be like aright instead of doing that because I want to have a family too I’m gonna do like OBGYN which is a little bit of surgery but it’s... a little bit more flexibility to have a family.” Jackie mentions the importance of finding a medical specialization that is family-friendly several times in the interview, explaining, “I’m interested in the very mom-friendly fields like ER medicine I’m interested in and [pediatrics] um... that kind of stuff.” It was clear from her interview that I was raising questions about family and career that she had already given serious thought to.

Megan is another female participant planning to work in the medical field. Megan was the only of the interviewees who is currently married and although she is only 22, Megan is

already enrolled in UNC's nursing school. When asked whether her career goals have been influenced by the expectation to have a family in the future, Megan replied, "I had considered doing the medical route and going to med school and when I was getting serious with my husband- we were in high school- and we were planning out a future and I realized that my dad [a doctor]... the kids who live with him never see him because he's always in the OR and so I was like I don't think that's a really conducive environment for having kids, at least for me because I want to be heavily involved. So I decided that nursing was a better avenue." For Megan, family considerations were weighing on her mind as early as high school, and consequently, she went ahead and changed her career goals to suit those expectations.

It is interesting that Jackie and Megan mention OBGYN and nursing as mom-friendly fields. Certainly, OBGYN can involve irregular hours and likewise nursing is known to have long shifts, with night workers often working through the night and sleeping during the day. It is possible that Jackie and Megan believe that these are the best options of many poor options for females who desire a family and also aspire to work in the medical profession. However, it may also be the case that Jackie, Megan, and other college seniors have a difficult time truly understanding the demands of various career areas. This makes it even more dangerous for women to preemptively choose fields that they perceive to be mom-friendly, as they risk being misguided in their assessments.

In contrast, Dan is a male who will also be pursuing medical school. Unlike Jackie, he is not taking a gap year beforehand and will be immediately enrolling in medical school if he is accepted. When asked whether he could see his career goals changing as a result of having a family, Dan replied "Hopefully by the time that happened, I would be established as a doctor. Like everything goes to plan and then I don't think it would really change at that point. I think I'd

keep doing what I was doing.” For Dan, being established as a doctor automatically means being in a good position to have a family. He cannot envision how such a career would have negative consequences for his family life. Yet for Jackie, fulfilling her dream as a doctor means an onslaught of worries about the ability to spend time with a family. For both Jackie and Megan, several concentrations of the medical field were ruled out at an early stage because of a perception that they are not family friendly.

Yet it is not only females in the medical field who reported already being influenced by the thought of having a family in the future. Jessica is a Peace, War, and Defense major who aspires to work for the government. Yet, she also reported a desire to open her own bakery in the future. She discusses how the expectation of a family plays into these conflicting career goals saying, “...Originally... I kind of wanted to do counter-terrorism and all this. The more that I have looked into like the different departments and the jobs, it's like you have to travel, you have to move. And I'm like well if I do have a family, that's why I kind of like the idea of doing something like this for ten years. And by the time the ten years are up, hopefully I'm married and by then, you know, having kids and so I can- when I do have a bakery it's easier to have a family.” For Jessica, working for the government and having a family cannot mesh. She feels that she should pursue her aspirations to work in government, but only for 10 years, or before getting married and having children. She has already decided that at that point she should look for a career alternative such as opening a bakery, which she believes would be more conducive to having a family. Interestingly, she does not consider that an entrepreneurial venture such as this might be equally as time consuming as working for the government.

Overall, the female respondents were split evenly with five reporting that their career goals have already or will be changed by having a family in the future and five reporting that

they have not. Note that the participants were asked whether they expected their career goals to change in the future, as a result of having a family. However, on their own, five females explained ways that their career goals have *already* been influenced by this expectation. In addition, even among the females who articulated that their career goals had not yet changed, several contradicted this sentiment in other areas of their interviews. For instance, Anne is planning to enroll in graduate school so that she can become a speech therapist or speech pathologist. Yet, she also has a passion for music and therefore will be taking a gap year during which time she plans to play music and save money for graduate school. She initially said that the expectation to have a family in the future has been in the back of her mind but has not been the driving force behind her career goals. However, when asked to describe her dream job, Anne replied, “I guess my goal, my dream, has always been to do music, and that's something that I plan to do a little bit next year, but I definitely think that the thought of being able to have a family maybe has factored into that pursuit being a little bit diminished, I guess, just because it's—music isn't a very stable lifestyle, and you're traveling a lot, touring and that kind of thing. So, I would say my desire to have a family would probably outweigh wanting to do something that did not allow me to be at home.” Anne, like many of the female respondents, finds her dream job in conflict with her desire to have a family in the future. Anne herself may not be fully aware of this conflict or its impact on her career goals, as evidenced by her belief that her familial desires were not a major factor in her decisions. Based on the data, it appears that over half of the female participants’ career goals have been somewhat altered by their expectation to have a family in the future. Taking a holistic look at the question responses, it appears that some participants were more aware of this influence than others.

In contrast, only one male, Joseph, reported that his career goals had already been influenced by the future expectation to have a family. Joseph will be interning with an investment bank this summer and then returning to work for them full time after completing his Masters in Accounting at UNC. He acknowledged the long hours and travel involved with investment banking but believed that these factors would lessen down the road, around the time that he would want to start a family. When asked whether his career goals have been influenced by an expectation to have a family in the future, he replied, "I would say so, yeah. Definitely I would say, I enjoy what I'm going to do but it will also put me in a place where five or six years down the road I don't have to work a ton and can be with the family." Joseph believed that this career area would require a huge initial investment of time and travel but would later become a flexible and stable job that would allow him to spend time with a family.

Answers from the other nine respondents were highly variable. Two admitted to having never given any prior thought to having a family, with one of these explaining that he did not believe he wanted to have a family in the future. Two others responded to the question with a simple "no" and did not elaborate as to why they did not believe their career goals would change. Of the remaining five, most reported that any future career changes would be related to a need to make more money for a family, although most were uncertain of how this would play out. Consider Eric, who throughout his interview expressed a high degree of parental influence. He noted several times that his parents are very materialistic while he himself is not. He says, "I have always been pressured by my dad. You want to be an orthopedic surgeon, make big bucks, be able to support a family, no problem. Once I changed that, started changing, saying I want to do a [Physician's Assistant], big old dentist dad started having his influence, like you can't support a family on that income, blah, blah, blah. So yeah, of course that's important in the whole

decision.” Although Eric felt pressured to pursue a career that would make more money for a family and said that his career goals had been changed by this pressure, the rest of his interview did not reflect this. Eric was largely undecided about his future job plans but still leaning heavily toward the [Physician Assistant] track. Likewise, the other 4 respondents who felt that their career goals *might* change were unable to articulate specific ways that this would occur. In addition, their answers to other related interview questions such as their chosen career path showed that their goals were largely stable and that they had given little or no prior thought to the way these goals might change if they were to have a family.

At the same time, the majority of male respondents, eight of ten, said that they planned to have a family in the future. One male did not want a family and one male had not given any prior thought to whether he would like to have a family but later said he would. Four of the nine males who desired a family said that they would like to take time off work after having a child, but all seemed uncertain, saying that it would be “a nice thing to do” or that it would be contingent on whether such an option were “possible.” Two others said their decision would depend on job situations. Nate was the only male who expressed consideration for his wife’s preferences saying, “It depends on what my wife wants to do. Like if she wants to work then I want to help as much as possible and take time off so we can split duties. But if she wants to stay at home then that's fine with me too.” The remaining three males said that they did not anticipate taking time off work after having a child. Eric explained, “Personally, I think I'll have my wife take care of all that, and I'll keep making the bread.” Thus, in his mind the responsibility to take time off work fell squarely on the wife, while the responsibility to make money and provide for a family rested with the husband. The others did not provide an explanation for their response.

Thus, although the majority of men reported a desire for children, they did not see this corresponding with a need to take time off work after their birth.

Of the females interviewed, *all* reported wanting to have a family in the future and taking maternity leave after having a child. The respondents believed that their maternity leave would average around three months. Five women said that they would take this maternity leave and then return to work. Two of these five women expressed an interest in becoming a stay at home mother but ultimately decided they would not. For example Megan, who decided to pursue nursing due to its family-friendly reputation said, “I grew up during most of my life in a single parent household so working was really instilled in my mind as something a mom should do because my mom did it. And that’s how I’ve always viewed it. So for me it would be really hard not to work. Although it would be nice to be a housewife I don’t think I could do it.” She later reiterated that in nursing it is common to only work 3 days a week, which she thought would be helpful in terms of raising kids.

Among the remaining five women, three said they would like to take anywhere from six months to a year off before returning to work, and two said that they would remain at home with their child for over a year if it were financially possible. One respondent, Mary, hopes to start her own for-profit social venture. She worked in Nepal for a human trafficking nonprofit last summer and hopes to be accepted into Venture for America so that she can gain more real world experience before starting her own company. Considering this, it seemed unlikely that she would envision taking much time off work after having children. However, she responded to the question saying, “I personally would have a preference to raise my child being a stay-at-home parent through the age of four maybe, three or four. But if that's impossible, I don't think that it's going to be detrimental to my kid's upbringing.” Mary is aware that certain factors might make it

impossible for her to become a stay at home mom and she acknowledges that this would not necessarily impact her child in a negative way. However, she would still prefer to stay home if given the option. This is important, since Mary's demographics as a college educated woman suggest that she may already be positioning herself to become one of the financially successful, highly educated women who choose to "opt out" of the workforce when given the chance. Nearly half of the women in this study hoped to take roughly a year or more off work after having children. As previously mentioned, statistics show that women's earnings decrease by about 20% after just one year out of the workforce and that many professional women do not return to work full time if they leave (Sandberg, 2013).

On the whole, female participants believed that their career goals would change, often citing job-related factors such as long hours, travel, or time off work in their explanations. Many were aware of a conflict between career goals and family goals at an early stage and have already witnessed an impact on their chosen career path. Of the females that believed their career goals had remained unchanged, a few contradicted this sentiment in other areas of their interviews. This was both articulated by the participants and reinforced by their responses to questions such as when they were asked them to describe their "dream job." For the female respondents, it was obvious that having a child would necessitate taking a certain amount of time off work. Half even hoped to take additional time after maternity leave and none mentioned a concern that their salaries might be reduced after returning to work.

It was clear that the male responses to questions about changing career goals and family considerations were much less developed than the females'. The female interviewees had all given significant prior thought to how their chosen career path would affect their ability to have a family. Yet, some of the males had not yet given thought to having a family in the first place.

Nearly all of the males who decided that they would like to have a family did not feel that their career goals to date had been influenced by this desire. A few reported that their career goals might change in the future in order to make more money to provide for a family. Although about half hoped to take time of work after having a child, most were uncertain and a few did not plan to take any time off.

There is little research that has been conducted with college students regarding questions around career and family expectations. Most of the literature focuses on adults who have grappled with the decision to leave the workforce after having children. This research has shown that unlike men, women are likely to be confronted and conflicted over such a decision. My study indicates that as early as college, women are being significantly influenced by family considerations. Some have already altered their career path as a result and others are anticipating tradeoffs in the future. Thus, it may not be practical to address the gender leadership gap without giving consideration to the thought processes that influence women far before they have husbands or children. If women are limiting themselves to “family friendly” majors and career paths in college while men have barely given thought to a family, these factors may actually represent the roots of a gender leadership gap that becomes manifest later in life.

Tradeoffs

Nearly all interviewees believed that people make tradeoffs about work and family differently based on their gender. Males described men almost exclusively as “providers” while they described women as more emotional, caring, willing to make sacrifices, and child centered. They also felt that females were better at raising and staying home with children than their male counterparts. Consider several quotes highlighting this trend:

“Women I think are filled with characteristics that make them better at raising kids and dads ... I mean I mentioned [are] kind of like a provider”, “I’d say women in general are typically more um caring and more... how do you say motherly... because they’re women...” -Liam

“Women are definitely more, as far as my family, my mom is very child based, making sure her kids are happy, their well-being is all taken care of. The dad, my dad is more so the welfare of the entire family, and that everything is taken care of. We have what we need. But I feel like the female figure is more on the emotional side.” -Eric

“I would say women want to be home with their kids for sure...” -Joseph

“I think for my family it’s been the same trend my aunt and uncle did the same thing, my grandparents did the same thing. So I dunno the difference is the father in my case works more and the mother stays at home more.” -William

These statements showcase how gender stereotypes can be passed from one generation to the next, through the working status of their own parents or that of other family members. Consider that when asked whether it was preferable for the mother or father to stay at home, Joseph replied, “I think the mom personally...that’s just the way I’ve been raised. But for no particular concrete reason.” Although he believes that mothers want to stay home with their children and should be the ones who take on this role, he is unable to articulate why he feels this way, other than because of his own familial experiences.

Other responses simply propagated female qualities without necessarily providing a context for how they have determined such traits to be true. It is important to note that males were quick to say that men and women make tradeoffs differently; however they struggled to explain why this was the case. Many men tried to word their answers carefully, as if to ensure

that they were politically correct in their responses. They often paused or qualified their statements by saying that they weren't really sure about their answers. One male, Nate, seemed to dismiss the question altogether, feeling that his status as a male meant he was removed from having any insight into these kinds of questions. He responded to the question by saying,

Nate: "Are you looking for the answer of patriarchy and . . .?"

Interviewer: "I don't know, I'm just curious about what you think."

Nate: "I don't know, I've always grown up . . . a lot of the girls I actually am friends with and I've met really want to have stay at home roles. On one end you want to think maybe that's because that's the way our society is. But on the flip side I feel like a lot of these girls really, really would enjoy doing that. And they actually talk about it all the time, "I want to be a stay at home mom," and that kind of thing. So I think that's a question better for a girl, not for me. So, I don't know."

Nate's response is indicative of a larger societal trend, as men largely avoid the dialogue around the "opt out" revolution and women in the workforce. Nate was aware that questions about gender roles and tradeoffs could elicit a conversation about patriarchy and wanted to know whether that was the direction of the conversation before he continued. It is possible that men are largely missing from the dialogue of women in the workforce for reasons seen in our interview sample. Men are so careful not to say anything controversial that they find it hard to articulate their opinions. The issue at hand does not directly affect them so they feel these are better issues for women to resolve. The problem is that with women still struggling to reach top leadership positions in nearly every career area, men must be a part of the conversation. They hold positions of power and leadership in society and if women are to break through a leadership

glass ceiling, they need informed males to understand the issues at play and help challenge the status quo.

A few females offered responses somewhat similar to those given by the males, a belief that women have a preference for being at home or spending more time with children and that those qualities influence them to make more tradeoffs than men. However, the majority of women acknowledged these gender expectations as a historic societal trend while expressing hopefulness that it is shifting. Some respondents answered that they have friends who had a stay at home dad or that they've seen examples of stay at home dads in the media. Others expressed a hope that more men would see this as a viable and acceptable role in the future. Think back to the way male respondents phrased a female's decision to leave the workforce for family reasons. They viewed it as something women *wanted* to do and indeed, were innately predisposed towards. Yet, when women described this trend, they often used the word "sacrifice" in their description, as with a respondent who said "women a lot of times they are sacrificing the career goals and for men I feel like they can pretty much do whatever they want to do career wise." While men seemed to believe that women happily leave the workforce to care for children, women used an entirely contradictory descriptor to explain the trend, saying that women are forced to consider a decision that men are rarely faced with. This seems to demonstrate a large gender gap between men and women with regard to how these decisions are perceived.

John offers a prime example of how these issues are perceived differently based on gender. Consider the exchange that occurred after I asked whether it was preferable for the mom or dad to become a stay at home parent.

John: "Yeah so my mom had a pretty good job before she had me. She quit."

Interviewer: "She quit because she had you?"

John: “Yeah yeah yeah she quit to stay home. But that was her choice and I think it’s probably better but it depends on the situation.”

Note how John says that his mom’s decision to leave her good job and stay home was “her choice.” This is an example of a widespread sentiment pointed out in chapter two. Men often perceive a female’s decision to opt out of the workforce as a choice, something that they wanted to do. However, in reality, it is often the result of a series of difficult decisions, tradeoffs, and as explained by our female respondent’s, sacrifices. Defining the decision as a personal choice ignores the larger issues at play and forgets that husbands, families, and company policies all have a role to play in whether a woman feels that she has truly chosen her path or that she was left with no alternatives.

Several female respondents communicated a sense of frustration with societal expectations that are based on gender. Consider Jackie, the respondent who plans to pursue medical school after taking a gap year and working with Teach for America. She gave an immediate and impassioned answer to the question saying,

“I think about this all the time... If I was a dude there would be no question as to what I would be doing. I probably wouldn’t even take two years off. I’d probably go straight into medical school and be like oh it’s fine I’m a dude and I’ll meet somebody and I don’t ever have to take off work so no it sucks, it totally sucks being a- I think it’s completely different. Um... (laughs) sorry that was an impassioned answer. But I told somebody this morning I was like if I was a dude this decision would be easy.”

Other women shared this sentiment. They acknowledged that men face a different type of social pressure to be a breadwinner for the family, but maintained that it was unfair that decisions about sacrificing work for family still fall disproportionately on women.

Serena is a female business major who has recently accepted a full-time position in the banking industry. During her interview, she described the application process in the banking and consulting world, saying that many companies tried to portray themselves as woman-friendly. She said that the process made her acutely aware of her status as a “woman in a male-dominated industry.” While Serena sometimes felt uncomfortable being given extra attention by companies who were afraid she did not perceive them as female-friendly, other firms had the opposite effect, making her feel that as a woman, she was not welcome in the company. These are the types of issues that Sheryl Sandberg spends much of her book discussing. Sandberg feels that women in corporate America must overcome unique obstacles that are put in their path by virtue of their gender. In her response to the question about tradeoffs, Serena expresses a belief that these decisions differ based on industry. She relays her experiences in the business world saying,

“I think there's sort of like a trend towards women going into things like accounting and things with, you know, set hours. Things that they can like plan ahead, plan for that kind of thing. Whereas I think there's a trend towards men of going for, you know, the highest paying job. They're gonna be the ones going for, at least within my major, going for the investment banking jobs where like you could be working all night. You could like be working Saturdays... and I think one reason for that trend is because women are thinking of that type of thing.”

Serena explains her belief that women are influenced by factors such as working late hours and on the weekend, whereas men are not. Echoing a major element of Sandberg’s book, Serena suggests that as early as college, female business students are thinking of the impact certain industries will have on their personal life. They desire a family in the future and because

of this, gravitate toward industries where spending time with a family is feasible. Yet, Serena later adds a caveat to this trend, saying that compared with years past, a larger number of women are pushing thoughts of family life to the side in order to pursue their career ambitions. At the same time, she said she knows men who have entered into a serious romantic relationship in college and consequently chosen to avoid seeking a job in an industry where personal time is minimal.

Both men and women in the survey agreed that tradeoff decisions differ based on gender, however they explained this trend differently. Men largely attributed it to innate qualities of women that made them desire to take time off work and care for children. In contrast, while women recognized that females often trade work for family responsibilities, they viewed this choice as a “sacrifice” rather than something they were innately predisposed towards. Most women expressed optimism that this trend would change and more males would begin shouldering responsibility for work-family tradeoffs. In addition, as evidenced by Serena’s comments and Sandberg’s book, work expectations largely differ based on industry, with women in large business corporations facing additional work-family pressures.

Literature on this subject echoes that of the interviews. Social norms and historic gender roles often cause women to feel greater pressure to step back from their careers in order to focus on their families. While this trend is widely acknowledged, women do not necessarily agree on whether it should change. Think back to Anne-Marie Slaughter’s article in *The Atlantic*, which asserts that women cannot be both good mothers and top professionals. Slaughter uses her own experiences working in a top position of the US State Department to evidence her claims. Yet, authors such as Sandberg counter that with help from society and leaders in the workforce, women will be able to have a family without feeling the need to abandon or scale back their

careers. What my research indicates is that males hold an especially provincial view of female qualities and expectations. These views are largely dependent on their own childhood experiences and parental influence. While some females share similar beliefs, the majority held a worldview that is much more progressive than their male counterparts. Thus, while current literature often becomes a debate between women, it is equally important to include men in the conversation, as their expectations and influence weighs heavily on society. Any societal progress will almost certainly have to be accompanied by a changing world view on the part of men, one which understands women as having an innate desire for a successful career just as much as any desire for children.

Conversation around these issues need not focus solely on professionals at the peak of their careers or who are beginning a family. Instead, it should be recognized that as early as college, major differences emerge among men and women, with women being unduly influenced by questions about their future family life and career. They may track themselves out of certain jobs or responsibilities as a result, while men continue unhindered by thoughts of how their decisions will affect a family down the road. It is this attention to self-limiting decisions on the part of women that could change their choices both now and in the future. Likewise, men, who will continue to hold the majority of power positions for the foreseeable future, must become aware of the way that women are thinking about these issues, rather than propagating stereotypes about females who desire to leave the workforce.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Although female workforce participation is drastically different today than 100 years ago, women have yet to reach parity with their male counterparts. This is especially true with regard to reaching top leadership positions. Research shows that women make up less than 3% of Fortune 500 CEO's and less than 7% of Executive Officer top earning positions ("Targeting Inequality: The," 2010). Although women are earning bachelors and advanced degrees at much higher rates than men, they rarely advance to the top of their career fields. Even in education, where females make up 75% of the teaching force, only 18% advance to become superintendents of a school district (Mitchell and Hoff, 2011). Numerous authors, professionals, and researchers have attempted to explain this phenomenon and their explanations do not always coincide. Some attribute the gap to business practices that largely cater to male employees, for example not offering an advanced position to a woman who has (or wants) children. Others argue that women limit themselves by choosing to opt out of the workforce or shying away from promotions that they are qualified for. At the same time, some researchers conclude that poor policies such as limited paid maternity leave and nonexistent paternity leave contribute to a culture wherein childcare responsibilities fall upon the mother, who is left to choose between her children and her career.

Most research on these issues falls into two categories: it is conducted with women who have left successful careers in order to raise children or it focuses on female underrepresentation in various fields and the policies and practices that may be barring their advancement. Little research is conducted *before* women and men enter the workforce, as it is often concluded that professional advancement and childcare issues do not become influential until marriage and family planning takes place. My goal was to talk with seniors at a prestigious public university

to discover what factors had influenced their career decisions thus far, and what they hypothesized their future career and family life to look like. Three themes stood out as important to the research questions at hand. These were the interviewee's responses to questions regarding parental influence (specifically the working status of their own mother), changing career goals, and expectations for making tradeoffs in the future. Present in each of these themes was a clear divide between the way males and females think about these issues.

In concurrence with other research, the participants were more likely to have a favorable view of working mothers if their own mother was employed during their childhood. In fact, the working status of their parents was a large factor for nearly all of the participants I interviewed. Most used examples from their own childhood to describe what they hoped their future work and family life would look like. This implies that as young adults contemplate their future, they consider the actions of their parents and reflect on their experiences as a child. They may look to their own parents for guidance and their parents will be influenced by their own experiences raising children and choosing to pursue or leave their careers. The participant responses indicate that females are particularly conflicted over these questions and may benefit from mothers who have successfully balanced both career and family. At the same time, males felt pressure to provide financially for their families while also hoping to spend adequate time with their children. Parents who refrain from placing financial pressures on their sons and who model work-life balance may help shift the current paradigm away from one in which it is considered acceptable for males to prioritize familial income over time with family. Males were also more likely to report a strong aversion to becoming a stay at home parent in the future, believing it would be boring or that they felt motivated to participate in the workforce. While several females also articulated that they would not want to become a stay at home parent later in life,

they expressed concerns such as fear that they would not return to the workforce if they left or the belief that their current preferences might need to be altered after actually having children.

There is a dearth of research pertaining to whether family considerations influence males and females at the college level. Indeed, the male responses largely confirm what many researchers suspect- young adults in college have yet to see their career goals change due to a desire to have a family in the future. In fact, many have trouble imagining that their career goals might change even after having children. However, the female responses of this study indicate that women actually do consider these questions in college and a surprising number change their career goals to accommodate their expectations. Half of the females interviewed indicated that their chosen career path had been influenced by the desire to have a family in the future. This is surprising considering that only one of those females mentioned currently being in a romantic relationship, and therefore it can be presumed that it will be several years before these women actually have a family of their own. Thus, before beginning their first job or becoming involved in a serious relationship, women are making significant decisions based on their desire to have a family. It is a mistake for researchers to continue ignoring this group in favor of adults who are in the midst of promotions and having families. Clearly, there is more to be learned from these females, whose collegiate decisions may play a large role in the current gender leadership gap.

There is a large body of research documenting the way that females make tradeoffs between work and family. Most research is concerned with how women and men divide their time, often asking how much time they spend doing housework, caring for children, working, or pursuing their own hobbies. The results of this research consistently indicate that females spend a much larger portion of their time on housework and childcare than their male counterparts. Some research delves into why this is the case, often discovering that the husband's job is

considered to be more intense or is the primary income for the family, and thus the wives spend more time caring for the home and children. My research did not necessarily echo those results. Although all respondents agreed that males and females make tradeoffs differently, they had different views on why this was the case.

Males largely viewed females as having a stronger, innate desire to spend more time with children, thus causing them to happily trade career advancement for time at home. However, females viewed the decision to work less as a “sacrifice” that women are often faced with. They expressed a desire for gender expectations to change so that more men felt a responsibility to balance familial responsibilities. Unlike research conducted with older respondents, my study revealed a stark difference between the way women and men think about tradeoffs. Women expressed frustration with current societal expectations, while men seemed to believe that women were happy with the status quo. Women appeared relatively comfortable explaining their opinions on these issues, while men were more uncertain of how to phrase their responses. It is possible that after marrying and having a family, tradeoffs seem more natural and pragmatic. Thus, while males and females recognize that the latter often makes more tradeoffs, they rationalize this occurrence through practical explanations such as job demands and financial concerns. This may result from cognitive dissonance, or a need to justify engaging in a behavior that you do not necessarily believe is right. For instance, many adult women may agree that females should not be expected to make more tradeoffs, yet they themselves make more tradeoffs than their spouse. To preserve their self-concept, they must justify their behavior, in this case with explanations about monetary stability and job flexibility, which may or may not be the fundamental reasons behind their decisions. Although unaccompanied by firsthand

experience, college students may provide a raw, unfiltered explanation of tradeoff differences and how they are maintained.

Limitations

The number of respondents and the fact that they were all chosen from one university limits the scope of the study. It cannot be presumed that these results would be replicated in other geographic areas or with a higher number of participants. North Carolina itself is a unique state, where for many years Democrats dominated state politics, even though the majority of the state's residents were socially conservative. Consider also that nationally the median age of marriage is 27. Yet, in North Carolina it is 25.7 (LiveScience Staff, 2013). This suggests that residents of North Carolina may hold views about marital and family life that are different in other states such as Massachusetts, where the median age of marriage is 28.5. This is just one example of how results of a study such as this may differ from one state to the next. Still, the questions raised are important no matter where a university is located. Nearly all females will eventually face these decisions about career and family. My study suggests that many women will begin thinking about these issues as early as college, where they will either purposefully or unconsciously make important life decisions based on their perceptions.

Suggestions for further research

As a result of both my findings and the limitations of this study, I recommend that future research be conducted among diverse populations of college students with the purpose of discovering how males and females think about career and family, and how those views have influenced the choices they have made or plan to make in the future. In addition, longitudinal studies could give greater insight into how these early perceptions translate into decision-making processes later in life. Such studies could follow males and females from college through the

birth of their first child. This would likely be a 10-15 year time period or shorter. This would allow researchers to determine how views change over time and whether or not these early opinions on career and family are apt to change or influence the participant through adulthood. Finally, it is important for future research to determine the types of interventions that could change this trend, helping males and females better understand how one another conceptualize these issues, and importantly, encouraging females to pursue their dreams without fear that such a decision would jeopardize their hope for a family. This would involve experimental interventions both in college and in the workforce. For example, female first-year business majors could be sorted into a control and an experimental group. Throughout their time in college, the experimental group would attend guest lectures with successful businesswomen and engage in group discussions about work-life balance in their chosen career areas. After four years, interviews or surveys could help researchers discover whether these interventions helped females become pursue their early career aspirations or feel more confident about their future as a female in the business sector. Importantly, this and other experimental interventions that encourage females to pursue lofty goals must be accompanied by a truthful assurance that such a decision will not haunt them later in life.

Policy Recommendations

For policymakers, the gender leadership gap is an issue that cannot wait decades to be addressed. The labor force needs high achieving, driven women who will rise to the peak of their careers. With every woman who leaves the workforce in the midst of that journey, we lose great leaders who keep their respective occupations from moving forward. Research has already shown that US women are earning both bachelors and masters degrees at higher rates than men. Policymakers must work to ensure that this investment results in a major contribution to the

nation's labor force. Additionally, early conceptions of career and family are extremely important later in life with regard to marital happiness. Husbands and wives who are unable to reach agreement about childcare concerns or who lack flexibility in the workplace may run a higher risk of having marital discord leading to divorce. Consider that nearly 50% of all marriages end in divorce and that the top two reported reasons for divorce are poor communication and finances (Daily Infographic, 2013). This shows that the results of my study have major implications, considering that a main finding was that men and women in college hold very different understandings of one another and opinions about what they want their future career and family to look like. Further, professional women who leave the workforce suffer a significant pay cut if they return a few years down the road. With the rate of divorce remaining so high, it is extremely important to encourage women to maintain their financial independence so that down the road they do not find themselves divorced with children and looking for a job. Like most complex problems, there is no easy solution. Instead, there are a variety of strategies that all play a critical role in the process.

There are a number of changes that must be made at the organizational level, spearheaded by businesses, corporations, and nonprofit entities and supported by government incentives. For instance, organizations should offer gender diversity training programs that invite conversations between men and women. This could include discussions about work-life balance, societal expectations, and workplace pressures. The goal would be to give voice to the challenges facing professionals while also breaking down barriers between men and women when it comes to understanding these issues. As seen in this study, there is a large divide between men and women at an early age when it comes to understanding one another. The men in our study reported feeling that women innately desire to be home with children and are better at caring for

children than men. Instead, women view the decision to leave work as a sacrifice. This discrepancy alone can cause huge problems both in the workforce and at home if it is not openly addressed. Thus, gender diversity trainings could allow these differences to be recognized while giving males and females the chance to explore the issues at play. Policymakers could offer tax breaks or grants to organizations that offer these resources to their employees and who demonstrate that their employees are benefitting from participation. Given the economic troubles of the United States, working these types of financial incentives into a state or federal budget could be difficult. Yet, they would be an important long-term investment in retaining the nation's top female employees.

While policymakers cannot change the attitudes and parenting decisions of adults, they can influence the options available to them. It is possible that by changing the structure of the workplace we could change the sociocultural expectations for child rearing. This has already occurred in some companies, such as SAS Institute, which offers on-site childcare for only \$410 per month (CNN Money, 2013). On-site childcare provides benefits not only for employees but for the business as well. Employees who know their child is well cared for can focus better during the workday and will likely feel that they are part of a more humanized workplace. Further, a study conducted at Union Bank in Los Angeles found that users of its on-site childcare center were absent 1.7 days less than the control group and had turnover rates of 2.2% versus 9.5% in the control group and 18% throughout the bank (Canfield, 1996). Thus, giving parents a convenient, trustworthy, and affordable option for childcare not only allows employees to remain in the workforce with greater peace of mind, but also has significant benefits for the companies they work for. If this practice were more widespread, young females would likely have less apprehension about choosing a career that would be incompatible with childcare. This is

especially true for women aspiring to enter fields such as investment banking and consulting that are notorious for long hours at the office. Certainly, in these cases the children would not remain in the on-site childcare until late at night, however their presence in the building for a large portion of the day would likely be a comfort to working parents. Again, policymakers could incentivize businesses to invest in on-site childcare by providing grants to start-up these centers or tax breaks to those who already have them. Many companies that offer on-site childcare rank among the best companies to work for. Policymakers could also pay greater attention to these measures of employee satisfaction when making grant or tax break decisions.

There must also be progress in an area that has plagued the US for decades- the pay gap. On average, women continue to earn 77 cents on the dollar when compared to men. This figure fluctuates based on age, education, and job area. Interestingly, the financial services sector has the highest wage discrimination, with women earning 70 cents for every dollar a man makes. Among those with a high school degree, women earn \$554 per week while men earn \$720 per week. The discrepancy increases as education rises. Women with a doctoral degree earn \$1,371 per week while men earn \$1,734. However, this trend has consequences far beyond inequity or taking home a paycheck. When a couple decides to have children and later has to make difficult decisions about childcare and careers, for many a primary concern is finances. Whose job will bring in the most money for the family? Today, only 22% of women earn more than their husbands, and thus many women will feel financially pressured to leave their careers if a parent needs to stay home (Equity in Business Leadership, 2013). If women continue to be locked into lower levels of compensation and attracted at an early age by family friendly jobs (jobs with set hours, little travel, and so forth), they will also continue to be the spouse who disproportionately leaves the workforce. Couple this consideration with the other findings of our study and it is

easy to understand why women are thinking about these issues at a young age and being faced with the reality of these problems later in life. There have been small gains in recent years, yet policymakers must continue to be proactive. They must ensure that there is equal work for equal pay across the country and in every career area. The Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was signed into law in 2009, yet in 2012 women were still making 77 cents for every dollar men earned. While this act was commendable, these statistics show that more must be done, both at a state and national level to combat this obstinate problem.

Finally, my research suggests that interventions at the college level are critical to closing the gender leadership gap. Universities must be aware that many women will begin making career decisions in college based on their desire to have a family in the future. They can encourage young women to pursue their dream jobs by inviting successful women to speak about their experiences in the workforce. For example, Schools of Medicine could invite a veteran female surgeon to talk about her career with a special focus on how the field has changed over the course of time and how she has personally grappled with issues relating to work-life balance. Universities could also facilitate support groups that allow both women and men to voice concerns about their chosen career paths. This type of activity could spur conversation that helps narrow the divide between women and men with regard to how they think about tradeoffs and changing career goals.

My research found that college age men and women are an important demographic to study with regard to the gender leadership gap. Women in particular are thinking about how their careers will impact their future family life at an early age. They also highly differ from men with regard to their perspectives about tradeoffs and stay at home parenting. That their answers were so highly variable by gender shows that improved communication is a primary step

to tackling these issues. For the present, men remain power positions and thus have an elevated ability to influence the world around them. They cannot help close the gender leadership gap if they do not view it as an issue or understand the predicaments that professional women are faced with. Innovative business solutions such as gender diversity trainings can help both administrators and general employees better understand the issues at play. From there, leaders are positioned to address these concerns at an organizational level by providing familial services to their employees such as on-site childcare. In both of these areas, policymakers must be proactive in encouraging and rewarding innovative ideas and successful practices. It is also time for the pay gap to be closed. CEO's, governing boards, and other entities should take steps to ensure that their organizations that females are treated fairly and paid equally in comparison to their male counterparts. Policymakers must continue creating legislation that will monitor these practices and reprimand those organizations that do not comply. Finally, universities must be proactive in their support of females by facilitating guest speakers and open dialogues that will encourage and inspire young women. The hope is that these efforts will allow the future Jackies of the world to move from "If I was a dude this decision would be easy" to "Even though I am a woman, this decision is easy" as they pursue unhindered the dreams and goals they aspire to.

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Appendix

1. What is your major? How did you choose this major?
 - a. Explain the process.
 - b. Did anyone influence your decision? How?
2. How (if at all) do you think your degree will relate to your future job?

3. Describe your job application process this year.
 - a. When do you plan on applying for a job?
 - b. What kinds of jobs do you intend to apply for?
 - c. Did anyone/anything influence your career decision? How/in what way?
 - d. Did anyone help you in your application process? What resources did you use?
 - e. How did you decide to pursue x/y/z options/careers?
 - f. What, if anything, intimidates you about entering the working world?
 - g. What excites you about graduating and entering the working world?

4. At this stage in your life, have you given any consideration to having a family in the future?

(if no)

- a. When you're 30 do you think you'll be single? How about when you're 40? Do you want to be single then?
- b. Will you want to have kids? Will your partner?

[Probing questions]

- c. Do you plan to have a family?
 - d. If so, when do you plan to get married and have children? (Give estimated timeframe if you have given thought to this). How long should someone date before deciding to marry?
 - i. If curious, the average age of marriage is 27 for women and 29 for men.
 - ii. Average childbearing age of women is 25.
 - e. Have your career goals been influenced by the future expectation of a family? If so, how?
 - f. Do you expect to take time off work after having your first child? If so, how long?
5. In what ways do you think your career goals or job choice may change in the future if you do indeed have a family?
 - a. How are you going to make tradeoffs?
 - i. Do you want a job that requires travel? How would this affect your kids?
 - ii. Would your wife work?
 - b. Do you think that men make tradeoffs about work and family differently than women?
 - c. Based on your previous answers, do you think it is possible to have work-family balance? What factors are necessary to achieve this?
 6. When you think of a "good" or "great" job, describe the factors that influence you (for example, it pays well, it is in a city vs suburb, involves little overtime, involves travel, etc)?
 - a. How have you determined that x/y/z factors are important aspects of a great job?
 - b. Describe what a typical day in a "good" job look like for you and what would a typical day in a "bad" job look like for you. Why?
 7. Describe several key aspects of your "dream" job. Explain the way that this job would impact your home life. In other words, what type of work/life balance would it offer?

8. (Provide an index card so they can rank) From the following 5 career priorities, rank them in order of importance.
- Make a positive contribution to society.
 - Reach a managerial position in your company/office.
 - Become a partner/owner of a company.
 - Become financially stable.
 - Find a way to balance your personal life and career.

Explain how you decided on this ranking.

9. Describe your parents' occupations. Do you think that their careers have influenced your career choice? If so, how?
- Did they travel?
 - When you were sick, who took care of you?
 - Who helped you with your homework?
 - Who took you to outside of school activities? (sports, piano, etc)
10. Do you believe that it is preferable for children to be raised by a stay at home parent? Alternatively, is it preferable for children to be raised by a working parent?
- Is it preferable for the mom or dad to stay home? Explain your choice.
 - Describe the benefits/drawbacks of having a working/stay at home parent.
11. If you had the opportunity to become a stay at home mom or dad, would this appeal to you? Describe the benefits and drawbacks of such a decision.
- What could you do as a stay at home mom/dad that you would not be able to do otherwise?
 - How would you make this decision? What factors would you consider? Finances, childcare, housework, etc.
12. Would you describe yourself as ambitious?
- Explain what the word ambitious means to you. How have you reached that conclusion?
13. Think of the most ambitious person you know. What drives them?
- How has this drive/ambition affected his/her life?
 - How has this drive/ambition affected your life?
 - At the peak of your career, how much would you like to be earning?
14. What salary do you expect to earn in your first job after graduation? How about 5 years following graduation?
- How have you estimated this number?
 - What salary is necessary to lead the life you want to lead? What makes you think that?
15. How soon after receiving your first job would you expect to be promoted?

a. What makes you think that?