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The thesis of  Genna Stead Wangsness  entitled

LESSONS FROM OUR MOTHERS:
The Effects of Education
on Mother and Daughter Communication

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies in the School
for Summer and Continuing Education of Georgetown University
has been read and approved.

__________________________
Mentor(s)

__________________________
Director, Liberal Studies Program

__________________________
Date
LESSONS FROM OUR MOTHERS:

The Effects of Education on Mother and Daughter Communication

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies

By
Genna Stead Wangsness

School for Summer and Continuing Education
Georgetown University
Washington, DC
May 1, 1995
ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the effects of education on mother and daughter communication. Using the theory and methods of feminist oral history, I conducted interviews with 11 female graduates and students, from Georgetown University's Liberal Studies Degree Program, and their mothers, who had received little or no academic education beyond high school. Many of the mothers received less than a high school education. Oral history is used by feminist historians to incorporate previously overlooked lives, activities, and feelings of women into understandings of the past and the present. Oral history is one method of rectifying the suppression of women's perspectives which historically have been ignored and trivialized. This thesis is an intimate and personal historical record of what the absence of formal education meant to the mothers with whom I spoke and what the difference in educational levels meant to the relationships between the mothers and daughters.

The Introduction explains the methods I used to conduct this study, as well as the reasons why I chose to do it. Chapters I, II, and III are introductory chapters through which the individual experiences of the women provide a framework to examine the collective and the similar in their lives: Chapter I provides a brief portrait of the women who participated in this study; in Chapter II, the women reflect on circumstances in their lives which limited or advanced their educational opportunities; and Chapter III summarizes the direction the women's lives took as adults. In Chapter IV, I examine the similarities that I detected running throughout the women's lives. I believe that the three areas of economic
dependency, abuse and alcoholism, and the myth of the nuclear family played significant roles in the formation of communication patterns present in the family systems of the mothers and daughters prior to the daughters' pursuit of higher education. Chapter V details and examines the communication systems currently in place in each mother and daughter relationship.

I have concluded that education was a factor like all other life experiences in the development of the mother and daughter relationship. Although the mothers in this study had much less formal education than their daughters, they were intellectually stimulated by life's challenges and did not always conform to society's expectations of women, in their roles as homemakers, workers, mothers or wives. The majority of daughters in this study bridged the gaps between themselves and their mothers. Most daughters understood that their mother had to overcome hardships and limitations of a degree unknown to today's generation of women. They recognized the sheer determination and strength of character that allowed their mothers to survive indifference, oppression, and abuse, admired them for their accomplishments, and accepted them as equals and as friends. For the few mother and daughter relationships which remain vulnerable and tenuous, the fact that they continue to communicate gives hope that their willingness to keep communication open will heal any wounds caused by their differences, whether educational or otherwise.

Diverse as the stories are that these women told, the similarity of their lives was evident and suggests that further study is needed, for it is never too late to record our mothers' histories and to pass on the stories of their strengths and accomplishments to the next generation of women.
This paper became reality because of the generosity of hundreds of women in the Liberal Studies Program at Georgetown University and their mothers who offered to participate in this study. I am particularly grateful to the 22 women whom I interviewed. Most of these women had never met me before, and yet they welcomed me as they would a friend into their homes and offices or spoke with me for hours by phone. Without their willingness to speak from the heart about close family relationships, I would not have been able to conduct this study based on their stories.

Two events occurred which put an idea in my mind for this thesis study. In the fall of 1991, I read Alice Walker's *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens* in Professor Leona Fisher's course *Representation of Women in Western Culture*. Walker's tribute to what black women accomplished under oppressive circumstances brought me to a new understanding and acceptance of my own mother. Two years later I was introduced to the concept of feminist oral history by Professor Marsha Darling, a guest lecturer in another of Professor Fisher's courses, *Theory and Methods of Interdisciplinary Research*. Those events made possible the conception of this study. I owe a debt of gratitude, therefore, to one of the most outstanding teachers I encountered in the Liberal Studies Program, my thesis mentor, Leona Fisher.

In addition, I am indebted to other Liberal Studies faculty members who helped me focus my values and grow intellectually.

Finally, I want to thank my family, especially my husband Roger, for unfailing support throughout my studies. Nowhere do I feel as loved and accepted as within the walls of my home with my husband and my children. Thank you for participating in my story.

G.S.W.

Alexandria, Virginia
May 1995
This study is dedicated to
Genevieve Josephine Schreiber Stead
better known as
Jane Stead, my mother

and

to the women who are carrying on our story
my daughters
Alison and Bijali
and my granddaughter
India
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INTRODUCTION

* *

MOTHERROOT

Creation often needs two hearts, one to root and one to flower. One to sustain in time of drouth and hold fast against winds of pain the fragile bloom that in the glory of its hours affirms a heart unsung, unseen.

Marilow Awaikta

ABIDING APPALACHIA

I received from Alice Walker a deep awakening that women cannot accept credit for their personal achievements without first understanding their mothers' histories. Progress is a generational consequence: one generation plants the roots so the next can bloom, handing on "the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see..." (240). In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker writes of the urgency of recording her mother's stories—not only the stories of her struggles, but also of her gardens. Walker's mother kept a magnificent garden; Walker sees the garden as a metaphor for spiritual survival, for never giving up despite the struggle. For generations of women, survival in a deadening world meant keeping the creative spirit alive to pass on to the women who followed them. For as far back as can be recalled, this was done with the most rudimentary of education. There was no such thing as "higher education" for women in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century, when Oberlin opened as a co-educational college—only
the second institution in the world to admit women—admitting both black and white women (Lunardini 32-3). With feminists such as Lucy Stone (who received an A.B. from Oberlin in 1847) expressing women's educational aspirations, higher education for women became a "demand of the age" in the last half of that century (Solomon 43); by the turn of the century, almost 3% of 18-21-year-old women were attending college (Solomon 64). Between 1930 and 1970, when the mothers of this study were reaching college age, the percentage of college women, compared to 18-24-year-olds, was rising steadily, from 5.7 in 1930 to 23.5 in 1970 (Solomon 64). Despite the increasing numbers of college-educated women, however, a much higher percentage of women were struggling to survive without the advantage of higher education, as illustrated through the mothers in this study. Through case-study research into the educational backgrounds of 11 sets of mothers and daughters, this thesis will examine the issue of disparity in educational levels between mothers and daughters, including the effect of education on their lives and intergenerational communication.

When Walker writes of the struggles of black women in America, she is writing of women whose lives have been particularly hard. But black women are sisters to women of all races and all nations who suffered from oppression, abuse, and indifference in a world that viewed success through the eyes of the powerful. When I read *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, I was reminded of the magnificent garden my mother kept all the years my two sisters and I were growing up. What message does our mother's garden give? I
knew I needed to look at her life to understand the meaning in her garden.

THE MOTHER: HER STORY

One day in July of 1994, I sat with my mother at her kitchen table, and we talked about her education. Our interview became the first in a series of interviews that I would do for this study. My mother's life had been a struggle from her earliest years. She was born in 1910, the only daughter of an alcoholic father and a mother whom she remembers as unaffectionate, exhibiting, in my mother's recollection, little interest in her children or her home. My grandmother gave to her only daughter many of the responsibilities of caring for five sibling brothers. Thus, my mother was kept home so frequently that she dropped out of school at 16.

I was behind in school. When I was 16, I was only in the eighth grade, and then I didn't know nothing because half the time the nuns would just more or less pass me. But the first few years I didn't get passed. I went into the first grade there, so that was three years in the first grade, two years in Polish, which I couldn't master. . . . I had problems of not passing several times in different grades because I didn't go to school very often. My mother always said a girl don't need an education, and so if she needed help at home for anything, for watching the younger children or anything, she just kept me home from school. So I wouldn't go to school.

Jane

Today my mother, at 84, is redefining her role in life after 56 years of marriage and the...
death of her husband, my father, in August of 1994. Denied an education by her mother’s bias, she is a woman who spent her life living according to her best reasoning and educating herself through life experiences. I am the middle of her three daughters, and after seven years of study and 35 years after finishing high school, I am about to finish my undergraduate college degree. Late in life I was given the opportunity of achieving my lifelong dream of attending college.

THE DAUGHTER: WHY THIS THESIS?

Because today’s society accepts education and careers for women as a cultural value, it is not surprising that women of all ages, like myself, are attending college in record numbers. As education expands our horizons, broadens our outlook, and often changes our values, does it affect our relationships with our mothers? In her *Washington Post* column, Ellen Goodman wrote that women today see their lives as better than their mothers’, but are a generation that has traded depression for stress, “with more options and more power as well as more obligations.” Feminist psychologist, Dana Jack, believes that women’s depression is caused by the outwardly conforming activity “required in order to be passive, to live up to the stereotype of the ‘good’ woman, particularly the good wife” (Nielsen 103). The mothers in this study struggled with the roles they were expected to perform as wives and mothers, and those struggles are evident in the way women talked about their lives in these interviews.
Women today have opportunities of choice which many of their mothers did not have, and that includes educational opportunities. What was life like for mothers who did not have the advantages of a higher education? Did they lead successful lives, or were they depressed as Goodman suggests? If we have succeeded, is it because of the strong roots planted by our mothers' struggles? We know the countless ways that life today is stressful for women, but what caused the depression in our mothers' lives that Goodman identifies? Was it a lack of opportunity, a lack of education? The questions are there because of a gap in recording the lives of earlier generations of women.

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ORAL HISTORY: ITS VALUE

Poet Clarissa Pinkola Estés, who inherited a tradition of oral history from her family, writes that experiences shared with others and stories told about these experiences create a bond (29). Indeed, many cultures do have an oral history tradition where older women pass on stories to the young, creating a bond between generations of mothers and daughters. But not all women know oral traditions, and generation after generation many women begin the process over, with little knowledge of the struggles and accomplishments of the women from whom they are descended.

I don't think she ever had a wonderful life. Her father was abusive. I think she was so crazy about her mother, and her mother died, right after Pat was born, I think, because I never knew her. She was very, very close to her mother. I think at one time she even gave her away
to a relative or something. I'm not sure.
These are things that now that I look at it,
I wouldn't mind talking to her about it,
but it's too late.
Willa

It is regrettable that "it's too late," that another woman's life story—wrapped up tersely in
one small exchange—is lost. Sadly, we've been conditioned to believe that no one wants to
listen to the stories of women's lives. But while it is true that today's women lead stressful
lives, women have always had full lives, demanding lives, overwhelming responsibilities, and
contrary to what we have been led to believe, there are compelling stories to be told.

I had a number of women who participated in this study tell me they didn't think
their lives were interesting. What would they talk to me about? What would they say?
They didn't think they would have much to tell me, and besides, who would be interested
in their routine lives? Because women's stories have never been considered worth telling,
there is a void where there ought to be volumes, a silence where there ought to be
pandemonium. I hope that the voices of the women in this study will fill the void and stop
the silence. Why does my mother recall that all my grandmother did was "sit on a rocking
chair and rock" while ignoring her children? Although I have put my mother's recollections
of her mother down on paper, no one asked my grandmother about her life while she was
alive. The circumstances which made her into the "unhappy, spiteful" woman my mother
recalls will remain a mystery, for they have been buried with her.

Like our mothers' and grandmothers' stories, women's place in society has gone
largely unrecorded. Christine Lunardini, former professor of women's history at Princeton University, writes that the "vast majority of women who have moved through the decades have done so without the recognition they so richly deserve" (xix). The field of sociology is a typical example of this neglect. Gender sociologist Janet Saltzman Chafetz writes:

1. Women were largely ignored by traditional sociology outside of the study of the family and some aspects of demography, specifically fertility. For instance, the study of work was primarily of men's labor participation force; of stratification and social mobility of men as family heads; of juvenile delinquency of mostly male adolescent gangs.

2. Topics generally important to the lives of many women were largely ignored by traditional sociology: for instance, the study of unpaid work in the household and volunteer realms; the sociology of emotions; conflict, power, and the unequal distribution of resources within the family or household.

3. The experiences, values, behaviors, and priorities of men were implicitly taken as the norm against which women were compared—and usually found wanting. Related to this, research done on exclusively male samples was simply assumed, often erroneously, to generalize to women, such as the relationship between educational and income attainment. (138)

It is not surprising that women were overlooked when, as Chafetz at the same time points out, "until the 1970s, almost all sociologists were (white) men." All academic disciplines, in fact, have been dominated by white males and their "particular and limited interests, perspectives and experiences" while women's perspectives were "suppressed, trivialized, ignored, or reduced to the status of gossip and folk wisdom" (Nielsen 96). Even up until the early 70s, women were fighting for a place in academia at the same time that they were the victims of unequal admissions quotas at many universities. According to Sheila Tobias, who organized Cornell University's first women's studies conference in 1969, even an institution
as prestigious as Cornell, coeducational from its founding, at that time admitted one female for every two males in the College of Arts and Sciences, "because it was argued the men's dorms in which the extra women would be housed were equipped with urinals" (Cornell '95 8). It is only since the 1980s that the field of sociology—as well as other academic disciplines such as anthropology, political science, art, and literature—has altered its "theoretical and methodological approaches to accommodate the strategies of feminist theory" (Case 1 12). This scenario can be replayed in countless fields, including those of such major importance as psychology and health and medicine. Twenty-five years ago, women's studies programs first appeared on American campuses thanks to the efforts of women who began re-addressing the status of women by bringing feminist movement leaders such as Betty Friedan and Kate Millet to speak at college campuses (Cornell '95), just as their predecessors of the nineteenth century had brought feminist lecturers like Abby Kelly Foster to college campuses to support feminist causes (Lunardini 33). 1 With the growth of the field of women's studies, the neglect of women both in and out of academia has begun to be addressed. The Women's Studies Program at Georgetown University, which is directed by Professor C. Margaret Hall of the University's Department of Sociology, is an example of the current trends in interdisciplinary study which are being influenced by feminist theory.

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1 According to the National Women's Studies Association, the first women's studies program was established in 1970 at San Diego State University (D'Mona 28), while Cornell was the first university in the country to offer a "full-formed, fully accredited and fully enrolled" class in women's studies, "The Evolution of the Female Personality" (Cornell '95 8).
Education is one of the ways of addressing indifference towards women. Many women who today are receiving a higher education had mothers who grew up in an age when education for women was still considered unimportant by most people. All of the mothers in this study married early rather than attending college; women were expected to marry and maintain a home for a husband and children, a private world in which it was often believed that they did not need an education. Whether they were homemakers or factory workers, on their feet all day as sales clerks or on their knees as domestics, women were, as one mother I interviewed put it, "bound to the stove," by men who expected a hot meal on the table, not a wife with a "career." They may have been fired when they got married, or obliged to give up their jobs by husbands who did not want them to work. Now, as women obtain higher education in numbers equal to men, this era is passing, for education is allowing today's women to create lives for themselves of which many of their mothers could only dream, lives of freedom and independence.

* RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: THE PROCESS OF LOCATING INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

This study began with a survey and cover letter sent to female students and graduates of Georgetown University's Liberal Studies Program. The survey was used to identify women whose mothers had received little or no academic education beyond high school (see Appendix), and who would be willing to participate in an interview.
Approximately 550 surveys were mailed, with a return rate of approximately 40%. Fig. 1 presents a tabulation of statistics produced from the responses. The number of mothers who had post-high school education was higher than I had expected, which shows that “concepts do not reflect the reality of women’s lives” (Fonow 144). Because the survey was designed primarily to identify mothers who had not received higher education, a breakdown of types of higher education was not requested of respondents. However, many women included specifics regarding their mothers’ educational levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers deceased with</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-high school education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers living with</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-high school education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers deceased with</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers living with</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school education</td>
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<td>Mothers deceased with</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers living with</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>Less than high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information established that the amount of higher education varied greatly among the mothers. The types of higher education mentioned in the survey include: some undergraduate credits; business school certificates; music school; normal school (also called teacher training); nursing school; junior college; associates, bachelors, masters, and law degrees; and even a law degree without other college. To add complications to the numbers, there are educational levels that are difficult to classify, for instance a mother who finished seven grades of school, and then attended "business college."

SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

From the respondents who indicated a willingness to be interviewed, I began arranging individual interviews, with a plan to limit the interview process to ten mother/daughter groups. Ultimately, I interviewed 22 women, resulting in over 500 pages of transcripts. Because I wanted diversity while maintaining tight guidelines, the selection process was based on various criteria. First, I felt I would obtain more revealing, and therefore more accurate, information from women who expressed a particular interest in the study. Because survey recipients were offered the opportunity to expand on any of the survey questions or write about anything unique not reflected in the survey, I was able to begin the process by contacting women who had added comments to the form, samples of which are offered here.

It sounds like a very interesting study! Both my mother and I are very interested! My mother will be visiting me for one week during the
Thanksgiving Holiday. She and I would be available some time during that week.

My mother is intelligent, friendly and good. I had to learn how NOT to talk down to her because I thought I was so smart, when I just graduated. She has a lot to offer, to share. We’ve developed a good rapport over the years. I took her to Japan with me and I take her to professional conferences. My "educated friends" like her as much as I do. Good luck on your thesis. PS. I was the first to graduate from college since before the Civil War when both male and female had college training as teachers.

Good luck! I have spent a great deal of time discussing and thinking about this very subject—best wishes to you.

Additionally, I used other criteria in my selection process to ensure diversity, such as age, marital status, race, nationality, and type of degree. Mothers interviewed ranged in age from 44 to 85, daughters from 27 to 58, resulting in strong generational diversity. While all 11 of the mothers were or had been married, four daughters between the ages of 29-34 were single. One mother moved to the United States as a young woman from Ireland, and one moved from England to Canada. Other mothers were of Italian, Native-American, African-American, French-Canadian, Irish, and German ancestry. Fifteen interviews were in person with mothers and daughters living in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Although I was able to travel to outlying locations within Virginia and Maryland, it was necessary to conduct seven interviews by phone with mothers in other states and Canada. In all but one case, I met with the daughters first. Except for myself and my mother, all names have been changed in the interest of anonymity.
THE INTERVIEWS AND METHODOLOGY

The interviews consisted of one-to-two hour visits where I asked questions regarding educational background and relationships. What transpired in the interview process was a view of each woman's life from her own perspective. They told me about "their worlds as they saw them," (Fonow 146) and it is their words that are included in the following chapters. Because I limited my questions to education and relationships, the one- or-two hour interviews provided only a small window into each woman's world. Thus, the analyses are limited, not only by time, but by the fact that I was an outsider with no prior or deeper knowledge of these women's lives. My findings are based on the larger picture I saw as these women allowed me to look at how they reproduced or undermined (Fonow 150) accepted concepts about women's lives.

I went into each interview with a set of questions (see Appendix) related to education and its effects on mother/daughter communication. These questions were guidelines for me to ensure that I covered roughly the same areas with all the women. I wanted my questions to be flexible to accommodate the flow of data collection from each interview. I followed the basic theoretical assumptions of qualitative researchers:

that meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behavior,
that descriptive data are what is important to collect, and
that analysis is best done inductively. (Bogdan 58)

My analysis of whether education affected the relationship between mothers and daughters
was an ongoing process as each woman added new information to the body of information
I was gathering. I began the interviews with my thesis question of whether a difference in
educational levels affects mother and daughter relations, but I did not know what the
interviews would reveal. I began with a desire to conduct case study oral history research
into an area of particular interest to me. As the interviews progressed, I was able to see
patterns forming, and by the end of the interview process, I had developed concepts and
understandings that I incorporated into each chapter in my thesis report.

While I am drawing theoretical conclusions from the accounts of the women's lives, I
recognize that my attempt to interpret and attach specific meanings to what has been said is
influenced by my own personal, subjective interpretation of the data. Since I was not able to
use all of the data collected, I chose which portions to use, which leaves other facets
unexamined. Others may interpret the data differently, including those who provided the
information. Within the transcripts there are countless glimpses of stories that will remain
untold. For instance, in telling the story of how her mother emigrated from England to
Canada, Patrice related that her mother "had a fiancee in England apparently who was killed
in a wreck, and after that, she didn't want to stay in England, and she came over to Canada." Emily, her mother, did not mention the event. My goal during the interviews was to allow
the women to speak for themselves.

Feminist historians use oral history as a "basic tool in our efforts to incorporate the
previously overlooked lives, activities, and feelings of women into our understanding of the
past and of the present" (Nielsen 95), but there is little consensus on how to present the
information gathered. I attempted to follow the philosophy of historians such as Nancy
Siefer, who claims that

working-class women usually are not heard and when they
are, it is through someone else's voice...she commits
herself to letting the subject of her working-class oral
histories speak for themselves. To achieve this, she does not
analyze the accounts she collects, but presents them as they
were given to her. By not analyzing the accounts, she
prevents herself from speaking for, speaking better than, or
transforming them...[she] believes that the women are
capable of analyzing their lives, and that an analysis is
contained in what they are saying. (Reinharz 137)

Because this thesis is an attempt to discover whether the relationships between mothers and
daughters are affected by education, a conclusion is required, and for this purpose some
analyses are required. But in presenting the information gathered, I have tried not to
interpret or analyze the women's words as they described their lives. Rather, I have let
them speak for themselves, only placing them in space and time. I hope that my questions
encouraged the women to tell more than just what they did, but why they did it and how
they felt about it.

The interviews revealed that similar patterns ran throughout many of the women's
lives, some expected and some surprising. These patterns played important roles in
determining the direction that both mothers' and daughters' lives took. As patterns
developed, I began to question whether they were a result of the criteria used in the
selection process. The study is affected by the fact that all of the women who participated in
the study did so on a voluntary basis. They were willing to discuss not only their own lives, but their relationships. Thus, the mothers and daughters in this study have relationships and communicate with each other, and women whose communication has broken down are not represented. The tight guidelines of the selection process eliminated from the study various other mother and daughter communication, but I was struck by the poignancy of the many untold stories which were alluded to in the comments on some of the returned surveys. What would be discovered if a researcher spoke with the women who returned the survey, but wrote the following comments?

I do not have a relationship with my mother, therefore you could not interview her.

I wish I could participate and I wish I could recommend asking my mother, too. She and I have had a strained relationship, always. In fact, her lack of support showed when I went to college in 1968. Today she refers to me, face-to-face, somewhat sarcastically, as "the educated one." I'm not sure she's ever appreciated the value of a college education—much less an advanced degree. While our stories might help you flesh out the side of the argument that illustrates the friction and other relationship struggles, I don't wish to dig into the pain that is always there with respect to my mother and our relationship.

My parents are both dead, but they were two of the most intelligent humans I have ever known and had read most of the material I am now slogging through at Georgetown. They were amazing, and I only wished they had lived to see me begin to flower. Fortunately, they loved me anyway.
I would rather not talk about the past because it makes me sad.

I have had to struggle with the ambiguity of feelings about my mother and consequently my history—little education, alcoholism (my father), the ignoring of my own early intellectual and artistic desire, and a profound respect and even awe at my mother's raising 4 children virtually alone and the rich inheritance of her moral dimension. She was truly the genteel poor. I am trying, at age 47, to recover what I am and my own inner wealth. She, too, should have had a chance at education.

My mother died before I had this opportunity for higher education late in life. However, my children are happy and pleased with my accomplishments. It would be interesting to see comments on the children of the graduates. Do they feel uncomfortable or otherwise, with a mother's accomplishments and her ultimate use of it in the workforce. In my case, I have more degrees than my children. However, there is no family friction as a result of the education.

The study is affected further by the type of women that enter the Liberal Studies Program. Because the program draws on adult women, they are often women who were prevented from seeking an education earlier in life, the experience of many of the women in this study.

I was presented with the dilemma of how to present the "voices" of the women who participated in this study. I have included many long sessions authored by the women I interviewed, eliminating the questions I asked in order to focus on the women's stories. To convey the human drama of their stories, I turned to the insight of playwright Anna Deavere Smith. Her book *Fires in the Mirror* is based on interviews, and in the book's introduction
she writes that interviews allow people to experience their own authorship. In recording
the stories of the women that I interviewed, I found, like Smith, that the women often spoke
with incorrect grammar, in unfinished sentences, and ran sentences together with ands.
The strength of their stories, however, is the fact that these women were responding to
questions that in many cases they had never had posed to them by anyone, and it is the
unrehearsed aspect of their answers, the "thought as captured for the first time in a moment
of speech" (xxxix), that makes their stories so powerful.

Speaking teaches us what our natural "literature" is. In fact, every one, in a given amount of time, will say something that
is like poetry. (xxx)

I have attempted to capture the poetry they created.

©
CHAPTER I

VOICES OF WOMEN

Among my people, questions are often answered with stories. The first story almost always evokes another, which summons another, until the answer to the question has become several stories long. A sequence of tales is thought to offer broader and deeper insight than a single story alone. 

Clarissa Pinkola Estés
THE GIFT OF STORY

Each generation tries to compensate for what was missing in their family—affection, support, love—or to escape the things they did have—indifference, oppression, abuse, alcoholism.

Many women today are doing that through education, in an effort to have the economic independence to choose for themselves the direction of their lives, an opportunity that previous generations of women did not always have. Our mothers and their mothers before them often had to accept lives of oppression and abuse, as well as indifference to their hopes and dreams for themselves. Countless factors, including economic limitations, small-town ignorance, and the age-old belief that women did not need an education, prevented them from receiving the education they most often wanted. With limited freedom in a society which placed little value on their personal desires, our mothers struggled to overcome the boundaries and confines of their surroundings. Stories of survival, of courage, of hope, and of pure determination are heard in the voices of the many women who participated in this study. Hopefully, their stories will offer "broader and
deeper insight into the accomplishments of women and provide answers to the questions asked in this study.

Sandra and Rosemarie are daughter and mother in the "ideal" family: warm and supportive mother and father, four children who glow in the light of their parents' love, apparently untouched by the dysfunctionalism of so many homes. Born in a small town in Maine of parents who had immigrated from French-speaking Canada, Rosemarie came to Washington, DC, at 17 with a Catholic high school education and $200 pinned to her bra.

Judith and her mother, Barbara, together experienced the horror of family abuse at the hands of Judith's alcoholic father. With six children to care for, economic dependence on her husband kept this mother and her children in daily fear of their lives. After a particularly abusive episode, Judith almost killed her father with a butcher knife. Today, Judith and Barbara share a special and close relationship.

Toni's mother, Florence, worked as a bank teller while raising her children. Today, she is a happy and good-natured devoted wife, mother, and grandmother, and her divorced daughter, Toni, struggles to find an economically secure, independent life for herself, free of violence and drug experiences perpetrated at the hands of men.
Lexie lived a "sad" childhood, but one free from "living in fear of being hit across the room" because her mother, Ethel—afraid she would kill her abusive husband—took the unusual step of divorcing him. Having secretly saved enough grocery money to buy a small home for herself and her four children, Ethel worked in a school cafeteria to support them on her eighth grade education. Working by day, taking classes at night while her children stayed at home with the doors locked, she obtained her GED and 22 college credits. Both Lexie and her mother came from broken homes: Ethel's mother died when she was six, she was raised in an orphanage until her father remarried. Wanting a happy home because of the family history of broken homes, Lexie worked at "creative domesticity," only to have her dream shattered when her husband deserted his family in a mid-life crisis.

Erin and Molly share an exceptionally close relationship. Molly came from Ireland and worked as a domestic before marrying another Irish immigrant. She struggled and survived the challenge of returning to work after her husband died at 47 from a heart weakened by alcoholism. Erin wants to marry, but not devote her life to her family as did her mother, hoping for a balance between her work as a physical therapist and a role of wife and mother.

Marjorie's mother died from a ruptured appendix when she was 18 months old, and she was taken in by her maternal grandparents, who at 60 had already raised their own
children and then a niece. She gave up her dream of becoming a nurse in order to care for her elderly grandparents. When an aunt—who had taken Marjorie and her grandfather in when they became homeless—committed suicide, Marjorie was faced with feelings of guilt. With no role model, she married in her late 20s and raised four children, regrets that her husband died early due to an alcohol-related disease. Her daughter, Charlotte, put herself through college after she was married; Charlotte's only brother's college education was financed, because her parents believed that in his role as a male he would have to be responsible for a family.

Patrice's (Patsy) mother deserted her and her father when she was an infant. She was raised in Canada by her grandparents until her father remarried when she was eight. Easily making a transition to having a mother, Patrice and her stepmother, Emily, have a solid, though long-distance, relationship. Emily attended school in England until she was 14, and at 17½ joined the Royal Air Force and trained in the new world of computers and data entry. Having the help of a 10-year-old daughter allowed her to continue working when she and her new husband had a son.

Loretta's mother died five days after giving her birth. Raised by an uneducated but loving Cherokee grandmother, her faith in Jesus helped her survive a sleeping disorder which affected her ability to study, a rape, and two alcoholic husbands. Her daughter,
Sarah, has been able to reconcile with her mother after years of separation and anger.

Carolyn's mother, Regina, married young, devoted her life to her daughters, her husband, and her church. Late in life she was able to "blossom" when her husband died early from alcoholism, and she began working with mentally handicapped men. A strong proponent of education for women, she is close to her daughter, Carolyn, who has a good career, would like to marry, but does not want to have children.

Tracy does not understand her mother's desire that she get married and "live happily ever after." Marriage for her mother, Willa, was a refuge from an abusive, alcoholic father who did "perverted" things to her. Paralyzed by her experience, told to "forget her past" by therapists, Willa sits at home watching TV in a co-dependent relationship with her husband. Loved by him, but intimidated by his Harvard education, she discouraged her daughters from getting an education.

Sally earns hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from her chain of hair style salons. The only mother wealthy enough to be economically independent, she remains tied to relationships with men, searching for happiness through marriage. Her daughter, Anne, like her mother and her grandmother before her, married while still a teen. After spending five years as a model, she has begun her education while her husband attends law school.
and they raise three small children, determined not to lose her husband in a mid-life crisis because she is not well enough educated for his circle of friends. Separated from her mother by distance and philosophy, Anne shares a love-hate relationship with her the future of which only time will determine.

There is no single shape to women's lives (see Fig. 3, page 73). They are as diverse as the women who live them, each unique, each offering a new narrative on "the human condition." However, in conducting this study, I found that there were a number of patterns of similarity in the women's stories. While this study was conducted to evaluate the effect of education on mother and daughter communication, it is important to examine other aspects because of the insight the developing patterns offer into the mother and daughter relationship. In evaluating the responses I received in the interview portion of this study, I was struck by the fact that the majority of women perceived that the lack of higher education contributed significantly to the direction of and limitation on the mothers' lives. Armed with this understanding, the daughters saw education as a key to having control over their own lives. The quality of the mothers' lives was governed by events which the daughters did not want to see repeated in their lives. Patrice spoke for all the daughters when she said, "Education certainly helped me figure out that I didn't want to repeat that paradigm. . . ." This study will examine, therefore, not only education and its effect on communication patterns but patterns themselves, since I found that education, patterns, and communication
are intertwined complexly, and the cause and effect aspects cannot be separated. In the following chapters I will examine educational levels and their effects on work and marriage (Chapters II and III), discuss the patterns which were contributing factors in the mother and daughter relationship (Chapter IV), and finally, consider the effects of education on mother and daughter communication (Chapter V).
CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS: EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

I think my whole life would have changed had I gone on and gotten an education. I used to, years and years ago, I thought about it quite a bit, but now I don’t dwell on things, or that sort of thing.

Barbara

“Did you ever feel that you weren’t well enough educated?”

Always! Always!
Rosemarie

There is no pattern or shape to the educational histories of women’s lives, although nationally, the twentieth century has seen a rapid growth in the number of women attending college. I recruited women for this study whose mothers had not benefited from higher education. The data obtained in the interviews reveal that five mothers completed high school, five had less than a high school education, and one briefly attended a community college; among the daughters, eight have master’s degrees from Georgetown’s Liberal Studies Program and three are working on their bachelor’s degrees from the same program. Thus, there was a dramatic improvement in the chances of a woman obtaining a college education from the mothers’ era to that of the daughters.

These findings simplify what is a complexity of circumstances contributing to the mothers’ lack of educational opportunities, and the barriers many of the daughters
encountered and overcame in the process of realizing their educational goals. The women who were educated in the '20s and '30s felt they really had no choices offered to them. They saw obstacles in their paths as difficulties with which they had to come to terms and accept: education wasn't affordable; education wasn't discussed; education was for others, brothers or husbands.

Ethel, born in 1912, was forced to quit school in the eighth grade by her stepmother who "was the boss." Though it isn't named, a sense of injustice is evident in the telling of events by Ethel and her daughter, Lexie. The factual disclosure of the experience cannot be separated from the double entendre that comes through, for the facts are co-mingled with the emotion that these events produced.

My mother spent two years in an orphanage with her only sister and younger brother, and her father remarried. And he married a woman who had a son by a previous marriage, so they began their marriage with four children, three his, one hers, and then they had four children of their own. When my mother and her older sister reached eighth grade, her stepmother just told them that they were not to go any further in school. They both had been straight "A" students the whole time. Then, the brother, the little brother, reached eighth grade and was also made to quit school. But then, when the children of this marriage, when the two sons reached high school, one was sent to medical school and one was sent to law school.

Lexie

We were never allowed to do our homework at home. We had to do homework for her children. We did their homework, and they copied it. Yes we did.
One of her sons by the previous marriage and one of these other children had trouble learning.
At one time really, when I first moved away, there was a time that I thought if I ever get away from you I never want to have nothing to do with you. I almost hated her, but hate hurts you. You don't hurt anybody by hating them, but you hurt yourself.

Ethel

Marjorie was born in 1909 and wanted to be a nurse, but for her "there was no hopes of that." She was the third generation to be raised by elderly grandparents who had little economic resources, and her uncle made it clear that he expected her to take care of his parents in their old age, since he felt they had "done more for me that they had ever done for him."

That's something funny, but I was thinking the other day about it, and I thought it was sort of like accepting what happened. It was there, and you did it... As I said, I think it's just one of those things, what comes along you have to do. And I felt obligated when I got old enough to understand, I felt obligated. They had been good and here, you would think, there was another mouth. We never had any money, and we were poor, and of course the others didn't get that affluent, that they had anything much more to throw into the—

Pap worked always... Pap didn't stop working until he was 82.

Marjorie

The '20s and '30s were also the age of the Great Depression. The Depression and the war that soon followed had profound effects on families. For women, this meant going to work and an early end to educational opportunities.

She had to go to work. This was the middle of the Depression,
and that's the reason that school only ran to the 11th grade, as everybody had to get out and earn money to help their families, and she began to work.
A lot of people her age left that part of Texas and went to Dallas or came to Philly to get jobs. Today she says we have many more opportunities than she did. They didn't know about going to school at night, they didn't know about borrowing money to go to school.
Nobody suggested that girls go on particularly, and she felt the only option was to go to work, and after she went to work she met someone and got married.

They didn't have any money to pay for college, probably the people came from families where they were really struggling to keep their farms, because a lot of people in the community lost their farms at that point.
Mom and her sisters sent money back to my grandparents to try to keep the mortgage.
They lost the car, they lost their new milking devices they had installed. They had dairy cattle and provided milk to the local dairies. That equipment was repossessed.

They [Judith's brothers] went into the service.
Steve served in WWII, Carl served in between Korea and before Viet Nam.
Anyway, he went into the military and that's when he got his education.

Judith

I lived with my daddy until I was like 15, I think.
I left home and got a job at Tallheimers Department Store. Told them I was 18.
It was during the war and they needed help and they hired me. They gave you an aptitude test, and I could pass the aptitude test. And I credit that to my grandmother and grandfather. They taught us it was very important to study and learn, and my grandfather would sit up—we'd just have a teeny oil lamp and one little table in the middle of the floor—
and he would sit there and call out my spelling words to me at night.
I was taught to read the ads in the newspaper and read the newspapers.
It was very important that you get your education. He would always tell me
that he thought I'd be a wonderful bookkeeper,
because I was good at figures,
adding,
when I starting into adding and multiplication
and had no problem with them.
He always encouraged me.
"Oh, you'd be a good bookkeeper, just like your granddaddy."

Loretta

I was educated in England and it was 1944. I was 14 that September.
The area I lived in, we had to leave school
when you finished the school term, not the year.
So I left school at the Christmas. I was considered sufficiently educated
to go out and get a job.
Well, the war was still on, they were calling up
the 17½ year olds at that point, so it was a case of
you were considered educated enough to get out and work
so that the 17½ year olds were then going into the service
you see. But the depth of our education was very poor.
We were never allowed to take our books out of the school.
We didn't have homework, you had three verbal lessons,
questions on the blackboard, and then the
fourth lesson with that teacher you wrote.
Whatever the subject was that you were learning then
you had to write on that. I guess I did fairly well,
I was usually in about the top ten of the class
whatever class I was in, but there was no way to sort of
further your education.
My parents weren't in any position to pay for any schoolin'
and so you just sort of learned what you could.
The only time we were allowed to bring our books home from school
was the day we left school permanently. Not the textbooks,
but even your written work
was not allowed out of the school.
You had a book for each subject, which was again just
We were taught in the homemakin'. We had what they called
housewifery,
for the first year in the secondary school.
You were taught cleaning, pieces of wood, metal,
different things like that.
You also had to sew an apron that you used in the
next year when you started your cookery lessons,
and until you had sewn this—
it was a complete coverall, wrapped around all of you—article of clothing,
and once you had done that
then the second year you started cookery lessons and
that started off with a mashed potato
and finished up doin' a
three-course dinner sort of thing.
In those days you didn't have too much input in life.
You kept
rather secluded, in a way.
You didn't know what was happenin'
in the world,
and there was to me a kind of a
frightenin' aspect.
You were scared to do anything.
My mother was home all the time, she raised us and stayed home, she never worked.
My dad didn't have a very good paying job and we had a radio, admit it,
but no contact too much with current affairs and what was happenin'.
Like nowadays children know quite a lot
and are brought up and people talk about things. We didn't,
and I assume that everybody in the school and their parents—
although some of them had professional jobs—
but we were all sort of on the same
intellectual level, in a way. But I think we all
adjusted pretty well.
Emily

Among women whose circumstances prevented them from getting an education,
some saw the opportunity for advancement limited to marrying "up," finding someone who
had taken advantage of the educational opportunities offered to men, especially because of
their military service, and who could provide a better life.

He went to Harvard. I was working at Boston
at a company, and one of the bosses said
"He's so well educated, what does he want with you?"
He laughed when he said it, but how things come back
to haunt you, you know.
How many times I've thought of that.
But it doesn't seem to run any kind of interference in our marriage.
Not at all.
Willa

I know that there were five kids in her family
and that her father was pretty much,
after he got out of the Marines, he was just a bum.
He was this sometime furniture mover, and they were dirt poor.
They lived in the slums of South Boston.
My mom was a middle child and was sick a lot as a kid.
She never wanted to do anything other than get married
and have babies. She really got lucky,
because she sort of met her
Prince Charming.
My dad was lower middle class, but not nearly as poor as my mom's.
He had a very supportive family and managed to
go to Boston College and Harvard,
on the GI bill,
and so he kind of
rescued my mom.
I don't think she saw herself
going out on her own.
Tracy

Fifty years after the war, women of the '90s outnumber men in receiving both
bachelor's and master's degrees, falling behind men only at the doctoral level, an impressive
accomplishment considering the effects of the GI bill, which rewarded men but set women
back. Many of the women mentioned brothers, husbands, and fathers who had gone to
college on veterans' benefits. While female veterans were eligible, they constituted only three percent of the armed services (Solomon 190). Educationally, women had begun to catch up with men during the '20s and '30s, as more and more women entered college. That changed after World War II when returning soldiers were given veterans' benefits through the GI bill (Solomon 189) to attend college as a reward for serving their country. Meanwhile, the women who had taken their jobs to keep the country running were sent back home to be housewives or continued working to support the family while their husbands attended college.

**EFFECT OF THE GI BILL ON COLLEGE ENROLLMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bachelor's Degrees</th>
<th>Master's Degrees</th>
<th>Doctoral Degrees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>76,954</td>
<td>109,546</td>
<td>10,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>103,217</td>
<td>328,841</td>
<td>16,963</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| % Increase | 34 | 200 | 66 | 150 | 44 | 103 |

The male influx into academia (Solomon 190) is evident in the Department of Education statistics for the ten-year period from 1940-50 (Fig. 2), when the percentages of men obtaining degrees far surpassed that of women and almost returned the ratio of women to the turn of the century when four times as many men received bachelor's degrees as women (DiMona 6).

In the postwar years, women were accepted in many more lines of work than in
previous decades, jobs for which a high school education was considered adequate, especially for women; and college was still not discussed in many homes. Florence began working as a bank teller right out of high school. Although her mother had been one of 12 children of an Italian restaurant owner, all of whom were sent to college, Florence did not attend college, in fact it was not even mentioned.

I don't know why. My father didn't go. He was very bright. Very smart man. Well, I guess there wasn't the money, and they never suggested it. Nobody ever even put it in your mind. . . . I finished high school, and I went to work for Federal Reserve Bank in Baltimore. After that I left and went to another bank in Baltimore City, and they eventually merged and became Maryland National. And then when we moved here, I stayed home while the children were little.

Florence

Women have always been considered the primary caregivers to their children, and education for women often is limited as a result of bearing and having the responsibility of caring for their children. Sally quit school in the tenth grade when she became pregnant and very soon became a single parent, with no one but herself and her parents to help.

What happened was I had Anne. I met her Daddy and became involved with him, and Anne was a product of that, and I was 17 or so when she was born. When she was about 4½ - 5 months old, it seems as though that's when we decided to go into the vocational training. I can be very candid about what happened to my life at that point
if you'd like for me to be.
The boy's parents had a great deal of influence over him
and caused us to separate,
and it left me in a position where I was living with my parents again,
and my mother helped with raising Anne.
She would baby sit for Anne while I would go to school during the day.
My parents [and I] ultimately have lived together throughout the years,
regardless of the fact that I've been married and
Anne's father, my second husband, adopted her.
He worked in Dallas, I worked in Fort Worth, and
we lived half way between.
And my parents were there
to take up the slack
of getting the kids to and from school,
and then we'd
get together with them in the evenings
for their sports activities and various things, and it really
filled a gap in for the children,
because it gave them
a more
stable environment.

Sally

She got pregnant with me when she was 16.
I was born in February, she turned 17 in March.
They got a divorce before I was six months old.
She was an only child. He was an only child.
My grandparents were traumatized.
My grandfather left the house for three days and didn't even call.
The man was just—
And finally he told her, he said, "I don't care what you do,
you're going to have this baby, your mother will watch her,
but you're going to learn, find something to do,
and you're going to make money
and you're going to learn
to take care of yourself.
I'm not supporting you the rest of your life."
And a lot of animosity between her and myself developed because of that.
Because in his eyes, I sort of took her place.
They took her and made her be the adult and put me in her place,
and sort of started over,
and that has really,
my mother will never admit it, but my grandfather just—
You could see it in her eyes, she just,
I sort of took her place, and she just couldn't deal with it.
I lived with them
until I was 14.
Anne

Anne married right after her high school graduation, but her sister, like her mother and her
grandmother before her, left school and got married at 16.

As mentioned earlier, education was not even discussed in many families. This was
especially true in rural or small towns, but it did not mean that women were not thinking
about education. Even today, at age 60, Rosemarie deeply regrets that she never went to
college. Growing up in a small town in Maine, with French-speaking Canadian parents, high
school "was the end of the line." Rosemarie did not have the option of continuing her
education.

They grew up in Canada,
and it was little red school house type of thing.
It was not a real formal type of education.
As a matter of fact, they didn't speak English
until they moved to Maine, they came down from French Canada.
My father, for instance, spoke English well
but he learned it from reading the newspaper every day.
He taught himself that way, and he did very well.
But my mother never spoke English.
So we went to the usual parochial schools.
It was important that we did well, never challenged further than that, in that they were happy if you passed and did well. You didn't even have to do real well. And when I was in high school—my father worked in textile mills. In fact everybody in town sort of panicked because the mills moved south and the job market sort of dried up there and everybody just panicked. It was a small town, and there was no place to go. So many people out of work. That happened while I was a sophomore in high school, so I sort of knew that that was the end of the line pretty much. In school, there were a few girls that were picked out as being definitely college material, and they were encouraged to be nuns. As a matter of fact, when I go back to reunions, it's interesting, because all of the—out of 24, maybe 5 or 6 went to be nuns—which is a pretty high average—and they now are no longer nuns but they all have this great education! They really do, and have good jobs. As a matter of fact, my best friend, nobody ever mentioned her going to college, but her mother insisted upon it. There was a very small school, maybe two miles from our house, in the next town, called Lazanne College, and it turned out that there were scholarships available for people in town. But nobody ever heard of it. This girl looked into it and got one. I always thought "Gee, how could she go to school? Her parents can't afford it anymore than my father." Her father was a truck driver. We thought, they can't afford it any more than we can and look at her. It turns out she had a scholarship, and she went on to Columbia and became a teacher in Long Island. It was interesting that wasn't mentioned,
or it wasn't even an option for other people.
Rosemarie

Only one mother, Regina, had the option of receiving a higher education, and she chose to get married and raise a family because she was not happy in school.

I enjoyed school very much in high school, but it seemed like I just was tired, and I thought I was going on and get an—
but I just decided I didn't want to. And sometime after a while, you don't want to go to college and then some people leave and go back to college. But I preferred to get married.
Regina

Although all of the daughters went on to higher education, only five received encouragement and financial support. Six were self-motivated women who financed their own education and overcame barriers placed on their educational goals by earlier circumstances.

I didn't understand about getting loans and financial aid. See, I thought it was a bad thing to get a loan. I didn't understand that I could get a loan to pay for my housing and to help me eat. No one told me.

So I worked then. Under Kennedy, they had the DEOG grant, so that underprivileged kids could get money. Not that I understood that they would give me money. So I started off, I saved up, so that my first semester I didn't have to work. I saved up enough to pay rent a whole semester, to pay for my tuition and everything, and I made A's and B's that first semester. Then in the summer, I took a part-time job and when I took the part-time job, the DEOG money went down. So that by my fourth semester, I was working full time at three different jobs,
and I went from an A-B student to a C-D student
and when I got an F in something,
I said, "Forget it".
I was trying to take Organic Chemistry, second semester Biology
and those kinds of heavy sciences in that last semester,
and I said, "I'm getting nowhere."
The DEOG money was not enough for me not to have to work.
And I didn't understand,
to me owing money was a bad thing, so you didn't take out a loan.
I didn't have a concept that when I got out of nursing school
I would have made, at that time, $10-12,000 a year
which is comparable to like $30,000 a year now,
and I would have been doing very well and I could have paid it back.
I just didn't, because I had never had anybody to actually explain all this to me.
All I knew was that I worked,
I paid my rent,
I saved.
Sarah

No, there was absolutely no one in my family who encouraged me to go to college. In fact, my sister dropped out of high school when she was 16
and went back five years later and got her GED. My brother,
both of them were B and C students, I was a straight A student
from literally the first grade, five years old to probably in high school.
I was always the class pet. I always loved to read.
In fact, when I was a child
I would
literally
go to the library once a week
with my mother,
who encouraged me
to go to the library. She would go with me,
and I would get ten books out.
I remember at an early age, I was reading about
arcane subjects,
literally, as a child,
like sharks and UFOs and that kind of thing. . . .

I think to them education didn't have to come from an academic background.
To them, education could be learned, I think,
from just the apprentice system, mentoring.
And in that era, it was more agrarian, and people learned from working in the family and working in the family business. There was no need, many people were self-educated then. For example, like Harry Truman.
In that era, you read and did different things.

Toni

One of the daughters was growing up in the '50s along with many of the mothers in this study and experiencing similar frustrations and barriers to her educational aspirations.

From high school, she began working, eventually marrying and attending college while raising her children, receiving a BA in sociology. One of the first students to attend Georgetown University's Liberal Studies Program, she talked about her educational experience and the fact that she and her sisters were passed over for their brother, who was given preference despite the fact that he was the third born of four children.

Well, it was in the cards that my brother would get a college education, because he would have to be responsible for a family. But it was almost like we were in a tracking system, and we could go to nursing school, or we could take a business course, or something like that. It was like, well there was just no way that they could afford to send us to a Catholic college in the '50s. In the '50s here, there were rumors that the professors at the University of Maryland were, as they used to call them, "Pinko" or "Communists." And there was no way that they would let us go to the University of Maryland and get taught by these communist professors. It was that frame of mind at that time, so that was not even a possibility. . . .

But anyway it was just like that was it, you know, and so I worked for two years in a bank, and then Lee was in the Army in Georgia and he wanted to get married.
And I didn't like being that far away from him, and so we got married. But even after I got married, then I was either going to the library and reading books and I started taking some Adult Ed classes, and Lee was the one that encouraged me and said, "Well if you are going to take classes, you ought to get credit for it."
And we lived very close to the University of Maryland. So when my daughter was a year old, I started going at night taking more courses at University College. . . . I just think they were so into that framework, you know, the roles and so forth. . . . I'm trying to think, we just had our 40th class reunion, and I think there was one other girl who got her degree in my class. She went right to college and got her degree. She has never worked a day in her life since, because she married a man who was an executive, and she has played the role of the executive wife. I can't think of another girl that went on. . . . In the 50s, you could go out and get a job and work your way up within the company. They did a lot of that. When I went to the University of Maryland, there were very few older women who were going to college. There were some guys that were taking classes who had gone through the service and were taking them after their fulfilling the service needs, but there weren't many older women.

Charlotte

Women are not allowing age or other barriers to discourage them from receiving an education, because they know it is a requirement today for many jobs. As one of the daughters, Judith, says, "a college degree is a green card for most of us, and was in the '60s, whereas it was the high school diploma or certificate that was the green card in the '40s."

What they did was they restructured our department and when they did they came up with an entirely new organizational chart. And when they did that they said,
"Okay, everyone is unemployed now
in this department,
and we are interviewing you for a position
in the new organization. So in the new organization
there are several jobs like the one I have now,
so I'm hoping that I will fit into it somewhere and they will see that
I have the skills necessary for it.

I have really learned the value of a college education.
Because I have been able to interview for jobs that people who have been there
like 15 or 20 years and have really shown that they are good workers
and can contribute to our company, are not getting interviewed
because they don't have a degree.
So if you indicate that you are interested in that,
because you are at that level anyway in the group,
if you don't have a degree, you will not even get an interview.
Whereas here I am, I've been with the company for only 4½ years
and I've been interviewing for some of these jobs.
I think in the old company, you didn't need a college degree
and so there was a lot of advancement when people didn't have a college degree.
It was based more on their work performance. However,
now that they are starting back at zero sums again,
they are looking at
credentials
inside and out
and some people don't have the education.

So I have really learned the value of having a college education.

Sandra

In 1961 I went to work in town, but I was already 48 years old, and
I had to lie to get a job. Nobody wanted to hire you at 48 then.
And I was going to be 49 in October,
and the only place that would hire me
was the place I didn't know until I got the job there that they didn't even
pay minimum wages, and I worked there though until I was 62.
We got a little raise along, and I worked for Lerner Shops.
I went to work there and I found out afterwards that I didn't know at the time
that I found out afterwards,
they had at that time not hired anyone without a high school education.
Because I saw them talk to people and say I can't hire and say why,
and say you don't have it.
You mean you have to have a high school education to work here?
And she said, some of them whose working here now and been here a long time
didn't have it,
but the new rules is
you have to have it.

Ethel

Patrice, Carolyn, Erin, and Sandra had parents that supported and encouraged their
daughter's education, while Tracy's father encouraged and supported her over her mother's
objections. Unlike the women who saw education as a "no option" situation, these
daughters never questioned that they would get an education. They also had no options,
but unlike their mothers, there are no regrets.

Well, the whole family was always very encouraging in going on to college—
mother, father, grandmother, grandfather.
It was just in their—
My grandparents had not had college. My father had had some college,
and I think he did finally get a degree of some sort, but it was
the family paradigm that the children, the grandchildren, whatever,
everyone should go to college... They had always planned that I would go to college,
and I didn't question that there might be some other option. That was it.

Patrice

She grew up in Maine, in Stamford, Maine.
And it was just, I was raised that I was,
that I would go to college and there was no doubt about it.
She was raised not thinking that,
and she didn't go, and I did.
For me there was no question, and for her there was no question.
And it was interesting that the children of her brothers and sisters
that stayed in the town who are my cousins and my age
also did not go to college,
because they were raised under the same assumption.

Sandra
Went to public school, went to a very good primary school, was able to walk to school, and just grew up in a very lovely family. My father loved to read, my mother liked to encourage us in our school work and because of my two older sisters—I have a sister who is eight years older than I am—I was very energized, I would sneak at night and read their school books. I loved to read and my mother will probably tell you some stories about that. I guess my point is I grew up knowing that an education was important. Loving family, a good school, even though it wasn't a very wealthy school. But teachers who cared about us and parents who were committed. When I went to high school, I became interested in taking a foreign language and became a foreign exchange student for a summer in Costa Rica and I came back from there and was very fluent in Spanish. I got an interest in Latin American affairs, and international relations. I came back from Costa Rica, graduated from my high school in suburban Chicago, and then went back to Costa Rica and taught English there awhile. I was kind of restless after high school, didn't know what I wanted to do. I taught English as a foreign language, I was like a teacher's aide, made some money, attended the University of Costa Rica, and then decided that I wanted to do something in International Relations, and was talking to some people at the American Embassy there and they said, "Go to Georgetown, it's a very good school for that." And so I applied from Costa Rica. I'll never forget, they wanted me to take the English as a foreign language test, because they thought I was actually Costa Rican! Went to Georgetown and attended, graduated with my Latin American Studies and was hired by—. But I knew that having a college degree was instrumental to any kind of career move I might make, and I just thought this is something I need to do. But I'm really glad I took that year off between high school and college, because I think you need to do things when you're ready for them, and I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But actually, since you mention it, I always knew that I would go to college,
I just didn’t know when or how.
It was always within me.

Carolyn

Lexie was a daughter with no options because of her gender. She grew up Catholic, wanted to marry and have eight kids, but she also wanted an education. Her mother said that her brother’s education was a priority, because “girls don’t need a college degree.” Lexie received a BA in English from Boston University, after she had worked to put her husband through college, and a Master’s in Liberal Studies from Georgetown University. One degree she can’t put on her resume is her PHT, a popular degree in her neighborhood in the 1970s. Putting Hubby Through was still an accepted part of the era.

Lexie acknowledges that her Liberal Studies degree made her rethink her values, but laments,

It’s a pity that I’m 50.
This would have been better had it come when I was 20.
The thing that is amazing to me is the culture in which you grow up and the acculturation process during your youth.
There are so many things about the way you think that are set in that period that you don’t even question them because it’s like you see this as being set. In fact, you don’t even see it,
it’s such a foundation the way you think.
It seems so normal and natural.
You never question it. . . .

She needed me and my sister to work to pay her room and board so that she could finance my brother through college. That is where she really got the money is from our rent. I was paying 1/3 of my net income to my mother, and applying it to my college courses in night school, and totally supporting myself,
and then doing things like buying her a washing machine.
I had kind of set up in my mind was that I did want my degree.
For three years in a row after I had graduated from Catholic High,
I had a priest at Catholic High who could
pick up telephones
and get scholarships for me,
because I had graduated Valedictorian of my class
and so, I guess they have connections in Catholic communities.
And for three years in a row I had people set up these
arrangements for me to go to school full time.
And in the Spring I would ask my mother if I could go. She would say,
"If it doesn't cost anything." And then in the Autumn
when it was time for me to leave
she would tell me I couldn't go. And then I would say, "Okay, next year."
And she would say, "Okay, next year."
And we did that three years in a row and then finally, the third September,
I got married and moved away.
I had not originally planned in my mind to leave.
I had never originally planned to marry before I had at least
gotten my Associates of Arts degree,
and I think what happened was that after I married my husband,
his educational—he had not yet finished,
he had three years of college to finish when we were married.
So I
put him through.
And now I look back on it, I hadn't even finished my own degree and
I was putting him through.
After all those years of
putting my brother through,
now I'm putting him through,
and you know
when you look back on it
in retrospect
you say, "God, why did you do that?"
Lexie

Lexie calls the work women do as wives and mothers "Creative Domesticity," but as Betty
Friedan wrote in *The Feminine Mystique*, few women of Lexie's age felt that the role of wife
and mother sufficiently utilized their creative abilities (Solomon 200). Lexie questions the justice of women being oppressed to the benefit of men, when the men so often walk out in a mid-life crisis. After 25 years of creating an environment according to an ideal, the cult of true womanhood (Berry 51), her life came full circle to that which she had been working to escape, a broken home.

Nobody laughed, nobody joked, everybody was serious. Of course it was better than living in fear of being hit across the room, but it was sad, and so I just wanted a happy family.

Her husband walked out of her and her daughter's life.

The stories of women who sacrificed their own development in order to provide their husbands with advantages, only to have the husband dispassionately leave in a mid-life crisis, proved so pervasive that women today have developed defense mechanisms to avert a financial crisis when faced with abandonment. Anne is a woman of the '90s. Because her boyfriend was going to college and he did not want to leave her, Anne married right out of high school.

I'd gone to Europe to work.
We moved to New Orleans when we were 18 and he was in college, and after about a year there, we didn't have any money, we had no money.
And this man at Mardi Gras asked me to go to New York to model and I did.
And that's what I started doing and did it until I was 4½ months pregnant.
I did it for 5½ years.

Anne
Anne and her husband now have three children under five. During those years, Anne's husband earned a B.A. in Political Science, a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, an M.A. in Chemical Engineering, and is currently studying for his law degree at Georgetown University.

I thought to myself, what if he has a mid-life crisis and leaves me for some little paralegal with 25-year-old hips and 25-year-old tush, and I'm stuck with three kids and they try to take my kids away from me. So I said "No Way!"...and finally I said, "Oh, this is awful, I've got to have some outlet here. I've got to do something," I don't want to turn into my mother, or his mother, and I don't want him leaving me for someone else. So I said, "I want to go to school." He said, "Do you think this is a good time? I'm in my first year in law school." And I said, "If you're doing it, well, I'm going to do it."

Anne enrolled in Georgetown University's Liberal Studies Program and is studying for her bachelor's degree. She represents a generation of women who are actively rejecting the subordinate role imposed on women. In earlier times, a similar strength of character and determination was required to fight against the limitations that subordination placed on women's lives. While the limitations placed on their formal education was often beyond their control, the tenacity not to accept a static environment in their lives was exhibited in small ways.
We never had a car until Ed got old enough to drive. My father bought an old Ford. He never did learn to drive it, so Ed took over and my father bought a better car. Ed did the driving and then I wanted, I was 16 and I said I wanted Ed to show me and he said no. So I just paid attention to what he was doing and one time I said to my mother, "Can I take the car and go visit Ann Tissaday? She's visiting her aunt in Del Ray for the summer." And she says, "Do you think you can drive it?" I said, "I think I can." She says, "O.K." So I got in and I went. I didn't have any kind of a lesson and I started it, and I started down Jefferson. I got out alright, I got as far, almost up to the Rouge Bridge and a man pulled up along side of me and he motioned to me that I hadn't finished shifting gears, I was still in second. He motioned for me what to do and when I did it he just laughed and went on his way. And I found the street where Ann was, and I went down that street. That was fine, but then I found out it was a dead-end street. I turned around in that street, there were no driveways or anything. The aunt lived, the street was here but there was a shop on this side of the street, and the street ended, so I had to maneuver the car until I got it around. I got home safely.

Jane continued to subvert the restrictions placed on her by educating herself in similarly small but powerful ways throughout her life. Her lack of education would always plague her, and like the majority of mothers in this study, she encouraged all of her daughters to get an education.

It was during the war, Whiteheads just didn't pay the money and then on top of that the steel mill went out on strike and they pulled Whitehead & Kales out with them. Dad got a job at the shipyard but they wouldn't let him keep it. . . . I was so interested in trying to keep things together here that
I never gave it a thought what I would have liked or not liked.
I liked being a housewife, I liked taking care of you children
and taking care of Bill and everything,
I liked all that but the money wasn't coming in.
The steel mill, they settled their strike, but after pulling Whitehead and Kales out
they didn't stay out until Whitehead's was settled,
and I used up
all the money we had.
You children, as you were born you got little banks,
you money you got I would put in those little banks for you.
You and Pat had several bonds that people would give you.
When Dad went on strike, I had to cash all those in,
we used up,
I used up everything. . . .

I figured if you had an education when you left school and you went out,
you would have a chance to get a job. When I went out,
I couldn't even take a sales lady job because I didn't know how to spell.
Over the years now I've learned how to spell, yes. But at that time,
I didn't know how to spell, I didn't know nothing,
and so I didn't know what kind of a job—
I went places where they told me they wouldn't even hire,
I went to Trenton where U.S. Rubber was there and tried to get a job
and asked if they had women there, could I get a job?
And they said, no they didn't have women there. I went to,
what other place was that,
a place in Wyandotte, a shop there,
and they didn't hire women there.
I went to several places trying to get a job and
I went to Trenton there where they made their engines and
I went there, and they said, no the only women they hired there was in
the office, did I know any office work? Well, I didn't.
I was all over trying to get a job.
I would take Dad to work
and then went all over trying to get a job.
He didn't want me to work
but I only had, it got so bad,
I only had one pair of shoes.
My mother gave me one of her housedresses to wear.
It was bad. . . .
We didn't have money for college. You wanted to go higher. You wanted a higher education, but you had to figure out a way to get it on your own, because I couldn't. I was lucky I made payments on this house.

Jane
CHAPTER III

PATHWAYS: WORK AND MARRIAGE

She, when she graduated from high school
the Veterans Administration came up and gave
all the females typing tests, and if they could type well,
they got them down to Washington to be GS-2s in the Government.
So when she was 17, she, literally, she pinned $200 to herself, and
she jumped on a Greyhound bus and came down here
and started typing.

Sandra

Until recent years, the word "career" was not often applied to work that women do.

If they had a "career," it was as a homemaker. A career is defined by Webster as "a field for
or pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement, especially in public, professional, or
business life," a definition which applies to those in the public sphere. Women's place was in
the private sphere and "career" therefore applied more to men than to women. Since
more women today have careers alongside men\(^2\), this leads to the assumption that women
are being challenged more and succeeding more than their mothers. But it is an illusion that
the lives of previous generations were set into a pattern. While women did marry early,
were mothers and housewives, cooked, cleaned, and cared for children and husbands, they
also were employed at various periods throughout their adult lives. Putting women into the

\(^2\)Many women remain in the traditional path; only 57.3 percent of married women work
outside the home (compared to 37 percent in 1950)\(^3\) and of those only about 75 percent
work full time (Berry 171).
category of "housewife" is problematic because "most women move from unpaid work to paid work during their lifetime" (Fonow 144). In fact, there was great variety to the lives of the mothers in this study, due to the chances they took, the places they went, and the work they performed, taking advantage of every opportunity that came their way. For the majority of mothers, their "career" was childraising, but a high percentage of them worked at other jobs. Some worked before they married, for others work came later in life, but it was an extremely important aspect of their lives, giving them a personal satisfaction and fulfillment quite different from that obtained in the mothering role.

When working professionals speak of their work as a "career," the word suggests a degree of importance or stature. Because it has a significance, a weightiness, that "work" does not evoke, the use of the word "work" can devalue the jobs that women of previous generations held. When I asked daughters whether their mothers had careers, they said no. Sarah's response was, "No, although she worked. She worked part time when I was young and I think she was home with each of us when we were very little and then started working part time and then worked full time when Cathy was three. She did bookkeeping."

Tracy also replied, "She didn't really have a career. When I was about thirteen, she went to work at the Ethan Allen furniture store and was the office manager there." A position as a store or office manager would today be considered a "career." Willa points with pride to her advancement when she was such a poor student in school, but she said her daughter thinks she's "not very smart." Similarly, Sandra says that her mother is "intellectually curious"
and yet her mother said of herself that "she's not smart at all," sensing an unfulfillment
because she did not go to college. That seems to be one of the things that women get from
education—no matter what they accomplish in life, they do not feel like they have done
anything if they have not used their minds enough. Despite the pejorative comments from
mothers and daughters alike, the mothers in this study are complex, articulate, wise and
thoughtful women whose successes are measured in ways that are not always apparent to
them or their professional daughters.

I had an important job in my opinion. I ran the office
and I loved what I was doing. . . .
I love people,
I love people!
That's why I loved my job at the retail store.
That was why I was good at it,
because I got along so well with the people.
They would call up and they would be so mad that their furniture order wasn't there
and before you would know it, I had them
eating out of the palm of my hand,
most of the time, most of the time. . . .

Maybe they didn't realize what an accomplishment I made going to work
and working my way up to becoming AA at Ethan Allen
and then learning bookkeeping
which I
hate.
I can't add for the life of me, but bookkeeping was
wonderful,
everything had to come out.
Willa

With me not having any education, I got a job in the dime store
and worked there for a while and then I got a job in a department store
hanging clothes up when the clothes came in.
Hanging them up and putting them on the racks.
And then they needed a cashier there, and they asked me if I would do that. And they said, “Go and help that girl.” So I went in there and was helping the girl. You know, you take the money and ring it up and wrap the clothes. Well, the girl quit and they asked me to take the job. I took the job. Somehow or other, I always balanced.

Jane

Women often left home in their teens, moving to new towns or countries in search of work, embarking on a search for freedom and independence. Education was beyond their reach, but they were adventuresome and unafraid and their stories are wonderfully exciting, often humorous, and filled with the excitement and pride that comes from personal accomplishment.

I volunteered for the Air Force when I was 17½, my father had to sign the papers. He really didn’t want me to go, but that broadened my outlook on life. I came in contact with people of very different home lives. But because I signed for three years and I was sent eventually into a camp that we did the Hollerist work, we were the only unit in the Air Force that used service personnel. They were Hollerist machines, IBM machines, the same idea. So it was a case of you learned the machines whether you wanted to or not. There was no official trade in the Air Force for that until 1951 and it became an official trade. But that was the work I did from then on. I was posted at this camp to train as a key punch operator, and eventually went onto the bigger machines and everything, so that was a good grounding for me for work then when I went back into the civilian life.

I emigrated out to Canada, I was a couple of months before 25. I got work with the IBM company in Hamilton. I’d always wanted to come here. We had relations here. Mother’s great aunt who I’d never met, she had left the country five years before I was born, but had been in touch letter-wise for years.
I decided it was time.
I needed a change,
and so I said,
"I think I'll try to go and apply to go to Canada."
And that opened up a completely different world for me. . . .

Patsy's grandmother came from Yugoslavia on her own.
Her parents were Polish Ukrainian, and I believe neither side
liked the idea of marrying into a different group sort of thing,
and so the parents when they did get married moved down to Yugoslavia
and her grandma was born there. And again, she, at the age of about 20, 21,
was coming over this way. Her brother had immigrated previously,
and so she came to Canada. Her brother was living in Detroit.
She had herself a nice little time in Paris,
with two or three other girls
and they missed the boat.
So the next boat leaving went to Canada
instead of
America.
So she came out. . . .

Emily

My grandmother, her mother, had come to America as a teenager,
in her early twenties. My grandmother was one of 12 children,
and six or seven of her siblings had come to the Hartford area and stayed.
She also had come to America and actually liked it.
When she was going on the boat back home for holidays,
she met my grandfather,
who didn't want to live in America,
so she ended up returning to Ireland and staying in Ireland.
I think she talked about America plenty to my mother.
One of my grandfather's sisters was a nurse in New York.
When she would come back to Ireland during the summer,
she would bring amazing clothes and wonderful things.
So my mother had this
vision
of America being this fabulous place
with beautiful clothes.
And her visual image of New York—
She thought money would grow on trees and everything would be spectacular.
She has a very interesting story of her first night in America and opening her eyes and seeing a neon sign that said "Drake's Cakes" and thinking, "Oh, my God, I want to go home".

Erin

And then there was this thing there are no jobs in Ireland.
What do you do?
And everybody was coming, and I think I said to my mother I want to go to America or England.
"Well, I would certainly like to see you go to America before you go to England."
And she wrote my aunt in Hartford
and my aunt said she would sponsor me, and here I was.
I had taken shorthand and typing in Ireland in the secondary school which is like a high school here. But when I got here, there was the question of a place to stay and
I had an aunt in Hartford that did domestic work and of course rumor has it that the girls in the office don't make very much money and they don't have a penny by the time they have their room and board paid for so this was the best place to start over.
So I got a job, my first job was with a Jewish family, and they had three children.
And we went away to the beach for the summer, but it was hard.
I was doing the cooking, and I wasn't familiar with American foods. Like I always tell the story about the first day on the job we went to the beach, and we went to the shore to this house and she went down to the beach and said we would be back for lunch and we left hot dogs for lunch. I had never seen a hot dog and I had never heard of a hot dog.
I was the most timid, and didn't say "What is a hot dog?"
So I looked and I couldn't find anything with dogs on them. And she came back and said, "Did you cook the hot dogs?" and I said I couldn't find them and of course she went into the refrigerator and there were the frankfurters. So she took them out, and left them on the counter. So then I didn't ask, "What do you do with it?" So I looked at it.
So I figured we had black pudding which is mud pudding to make in Ireland,
so I cut them into slices.
And she said, "Well, it doesn't matter how you cook."
I didn't even know how to run the vacuum cleaner or open a can,
I had never used a can opener in Ireland, you would see plenty of cans,
but we had that point,
we lived in the country where we never had cans.
And I had cut all my fingers just from trying to open the cans
and not knowin' what to do.
I guess she had to show me because, she showed me.
And I remember her saying one night—she's having a
glass of beer with her supper——
and I didn't know, there were all these can openers, and evidently
I picked the wrong one and put a little hole in it and the thing
hit the ceiling.
But anyway, I learned,
but it was learning the hard way.

      Molly

We were nervous. We were very nervous about leaving.
We felt confident being together, the three of us. We just felt——
One of them had been my absolute best friend since early childhood,
so I was not 18 yet. So young!
Oh, my mother cried and everything, and they were nervous about us getting here.

On the other hand, they felt—a government job is regarded so highly up there,
it almost doesn't matter what you do, I swear.
I had had three brothers leave for the military,
they had already been in the service, going back and forth.
I think they thought I could take care of myself, or if not, I'd be back.
Yes, everything worked fine.
What I joke about with my children is,
the joke around here is whenever we discuss doing anything, I say,
I can't believe you can't do that!
The joke is that I came here with $200 pinned to my bra!
Because that's kind of a family joke. I had it someplace where it would be safe.
And that was the big thing, knowing I had $200 going to the big city.
And that was money that they had—I don't know how they came to that amount.
We hadn't discussed it, I hadn't asked,
I don't know what I thought I was going to live on.
I didn't have any luggage.
I kept talking about coming to Washington, but I thought "I don't have any luggage."
Little things like that were big things, because I hadn't worked ever,
I didn't really have any—
I had done some babysitting, but other than that—
Of course in my school, we always wore a uniform
so we didn't have many clothes at all.
I started working here and it was sort of challenging,
there is no question about it.
We lived at, there was a place called—
We had a place to live before we came here,
I mean our parents made sure we had a place to live.
There was somebody who was already working here that somebody knew
and got in touch with that person and
she found a place for us to go
after we got here.
It was the Evangeline. It was a home for young business women or something.
Well, I've never run into anybody who has ever heard of it!
My parents were very comfortable with that. They knew that
the rules were strict, that we'd be in by ten o'clock,
12 o'clock on weekends.
The food was sort of cafeteria style in the basement of the place,
so we would eat well.
They knew we could afford to live there with the money we made.
And so that was fine.
A big problem, I think—see we came here in June
and I was amazed it could be so hot. We were so—
There wasn't any air conditioning.
We would just go home when it got to be 95, they sent us home from work,
and we would just lie in our beds and
wonder if we were
still alive.
We just couldn't believe that people could put up with that kind of humidity.

They were great days. When we first came to Washington,
it was to work for the Veterans Administration.
So in no time did I decide I didn't like it there,
I could see that there were better things around, through meeting people.
I decided I wanted to work for the CIA. So I spoke French
and that's the one thing that would be an asset, and
so that's what I did. I applied to work there.
I worked there many years, that's where I met my husband.  
I loved working there. I wasn't there three months when they said, 
how would I like to go to Paris for three months on a TDY 
and the first thing I said was, "Alone?!" 
I had, you realize, up until now I had never done anything alone.  
I always had to surround myself with these roommates and other people.  
And they said, "Of course, alone." And I said, "Oh, I don't know."  
And everyone around me said, "You're crazy if you don't do it, 
it would be crazy not to, what an opportunity." So I did that.

In Paris, it was an undercover job.  
It wasn't right there where the other CIA personnel were,  
I used my French, I had a good time.  
And before I went there 
I trained to sort of 
get a better accent.  
I loved that,  
I thought all that was good.  
Loved the whole experience as it turned out.  
You know,  
it was a real growing experience for me.  
Rosemarie

Despite the excitement and satisfaction they obtained from working before their marriage, it was rare for the mothers in this study to have full-time jobs during the years they were raising their children. This was often the result of husbands who felt a wife's place was at home, due to the well-developed concept of separate spheres for men and women, the public and the private: men were responsible for the public world and the woman's role was in the separated, private sphere of the home.

I always talked about going back to work when my husband was living and he never wanted me to.  
I worked up the street in the Monastery like 10-2,  
and I was off Christmas vacation and off summers,  
and I worked as a receptionist, and he said,
that's fine but you are to stay home.
My husband,
I guess it's what you call a chauvinist,
the woman stayed home.
Bound to the stove as they say.
I did the cooking,
he took care of the outside, and did very well,
and I did everything inside and
that's the kind of home that we had. . . .

I wished so many times that I was in the working world,
and he was alive to say no. . . .

Molly

Most mothers worked at some point. One mother, Emily, was able to combine
home and her work as a computer operator because when she married, her stepdaughter
was already ten years old and able to help. Sally worked full-time building a successful string
of hair salons because she left her children in the care of her parents. Although Ethel
worked to support her children after her divorce, they were subsistence jobs in which there
was little opportunity for progress or advancement. The other mothers usually worked
part-time, and returned to work full-time when their children got older or when their
husbands died.

I had little, small part-time jobs. I worked a number of years
as a crossing guard because I wanted to stay home with the kids
after I started having children. I worked at doing that for about eight years,
for the school that my children were going to.
And then that is pretty much what I did until I got older. . . .

My husband did not want me to work at all.
He didn't even like the fact that I was doing the part-time work.
I worked in the school, I had a very close relationship with the school,
with the grammar school that the children were going to,
and I worked with the PTA there,
and then I would do jobs, I would work part time at lunches and things.
But he didn't want me to work,
he said I should stay home and take care of the girls.
Then I thought that I should too because I always thought that I was young enough
that I could go to work later when the girls were able to take care of themselves.
But I always had the opinion that I wanted to raise my daughters.

That's why I always kept some kind of part-time, two or three hours a day,
I did want to do something.
Well, I really hadn't thought about that, other than
I just didn't like staying in continuously and not doing anything,
especially after the girls got where all of them were in school all day,
I was bored, and I needed to do something.

My father never believed that women should work, and
he always provided very well. It wasn't like it is today
where you almost have to have two jobs, the husband and wife both.
His job was satisfactory as far as they were concerned to take care of the family
and she [her mother] also did the same thing I did,
she would do two or three hours sometime, she did a lot of charity work.
She liked to go to hospitals and things like that.
It wasn't her as much as it was the decision between the two of them,
that she wasn't going to work. I never knewed her to have a full time job.

Then I knew that when he died I had to get out and get a job,
a full-time job. The kids were grown, I mean big kids,
and I didn't have to worry much, and I didn't.
I went out, not like a job I would want,
but I had to do it until I was able to get the job that I wanted.
And I took care of myself.
I knew I had to do something.
I knew that this is what I had to do.
It was just something I had to do.
And I enjoyed it.
Because I had a very good job, because that's why I liked it.
I was very productive as far as I was concerned, and I enjoyed working with people,
and I just enjoyed it. I had wanted to do it anyway,
and I would have done it
whether or not he had died,
because I knew that I couldn't just
sit after my girls got off,
I knew I couldn't just
sit and hold my hands.

Regina

I got a job and I worked at Reed's Drug Store behind the soda fountain,
made a friend there and we are still very close friends.
But anyway, then I had some kids that were behind me in school
but we'd always been friendly, and they worked over at Potomac Edison
so then I got in over at Potomac Edison as the office payroll clerk,
and then from there I got married. . .
Bob was working up at the Foundry and he was a machinist and
he was a good one but we had the Depression, you know,
just before we got married, and so forth. . .
I married Bob. 'We went together for eight years.
Well, the Depression, the Depression came along, you know
so that knocked that in the hedge for a while. . .

But the one thing that saved me when he died. . .the fact that
I was working with Bob, the son,
and he never said anything about taking any time off.
You get out, you meet people and you can't sit and think. . .
I didn't go to work for Bob until 1969 when he bought the business over from Pete,
who wanted to retire, and he bought the business
because he wanted to keep it in the family longer, over 100 years,
and he said how about, because I was doing part time,
and he said how about coming to help Tom, who was in the office
and wanted to retire too. He had been with Pete for 25 years.
So I went to work when Bob retired.
I stayed with young Bob then until I fell and broke my hip.
But I was ready to.
He should have put me out on pasture before.
Government forms and everything, when you get older,
they confuse you a little bit,
and I couldn't, I told Bob when I was in the hospital,
he stopped in that one day, and I said "I'm not coming back."
He said "Well you and Bob are in one boat"—
he was the auditor—"both of you are getting older."
And I said, I knew that!
I know one time I told Bob, 
he made me mad about something and I laughed and I said, 
"I'm going home and you don't have to bother about me." 
"My God, Mom, if you were at home, 
you and Pop would kill each other!" 
Marjorie

The biggest changes in the daughters are the facts that homemaking is no longer a 
career and marriage is no longer their first goal. The daughters work in the fields of 
marketing, graphics, physical therapy, computers, secretarial, academia, government, and 
public relations. Only one daughter is a full-time mother, but she is attending college at the 
same time because she does not want to continue the pattern set in place by her upbringing 
in Texas.

I am the only female, my mother, my grandmother, and my sister, 
none graduated from high school. 
But they live in this little area in west Fort Worth, 
where people are so trite in their outlook on life.

It's the fact that I left Texas. 
Women in Texas are still very stereotypical, marry money and that's all you need, 
wear a big diamond ring, that's all you need. They don't leave Texas. 
They're fine as long as they're in the state of Texas. 
I think a lot of the reason I feel this way is I travelled all over Europe, 
a rude awakening, to see how women are treated over there. 
I encouraged my sister to go to school, and she won't do it. . . .

I know very few women that have a lot of money 
that did not go to college, 
that did not develop a life of their own, 
that are happy. 
Every woman that I know that has an education, 
or even an education and a career, 
or an education and a family, 
and if they have money,
they seem really happy, because they do things.
it opens up all.
They say an education opens up everything to you,
and it's not stupid when you think about it, because it opens up avenues,
it broadens your expectations of what you can expect
from yourself
and what you can expect from other people.
Phil's mother especially, she's like my mother as far as money.
Oh, she can put $10 and put it in the stock market and boom! it's $10,000,
I mean business genius.
But she's socially dysfunctional.
I mean, it's awful and it's terrible, and I just don't want to be like that.
I don't want my daughter being like that.
I don't want my sister's daughter being like that,
because my sister's mother-in-law is just like my husband's mother. It's awful.
Anne

For most women who are pursuing higher education, careers have priority over
marriage. This is a result of the opportunities that education has offered them, opportunities
which they know their mothers did not have, the lack of which led them into marriage and
motherhood.

If my mother had been born today,
she would have done things completely different
because she would have had a chance.
But she felt that she had to marry because
how could she take care of herself otherwise?
And she had a child and how could she do that otherwise?
And she did leave.
Now she told a story at one point that when she got pregnant,
that her father wanted her to give the baby up for adoption, this is another thing.
I think when she was 15 she went to live with Grandpa White.
She went back to live with her father again.
When she was about 15, though,
she talked her oldest sister, Loyce, into leaving North Carolina
and coming up to Richmond.
She lied about her age and she got a job working
in the Accounting Department of Miller & Rose. It's kind of like a Woodies. So. But you know at some point she was in Blacksburg, too. So I'm not really sure, I'm sure there was some activity there, but I don't know, I had a much better chance of working as a single woman and making money and taking care of myself. I mean obviously. And she tells a story about working at Miller & Rose— and she was always a very good worker, I've always been a very good worker, too— But there was a MAG card machine or something that came in, and they selected the workers to be trained on that by their education. Not by their ability. Even though my mother had come in, never seen any of this equipment before, had mastered all of it, a better producer, better worker than anybody else, she got passed over because she didn't have the education.

Sarah

If the daughters look to their parents' marriages for role models, they may feel that they have a greater chance of having a successful career than marriage (see Fig. 3, page 73). Only three daughters are married to their first husband with intact marriages that appear to be happy—two have children, one does not. Among the mothers, seven considered themselves happily married, including three with alcoholic husbands who died young due to their alcoholism (one of whom left her alcoholic husband later in life when his drinking became intolerable); two married three times; one left her alcoholic, abusive husband and unhappy marriage later in life; and one divorced her abusive husband.

Many women today are more willing to sacrifice for their careers, as opposed to their mothers who sacrificed for their husbands and children. They are not willing to give one hundred percent to a marriage, and they question the very concept of marriage, where
in patriarchal culture "you live in his house and you damn well better do exactly what he wanted, when he wanted it and how he wanted it done" (Sarah). The role of mothering as natural is also questioned.

I think society has changed.  
It sounds like such a metaphor, but I think at one point that's all women did, would have kids, and whether or not you were suited to it, you did, and went on with your life.  
But women have changed so much in the last 200-300 years, there are a lot of women who don't need kids, and a lot of women who don't want kids, and kids have become a means of control for women over men, which is the worst thing you could possibly do. I mean the things that women do to their kids now, you look back 400-500 years, I'm sure women always got mad at their kids and smacked them in the butt, but now you've got women killing their kids because of men. That to me is the most disgusting thing in the world, and now I think there are a lot of women who don't need kids. I don't think my mother needed kids. My mother used kids to get to a man. And I know a lot of women like that.

Anne

I think she was the type of mother who sacrificed a great deal for her children.
It turns out later my father was an alcoholic, but he was one of those drunks who got drunk and stayed in a corner and was quiet, he wasn't violent or anything like that. But I think she protected us from that, she tried to make our home as happy as possible in spite of that, and I think sometimes she really lived through us, I guess...

She went back after my father died, she decided to go back and she got, there was a program
women whose husbands have died or after divorce could get career start program
and she went to school and got sort of a health certificate,
I guess it's like a nurse's aide certificate.
With that she was able to go to places,
and she liked working with the men because they were more like children
and I think she felt she could deal with children,
and she worked there for about—well, anyway.
She just retired from doing that, now she is home during the day.

In some ways, I think she just blossomed after he died,
I hate to say that but she really did. And in a way
I think she felt she had done her duty, she stayed with him as long as it took
and she provided for him and for his children.

I'd love to get married,
I don't want children.
I think I'm,
that's not for me.
that whole project, being pregnant,
the whole thing, doesn't appeal to me.
Someone once told me I have an unnatural fear of childbirth.
But I would like to get married.
I'm glad that I live in a country where that is changing,
because that's not always the case,
and even my mother has changed a little bit about that.
She would just like for me to get married, she'll tell you.
She would do anything.
She'd recruit anybody
for me to get married.
Because she feels some way that I'd be taken care of,
and I told her, you know all husbands don't—
"Well, but still you wouldn't be off by yourself."
"What you really want me to have is a bodyguard, not a husband."
At least now she doesn't get on me about having children.
Maybe it helps that she has five grandchildren of her own
so I'm not pressured in that way.
But I think you can. I feel good about that. I talked to my priest about it.
I really don't want children.
But I love being an aunt and I'm a godmother.
I always thought if I did feel that way I'd go maybe adopt,
because I feel for all the children out there that people had
that they don't want. So I thought if I ever get that,
what do they call it?
the biological clock,.
if I don't
throw it out the window,
maybe I'll adopt. But so far
I haven't had those feelings.
Carolyn

She was only 47, he died of a heart attack.
My sister was 14, I was 19, but soon to be 20, my brother was 21
and my other brother was 22. I think that is why we are all
so close to my mother and respect her so much.
Because she just handled that so amazingly well.
It's unbelievable how strong she was. Not that I don't ever remember
thinking she wasn't strong, just her ability to persevere
and just go ahead and have faith that somehow this will all work out.
And it did. I mean she stayed in the house that we had lived in,
I think for seven years while all of us went off to college.
I came home after college for two years.
After I moved to Washington is when she sold the house and bought a condo.
She was ready to do that and she loves her condo.
She saw them build it and she is so happy there
and she feels really safe and it totally meets her needs.
She has a circle of women friends that she has been close to
and they helped her through it.
She took up walking and again, she has really strong faith and just prays.
She just did beautifully and she never ever projected any self-pity.
She just was like this is what I have to do and she just did it.
I don't know how she did it, she just did.
Out of the blue, he was gone like that (snap) and she did.
She had her brothers who came over from Ireland to visit
which sort of helped her through it,
but she found the strength within
to find a new life
and she never projected "I can't cope, I can't cope"... .

I like my independence, and I like being close to my mother.
So I wonder how you can strike a balance
by being supportive of your family and still have your independence.
Maybe during periods of your life
maybe you have your independence now and then you have your children and
give up your independence and
then you re-emerge again when your children are out on their own.
If I can carry it off the way my mother did with her selfless giving
and not feel like I'm completely giving up my independence
I would be truly happy.
But I can't,
when I look back knowing what she did,
I can't imagine myself doing that
without resenting it.

Erin

I got married because I felt that all of my girlfriends out there were getting
married and if I wanted a primary friendship in my life,
it looked like society was telling me I was going to have to get married,
it was the only way.
Otherwise, I was just going to be out there by myself.
Didn't mind living alone.
Didn't mind taking care of myself,
but I wanted somebody that I could be pretty sure I could go to the movies with
on Saturday night, or go out to dinner or whatever.
So during this time in my life this man, Don, came in and he was funny,
he was an artist, he taught art school, and he just fell head over heels,
and he said the day he saw me he went to school the next day and told everybody
at work that he had met the woman he was going to marry.
Don was passive enough
that he would never run my life,
I felt that I could wear the pants of the house
and that was fine with me.
I called an attorney before I got married. A woman attorney in Atlanta.
I said I want to know what rights I lose when I get married.
And she said, "Oh, you don't lose any rights when you get married,
it's when you get divorced when you lose."
I shouldn't have done it but as my friend Andy said, when someone said to him,
guess what Sarah is doing now? He said,
Well, she must be getting married because she's done everything else.
She's been to Europe, she's lived in a commune, she's done this and that.
Not that I needed him to fit in, I just wanted a friend, and he was fun.
And I figured I could learn to love anybody.
I had learned to love all those people I lived with in the commune as you know.
I just didn't see it.
I still thought, well, I can still go ahead and do what I want to do.
So, of course, I had no idea of what a marriage or partnership was.
He was 36 years old and had never been married.
He had lived with a couple of women.
Now I had lived with a man in a commune for years, of course,
that was very different because you had this whole family of people around you.
So we weren't really a couple either, we were a part of this big group.
Even though we slept only with each other
and we considered each other girlfriend/boyfriend.
There was always this group.
You went to the movies, you took up this whole row.
Everybody went to the ballet together
and everybody went to Canada together, you know.
So it was quite a shock, I think, for both me and Don.
It didn't work because he was too quiet and too passive
and he turned out to be a whiner
and he turned out to be passive/aggressive
and he would, you know,
things would upset him and he wouldn't talk about it.
So I would say, "Don, are you all right? Talk to me."
"Yeah, Yeah."
So finally we went out, I remember, one night during the week,
it was like Tuesday or Wednesday
and we were playing Trivial Pursuit at a friend's house
and we stayed up until about one o'clock in the morning and then we came home
and we got into this talk, an endless talk,
and he finally opened up and told me that where
I saw myself as being supportive and encouraging,
he saw me as being critical and demeaning.
He kept saying that he wanted to go back to school
to get his graduate degree, Ph.D.,
whatever the next level he needed so that he could teach on a college level.
And I kept saying, that's great, let's go.
I'll go back to school, you go to school, I'll go back to school,
or I'll work while you're in school and you can work while I'm in school,
let's do it, let's go somewhere else.
I mean you know, I was just, I could make anything happen. That was the other thing. I thought I could make anything happen. So that I could make this marriage. I thought, well, if I'm going to get married one day, might as well get married today. Here's a guy, he's interested, good person, has good friends, funny, and I can make this happen. I can make this marriage. No.

Sarah
### MOTHER AND DAUGHTER PROFILES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daughter</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td>Regina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Age: 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Willa</td>
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<td>Navy or Marine</td>
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<td>married</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3 marriages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>she left him, he died young</td>
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<td>Ethel</td>
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CHAPTER IV

ALONG THE WAY: PATTERNS ENCOUNTERED

We read these stories to find
what we share,
what binds us together, and
how other women have learned
to transcend the rules and the roles...

Susan Koppelman
BETWEEN MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

It is beyond the scope of this study to present the entire range of social phenomena I encountered in talking with the women about their lives. I am presenting those which I consider most significant and worthy of representation. My reasons for choosing the three major areas of economic dependency, abuse and alcoholism, and the myth of the nuclear family are outlined below, but more importantly for the purpose of this study, I believe that all three areas played a significant role in the formation of communication patterns which existed in the family systems of the mothers and daughters prior to the daughters' decisions to pursue higher education.

I begin with economic dependency, which has long been recognized as a primary factor in the oppression of women. The problem of economic dependency always has bridled women. Despite gains made by women who joined the work force during the Great Depression and World War II, the majority of mothers in this study, even those who held jobs outside the home, felt they could not support themselves and their children alone.
Today, economic independence is liberating educated women from the fear and oppression which forced their mothers to marry and remain in marriages, despite the quality of the relationships. The daughters' desire for education often arose from not wanting to repeat their mothers' lives as far as being economically dependent on a man. They saw their mothers as examples of the limitations placed on women and the resulting difficulty of their lives. Analogous with the daughters' expectations for their own lives was the encouragement they received from their mothers, who knew they had wanted more for themselves than life and circumstances offered them.

I am presenting the pattern of abuse and alcoholism because I was personally astounded at the number of women in this study who were married to abusive and/or alcoholic men. When my first interview revealed a daughter who had tried to kill her abusive, alcoholic father to protect her mother from a brutal beating, I hoped it would be an aberration, despite my awareness through media attention and organizations such as M.A.D.D. that alcohol plays a major role in our society. Unfortunately, among the 11 groups, I found only one family that I would consider "perfect"—completely functional and happy. I wish I could capture what made this family a success, because I left so many interviews feeling sadness over women's lives. I believe the issue of dysfunctional families is a contributing factor in the desire of the daughters who participated in the study to seek escape from the confines of marital dependency. In words and action, many of the daughters are consciously trying to avoid relationships similar to that which they saw in their
significantly reduced today by advances in medical knowledge and technology. On the other hand, some daughters of the study also were "motherless daughters," because their mothers rejected traditional mothering roles. I present this pattern because of its relevance not only to the current ongoing debates, but because of the myth created by a patriarchal society that women are naturally meant to marry and become mothers just as their mothers before them. While the majority of the women were raised in "traditional" homes, more than a third of them were not. Because women know that the ideal is not reality and because they are today experiencing a freedom unknown to previous generations, the daughters of this study are representative of a generation of women who are willing to overturn patriarchy's legal, political, and economic institutions, and its cultural institutions such as marriage (Tong 7).