

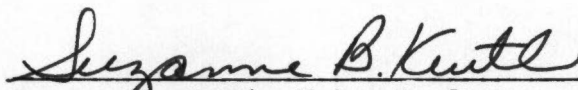
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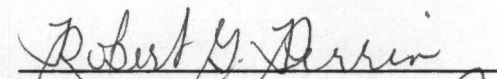
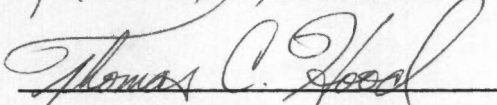
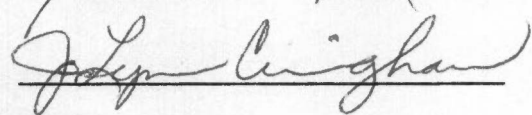
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Cynthia S. Burnley entitled "Selves, Careers, and Relationships of Never Married Women." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Sociology.


Suzanne B. Kurth, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

Thesis

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SELVES, CAREERS, AND RELATIONSHIPS OF
NEVER MARRIED WOMEN

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
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The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Cynthia S. Burnley

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ABSTRACT

The symbolic interactionist perspective provided the general theoretical basis for this exploratory study of the selves, careers, and relationships of never married women. The life careers of adults who are not married were investigated in order to fill a gap in the literature on adult life and to explore the utility of the symbolic interactionist conceptualization of career.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 never married women between ages 30-40. They were selected through a process of snowball sampling. A semi-structured interview guide was developed for the study.

Individuals have multiple careers with various dimensions (e.g., occupational, familial). In addition, symbolic interactionists have utilized the concept of personal or moral career to refer to the various shifts which occur in a person's conceptions of self and others over time. They eschew developmental models which propose that individuals must pass through a specific set of stages in a particular sequence.

The respondents' careers varied in terms of entry (recruitment). A few women reported that they had selected their single status. However, most respondents cited situational factors to explain their present marital status and did not perceive their careers as irreversible, although they varied widely in the degree of reversibility they perceived.

The respondents generally indicated positive self perceptions but they were aware that others, particularly those not close to them might

assign negative social identities to them (e.g., old maid). In some instances the women assigned negative identities to other singles, e.g., participants in activities planned for singles.

Around age 30 many of the women experienced changes in perception or engaged in different types of activities which suggested that they experienced identity transformations, i.e., identity turning points. Thus, some reported changed perceptions of the likelihood of marriage, while others decided to pursue advanced degrees. The majority of respondents had developed various "stories" or accounts to provide others who questioned them about their single status.

Marriage is often conceptualized as a crucial interpersonal relationship establishing and structuring other adult relationships in American society. Singles reported that they had relationships with others of varying ages and marital statuses; however, the activities they engaged in with married associates differed from those engaged in with single friends. The respondents also indicated a relatively high degree of contact with surviving parents. The singles' various relationships with friends and members of their families of orientation were conceptualized as forming "social support networks" for the singles. There were different expectations associated with the various others in their networks.

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INTRODUCTION

Sociological research on adults' lives primarily examines occupational, family and deviant careers; in other words, people's movement through organizations and institutions (Brim and Wheeler, 1966). The careers of women who have not been married do not fit the typical adult stages associated with frameworks such as the family life cycle (Aldous, 1978). The symbolic interactionist concept of career which emphasizes changes in perceptions of self and others provides an alternative framework for examination of never marrieds' lives.

The likelihood of first marriage is lower for older age groups in American society. Marriage statistics indicate that most women who ever marry do so by age thirty (U. S. Bureau of Census, 1977b). Researchers, such as Donelson (1977:234-235), have argued that single women are likely to recognize the low probability of marriage and to experience a "moment of truth" around 30. These women may have to begin adjusting to singlehood as a relatively permanent status. Changes in perceptions may be precipitated by the achievement of a major goal (e.g., completion of professional training and entrance into a lifelong occupational career). Thus, Adams' proposes that

by age thirty most women who are still unmarried are beginning to build up economic independence, an investment in work and a viable value system that allows them to identify and explore major sources of personal and social satisfaction in other areas than marriage and family. Even those whose first preference is marriage are compelled to readjust their social sights and relationships because the number of eligible men will have thinned out (1974:491).

The purpose of this study is to examine the life style adaptations of never married women age 30 and over.

Occupants of social statuses are expected to behave in accordance with social prescriptions (i.e., fulfill role expectations). Social psychologists argue that individuals are often assigned social identities based upon the roles associated with their statuses. An individual who does not fulfill adequately role expectations or whose status is questioned may be assigned a different role and social identity. Typically, a young never married woman is cast in the role of marriageable young woman and assigned the associated social identity. The social identity is of limited duration because both the social group assigning it and the woman usually expect that she will marry within a few years. When a woman marries, she has a new identity (aspect of self) based on her marital role of wife which replaces that of marriageable young woman. If a woman is no longer young but remains never married, she may be assigned an undesirable social identity (e.g., old maid) and be the subject of social disapprobation for her failure to move through the socially prescribed sequence of status changes.

Women in their thirties who have never married have not participated in the expected sequence of status changes (wife and mother) and must develop strategies to neutralize perceptions of them as deviant. All single women are asked at times to explain, to account for their singlehood (Scott and Lyman, 1968). Not only do other people inquire, but also the single woman has been socialized to ask herself

why she has not married. She must develop responses which affirm her current view of herself or alter those conceptions. How never married women account for their singleness, whether they believe such accounts are honored and by whom, whether they believe in the accounts themselves, and who request such accounts are questions addressed in this study.

Adult singles may receive social support from their families of orientation (Shulman, 1975:820; Stein, 1976:46), but also they probably seek social support from other sources. The types of others with whom singles form relationships may be influenced by their status. Thus, investigation of their relationships requires that the social characteristics (e.g., marital status, age, gender) of their relationship others be ascertained.

Marriage is a legal, contractual relationship. Although never married women may participate in intense personal relationships with others of the opposite or same sex, those relationships do not involve socially recognized changes in status. Only never married women who have never born children are examined, for the previously married and the never married with children have held or hold different statuses.

Chapter I presents an overview of the theoretical frameworks utilized to examine the selves, careers and relationships of never married women.

Chapter II reviews the existing literature on singles and the population characteristics.

Chapter III describes the methodological procedures utilized in the study and the sample characteristics.

In Chapter IV data are presented regarding the identities (selves) and careers of single women. Dimensions of singles' careers examined include: career entry, (ir)reversibility, multiple careers, career plans, role/career models, and career accounts.

Chapter V contains the presentation of data pertaining to the social relationships (family, kin and friend) of singles.

Chapter VI presents the empirical conclusions, the theoretical contributions, and limitations of the study and suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

A set of difficult issues confront social scientists who attempt to examine the less formally structured aspects of adults' social lives (e.g., personal careers and relationships). These issues are confronted when there are multiple patterns, especially when they are not clearly defined. Existing frameworks are strained when examination is undertaken of the interrelationships among various aspects of adults' lives which are structured in varying degrees. The study of never married women's lives requires that these issues be addressed and that the researcher draw upon the strengths of various theoretical frameworks.

Careers

Several frameworks of varying degrees of theoretical abstractness have been developed by sociologists and psychologists who have examined adults' lives. Generally, sociologists have examined adult status passages and adult socialization by focusing upon occupational, family and deviant careers. Emphasis has been upon patterns of movement through organizations and institutions (Brim and Wheeler, 1966). As a consequence, aspects of adult life which are less structured have been neglected. Also, a tendency to focus on the experiences of "typical" individuals as represented by the use of demographic data has directed attention away from the variety of life patterns. Psychologists have expanded their attempts to specify the order and timing of developmental

stages to include adult life (Frieze, et al., 1978; Levinson, 1978). Developmental frameworks de-emphasize the person's ability to actively construct her own life, as well as neglect issues of interest to sociologists (e.g., social and cultural differences). Symbolic interactionism, a sociological social psychological framework, requires that the social structure, individuals' subjective experience of status passages, and the interplay between the structural and subjective be considered when examining adult lives.

All such frameworks are postulating the existence of careers. This work will draw upon various of these frameworks to examine the careers of singles. However, the symbolic interactionist framework will be utilized as the theoretical foundation.

Age and Gender

Age and gender are social categories which have tremendous consequences for people throughout their lives. They affect how people are expected to perform roles based on occupancy of various social positions. A parent who is female and 22 years of age is expected to behave differently than one who is male and 60 years of age. Examinations of gender and adult developmental stages have focused on the apparent consequences of age and gender categories.

During their young adult years, most people begin preparation for their major adult roles by making life career decisions. For a male the key career choice typically involves what occupation to pursue. Males are expected to join the labor force when they complete their

education. The question is what work they will pursue; labor force participation is anticipated. Women traditionally are socialized to select marriage as their central adult role, subordinating other roles to it (Kuhlen and Johnson, 1952). A woman's adult career is expected to be based around marriage. Although she may perceive flexibility in the timing of marriage and the extent of involvement in other roles, her decision to marry is presumed.

As a consequence of differential socialization, women are more likely than men to view their work choices as temporary and as having limited bearing on their future economic security. A woman's choice of a marriage partner rather than her choice of a job is expected to determine her future life style. Various researchers have suggested that women may delay clarifying their needs, values, and goals. This delay may facilitate accommodation to the needs, values, and goals of their future husbands. They may be able to broaden their marriage options and pools of eligibles by remaining flexible (by exhibiting a contingency orientation) (Angrist and Almquist, 1975).

The general argument is that female socialization encourages dependence on others for support, approval, and direction (Bernard, 1975b; Mischel, 1966). And consequently, "most young women reach the end of the young adult period without having moved as far as men in clarifying their future life objectives or developing a sense of themselves as autonomous individuals" (Frieze, et al., 1978:169). Young women may postpone the search for autonomy and the process of self-exploration.

Psychologists have identified various adult stages. They have proposed that during the 22 through 24 age period there is a search for intimacy which leads many people to marry (Levinson, et al., 1978). Because the median ages at marriage for males and females are in the early 20s, sociologists have concluded that social expectations of marriage must be high during this period. Sociological social psychologists might hypothesize that women who are not married by their mid-20s (1) would experience pressure from others to marry, (2) would question themselves about violating social expectations, and (3) would become increasingly more aware that the marital relationship is expected to satisfy most adults' needs for intimacy, as well as to structure other adult social relationships.

Ages 25 through 29 are defined by psychologists as the period of parental role for women (Frieze, et al., 1978:171). Demographic data on childbearing bolster this argument. During their late 20s married women with children become immersed in the mother role, whereas for many men this is a period in which they are heavily involved in their developing occupational careers. Marrieds without children experience social pressure from their relatives and friends to have children, particularly if there are no apparent physical or financial reasons to delay or foreclose childbearing (Veevers, 1979). Single women in their late 20s may experience pressure to marry and bear children before "it is too late."

Women and men apparently have somewhat different experiences in their 30s. Levinson, et al. (1978) argue that a man in his mid-30s

works on becoming "his own man." In this stage the man focuses on goal-directed activities, particularly succeeding in his work role. Women may be exploring new roles or become more involved in roles they were previously less involved in performing (e.g., occupational, educational). Thus, men "enter adulthood with a firmer identity and develop greater self-esteem during their early work years. While women expand during the 30s, men may be confronting impediments to their aspirations for the first time" (Frieze, et al., 1978:178). The focus of this research is upon never married women in their 30s.

For various groups the age at which a woman may be expected to marry differs. Women in rural regions of Appalachia may be expected to marry in their teens whereas women from upper middle-class families in metropolitan areas may be expected to postpone marriage until their early or middle 20s (after college graduation). Demographic data indicate that most women who ever marry do so by age 30 (Hastings and Tu, 1973). Thus, entering the 30s may lead single women to confront the likelihood that they may never marry, although they may be gaining greater satisfaction than anticipated from other aspects of their lives. Additionally, childless women in their 30s must recognize that if they are ever going to bear children, their time for doing so is limited.

A parallel can be drawn between remaining single and remaining childless. Statuses initially perceived as temporary may be held permanently (e.g., if individuals reach and pass the ages after which changes in the statuses become unlikely). The model which has been utilized most frequently to examine women's adult lives, the family

life cycle, is based on marriage and parenthood. There are no formal sanctions to insure that individuals comply with marital and parental expectations, but rather there is reliance on informal sanctions. Not only is the individual expected to conform, she also is expected to desire to conform (Veevers, 1972:571-575). Social scientists have tended to ignore those women who do not marry and bear children—those whose lives cannot be examined through use of the family life cycle model.

Personal Careers

Symbolic interactionists argue that in order to understand social life, researchers must recognize the continual interplay between organizational and institutional patterns and individuals' perceptions and actions. The meaning of various events and actions emerges through the process of interaction with others in various settings. And, the meanings an individual assigns to various events and actions shape the individual's subjective perceptions of self and the social world. Strauss (1959) argued that individuals embark upon new stages when their perceptions, the meanings they assign to events and social objects, and thus their behavior undergo alteration.

The symbolic interactionist framework emphasizes examination of personal, moral, or subjective careers (Goffman, 1961; Stebbins, 1970; Strauss, 1959). Such careers encompass all the changes in perceptions of (meanings assigned to) self and others experienced by an individual. This conceptualization of careers is based on an explicit rejection of

the assumption that careers are like stairs with defined steps, each higher than the preceding one, and that there are clear stages which must occur in a particular sequence. Utilization of this career concept permits examination of "any social strand of any person's course through life" (Goffman, 1961:127). It "allows one to move back and forth between the personal and the public, between the self and its significant society" (Goffman, 1961:128) and to focus on the impact of specific organizations (occupational, familial, religious) or less formally structured aspects of social life (e.g., singlehood).

Strauss (1959) argued that personal careers enter new phases when individuals experience identity turning points which mark identity transformations. Turning points occur when individuals find it necessary to "take stock, to re-evaluate, revise, resee, and rejudge" (Strauss, 1959:100). A young woman may assume she will marry by a specific age or before all of her friends marry. If she does not, she may experience a turning point in her personal identity. Since many life changes are experienced with similar others (e.g., graduation) or experienced by many (e.g., marriage), the structure of social life leads many individuals to have career phases similar to those experienced by others.

Accounts

The past and present experiences, actions, and commitments of individuals are encompassed in their personal moral careers. Although "many careers are optional, the personal moral career is not optional"

(Lindesmith, et al., 1977:437). Both deviance theorists and ethnomethodologists have used the concept "accounts." Whereas in the deviance literature, actors are requested to account for specific behavior, phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists use the concept in reference to people's continuous reconstruction of their perceptions of reality used to explain everyday life (Filmer, et al., 1973:209). Garfinkel (1967) believes that the easiest way to study accounts is in situations where expectations of social roles have not been followed.

The literature on accounts has focused on explanations of a recent specific action (e.g., "Why did you stay up all night?"). Singles often are expected to explain for their non-action (i.e., why they have not married). The question is usually not asked in the context of "Why didn't you marry last week?" but rather "Why have you not married by this age?"

Scott and Lyman state the deviance view.

By an account . . . we mean a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior—whether that behavior is his own or that of others, and whether the proximate cause for the statement arises from the actor himself or from someone else . . . we include those nonvocalized but linguistic explanations that arise in an actor's mind when he questions his own behavior (1968:46-47).

Although by remaining single a person deviates from socially expected behavior, Scott and Lyman's conceptualization of accounts has limited utility for the study of singles' careers.

An individual's apologia may encompass more than explanation of a recent action. An account may take the form of a tale, a story which

may describe real or perceived events. Individuals who are not satisfied with their careers may have sad tales whereas people content with their lives may present happy tales (Goffman, 1961:150-154). Tales may include both happy and sad elements.

People have multiple identities and develop stories specific to careers (e.g., marital and occupational). A person may take different stands depending on the interactants. Since identities change, the individual may present a changed identity with a suitable story to an old audience, or seek a new audience (Goffman, 1961:168-169). People may also develop "master stories" which account for all of their careers (e.g., religious, occupational, familial). Such master accounts pivot around key beliefs (e.g., in traditional religion—"Whatever God has in store for me" or in oneself as the deity—"I'm okay"). The individual uses these accounts to organize his/her life experiences.

Unlike a physical stigma, being never married is not visible; however, it is not "normal." Once a person is identified as mature and never married, an account may be called for or volunteered (Goffman, 1963). If there is no opportunity for accounting, a stigmatized identity assignment may be impossible to avoid.

A never married woman may account for her singleness in a positive, neutral, or negative way. She may state that she wants to remain single because she enjoys her independence and freedom or that she wants to marry but "hasn't found the 'right' man," "wants to finish school first"; or "must take care of her family." The nature of the relationship(s) to the other(s) to whom the account is provided may

influence whether or not the account is honored, as well as the quality of the story. Family and friends might accept explanations which strangers would discount. "Both the account offered . . . and the honoring or non-honoring of the account . . . will depend on the background expectancies of the interactants" (Scott and Lyman, 1968:52-53). Thus the never married woman's account for remaining single may or may not be accepted. Others' attributions about her may lead them to reject the woman's account, if her story is inconsistent with those attributions.

The person offering the account may not desire or be unable to provide the "real" explanation, but must produce a socially and personally acceptable account. When asked "Why haven't you married?" the reply "I'm having family problems" may be sufficient to terminate discussion of the topic.

Individuals often do not know why their personal careers have evolved as they have. Peoples' accounts are in retrospect (i.e., after they have acted, they explain their behavior). These accounts provide insight into the identities people desire to project and the retrospective organization they are imposing on their lives.

Both singles and childless marrieds may be confronted by casual acquaintances as well as intimates who ask personal questions about their non-conforming statuses. People who would not inquire about an individual's financial situation would ask the same individual why she has not produced children or why she has not married. A distinction can be made between the voluntarily childless and the involuntarily

childless; the career of each receives different reactions. The former is perceived as selfish and the latter is pitied and values are not questioned (Veevers, 1972:577-578). Recruitment, whether voluntary or involuntary, to a deviant career may be described in accounts.

Career Phases and Flow

Institutional markers may delimit career stages in organizational life (Goffman, 1961; Roth, 1963). Patterns or phases cannot be readily identified for some careers in other settings. Some careers are more open-ended than others (Lindesmith, et al., 1977:436-437). Phases or patterns of the single adult life have not been identified except in terms of preparation for marriage (casual dating, serious dating, engagement). There apparently are no defined stages if the individual does not marry by the typical age. The purpose of this study is to examine what happens to women who have passed the typical age of marriage.

The initial reasons for postponing marriage or childbearing may be rather different from the later reasons for continuing those statuses. The individual who does not follow the "normal" sequence may be making decisions to not engage in the expected behavior at that time. If a woman decides to not marry a man she is dating or engaged to marry, she may not be deciding to remain single for the rest of her life but only deciding to not marry that particular man at that time. A couple who postpone having children while attending school, building financial resources or fulfilling desires to travel may become accustomed to

their life situation and continue to postpone having children. Veevers argued that "the majority of childless couples enter marriage apparently intending to have children, but remain childless as a consequence of a series of postponements" (1979:44). Thus, careers may be seen as reversible, providing individuals with many opportunities to change direction (Glaser and Strauss, 1971:Ch. 2).

An individual's life consists of multiple careers (Glaser and Strauss, 1971:Ch. 7). Some careers are assumed to be short term (e.g., friendships or intimate affairs), whereas other careers are expected to be of longer duration (e.g., marriage or work career). The intensity of involvement in a career may vary over time.

Careers have peak points of involvement, during which times the individual fully embraces the moral and subjective consequences of that involvement. At other times the involvement recedes into the background and may carry little if any implications for his or her other career commitments (Lindesmith, et al., 1977:433).

The media image of singles indicates that the peak of involvement occurs when the person is young and in a "swinging" phase and less involved in community and familial life. As singles approach age thirty, their career involvements may change. Although the media suggest they may become less involved in the "singles' scene," the careers in which they do become involved (e.g., work, friendship) are not depicted in the media.

Careers involve interactions with other people who influence the direction of the individual's future career. The never married woman may have had both positive and negative role models and experienced

mixed anticipatory socialization for the single life style. Once a career is initiated, interaction with others influences the way singles perceive their own life styles, whether positively or negatively. "A career is accomplished in the company of a set of career others—those individuals whose presence, commitment, and trust the individual comes to rely and depend on" (Lindesmith, 1977:433).

There may be many sets of career others (e.g., in the workplace, friends, family). An individual's multiple careers may be harmonious or in conflict. Involvement in the work world may affect involvement with family or friends or vice versa (Lindesmith et al., 1977:434). Individuals create strategies to balance competing career demands. Some careers are less visible than others; deviant careers may be deliberately concealed.

Career entrance may be voluntary or involuntary. The mode through which an individual enters a career may determine his/her degree of involvement and attachment to the career. People may be single voluntarily (have rejected offers of marriage) or involuntarily (never have been asked). Generally, voluntary entrance into a career results in a greater commitment and attachment to that social world (Lindesmith et al., 1977:434). It is questionable as to when entrance into the career of singlehood actually occurs. Some individuals may perceive this entrance much earlier than others. The single career may begin when the woman passes the typical age at marriage, when she is identified as eligible for marriage, or at some time in between. From the person's perspective such entrance is a turning point. The turning

point is whenever the individual perceives embarking on a new social identity. Experiencing the turning point may result in a greater commitment to being single or to marrying.

People may have greater control over some careers and less control over others. Women who have refused offers of marriage or have broken engagements may perceive control over their single career. Many careers are affected by matters beyond the control of the individual (Lindesmith et al., 1977:437). A single woman may perceive little control over the number of eligible men she is currently meeting or obligations to family which she defines as prohibiting marriage.

Members of social worlds share, among other things, perspectives on "reality." They may simply have similar experiences and interests but be geographically separated from other members. Singles, however, may not necessarily identify with the world of singlehood and other singles. Never marrieds may serve as a negative reference group, especially if they are perceived as stereotypical "old maids." Some individuals may be more involved in the publicly visible world of singles (bars, apartment complexes) than others. Singles who do not participate in this social world may have a negative image of those who do participate, thus lessening the possibility that singles will identify with each other.

Marital status may be a poor predictor of reference group identification. People may be interacting members of many social worlds. The boundaries of these social worlds "are set neither by territory nor formal group membership, but by the limits of effective

communication" (Shibutani, 1955:137). Thus, there does not seem to be one social world of singles.

Supportive Relationships

The support relationship(s) established by marriage potentially differentiate married and single individuals. Much of the literature on singles focuses on the positive and negative consequences of "lacking" a partner in a society which is oriented to adult couples (primarily heterosexual). The positive consequences of singlehood are the independence and autonomy. The focus on the negative consequences has been on the absence of a marital partner and the social support that could be provided by a spouse.

Because being single does not preclude the need for such social support, singles must fill this need in other ways. They may rely on other familial relationships and on friendships. Single individuals may develop relationships similar to marriage without formally marrying.

Supportive relationships are based upon the ideas of reciprocity and trust. If marriage is the sine qua non of adult life in our society, instead of focusing on what singles lack because they are not married, consideration must be given to what marriage is expected to provide. Whatever the pitfalls of marriage, it provides at least one institutionalized supportive relationship. Many laws as well as customs mandate that marriage is a supportive relationship. In the sense that marriage provides "ready made" support networks, supportive relationships are structured by marriage. The supportive networks of singles must be developed in various settings and may be less permanent.

Marital disillusionment and divorce may be conceptualized as the results of unsuccessful searches for supportive others. Thus, a spouse may have previously provided support or may have never provided the desired support. The commitment to marriage (and presumably what it is expected to provide) may partially explain the high remarriage rates (Glick and Norton, 1977).

Friendships

Various definitions of "friendship" have been generated. For some singles, intensity of friendship is a crucial issue, although individuals' definitions of "intensity" vary (Stein, 1976). Intensity may be defined as the amount of time spent with a particular person or the intimacy of the interaction. Friendship may be defined in terms of exchange or reciprocity—what friends can do for each other. Some singles may recognize that friends come and go, that friendship has a temporal dimension. Stein concluded, "more important than permanency of friendship was the appropriateness and commonality of the relationship in the moment" (1976:85).

Women may accept the gender based stereotype that they more highly value friendships with men than with other women. Because traditionally, women have been expected to value any potential marital relationship more than any other type of relationship, some women will break their plans with other women when any man extends an invitation. Many men expect such behavior, but it causes them (as well as women) to question the value of same gender friendship to these women (Strommen, 1977:165).

However, being single, or female may not be the distinguishing factor. Regardless of gender or marital status, some individuals may hold out for the best alternatives and cancel previous plans or delay commitment to any set of plans in order to pursue such alternatives.

Kin and Friends

Two important sets of others are kin and friends. Two forces have been used to explain interaction with kin and friends: positive concern and value consensus. Family cohesion may be seen as a result of what Adams (1967) labels "positive concern," (i.e., interest, perception of need, obligation with affection). "Value consensus" and affection are seen as the force for friendship cohesion. People choose their friends and maintain contact because they have similar interests, attitudes and values (i.e., homogamy operates). Kinship is ascribed and kin relationships constrained by social prescriptions. Close friendship is often characterized with the properties consensus and affection, and intimate kinship characterized in terms of affectional or positive concern.

There are similarities between kin and friend, e.g. a friend may be defined "like a brother to me," or a sibling may be defined as a "good friend." Awareness of these similarities contributes to our understanding of the traditional kin-friend categories of the social network. Adams concluded that

. . . some combination of consensus and/or positive concern and affectional closeness is the essence of the primary relationship. . . . Presenting the elements of positive social relations . . . results in the virtual equating of intimate kin and close friends with our primary relations, defining them interactionally and attitudinally by consensus and/or concern and attraction (1967:77).

Unlike kinship, there are few institutional constraints on friendship. Friendships are based on choice rather than a sense of duty or formal requirements; thus there is always the possibility that friendship ties can be revoked.

Friendship ties may be much more vulnerable to breaks in face-to-face contact than the kin groups because there are no institutional pressures for permanence. Friendship ties tend to rest on free choice and affectivity; neighborhood ties, face-to-face contact; and kinship structures, permanent relations (Litwak and Szelenyi, 1964:469).

Singles may fear their friends will go their separate ways, and they will be left without close ties to anyone, unless they have relatives upon whom to rely.

Kin may provide emotional and financial support. People may be more likely to expect kin rather than friends to provide such services in a crisis or emergency situation. Friendships may be more transitory because the ties are achieved rather than ascribed. For fear of straining the ties or uncertainty about their duration, people may be reluctant to become too close to, too dependent on friends.

There are few major reported social class differences in friendship patterns. Middle-class and working-class women have very similar friendship patterns. More working-class women report their neighbors as their close friends. Middle-class married women report having more friends than working-class women report for themselves. Both middle- and working-class women maintain friendships through correspondence (Simon et al., 1970:524). Bell argues that increasingly female friendships "perform the highly important interpersonal function of helping women more successfully cope with the emotional issues of life" (1979:142).

Bell (1979) states that people who are separated from kin may develop friendships which partly substitute for lack of close kin. Some kin and friend relations may be so similar that the only real difference is the legal, structural definition of kinship. There is often much similarity between the kinds of emotional commitments and helping patterns of kin and friend relations. The kin and friend relationships of never married women may, of course, differ from those of marrieds.

Networks

People are socialized to accept marriage and the birth of children as part of the natural, normal phenomena of the typical adult career. The establishment of families is the norm. Many family sociologists argue that emotional support is the most important function of the family in modern American society but the family obviously is not necessarily one's only social support system.

Singles may feel a real need for "substitute networks of human relationships that provide the basic satisfactions of intimacy, sharing, and continuity" (Stein, 1976:109). It is important to determine how the never marrieds fulfill their social support needs.

A network is an individual's configuration of relationships which includes close associates as well as friends of friends. It can be seen "as the chains of persons with whom a given person is in actual contact, and their interconnection" (Boissevain, 1974:24). Social networks are not static, instead they are dynamic and constantly changing. The concept "network" provides a way of viewing social relations.

Boissevain suggested that people should not be seen as passively obedient to norms and pressures but instead as manipulators of norms and relationships for their own social and psychological benefit.

A person's network thus forms a social environment from and through which pressure is exerted to influence his [or her] behavior; but it is also an environment through which he [or she] can exert pressure to affect the behavior of others. It is the reservoir of social relations from and through which he [or she] recruits support to counter his [or her] rivals and mobilizes support to attain his [or her] goals" (Boissevain, 1974:25-27).

A few researchers have investigated the friendships of singles (Adams, 1976; Stein, 1976; Strommen, 1977). It is important to identify and examine friendship relations, but there is also a need for the broader concept of network to be utilized. Network analysis has been conducted on families (Boissevain, 1974; Fischer et al., 1977).

Bequaert suggests investigating the informal networks of single women.

These informal networks are where she spends much of her life, where she is hurt or helped by support or its lack, where the effects of the labels 'widow,' 'divorcee,' or 'old maid' may limit her even more than the difficulties she faces with the formal institutions that set the rules regulating her life" (1976:79).

There is a need to examine the nature and intensity of singles' friendships. "Social support networks" provide a frame for pulling these together. In this study "social support networks" refers to people with whom the individual has relationships of sharing and intimacy. The network may be composed of family, friends, or both and includes relationships of varying intensities of involvement. Members may be kin relations, close friends, or "other friends." Relationships may be short- or long-term.

The purpose of this exploratory study is the examination of the identities, careers, and relationships of never married women ages 30 through 40. Focus is on the aspects of their experiences which constitute identity turning points, their career accounts, career entry, and their social support networks.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The number of singles is increasing as more people delay marriage. Single life styles are receiving more mass media attention than in the past. Sociological examinations of gender roles and the family only recently have given more than cursory attention to singlehood. In any case, there are few systematic examinations of the life styles of singles, particularly never marrieds.

Single Population

During recent years, the United States had one of the highest marriage rates and one of the highest divorce rates of all industrialized countries (Glick and Norton, 1977:4). The marriage rate in the United States has declined every year since 1972. The rate of first marriages clearly declined after 1972, even though it had gradually declined since the mid-1950s. There has been a gradual increase in the median age at first marriage for both men and women since the mid-1960s (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977a:3).¹

Most divorced persons remarry, thus the high divorce rate has contributed to the high marriage rate. However, there also has been a

¹From 1960-1976 the median age at marriage changed for men from 22.8 to 23.8 and for women from 20.3 to 21.3 years of age.

decline in the remarriage rate in recent years (Glick and Norton, 1977: 5-6).²

As the median age at first marriage increased and marriage rates declined, by 1976 there was at least a temporary increase in the number of singles age 30 and younger (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977a:3). In 1960, 92 percent of the women in their late 20s had married, but by 1975 only 87 percent of those in their late 20s had married (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976b:8). However, the increase should be interpreted with caution, because long term trends are not clear.

The increase in the percentage of never married women in their 20s was not paralleled for those in their 30s from 1960 to 1976 (Table 1). The percentage of never married women ages 20-24 increased 6.8 percent from 1970 to 1976. For the 25-29 age category, the percentage of never married women increased 4.3 percent. On the other hand, the percentage of never married among females declined slightly (-0.2%) for ages 35-99 and increased slightly for those ages 30-34 from 1970 to 1976. (U.S. Bureau of the census, 1977a:3). For both age categories the percentage never married had decreased from 1960 to 1976.

Glick and Norton (1977:6) suggested some possible reasons for the decline in first marriage rates and increase in the age at marriage in the 1970s. Whereas young men postponed marriage during their active military service in the Vietnam war, increasing numbers of young women continued their education and gained experience in the labor market.

²Between 1972-1975 there was a 17 percent decline in both men's and women's remarriage after divorce.

Independent economic status permitted these women an alternative to early marriage.

Table 1. Percent Never Married by Age Category from 1960 to 1976.

Women	1960	1970	1976	Percent Change	
				1960-1970	1970-1976
Age 20-24	28.4	35.8	42.6	7.4	6.8
Age 25-29	10.5	10.5	14.8	-	4.3
Age 30-34	6.9	6.2	7.0	-0.7	0.8
Age 35-39	6.1	5.4	5.2	-0.7	-0.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Marital Status & Living Arrangements March 1976" Population Characteristics Current Population Reports. Series P-20, No. 306, January 1977.

Secondly, they identify the "marriage squeeze." Women reach "marriageable age" two to three years before men, because the preferred pattern is for women to marry at an earlier age than men (18-24 for women and 20-26 for men). Therefore, the "baby boom" female birth cohort experienced a lack of young men at the "marriageable age" (5-10 percent less than the number of eligible women). Glick and Norton identify other potential causes, such as the women's movement, more women working because of increased economic and employment opportunities, and more available birth control, but they do not empirically establish any of the hypothesized relationships.

Alternative life styles, such as living together without marrying, may be more appealing and acceptable today than in the past. Glick and Norton state, "unmarried couples in households of any size included a

total of 1.9 million adults in 1977, as compared with one million in 1970 and 900 thousand in 1960" (1977:33).

The increase in the percent of singles between 1960-1976 may be only an indicator of a delayed marriage trend because the largest increase is in the 20 to 24 age category. The increase in the percentage of singles may taper off, especially after age 30, even though the increase may continue in the 20 to 24 age category. There is the possibility, however, that as singlehood gains a more positive image, and as marriage is defined more negatively, more people will choose a single life style. Women who delay having children usually have fewer children (Veevers, 1972; 1979). Similarly, delays of entrance into marriage may lead ultimately to fewer marriages.

Living Arrangements of Singles

Recently there has been an increase in the number of singles maintaining one-person households. Between 1970 and 1976 there was a 40 percent increase in one-person households. By 1976 "persons living alone in a house or apartment accounted for 21 percent of all households" (Glick and Norton, 1977:30). Some of these changes can be attributed to increasing numbers of elderly persons (for the 65 and over age category there was a 30 percent increase of one-person households). Thus, "nearly half (43 percent) of one-person households consists of elderly persons age 65 and over" (Glick and Norton, 1977:31). However, there was a greater relative increase in one-person households for young adults between 1970 and 1976. For the under thirty-five age category there

was nearly a 48 percent increase and for the age category 35-44 there was a 41 percent increase in one-person households between 1970 and 1976 (Glick and Norton, 1977:30-31).

Socio-Economic Characteristics

It is difficult, if not impossible, to explain why particular individuals marry or why particular individuals remain single. Bernard (1972:33) examined the marriage gradient. Even though both men and women tend to marry others of the same general class and cultural background; women tend to marry men somewhat older, of higher educational levels, and occupational statuses than themselves, i.e., practice hypergamy. The result is that men at the bottom of the social ladder and women at the top have fewer potential marriage partners than men at the top and women at lower levels. Thus, "one of the most noteworthy demographic generalizations about persons who never marry is that they tend to include the highest percentages of people in the lower and upper extremes of the educational distribution" (i.e., those with less than five years of education and those with a college education or more) (Carter and Glick, 1976:310). There has been a high percentage of single women at the higher educational levels but this percentage has been decreasing, particularly for white women with graduate education.

Klemer (1954) argued that never married women are more upwardly mobile than married women. The never married women he studied were more likely to have started life in lower socioeconomic levels and improved their status educationally and professionally. Klemer implied

that women who try to move up in the social class scale by their own scholastic efforts may have difficulty in the marriage market.

McClendon, in his comparison of white males and females with regard to the process of occupational status attainment, revealed that "male and female workers are considerably more similar with respect to their father's socioeconomic status than with respect to their own status" (1976:55). When housewives were compared to working women, it was found that housewives had a year less education, slightly more siblings and had fathers with slightly lower SEI scores (using Duncan's index) and slightly less education. This presents a different picture than the one Klemmer drew because the differences are so slight.

Occupational Careers

Increasingly women learn job skills or receive career training; however, they are less likely than men to receive socialization defining their adult life primarily in terms of a work career. Instead, marriage is defined more often as the central goal, achieving too high a level of occupational success may limit the woman's prospects for a mate (Kurth, 1975:4). Concomitantly, women may be perceived as less committed to occupational careers than men and assigned lower level positions and accorded lower pay. Employers may believe that a single female is likely to marry and terminate her employment; whereas a male's change in marital status presumably would make him a more stable employee (Stein, 1976:26).

Occupations are frequently sex-typed. Consequently, women are heavily clustered in the service professions: nursing, teaching, social

work, paramedical services, and secretarial and clerical jobs are predominantly female—and lower paid" (Bequaert, 1976:127). The ratio of women to men in such occupations ranged from 2.36 (teachers) to 28.34 (secretaries) in 1970 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976a:35). Professions at the top of the occupational hierarchy (e.g., law and medicine) are dominated basically by males (Moore and Sawhill, 1976).

Recently, males have been entering female-dominated occupations in increasing numbers and have achieved a disproportionate number of high status positions within them. Consequently, "while men were only 16 percent of all librarians as a whole in 1970, 60 percent of male librarians were employed in academic or special libraries, while only 26 percent of women librarians were similarly employed" (Stromberg and Harkess, 1978:299). In 1970, 21 percent of the elementary school principals were female, a decline from 37 percent in 1960. In 1968, 43 percent of the women social workers compared to 58 percent of the men social workers were in some form of administration (Stromberg and Harkess, 1978:303-304).

Starr and Carns (1972:46) place educated women in three overlapping categories on the basis of their work orientation: (1) the career woman who has aspirations and perceives a career and family as comparable or complementary; (2) the female who sees her life-time career as wife and mother and is working temporarily (until she marries) or sees it as a secondary commitment; (3) the woman who begrudges her work role because she sees herself not as a worker but a wife/mother or is not ready to accept the responsibility of a job. Starr and Carns apparently

did not recognize that some women do not marry and/or are not family-oriented. These categories suggest women's adult lives must involve marriage and motherhood. These writers do not seem to be aware that women may define careers as dominant and families as secondary.

According to some theorists, few young women today intend to marry and totally abandon their work or self-development plans (Westervelt, 1973). Instead, these women perceive such plans as compatible; they can combine the two careers. The theorists suggest that for most young women marriage remains a central aspect of their future life plans, although the importance of labor force participation has increased. Thus, unless women who do not marry planned differently than women who marry, they may not have planned for their occupations to be central parts of their adult lives. In any case, women are less likely than men to plan careers in high status (male-dominated) professions.

Stereotypes of Singles

A "stereotype" can be defined as "a set of biased generalizations about a group or category of people that is unfavorable, exaggerated, and oversimplified" (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969:420). It is possible for a stereotype to be favorable as well as unfavorable. The truth or falsity of a stereotype is not as important as the extent to which it influences people's behavior.

Opinions about social groups are acquired from other individuals, from the mass media, and to some extent from direct personal contact. Direct experience with the social object does not necessarily unseat

the stereotype because people mainly see only what they expect to see (Harding, 1968:259). Stereotypes initially are based on the behavior and personal characteristics of some of the members of a category of people. Subsequently, stereotypes are applied to all members of categories, regardless of their own behavior. Once people act toward others in terms of a stereotype, the stereotype may serve as a form of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Stereotypes of singles generally have been negative (e.g., old maid). Never married women may be likely to find themselves exhibiting the stereotypical behavior and identity expected of them because no other modes are defined.

The fact that the old-maid stereotype is recognized as a social entity has given that role an institutionalized continuity that provides a unique corporate identity for the single status. Society, moreover, encourages this tendency because the consistent and familiar image produced by this stereotype helps to circumscribe by definition the threatening deviance of the status, and since the image is unappealing, it is unlikely to compete with and threaten the more attractive one of marriage (Adams, 1976:75).

Two categories of stereotypes of singles are: (1) the swinger—free, fun loving, beautiful; and (2) the loser—lonely, seeing a therapist, tied to parents, and pitiful. These stereotypes are disseminated widely through the mass media (e.g., movies, television, and books). In reality, the lives of single people cannot be described adequately by such "ideal types."

These categories suggest extremes on the social involvement dimension: one is very socially involved and the other socially

isolated. Where others and the woman may locate her on this dimension may vary during different phases of her personal career. An individual may experience loneliness for a period of time and during another period may be involved in many social relationships. Also, individuals may differ in the degree to which they desire to be involved in the social life associated with the swinger stereotype and denied by the "loser" stereotype.

The stereotypes of singles apparently changed to some degree in the mid 1960s, as reflected in their presentation in the mass media. According to some social scientists, earlier stereotypes of spinster and old maid were supplanted by the swinging single stereotype in the 1970s. Epstein claimed, "Not only is the label 'spinster' becoming a relic (the 'bachelor girl' has replaced her), but the status itself is becoming passé" (1971:94). She may have been overly exuberant in her appraisal for "old maid" still is utilized. However, various positive aspects of singlehood have been identified: (1) as a positive alternative to marriage (emotional support, sex, and an active social life); and (2) as affirming greater freedom and opportunity for self-development (Stein, 1976).

Westervelt (1973:5) asserted that young women are now expressing that they "do not want to repress selfhood for a mere man." Like men, women are expecting their sexual partner (in or out of marriage) to

be a major source of support and assistance in their pursuit of self-development. . . . Many young women, now more than formerly, seek to assure themselves of it before making a commitment to marriage. Furthermore, their awareness of the growing instability of marriage . . . forces them to establish goals for self-development which are independent of the vicissitudes of marriage (1973:17).

Unfortunately, Westervelt did not provide empirical support for her assertions.

Marriage often is treated as an important basis for happiness during adult life. Numerous studies have examined the happiness and sense of well-being of married men and women as compared to single men and women (e.g., Bernard, 1972; Glenn, 1975; Gove, 1972; Gurin et al., 1960).

Gove examined the contradictory literature on the relationship between gender, marital status, and mental disorder and indicated that, as might be predicted, a majority of the studies revealed that single persons had higher rates of mental disorders than did married persons. Gove concluded,

married women do tend to have much higher rates of mental illness than married men. But when single men are compared with single women, divorced men with divorced women, and widowed men with widowed women it is found that these women do not tend to have higher rates than their male counterparts. In fact, if there is a difference, it appears to be that women in these categories tend to have lower rates . . . (1972:43).

Other researchers have shown that never married women are better adjusted mentally than never married men (Carlson, 1975:5; Gurin et al., 1960: 234), contradicting the opposing stereotypes of the frustrated, neurotic old maid and the carefree bachelor.

Gove (1972) and his associates (Clancy and Gove, 1974; Gove and Hughes, 1979) do not agree with Bernard (1972) and Gurin et al., (1960) regarding the mental health of married versus single women. Gove and Hughes (1979) suggest the higher rates of physical and mental illness among women are a result of the social acceptability of the woman's

sick role. Some of these studies found this to be true only at certain ages (e.g., single females over 35 have higher rates of illness than married females), but one researcher found in every age category single women had lower rates than married women. In any case, these research findings do not support the negative stereotypes of single females which suggest they are extremely ill-adjusted and neurotic.

Personal Identity

If the young single woman is expected to be popular with the opposite sex and sexually appealing, what happens to her identity when she does not fit that image? Kurth (1975) examined the transformations of identities of never married women as they age and realize that they may never marry, as well as their mechanisms for coping with the single identity on a long-term basis.

People may not choose to marry if they perceive that marriage will interfere with the development of their full potential. The rise in the popularity of sensitivity training during the 1960s and early 1970s was one of many signs of increased emphasis upon self-development. The encounter movement, with its emphasis on the "here and now," "finding oneself," and new forms of self-expression and interpersonal relations, encouraged the development of one's "full potential" (Back, 1972). Remaining single may enable people to develop their individual potential or develop alternative relationships which provide emotional support without the constraints of marriage.

Singles are often referred to as "failing to marry" or "losers." However, people may choose to be single because they like the single life

style or are not attracted by the married life style. Social scientists have focused primarily on the negative reasons for remaining single (e.g., homosexuality, unattractiveness, devotion to parents, fear of involvement or responsibility). Kuhn (1955) recognized such individual reasons for remaining single but also recognized impersonal factors (e.g., sex ratio of population, spatial and occupational limitations, and cultural prohibitions).

Bequaert (1976:218) stated, "At the risk of oversimplification, one could say that the never married women were 'natural feminists' insofar as they had planned their lives without tying those plans to marriage and personal relationships." Just because women do not marry does not indicate they planned their lives without regard to marriage. At least some never marrieds planned their lives with the expectation they would eventually marry, and therefore did not plan a lifelong occupational career. A very different life style might be developed by women who plan their lives without the expectation of marriage.

Media Images

Some popular women's magazines have broadened their perspective to appeal to the career woman (e.g., Cosmopolitan, Working Woman, New Woman) or include articles on careers (e.g., Mademoiselle and Glamour). Even though Cosmopolitan focuses on the career woman, it continues to emphasize the importance of and how to catch a man and become a homemaker (Epstein, 1971:30; Phillips, 1978:117).

Phillips (1978) systematically compared Family Circle (a traditional woman's magazine) to Ms. (representative of the "new" woman). She

treated these magazines as ideal types and explored the range of female occupational role models presented in each type. Phillips concluded that the women in Ms. could rarely be described as "self-made" women who have ascended the ladder to success and status. Instead, the women portrayed were exemplars of people who struggled for social rather than personal goals. The Ms. heroines were not liberated, though liberal.

The central character of popular fiction is usually not a happy career woman whether married or single (Weikel, 1977). The popular media is most likely to portray the single working woman as

embittered, frustrated, forsaken, displacing her real desires for marriage and children to a career—though she may appear as the homewrecker who injects the world of the virtuous and happy homemaker and whose only hope is for rehabilitation in her own home with her own children . . . One, rarely, if ever, encounters a story in which a married career woman goes off to work leaving her children in the care of a housekeeper or baby-sitter, or even a fond grandmother (Epstein, 1971:30).

Television programs are now portraying, although stereotypically, the lives of divorced, never married, and widowed working women. However, these roles comprise a small portion of all roles portrayed on this medium.

Singles' Accommodations

Starr and Carns (1972:43) stated that large cities seem very organized in their accommodations for young singles (e.g., singles' bars, coed singles apartment houses, singles' weekends and excursions). These accommodations may indicate the institutionalization of the

"swinger" life style in the cities, but Starr and Carns questioned whether this actually occurs to any significant extent or for many people for very long.

Many of the singles Gordon interviewed experienced feelings of alienation and disappointment at singles' bars. These bars are likely to be expensive, overcrowded, and designed to capitalize on the confusion between sex and companionship. Most of those Gordon interviewed had gone to singles' bars in search for companionship capable of lasting for more than one evening. However, the atmosphere in most of these bars was conducive to only superficial contact, (e.g., interest was mainly in attractiveness, type of car, address, and occupation). Gordon states that most people who go to singles' bars go home alone; and therefore, do not live up to the image of the "swinger" (1976:223-229).

The media imply that singles' bars constitute the social scene for singles. Starr and Carns (1972:46-47) reported that their respondents frequented singles' bars only one or two nights a week, if that often. They found an inverse relationship between the length of time a single person lived in the city and attendance at singles bars. By the time the typical single female had reached 25, she had little desire to seek social contacts at singles bars.

Starr and Carns (1972:47) reported that sit-down bars drew more steady customers but are not mentioned much in the media (because the setting is not such a sexual market place). The women in their sample who frequented these bars overwhelmingly defined the crowd in terms of

friendship relationships rather than potential dating relationships.

They liked such bars because they provided a place to talk.

Gordon stated that women perceive that single men have more freedom in their jobs and personal lives than women. After all, the man traditionally has asked the woman for a date. An attractive man is more likely to meet women through work and therefore have no need to frequent singles bars (1976:230-231). Through work, men are likely to meet more eligible women than women meet eligible men. For example, the male college professor has daily contact with many eligible women (e.g., students, secretaries, staff, and female professors). But the female college professor does not have this wide field of eligibles from which to choose because women are discouraged from dating someone considerably younger or with lower educational or occupational status.

Even though people who frequent singles bars do not consider themselves to be losers, they may perceive the others who frequent these bars as losers rather than swingers (Berk, 1977). They may continue to go to these bars hoping to meet the exceptional person. Singles may leave disappointed because of their negative expectations, which may be a form of the self-fulfilling prophecy..

Although some singles are discriminated against by landlords who do not want to rent to them, many landlords and business people recruit singles by establishing residential and commercial areas to attract young people. "Thus, whether by choice or as a consequence of limited alternatives, a majority of the singles population is concentrated in very large cities and in specific areas of such cities" (Stein, 1976:33).

Often singles' apartment complexes attempt to provide a community atmosphere with clearly defined activities. Many complexes employ social directors to plan activities and encourage involvement. But like the singles bars, the participants in the mass activities are perceived as losers. Like the patrons of the singles' bars, many of the residents believe the sophisticated people, especially males, do not need such entertainment (Gordon, 1976:237-240). In addition, transiency is prevalent in singles' complexes as a result of the marital status of the residents and the high rent (1976:240-241). Gordon stated, "Despite the Playboy and Cosmopolitan philosophy of the swinger, being single is, traditionally, considered a transient state. Although they may change, the majority of those who enjoy being single don't relish the idea of remaining so forever" (1976:241).

Wekerle suggested that the reasons singles were attracted to the singles' apartment complexes she studied and had high levels of interaction were "homogeneity of residents in terms of ethnicity, class, age, marital status; and a high concentration of people sharing a deviant social status; and the self-selection of residents predisposed to interaction with neighbors" (1972:10). Even though most of the respondents dated about six other residents and knew about nine people living there, fewer than one-half of the respondents had ever used any of the facilities. Thus, Wekerle was somewhat more optimistic than Starr and Carns who concluded "that neighborhood- and housing-based interactions do not significantly contribute to the formation of friendships and dating relationships" (1972:46).

Compared to the spontaneity of meeting dates on the college campus, activities designed for singles may seem too forced and manipulated. Starr and Carn's respondents still expected to be able to meet people easily, as they did in college, even when they realized it was more difficult in the city (1972:48).

Gordon (1976) and Stein (1976) claimed that the singles' industry does not necessarily meet the needs of singles but instead meets the needs of the entrepreneurs. However, Stein speculated that the vast singles' market of bars, clubs, and vacations may be contributing to the increased number of people choosing to remain single (1976:38). He was contradicting his earlier statement as well as other literature which referred to how boring and uneventful these facilities are.

The singles industry as a whole creates a false and unstable community . . . The singles industry was born of the disintegration of community in America, and it is dependent for its continued profits on the maintenance of the status quo. The industry is a business, and businesses are concerned with financial rather than personal growth. As industry depends upon the planned obsolescence of goods, the singles industry depends on the obsolescence of personal relationships. And . . . lonely people who use the singles industry as a solution to their loneliness often feel even more lonely and isolated (Gordon, 1976:245-246).

Limitations of Previous Research

Research on gender and within other areas of sociology has basically neglected singles. Previous research on singles has included only a small number of those who have never married; Bequaert (1976) had seven never marrieds out of a sample of 27 women, and Stein (1976) had 14 never married males and females out of a sample of 40. Even though

Starr and Carns interviewed approximately 70 never married male and female college graduates in their early- to mid-20s in Chicago, these individuals were not past the typical age of marriage (1972). Larger samples and more in-depth interviews must be utilized in conducting research on never married women past the typical age of marriage.

In American society, people often assume that singles have not found the "right" person, no one wants them, they are too particular, or they are in-between marriages. Adams claimed that "the choice to remain single and the capacity to sustain this deviant social role and status depend on a particular psychological motive power" (1976:189). She suggested that three criteria be used to define the single status for females: (1) the capacity and opportunity to be economically self-supporting or independent, from which are derived other features of singleness; (2) social and psychological autonomy and emotional independence from long-term commitments with men and from subjugation of personal claims; and (3) the clear intention to remain single by choice rather than be default (1974:490-491).

This definition is too limiting. For example, a single woman may have a long-term commitment with a man but still identify with singlehood, or a single woman may have chosen singleness by default, but this does not preclude her current intention to stay single. Adam's definition does not recognize changing perceptions over time, a turning point (Strauss, 1959), moment of truth (Donelson, 1977), or an identity transformation (Kurth, 1975).

Stein (1976) found that some of his respondents were single because they had not yet found the "right" person, but he did see an

emerging group of men and women who had decided not to marry at that particular stage in their lives. However, some of those who had decided not to marry had been married or involved in marriage-like relationships, but had decided they preferred singleness. Their previous relationships may have influenced their decisions. Stein assumed that people dating or living in an exclusive relationship were not committed to staying single. In reality, singles may move from one exclusive relationship to another and still intend to remain single. Involvement in exclusive sexual relationships could represent a phase of an individual's life style or a life-pattern.

The societal pressure to marry has been discussed frequently in the few research reports on singles. What has not been well documented are the feelings, perceptions, and responses of single people to such expectations. Do singles feel the pressure to marry? If so, from whom? How do they cope with this pressure? Are singles making a concerted decision not to marry, or are they simply postponing marriage?

Never married women may have either planned their careers or chosen their careers by default. They may have been concerned that too much education or a high status profession would affect their marriageability. Never married women tend to be the "cream of the crop" (Bernard, 1972:33; Carter and Glick, 1976:310), which may affect their dating opportunities. These data should be collected from women who are clearly past the age at which marriage is most likely to occur.

How closely do never married women between ages 30 and 40 fit the prevalent stereotypes of the swinger or loser? How do they meet their

need for social support? Do they rely on family, friends, or both? Social scientists must investigate such issues, especially since the number of women in that age category is increasing.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Further scientific studies should be conducted on the life styles of single adults, particularly women who have never been married and are between ages 30 and 40. The dirth of research on this cohort indicates that exploratory research would be the most appropriate methodology with which to examine this research problem.

The data for the present study were collected in East Tennessee because of the limited resources of the researcher. Whereas earlier studies of singles were limited to the urban North (e.g., Starr and Carns, 1972; Stein, 1976), this exploratory study conducted in a less urban area and a different region provides opportunity for comparison.

Method

The advantages of its flexibility and higher response rate (Lin, 1976:221), the interview was perceived as superior to the mailed questionnaire for this exploratory study. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were utilized in order to obtain detailed information on the life styles of never married women. Relatively unstructured interviews (Appendix A) of approximately one hour each were conducted by the researcher.

In-depth interviewing of a small sample enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information about the respondents. This format maximized the likelihood that the respondent would mention aspects

of her life style which the researcher would not have previously anticipated.

However, the exploratory study is not without weaknesses. If the population cannot be defined, it may be difficult, if not impossible to identify all possible types of respondents. Since representative sampling is not attempted, generalizability is low. Through the in-depth interview the interviewer may bias the responses through her facial expression, tone of voice, etc. Efforts were made to standardize the interview and to minimize reactive effects.

The exploratory nature of the present study prevented the utilization of previously tested questionnaires which were reliable and had been validated. Interview guides used in previous research on singles (Adams, 1976; Stein, 1976) were helpful in designing the questionnaire used in the present study. The focus of their research and the sample characteristics were different from that of the present study.

Sensitizing Concepts

Using the symbolic interactionist framework, sensitizing concepts rather than operational definitions were utilized. "Sensitizing concepts are deliberately left nonoperationalized until the investigator enters the field and learns the specific meanings attached to the processes represented by his concept" (Denzin, 1971:455).

An interview guide was designed with the use of the following sensitizing concepts.

Social Support Network. The reservoir of social relations from and through which the never married woman recruits support for her problems or personal crises and joys. Possible members may be family, friends, and/or other kin; married or single persons. "Closest friends" are included in the network.

Other Friends. Friends other than "closest friends." Such individuals may constitute a group in which singles spend much of their leisure time, but intimacies are not shared, as they are among "closest friends." "Other friends" may also be members of an individual's social support network, but constitute less intense relationships. These relationships may include kin as well as non-kin.

Accounts. Explanations for singlehood. These may be positive or negative, true or untrue.

Turning Point or Moment of Truth. A time at which the never married woman realizes her chances for getting married are very slim and therefore she is likely to never marry, whether or not she desires to marry. At this time she may pursue marriage actively or positively identify herself as "single" rather than "not married yet."

Single. A person's identification with and feelings about singlehood rather than a more negative identification of "unmarried" or "not married yet."

Never Married. A person who has not been married.

Probability of Marriage. The perceived probability of future marriage. The person may have expected to be married by a certain age. the age of expected marriage may or may not already have been passed and may have changed over the years.

Living Arrangement. The situation in which a person resides. An individual may live alone, with one or more roommates, with family, in a communal setting, in an apartment or house.

Pre-Test

In the process of designing the interview guide, the researcher talked with several single people to see if questions were easily answerable. The interview guide was pretested with five women ages 31-41. Their responses are not included in the final data analysis. The respondents were asked to criticize the interviewer's facial expressions. None of the women reported observing aspects of interviewer bias. To further examine the possibility of such bias, a videotape recording was made of one pre-test interview. Judges reported no significant nonverbal behavior of the interviewer which could substantially bias future interviews. The pre-test of five respondents produced very similar types of responses to those of the sample. The analysis of the pre-test enabled the researcher to revise and re-order some of the questions in the interview guide as well as add other appropriate questions.

Sample Selection

The criteria for sample selection were women between the ages 30-40 who had not been married, had never born children, and had lived in the area studied for at least six months. The population of never married women cannot be defined; therefore, snowball sampling was utilized to locate never married women in the area of East Tennessee which was studied. These women were identified through organizations which sponsor events for singles (North Johnson City Baptist Church, First Christian Church, Central Baptist Church, and Boones Creek Baptist Church). All organizations contacted responded favorably to the request for potential respondents. However, only two interviews resulted from these initial organizational contacts. Two other women were identified through churches which sponsor singles groups, but one did not fit the age criterion and the other canceled after setting an appointment. Most of the persons participating in these organizations did not fit the age criterion or had been married. These respondents were also asked to identify other potential respondents. In addition, acquaintances from a variety of contacts with the researcher were asked to identify other potential respondents (e.g., university professors, public school teachers, secretaries, students working in factories, neighbors, and friends of friends). From these initial contacts twenty-two participants were located. The sample snowballed from the initial contacts made through these organizations and the acquaintances of the researcher.

Eight respondents were identified solely as a result of the snowball process. The snowball effect was not as small as it might seem. Three of the initial contacts provided names of groups of friends. When each of these respondents was interviewed they each suggested names of friends that the researcher had obtained previously. Seven additional names would have been provided by the respondents. Six different networks comprising a total of twenty-three women were in the sample. These networks did not necessarily contain close friends. In four of the networks at least two of the members were close friends, whereas the others were acquaintances. This sampling method is adequate because there is such a low percentage of never married women in the area studied. The respondents did not receive pay for their voluntary participation in the interview.

A total of thirty women were interviewed as planned. This limit was reached after three months of interviewing. By that time, all contacts were virtually exhausted and the suggested potential respondents had all been contacted.

Letters identifying the researcher, stating the purpose of the research, and that the researcher would call later were sent to the potential respondents (Appendix B). A later phone call ascertained the respondent's willingness to participate and desired time for an appointment for the interview. Some attempt was made to interview a total of forty-eight potential respondents. Ten refused to be interviewed. Three of the refusals initially consented to be interviewed, arranged an appointment, later canceled, and did not wish

to set a future appointment. Of the refusals, only two had been suggested by another respondent. Six potential respondents did not fit the age criteria but indicated a willingness to be interviewed if the researcher could not locate enough women ages 30-40. Two potential respondents had moved away from the area.

Three respondents seemed somewhat reluctant to be interviewed but indicated at the end of the interview they just did not know what to expect because they had never been involved in a similar experience. Their initial reluctance did not seem to affect the nature of their responses. They seemed as open as other respondents. On particular questions, especially those dealing with the future, specific individuals struggled or paused excessively. Sometimes their initial response was "I don't know" but then they proceeded to answer the question. This reluctance or hesitancy seemed to indicate their uncertainty of the particular question and their lack of planning for such future events. The women varied in their reluctance to answer future-oriented questions. Certain respondents were consistent in their hesitancy whereas others hesitated only on specific questions.

The research was approved by the Department of Sociology and the Committee on Research Participation at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Respondents were requested to give their informed consent for the interview (Appendix C). They read the consent form prior to the interview, but signed the form at the conclusion of the interview (Singer, 1978). Confidentiality of the respondents and their responses were protected by using a code number assigned to each respondent prior

to the interview. The code list was destroyed after the completion of the research project. Confidentiality can be guaranteed since no one other than the researcher has seen the names; and personal characteristics will be changed in all reports based on these data. Respondents were informed that a summary of the research findings would be available upon request.

Sample Characteristics

Gender

If the single life styles of one gender are investigated, a more thorough study can be obtained than if both genders are included. Traditionally, marriage has been seen as very important, especially for women. Therefore, more literature is available on marriage and singlehood of women than of men. A comparison of the life styles of never married men and women should be made; but baseline data on one gender must first be collected. Therefore only women were utilized in the present study.

Size

Thirty never married women were interviewed. An exploratory study utilizing the technique of in-depth interviewing should consist of a small number of cases (Lin, 1976:142). This is a larger number of never married women than the sample used by other researchers (Bequaert, 1976; Stein, 1976), but a manageable size for in-depth interviewing.

Age

Women between ages 30 and 40 were interviewed. Sixteen respondents were ages 30 to 32; eight were ages 33 to 35; and six were ages 36 to 40. Several writers have discussed age thirty as a turning point in the identification with singlehood (e.g., Adams, 1972; Donelson, 1977). The upper limit of age forty for the sample was chosen because individuals older than 40 might be too far removed from the turning point and have more limited recall than those younger. Furthermore, respondents between ages 30 and 40 were more likely than older women to have experienced the same societal experiences and historical events as well as changes in social norms.

Occupation

Adams concludes that for women of lower socio-economic status "singleness does not have the same scope for, nor attraction of, independence that it does for their better educated and more affluent peers" (1976:9). Therefore, efforts were made to include respondents of different occupational statuses. However, considering the socio-economic status of never married women in the U. S., it was not surprising that most of the respondents were professionals and other white-collar workers (Carter and Glick, 1976; Donelson, 1977; Sanchez and Cosby, 1979).

Occupation was used as an indicator of socio-economic status because many writers on social stratification consider it the single best representative of socio-economic status (Haug, 1968:443; Jackson

Curtis, 1968:415). The traditionally female professions (nurses, elementary and secondary teachers, and librarians) constituted the largest category (11). The less traditionally female professions (college professors and administrators) and the traditionally female jobs (secretary, office clerk, and office manager) tied for the second largest (8 in each). Only three respondents were blue-collar workers (production, assembly). Data were examined for occupational differences and are discussed only in relevant cases.

Education

Considering the occupations of the respondents, their educational level is not surprising. The modal educational level of the respondents (10) was a master's degree or hours beyond that level but no higher degree. Three other respondents were working toward master's degrees. However, almost as many respondents (7) had attended college only for a while or attended a technical school. Four respondents had terminated their formal education after high school graduation and four after college graduation. Two respondents had received doctoral degrees.

Income

Annual income was fairly evenly distributed between \$4,000-\$24,999 with only one respondent's income above \$30,000. Three respondents earned \$4,000 to \$7,999; nine earned between \$8,000 to \$11,999; nine earned between \$12,000 to \$15,999; six earned between \$16,000 to \$19,999; and two earned between \$20,000 to \$24,999.

Religion

Most of the respondents were Protestant (12 Baptist, four Methodist, Presbyterian, or Christian Church, and two were Church of God or Free Will Baptist). The overabundance of Baptists in the sample may appear to be a result of the Baptist Churches in the area sponsoring singles groups. However, of the respondents identifying with the Baptist Church, only one name had been provided by one of these churches as a potential respondent. None of the respondents identifying with the Christian Church had been suggested by that church. Six respondents were Catholic and four respondents did not identify with a particular denomination.

Race

All respondents were white. This is relatively representative of the racial composition of the area of East Tennessee studied (7 percent nonwhite) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973:762).

Urban-Rural

According to the 1970 census, the area studied is ranked 601 on an urban scale of U. S. cities with the lowest rank being 840. Therefore, the area is more rural than urban.

Length of Residence

The length of residence in the area was fairly evenly distributed from six months to less than one year (3 respondents) to forty years (3 respondents). Eight respondents had lived in the area 21-40 years (nearly or all of their life), seven for six to ten years;

seven for four to five years; six for three years or less; and two had lived in the area 11-20 years.

Living Arrangement

Nearly half of the respondents (14) lived in apartments (two of them with parents); 10 owned residences; and three rented houses.

Three of the women lived in a house with their parents.

Most of the apartment dwellers had lived in them three to five years (5) or from six to nine years (6). The women who owned their own residences had not lived in them long (7 for two years or less, 2 for three to five years, 1 for six to nine years). The singles who lived with their parents had done so most or all their lives.

Over half the respondents (19) lived alone. A few (5) had a female room-/housemate. Of the six women who lived with relatives, five lived with parents and one shared a house with her brother.

A higher percentage of women in traditional female jobs (e.g., secretary) lived in apartments (75 percent) than lived elsewhere. Two of the three blue-collar workers owned their own homes. They earned between \$8,000-11,999 per year. Their salaries were lower than salaries of women in other occupations who did not own homes. These two blue-collar workers who owned their homes had experienced no geographical mobility. Respondents in the professions were the only ones who had roommates. This may reflect a desire to live with another person for social support rather than economic need.

Data Collection

The interviews were conducted at a site convenient for the subject and which provided privacy. No one other than the researcher and respondent were present at the interviews. The respondents were given the choice of being interviewed at their home or office, or at the university where the researcher is a faculty member. Most respondents (24) wished to be interviewed in their home or office. The remaining six wished to be interviewed at the university in a seminar room.

The difference in site of the interviews did not seem to affect responses. Of those interviewed at the university, four lived with their parents or a roommate. Perhaps their homes would not have provided enough privacy for the interview.

The respondents each selected the day and time for their interview. This enabled them to schedule the interview around their other activities. Some of the respondents felt free to call later and change the date and/or time of the interview. Only two appointments were not kept by the respondent and in both cases they were rescheduled and the interview was later conducted.

Prior to the interview the researcher asked permission to tape record the responses to ensure accuracy of the reporting. The tapes were later transcribed. In addition, the researcher took notes during the interview. This enabled the researcher to record any nonverbal cues which could potentially be inconsistent with the responses (none seemed inconsistent). The taking of notes helped prevent the

researcher from "leading" the respondent with the eyes of facial expressions.

The researcher engaged in some small talk (e.g., weather, attractive apartment) to establish rapport before the interview actually began. Each respondent was interviewed once.

Validity and Reliability

The nature of the sample selection technique severely limited external validity, or generalizability to the population of never married women. Respondents were interviewed only once, therefore there was no problem with historical factors which affect subsequent interviews or subject mortality. The video taping of a pre-test interview assisted the researcher to be more aware of reactive effects.

Even though some potential respondents were identified by representatives from churches which sponsor singles groups, this did not seem to bias the sample. Only two respondents identified in this manner were actually interviewed.

Analysis of Data

The testing of hypotheses and establishment of causality are not the goals of qualitative research. Instead, the goals are understanding, analyzing, and describing social behavior and developing categories representative of such behavior (Robinson, 1951; Glaser, 1965; Turner, 1953). The qualitative researcher may initially examine existing theories and literature on singles and the theoretical frameworks

suggested by other social scientists. An interview guide (Appendix B) was constructed, based on this initial research and used to interview thirty never married women.

Although some categories were more obvious than others, initial examination of the data revealed broad categories representative of the responses to the interview questions. The responses to each question were examined several times to determine the applicability of each category label. In some cases, other social scientists were requested to suggest and/or verify category labels. After categories were collapsed, refined, or eliminated, the data were examined again to assess their accuracy. The interview of each respondent was then coded, based on the revised categories.

During the establishment of categories, quotations from the transcripts were underlined. Quotes that were representative of the categories were selected for their descriptive value. The most articulate quotes were utilized in the report of findings. Quotes have been used as evidence by many sociologists (e.g., Becker, 1963; Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; and Komarovsky, 1967). The social psychological literature were re-examined for theoretical applicability to the research findings.

The qualitative and explorative nature of this study do not lend themselves to the presentation and testing of hypotheses. Therefore, statistical tests are inappropriate. However, the conceptual framework developed through the process of data analysis suggests future research.

CHAPTER IV

IDENTITIES AND CAREERS

People's changes in views of self (transformations of identities) lead to new phases of an individual's personal moral career. Movement through similar statuses may also result in their experiencing similar career phases.

Single Identities

There are basically two general social identities assigned to singles: "loser" or "swinger." The "loser" identity (e.g., old maid, spinster) suggests the individual lacks something important. The single person may be perceived as a failure for not having achieved the positive status of spouse. This identity is actively avoided by many singles (Berk, 1977).

The "swinger" identity appears to be more positive, perhaps even the opposite of the "loser" identity. However, closer examination of media presentations of swingers reveals that they too are depicted as looking for something or someone. The "swinger" presumably visits singles' bars, lives in a "swinging" singles' apartment complexes, and/or participates in other singles' activities. The swinger may be expected to have numerous heterosexual involvements simultaneously or sequentially. Several investigators of the swinger life style have concluded it is an empty and hollow existence (e.g., Gordon, 1976). But many people continue to have a positive perception of swingers as

free from the obligations of marriage and able to pursue whatever (or whomever) they desire. Singles' self-conceptions may not reflect either "ideal" types and their identities associated with other roles.

Self-Identification

Respondents indicated if they used the following words to describe themselves to other people; bachelorette, career woman, never married, old maid, single, spinster, swinger, unmarried. Some respondents indicated they used as many as four of these terms; all used at least one. The term respondents used most frequently was "single" (90 percent). When asked to evaluate the words, most respondents viewed this term as positive. Nearly half (43.3 percent) of the respondents used either "never married," "unmarried," or "not married"¹ to describe themselves. These descriptions were perceived to be slightly more positive than negative. Only 20 percent of the respondents described themselves as a career woman, even though most of them thought this term was positive. The women's occupations did not seem to be associated with their use of "career woman." Thus, the women's work pursuits did not appear to be central to their self presentations.

Only one respondent used both "bachelorette" and "swinger" to describe herself. She perceived that "bachelorette" portrayed a positive image whereas "swinger" portrayed a neutral image although other respondents viewed "swinger" negatively and "bachelorette" negatively or

¹ Although not presented with the choice, some respondents indicated they used "not married" to describe themselves to others. This term was included in the never married and married category.

as an unfamiliar term. The terms "old maid" and "spinster" portray the loser image of single women. None of the respondents used the somewhat archaic term "spinster" when referring to themselves, but 30 percent did refer to themselves as "old maids." However, eight of the nine respondents who had referred to themselves as old maids indicated they used the term jokingly. The other respondents said it too was outdated. No one thought old maid or spinster was a positive label. Thus, most of the respondents did not describe themselves utilizing either of the two general social identities assigned to singles: "swingers" or "losers."

Identification of Others

Even though most of the women did not identify themselves as losers, this did not preclude their defining other singles as losers. Four of the respondents mentioned they use the label "old maid" for other single women with whom they were not well acquainted who "fit" the stereotype. The others stated they did not use such designations.

Sometimes people assume that "singles' activities" such as singles' bars and organizations dominate the social life of singles. Some cities provide more of these activities than others. The women were asked, "Are there any singles groups in the area that you know about?" Responses were evenly divided. Half were familiar with or had heard of singles' groups. They listed church groups and Parents Without Partners (PWP). When asked, "Are there any entertainment places which cater to singles?" only 16.7 percent responded affirmatively;

10 percent said no; and 22 percent did not know of any. Bars were mentioned as such entertainment places. Only 6.7 percent of the women knew of any occasions planned for singles and they referred to the activities of the organized singles' groups previously mentioned (church, PWP).

The women were asked if they ever participated in activities designed for singles. Several respondents volunteered their lack of participation when asked if they were familiar with any singles' groups in the area. A few respondents (3) currently participated in such groups and eight had participated in the past. Past participation for all but two of these women occurred when they lived in other cities. This more than likely reflects the difference in type of singles' groups available in various cities.

A total of 36.7 percent of the respondents were either currently participating or had participated in singles' groups. Neither current nor past involvement in singles' groups could be explained by age. Given that so few of the women had ever participated in such groups and all were in somewhat traditionally female occupations, it could not be determined if type of occupation affected one's participation in singles' groups. Presumably, women in less traditionally female-dominated jobs would have more opportunities to meet eligible men on the job and would not desire to frequent singles' activities (Gordon, 1976). This assumption could not be supported with the present data.

Singles' activities sponsored by churches were the groups in which most of the respondents (4) had participated. Two of the women had only

frequented singles' bars. The remaining women (4) had participated in some combination of activities sponsored by churches, bars, and/or singles' apartment complexes. There are few activities designed for singles in the area studied.

The women who had participated in singles' activities were almost evenly divided on the extent of their participation. Five respondents reported participation in 20-50 singles' activities per year and three reported they participate in one to three activities per year. The extent of their participation did not vary according to types of singles' activities nor did it vary according to their geographical mobility.

Gordon (1976:223-229) reported that most of the people she interviewed had gone to singles' bars and singles' activities in apartment complexes in search for lasting companionship. The women who participated in singles' activities in this study were asked why they attend these activities. Most (7) of them reported they go to meet or be with others (particularly other singles). Three women responded they participated in singles' activities because the activities are fun and to meet others. Even though to meet or be with others was the main reason for participating in singles' activities, no one reported that she attended such activities to meet a man, husband, or date. This contradicts the image of the swinging singles scene portrayed by other writers (e.g., Gordon, 1976).

Although most respondents reported they refrained from use of negative labels for singles, they reported a somewhat negative view of

people who participate in singles activities. When asked "Why do you think other people participate in singles' activities?" 16 of the respondents gave negative or mostly negative responses. The negative responses focused on the personal characteristics of the people who participate in singles' activities depicting them as lonely, miserable, needing friends, looking for something to do or looking for a mate. The positive responses focused more on the activities and the group setting: the activities are fun, people have similar interests, and people are accepted because the activities are not couple-oriented. Twelve of the respondents had equally positive and negative views of people who participate in singles' activities whereas a distinct minority (two of the three who participated in singles' groups at the time of the interview) had positive perceptions.

Presumably, people who have actually participated or currently participate in singles' activities would have more positive impressions of why others participate. Examining the responses of the three women who currently participate in such groups, it is apparent that they are not necessarily more positive than people who do not take part in singles' activities. Only one of these women gave totally positive responses. The responses of the other two women were both positive and negative (e.g., to have fun, to meet a man, loneliness). These women had mostly participated in church activities organized for singles, although one respondent had frequented some singles' bars in the past.

Of the women who had participated in singles' activities in the past five of the eight gave mostly negative reasons as to why other

people take part in these activities. The assumption could be made that this negative impression of other singles is what caused them to discontinue their own participation in local singles' groups. However, only two of the women had previously participated in local singles' groups. The responses of both of these women were equally positive and negative (e.g., people go to look for a mate; other singles feel negative about being single; singles feel accepted by other singles and do not feel out of place as they often do with couples; a chance to meet other singles). These respondents, whose previous participation in singles' activities had been local, and who therefore could continue participating, actually had slightly more positive impressions toward other people's participation in such groups than did those respondents whose participation had been in other cities. Obviously, the number of women who have participated in local singles' groups is too small to draw any conclusions from these data.

The women who had ever participated in singles' activities were asked about their impressions of the women and men they had met at such activities. Half of the respondents had been positively impressed with the women and 41 percent had been positively impressed with the men.

The women did not have a very positive impression of people who participate in singles' activities. The image of singles as losers seems to have filtered into the perception singles have of people who are not married. Most of the respondents seemed to be saying that even though there may be some positive reasons for participating in singles' groups, the negative reasons are more pervasive. The image of the

people who frequent singles' activities was that they are looking for something they cannot provide for themselves.

Perhaps people who attend singles' activities are not the only singles who use face-saving techniques to prevent stigma. Portraying the image that they are satisfied with their current life style, not holding their breath until they get married, using the more positive terms about themselves may be face-saving techniques used by many singles. Even though singles have some very positive images of their own life styles, this image does not necessarily permeate their life style image of other singles. The negative image which some singles have of other singles serves to perpetuate a negative stereotype and furthers the need for singles to ward off negative evaluations from others.

Others' Identifications of Singles

Obviously, the views of others affect one's self image and therefore one's image of the other members of a category. Singles must relate to other's perceptions of the single status. Respondents were asked if other people described single women as: "bachelorettes," "unmarried," "career women," "never married," "swingers," "old maids," or "spinsters." They were also asked if others' use of such words to describe single women varied depending on how well these people knew the single women.

They reported that "old maid" was more likely to be used when the single woman was not an associate, whereas "career woman" and "never

married" were more likely to be used if the single woman was known. One respondent indicated the single woman's presentation of self determined which words were used to describe her. Perhaps this was another example of seeing the use of the term as reflecting how closely women "fit" the stereotype. Two respondents indicated that the ages of the people speaking determined which words were used, rather than their knowledge of the single women.

While responding to questions about usage of words describing women who have not married a few of the respondents expressed sensitivity about the negative image portrayed by use of the words "never married" and "unmarried."

- (21) Never married sounds like never lived. . . . It's almost like you've not quite arrived yet. You've not done what's expected of you, maybe.
- (1) Unmarried is not so bad, but that's like putting . . . marriage as the category . . . and it's like having a negative connotation. . . . You could do it another way and say "no longer single" instead of calling people married.

The responses to the questions which focused on terms which could be used to describe singles indicate that singles typically do not describe themselves to others as losers or swingers. Generally the respondents did not perceive that they describe other singles (except some participants in singles' activities) with such terms. They perceive such terms to be negative and are sensitive about the negative portrayal of single women suggested by several of the terms. And, they are aware that casual acquaintances and strangers may utilize such labels for single women such as themselves.

Singles' Perceptions of Their Lives

Whether or not they believe singles' are "swingers," people may assume that singles enjoy considerable freedom (particularly sexual) and independence (particularly financial). Of course, such perceptions do not preclude the women concurrently maintaining negative images of singlehood (e.g., as a lonely, deviant status). Although single women may share widely held social beliefs about singlehood to some degree, their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of their own situations provide a more realistic basis for understanding the consequences of not assuming the position of married person.

Advantages

When asked to identify the two most significant advantages experienced as a result of being single, the women gave a variety of responses. Perhaps as a consequence of the general tendency to define being single as the lack of something, half of the women were unable to identify more than one significant positive aspect.

Review of the forty-five responses provided led to the identification of three basic response categories: autonomy, freedom from obligations, and opportunity for self-exploration. Those categorized as focusing upon autonomy referred to the freedom to choose (e.g., to live where desired, to select a career, to continue or discontinue education). Two respondents stressed autonomy in both the advantages they identified. Over two-thirds (68.8 percent) of the forty-five responses fell in this category.

- (2) I'm able to move when and where I want to—to take advantage of any opportunities that come up.
- (5) A choice of my career without effect on another career. . . . You know, having to make a choice where I would work, what line of work I choose to be in.

Implicit in such replies is the belief that specific careers, occupational and educational, might not be pursued or if pursued would be shaped differently if the women were married. The two other categories of response were perhaps less salient, for they were given much less frequently.

Twenty percent of the responses focused on freedom from obligation, particularly expectations of other(s).

- (7) I don't have anybody telling me what to do. . . . I make my own decisions and I don't have anybody else influencing them.
- (26) I just don't have anybody to answer to.

The fact that the traditional wife role prescribes that the woman be subordinate to her husband, the respondents' (20) usage of either the words "freedom," "free," or "independence" to describe the advantages of not having a husband is not surprising. The classification of these two advantages of remaining single (autonomy and freedom from obligations) are similar to the classification of marrieds' reasons for not having children. Some people are positively attracted to other interests or they are against children (Veevers, 1979:45-46).

Recent psychological literature suggests that self-exploration is an important task of early and middle adult life which women may postpone until after they have settled into both the wife and mother

roles. Although singles would not encounter the constraints involved in performing those roles, the respondents infrequently identified opportunity for self-exploration as an advantage of single life (11.1 percent). However, emphasis on personal growth and development was apparent in a few discussions of advantages:

- (6) Personal growth and finding my own self.
- (18) I've been able to learn who I am and take on my own pain and develop into new channels which other people would be more likely to depend on someone else for.

Disadvantages

The women were also requested to indicate the two most significant disadvantages they had experienced which they attributed to being single. The rapidity with which they replied suggests that they had thought more about the disadvantages than the advantages. Only five identified just one significant disadvantage of remaining single. Thus, fifty-five responses were reported.

The most significant disadvantages of remaining single reported by the respondents revolved around problems which result from independence for which they were not prepared (solo functioning) and social constraints. Many of the responses focused on the consequences of not having a partner with whom to share financial responsibilities and exchange social-emotional support. The majority of responses (61.7 percent) could be interpreted as addressing the negative aspects of independence.

Independence may involve being solely responsible for others (e.g., aging parents) and thus lessen their freedom.

- (14) Facing responsibilities alone—bills, plans for the future and family responsibilities . . . It's harder to face my parents aging because I'm dependent on them emotionally. I will have to take responsibility for them. If I were married, someone would emotionally support me when my parents can't.
- (13) I'm not the type person that likes to make decisions. In my work I have to make decisions and I usually turn out being the leader of any group I'm in, but . . . underneath it I would prefer to have someone else tell me what to do. . . . I don't want to be dominated but I don't really like being the one out in front either.

"Lack of a companion" or one key person (typically referred to as a male) to depend upon was a frequently cited disadvantage (27.2 percent) of being independent. The respondents were not necessarily lamenting that they were not playing the traditional dependent female role but rather suggesting the problems involved in "total" independence. Interdependence, or a mutual dependence in an enduring relationship may have been what they perceived they lacked.

- (6) you . . . wouldn't have that security of knowing that there's one person that you more or less always depend on or turn to for something; that was always involved in your life, and you were pretty much involved in their lives. As it is I'm involved in a lot of people's lives. And I probably have many choices of people to turn to but not one necessarily specific person who I think I could always count on.
- (29) You sometimes get lonely. You have your friends and your family . . . but you don't have somebody who belongs to you.
- (9) There isn't necessarily anybody else within the intimacy of the marital type situation to bounce all of your ideas off of over a long period of time. Although you can compensate that by maintaining good contacts . . . individual people for advice rather than one key person . . . over a period of time.

- (18) I love to attend cultural activities and I will do this on my own but I prefer to have someone to enjoy those things with. Now just to have somebody to go along that doesn't enjoy those things wouldn't mean anything to me. I would just as soon go alone. I'm talking about a meaningful marriage partner.

Over one-fourth of the responses (29.1 percent) specified the disadvantages of not having a partner with whom they could share financial responsibilities as well as assets.

- (2) I probably would have more assets and more things in terms of real property than I presently do; a little more security because there would be a pooled income . . . probably my financial status or my status in the community would . . . be somewhat higher.

- (13) . . . having to make financial decisions on my own.

- (10) Financial security. I think that's really the main thing.

- (26) I would like to quit work and let somebody support me.

Clearly differential socialization which prepares individuals to perform gender specialized tasks generated an awareness of the problems of independence. Some of the women indicated displeasure with performing tasks traditionally expected of men.

- (9) I resent very much moving in a man's world . . . All I want my car and my mower to do is run . . . I don't like like having to talk to moving men.

- (16) I always have to go find someone to fix the lawnmowers or fix my car and I'm not sure that they're telling me the truth.

Many respondents perceived social constraints as a result of their single status (56.1 percent of the responses). Four of the women referred to general negative social consequences of being single,

- (25) . . . the social pressure of not joining the marital institutions . . . you're penalized by society for rentals and car insurance, and loans and things . . . there are times when you're not included into the realm of social activities . . . a lot of things are based on a family type unit as opposed to a single person . . . there are some standards that I think I have to keep as a single teacher which are more stringent in my personal life . . .

- (20) (Being asked) Why aren't you married?

Close associates were criticized as well as others for stereotyping singles.

- (8) A lot of times family members think that you have all the time in the world and nothing else to do, except what they want you to do at that specific time.

"Being left out" or left alone (21.8 percent) was the most frequent specific social consequence identified. Many of the women perceived that they were often expected to bring a date, or totally excluded from certain social activities if they were not currently dating someone in a couple/family-oriented society.

- (5) I don't consider it a disadvantage unless I allow it to be, but there are times that there's a social stigma with being single in regard to social functions . . . I don't mind being in groups of married people . . . It seems to bother other people at times . . . but there are people who definitely have bias in that respect, and it affects their relationship with you . . . I may not have an opportunity to do some things with people if those things mostly involve married couples . . . if they don't want me because I'm not married.

- (1) . . . sometimes there are occasions when society demands you bring a spouse or a boyfriend . . . and sometimes you don't always have that person to bring.

- (27) When there are groups of people going out. A lot of times they go out for weekends in couples . . . and you feel like a third wheel all the time.

- (4) Things at church that are family-oriented. I go to them but still they don't really plan for one person.

For some respondents being left out in the short run was less of a concern than when they were aged.

- (21) You sometimes have these fleeting thoughts of "as I grow older, am I going to experience a loneliness?" . . . when other people tend to be secure and maybe in a family nucleus, am I going to miss this type of thing?

Lack of positive single role models, as well as awareness of the negative consequences associated with aging in American society may have led to such apprehensions.

Another disadvantage identified by some of the respondents (9 percent of the responses) was that being single precluded the conditions in which they would be willing to bear children. Although they recognized the possibility that single women could bear or adopt children; these women did not perceive motherhood to be a viable component of their careers as singles.

- (18) I would like to have children but I would like the support of someone else in raising them. I don't think I would like to have my own child out of wedlock with someone I didn't particularly care about—love deeply.

- (1) It would be better to be married if I were going to have children.

One respondent wondered if failing to participate in the process of bearing and rearing children would result in later dissatisfaction with her life.

- (21) Later on in life will I regret (not) having a part of myself? . . . When other people are experiencing the success of their children, the on-goingness of life . . . Will I resent a part of me and someone I would have loved developing and growing?

When asked what advantages they perceived, 20 percent of the women prefaced their response with a statement such as: "There aren't many advantages" and half of the respondents specified only one significant advantage. On the other hand, only two respondents indicated they did not know of many disadvantages of being single. Thus, negative aspects of single life are apparently better known, and recognized, than positive ones.

Even though nearly all the respondents very easily listed the disadvantages of remaining single; all but two indicated they were satisfied with their current life style. One who was dissatisfied perceived a specific reason.

- (13) I've just had to make the adjustment of losing my father and he and I were very close. I guess at this point I'm not [satisfied] . . . I think it's an adjustment because of a relationship that was changed.

Thus, respondents' perceived advantages and disadvantages of being single are indicative of a particular phase of their lives. Where they are located on a continuum of happiness may vary from one phase of their life to another. Only one respondent perceived dissatisfaction which could only be resolved by marrying and having a family.

Singles' Careers

Careers have many dimensions. Important aspects include recruitment (entry), timing of entry, and perceptions of career reversability.

Entry

Types of careers may vary in the likelihood that participants were recruited voluntarily or involuntarily. Recent literature on singles suggests that increasingly singles have chosen their marital status and have a clear intention to remain single (Adams, 1974; Bequaert, 1976; Stein, 1976). However, some of Stein's (1976) respondents reported they had not yet found the right person.

Recruitment

The respondents were asked if they knew why they had embarked on a singles career. All but two respondents were willing and able to verbalize their preceptions of why they had remained single. One-half (53.3 percent) indicated somewhat circumstantial reasons: they had not met the right man or opportunities for marriage had not resulted in marriage.

- (7) I don't feel like I've ever met anybody or been involved that deeply with anyone who I want to live my whole life with. And I don't feel like I have to get married. I'm happy enough as I am. I'm not going to marry someone just for the sake of being married.
- (26) The time I was going to get married I chose not to marry. It was me and I broke it off. Since then there have been other people but nobody I really loved enough to spend the rest of my life with.

For one woman, the death of the man (2) she was going to marry was the major reason. The respondents' single careers were more a consequence of perceiving entrance into marriage as optional and appropriate only under certain conditions which had not materialized, rather than choosing or selecting to remain single.

Some of the women (26.7 percent) indicated a lack of interest in marriage for various reasons. For example, they perceived they had remained single because so many of their family members or friends had "bad" marriages.

- (17) I come from sort of a large family, seven of us in all. All the rest of them are married and I'm the youngest and I've seen divorce and trouble. So many things in their marriages—I know that it has affected my outlook on it. I'd say that's the biggest reason.

Others indicated they were satisfied with their life styles and did not need or desire a different way of life.

- (1) Circumstances I think . . . being single and feeling single and being at peace with single when the rest of the country is not at peace with my being single.
- (31) I like to be with people but I also like to be away from people . . . I can be around someone and around them but then after a while, I begin to feel crowded.

Of those uninterested in marriage(s), half were involved in a dating relationship with a man typically of four or more years duration. Thus, they could not be stereotyped as being unable to find partners.

Only three women indicated they planned singles' life careers. One desired an institutionally sanctioned single career in a religious order.

- (27) When I left high school I had planned to enter the convent and my parents did not give me permission . . . so that was still on my mind . . . I was not looking towards the marriage thing. But since I have not made that decision to do that I have become very accustomed to my single life and like it.

Another referred to early socialization

- (14) in my family it (being single) was always considered a very good thing to be. Because I decided that I was going to be single when I was a very, very small

child . . . I suppose it was from them (my family) . . .
. . . that this was a very strong option in your life
. . . maybe even a stronger one than being married.

The third woman indicated she had remained single because of a lack of interest in heterosexual relationships.

(22) I'm not interested in having a close or intimate relationship with men.

Thus, each was recruited for different reasons, and none for the reasons commonly proposed.

These findings support Bernard's assertion that the majority of never married women do not actively pursue, or voluntarily enter singles' careers. The responses suggest if marriage is perceived to be optional and appropriate only under certain circumstances, a single career may result. This provides an alternative to Bernard's rejection explanation that those who remain single do so because men do not select them (1972:35). Also, the responses suggest that many women make decisions about particular relationships and their continuation without dreading the possibility that such decisions may result in a single life career.

Nearly half (40 percent) of the women volunteered they had previously been engaged to marry (some more than once). Various of these women specified they had taken the initiative in terminating the relationships. The women were asked if some people told them they should not get married. Nearly all (27) of them had been encouraged to remain single. Most of them (70 percent) reported that married people had encouraged them to stay single. Several women (40.7 percent) perceived that these people were unhappily married. Only divorced people encouraged four

women not to marry whereas both married and the divorced people discouraged three women. (One respondent did not report the marital status of the individuals.) No one reported that never married or widowed people tried to discourage them from marrying.

The reasons marriage was discouraged primarily involved devaluation of men and marriage and glorification of independence. The devaluation arguments eight respondents had heard are exemplified by the following comments:

- (18) Men will use you, spend the money you make, and expect you to do all the work. Who needs them.
- (21) Don't marry unless he can support you in the manner you're accustomed, or unless you're really sure. Marriage is not what it's cracked up to be.

The independence associated with being single was extolled to seven women.

- (13) You don't know how good you've got it; being your own boss, having your own money and not sharing it.
- (15) You've got it made. You have time to do what you want. They're tied down with obligations and are a little envious. If they changed places they would be quick to jump right back.

Six respondents stated that people encouraged them to remain single for both reasons.

- (27) There's a hassle of no money to spend unless you work, a hassle with children. He's no good. You hear all about the husband and his faults. You're so lucky to have the freedom to go off on weekends.
- (4) There's no time for self. You lose your identity. It's boring to be married.

A few respondents (6) reported being generally encouraged to remain single.

- (8) You were always the smart one. You knew what you were doing.

The respondents noted that other people's own experience with marriage apparently determined whether or not they advocated marrying or remaining single.

- (29) Some say to get married. The married say it. The divorced say not to marry.
- (23) The unhappily married say not to marry, but those happily married say to get married—"that's the life."

Timing of Entry

A person may plan to enter a career at an approximate age and/or after completion of another career. On the other hand, others may drift into careers they did not plan or even be involuntarily recruited into careers other than those they planned. In American society, females generally are socialized from an early age to plan a marital career. Presumably, singles' careers are discouraged; except in some families who emphasize a celibate, religious career. Consequently the women were asked, "When you were in your teens, did you have some approximate age by which time you thought you probably would be married?" Most of the respondents (63.3 percent) reported that they had set an age for marriage.

Table 2 indicates the 20-21 age range was most frequently reported (31.5 percent). According to the 1970 census, in Tennessee women's median age at first marriage was 20.0 (Hastings and Tu, 1976:18). In addition to reflecting the social milieu, respondents may have planned to marry upon completion of their formal educational careers. Four

(21.1 percent) planned to marry at ages eighteen or nineteen, presumably upon completion of high school. Four others planned to marry between ages 22-24; the years typically following completion of college. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents who set an expected age to marry thought they would be married by age 25 or earlier. Two clearly had set later ages at marriage (28 and during 30s). The other respondents (11) did not remember establishing an expected age at marriage.

Table 2. Expected Age at Marriage as a Teenager.

Expected Age	Frequency
18-19	4
20-21	6
22-24	4
25	3
28	1
30s	1
Total	19

Respondents who set an age reported how reaching that age affected them (Table 3).

Table 3. Responses to Reaching Expected Marriage Age.

Responses	Frequency
Set new age	8
Depression	3
No effect	8
Total	19

Nearly half of the respondents (42.1 percent) did not recall that reaching the expected age affected them in any way or at least in any negative way. Their current identities were not threatened.

- (7) I was pretty much enjoying enjoying myself. I didn't think, "Oh, dear, I'm not married yet." At that point I thought I don't need to get married now. I've got plenty of time. I didn't really want to get married then.
- (11) I think as I got close to twenty-five I realized that probably the chances were I might not be married and it became less important.

Three respondents (15.8 percent) reported experiencing depression when they reached their expected age of marriage for they perceived marriage might be foreclosed.

- (29) I got depressed about it, and then I thought, "well that's not going to do." And then I turned it all to the Lord's hands. And I said, "Lord, whatever your will, will be." . . . I may never get married. It's whatever He had planned for me.
- (6) I cried for a day, I guess. But I got over it real quick. It wasn't earth shattering to me. I'll have to say to be honest too, that my whole outlook has changed because as a Christian person I've changed inside.

When they reached the age of expected marriage eight (42.1 percent) responded by setting a new age. Strauss (1959) proposes that an identity turning point may be avoided in this way. Some respondents reached subsequent expected marriage ages and again set new ones. The last expected age at marriage is used for the following analysis. The new expected marriage ages ranged from 25-50 with a median and mode of 30.

- (12) I decided that if I wasn't married (by the time I got out of college), I might as well go on to graduate school . . . I just didn't want to start working yet. DID YOU SET ANOTHER AGE BY WHICH TIME YOU THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE MARRIED? I think after graduate school . . . by 30 anyway.

One respondent reported that reaching this new age was depressing, threatening her perceptions of her future.

- (12) That was a bad time. And I was breaking up with someone at the same time.

Others reported no negative consequences for they had other careers upon which to focus (e.g., educational, single).

- (1) It didn't matter because by that time I'd decided to go on to graduate school. . . . It seemed real foolish to get married.
- (19) I wasn't disappointed. I think by that time I'd gotten used to the idea of knowing what freedom was—to pick and choose and do as you wanted.

Some respondents (whose new age at marriage was over 40) had not reached the expected ages. Those who did not recall setting expected ages for marriage may have been affected by other's expectations. One woman who was not aware of setting a new age reported considering marriage in her late 20s.

- (2) I kind of set it aside for a while . . . until I was about 27 and . . . two things kind of happened at the same time. I felt . . . if you're going to have children and get married, how's about it? And then I met someone that I thought might be a likely partner. . . . I lived with him for about two years. . . . I often wonder . . . if I had not met him at that particular time if that feeling would have nicely passed and I would have . . . gotten over that feeling of panic.

For many women increasing acceptance of their single life career apparently led to easier acceptance of not entering marriage by an expected age. Satisfactory adjustment may be associated with gradual adjustment.

Reversibility

Researchers have postulated that women who have not married by age thirty may be forced to recognize that they may never marry—the irreversibility of their single careers. Thus, each respondent was asked to express the perceived likelihood of marriage in the future. Slightly over 40 percent of the women (43.3 percent) indicated remaining single and marrying were equally likely. Respondents seemed hesitant to foreclose marriage or to be very certain of marriage (i.e., they perceived they had options).

- (2) I cannot conceive of myself ever marrying, but that doesn't mean I won't. I would guess 50 percent.
- (11) At this stage it's not a big thing to me to be married. It's not like when you're younger and you really think you've got to get married . . . the chances are I probably won't get married but I wouldn't say definitely.
- (24) I would say the chances are very slim . . . let's say 50 percent because if I met somebody that I felt was worth marrying, I would marry.
- (27) I have not given up and I have no desire to go chase it. But if it happens, it happens. I'd be very happy. And if it doesn't I would be very happy. I'd say 50-50.

More respondents perceived marriage to be extremely unlikely (six women indicated a 10 percent or less likelihood of marriage) than extremely likely (three women indicated 90 percent or more likelihood of marriage). Five respondents (16.7 percent) thought marriage was somewhat more likely than unlikely. Some of their responses reflected consideration of their desire to marry and perceived probability that they would marry.

- (5) My desire is probably 75 percent . . . and then I . . . just begin to look at the availability of people. And my career and how much it puts me . . . not in contact with . . . opportunity to meet people. It lowers . . . but still not less than 50 percent. But as far as my desire is concerned it's still 75 percent.
- (1) It would surprise me if I died unmarried . . . I don't know if I should put down 99 percent, put 75 percent (instead). That sounds like I'm determined that I'm going to be married.

Three (10 percent) expressed the reverse perception that marriage was somewhat more unlikely than likely. Thus respondents did not perceive their singles' careers were irreversible with the exception of a lesbian respondent.

In order to further examine changing perceptions of the likelihood of marital careers, singles were asked if their perceptions of the likelihood of marriage were different in the past. As might be expected for women past the typical age at marriage, two-thirds of the respondents perceived that in the past, they thought marriage was more likely. Six believed their current perceptions of the likelihood of marriage (50 percent or more) were very similar to their past perceptions. Four respondents reported that they had perceived marriage to be less likely in the past.

A person's perceptions of the past and future are influenced by his or her present situation, therefore the respondent's current dating situations (dating, not dating) were related to respondents' changes in thought about the perceived likelihood of marriage. Examination of Table 4 reveals that current dating situation apparently does not account for whether or not likelihood of marriage perceptions were believed to have changed (decreased or increased).

Table 4. Dating Situation and Perceived Likelihood of Marriage

Likelihood of Marriage	Dating Situation				Total	
	Dating		Not Dating		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
More likely in past	8	40	12	60	20	100
Less likely in past	2	50	2	50	4	100
About as likely in past	4	67	2	33	6	100

The women who had changed their perceptions about the likelihood of marriage (24) were asked for the approximate age when these perceptions changed. Even though the modal age was 29 to 30, by ages 27 to 28 half (54.1 percent) of them had changed their perceptions, suggesting that approaching or reaching thirty years of age was a significant turning point (Table 5). Only four respondents' perceptions changed after thirty years of age. The ages at which the changes were perceived to have occurred to some extent reflect the ages at which marriage was expected.

Table 5. Age of Changed Perception of Marriage Likelihood

Age	N	Cumulative %
20-22	2	8.3
24-25	4	25.0
26	2	33.3
27-28	5	54.1
29-30	7	83.3
32-33	2	91.6
34-35	2	100.0
Total	24	

Setting an approximate age for marriage to occur can be perceived as a self-imposed challenge, as well as a socially structured one. When the woman realizes the challenge is not likely to be met, she may experience an "identity turning point." Individuals may either revise their adult life plans by more actively pursuing the desired role or devaluing it (Strauss, 1959:96-97). They may have to alter former identities or form a new and different set of identities. After re-evaluating the possibility of obtaining the married status and its associated identity, single women may re-examine their identity as single persons.

The data indicate the initial expected age at marriage peaked at age 20-21 (31.5 percent) and dropped off by age twenty-five. It is likely that when respondents reached the age of expected marriage and were still single, they began to face the possibility that they might not marry or at least not have a traditional marriage career.

The women were asked if they could explain why their perceptions about the likelihood of marriage changed (Table 6). Of the twenty respondents who perceived marriage to currently be less likely, over half (11) of the respondents attributed their changed perceptions to some specific changes (circumstances) in their lives (e.g., moving, breaking-off of a relationship, completing an advanced degree, meeting fewer men).

- (11) I was engaged to be married and then I didn't. . . .
And since then it hasn't been that important to me.
I think as I got close to twenty-five I realized
that probably the chances were I might not be
married.

- (25) I moved back to (city). I never had much hope for (city) being the place to find a husband. And the fact that I was finishing up on my Masters Degree. And I figured once I got out of school the opportunities for meeting a person grow slimmer.
- (29) I got very hurt and sort of lost my trust in men. When you get hurt it takes a long time to get over it.

Table 6. Reasons for Changed Perceptions of Marriage Likelihood.

Reasons for Change	N	%
Marriage Less Likely		
Disruption	11	45.9
Changed Perception of Men/Marriage	6	25.0
Positive Changes in Self	3	12.5
Marriage More Likely		
New Men	2	8.3
New Options	2	8.3
Total	24	100.0

Six of them had gradually changed their perceptions of men, marriage, and singlehood.

- (26) I was getting used to it . . . I felt I could survive on my own. . . . I went to school with friends who got married . . . and you see so many that are so unhappy, even married. You can be unhappy single and I know that would be better.
- (7) As I got into my late twenties I began to feel that it didn't make that much difference if I got married or not. . . . I was much more particular about the men that I went out with. . . . I got more independent and I didn't feel like I needed to depend on a man.

Only three perceived a change in themselves and as a consequence had less interest in marriage. They did not simply "get used to being single" but were enjoying their lifestyle and defined it as more positive than the married lifestyle.

(19) After you stay single so long and you develop your own lifestyle, you see that maybe marriage isn't for you. . . . I'd rather be free. . . . I guess I'm too independent!

(22) I think I realized that I had not developed any strong interests enough to want to give up my independence.

Of the four respondents who presently considered marriage more likely than in the past, three had changed their perceptions after they reached age thirty. Two of these women had met men they contemplated marrying.

(9) Because I've met some guys . . . who give some evidence of the kind of people I could marry.

The other two were allowing themselves new options.

(14) I have always planned to be single. . . . In order to be free, to be happy to be single, I had to allow myself other options. . . . In order to freely choose it (singlehood) you have to consider something else.

(15) I was changing jobs and I was back home. . . . I think you go through periods that you feel different ways about different things and I think that was just the turning point . . . for me. I think I had gotten to know myself a lot better.

These women experienced "identity turning points" different from those experienced by those whose expectations of marriage decreased over the years. They did not previously define the single role as undesirable, but instead liked being single. These women then experienced events which pulled them toward the marital identity.

- (15) I guess I just changed as a person . . . and much more open to the idea.

Multiple Careers

A personal career encompasses all of an individual's life. An individual may have various specific careers (e.g., educational, occupational, organizational) at the same time or over time. Involvement in some careers (e.g., criminal) may preclude participation in others (e.g., political).

Childbearing. For some women, one of the disadvantages of being single is not having children, i.e., not being able to pursue parenthood as a socially sanctioned career. Respondents were asked if they desired to have children. Approximately two-thirds (63.3 percent) responded that they did. In order to ascertain whether or not being single limited their pursuit of parenthood careers they were asked if they would like to bear a child as a single person or as a married person. Most of the respondents who desired children preferred bearing a child as a married person, although five of them also said as a single person (e.g., "I don't want the responsibility of a husband"). Several women noted the social constraints that would be encountered if a child were born by a never married woman.

- (7) Having a child as a single would be hard for the child. A child is better off with two parents. I would go through a lot of stress raising a child on my own—more because of the way society would view it. I don't think at work . . . it would go over too well—to have a child and not be married.

Others believed that marriage was a necessary prerequisite to parenthood and were concerned that they would be too old to bear children by the time they might marry.

- (15) I would be too old by the time I get around to getting married. By pushing 32-34 you start running the risk of having a defective child.

Approximately one-third of the respondents did not desire to have children. Some respondents expressed ambivalence about children.

- (10) I really don't want children but I feel I'm missing something by not having them.

A few women responded they did not desire children but indicated that in the past they had.

Since the respondents were in their 30s they recognized that in a few years the decision not to bear children would be irreversible. Whereas marriage may become less likely with increasing age, it is always a possibility for people who are not institutionalized. Female socialization traditionally has emphasized that a woman's unique and most fulfilling function is child bearing. Thus, the respondents may have been ambivalent about foreclosing that experience.

Of course, child rearing does not require child bearing. One woman volunteered

- (20) I guess any woman would like to have children but not now at my age. I love children. I helped raise my nieces and nephews.

All respondents were asked if they would be interested in adopting a child. Twelve indicated that as a single or married person they would be interested in adoption. None of these respondents had adopted nor applied to adopt a child.

More women indicated interest in adopting a child as a single person than in bearing a child as a single woman. They apparently perceived somewhat greater social acceptance of the single parent who adopts. In any case, the responsibility of being a single parent and possible social negative consequences apparently deterred them from acting. The strength of their desires to be parents may have been limited by these and other factors. For example, one woman was concerned about her work career.

- (16) I would love to have a child, but as a single person I couldn't take the responsibility of a child alone. A child needs two parents. It would interfere with my career. I would be tied down. I don't feel capable of doing it.

Only a few of these women (21.0 percent) previously had stated that not having children was a significant disadvantage of remaining single.

For many people, both marriage and parenthood are desirable intertwined careers. The women were almost evenly divided on whether their degree of interest in having children had affected their degree of interest in marrying (Table 7). Respondents were asked, "Do you feel your desire to have a child (or lack of desire in having children) has affected your interest in getting married?" Over half (56.7 percent) responded negatively.

Table 7. Desire for Children and Interest in Marriage

Desire for Children	Interest in Marriage	
	Affected	Not Affected
Yes	11	9
No	2	8

A desire to have children was related to increased interest in marriage for eleven respondents.

- (12) At one time it (desire for children increased interest in getting married) did, when I was involved with someone.

Other respondents who desired children did not perceive their interest in getting married had been affected. Their interest in marriage was independent of their desire to have children.

- (19) I'd just as soon have a child, single. Then it's all yours and you don't have to share it with anyone.

Nearly all of the women who did not desire children believed their interest in getting married had not been affected. However, two respondents thought their lack of desire to have children had made them less likely to pursue marriage than if they wanted children. Their responses were:

- (4) If I was dying to have children, then probably I would have grabbed someone in order to have them (children).
(pause) I've seen girls do that.

Thus the respondents varied considerably in their perceptions of how intertwined marriage and parenthood should be. Those who desired children tended to perceive a greater interrelationship between children and marriage than did those who did not desire children.

Marriage vs. Future Careers. Expectations of marriage could have affected how the women had planned their futures and their participation in other careers (e.g., work, educational). The women were asked, "Has your desire to marry ever affected the way you planned your future?" One-fourth (26.7 percent) of the respondents perceived that

marriage expectations had affected how they had planned other aspects of their lives. They engaged in behavior which constituted "holding patterns," (i.e., delays of action or commitments because the respondent perceived such action was not necessary for a single woman and might be undesirable if she were to marry). Five had delayed both establishing themselves as independent and making certain commitments and plans. Two delayed becoming independent and one delayed making commitments. Even though only one-fourth perceived such delays; they gave several examples of postponing action because they desired marriage. A delay in establishing self as independent refers to postponing a change in living arrangements and/or making certain purchases.

(7) I lived in furnished apartments for a couple of years not because I thought I might be getting married, but because I thought I might be moving.

(19) Like buying my trailer or moving out on my own. I lived at home with my parents, thinking, "Well I'm going to get married. Then I'll have a home of my own, and a place to go."

(4) Like life insurance. I didn't buy it for a while.

The postponement of career decisions as well as a hesitancy in making long-range commitments is another type of "holding pattern" expressed by the singles.

(13) . . . like taking a job of some sort in a club when I thought I might not be there for a year.

(8) I almost got married when I was seventeen. . . . I didn't plan on going to college and then I realized I didn't want to get married. I went on into college without really thinking of what I wanted to do.

(18) I think a lot of my early years when I was working, I was sort of waiting around for Mr. Right to come along. I really didn't apply myself. . . . I think I put off involvement in a church until recently.

That some of the women (10 percent) continued to live at home with their parents could also be interpreted as a delay in establishing themselves as independent.

Most respondents did not recall delaying any plans because they thought they might marry. However, some of their actions or lack of action could be interpreted as "holding patterns" because they had delayed independent living arrangements, e.g., buying property.

- (16) I bought the house (at age 33) . . . because I wanted to save up enough money. . . . The furniture that I selected, . . . even if I did get married it would be more traditional—that could be used with just about anything.

Rather than postponing action, a few respondents reported selecting alternative courses of action. They chose a career, or going to school instead of getting married. They also delayed a commitment, but in these cases, the commitment was marriage.

- (15) He wanted me to come to where he was . . . and I said (No). I have a chance at a job and . . . this is what I want to do. So I made my decision.
- (1) I went on to graduate school instead of marrying. . . . So marriage doesn't interfere with my decisions. My decisions interfere with my marriage.

Work Careers. Turning points may occur around special events in people's lives. After receiving a promotion or completing a degree a woman may perceive that marriage is less likely. Alternatively, a turning point may result in a decision to change jobs or to pursue a degree. Therefore, the women interviewed were asked to discuss their past full-time work experiences and future plans. Four patterns of

past work experiences were derived from the respondents' work histories (Table 8).

Table 8. Work Histories

Work/Education	N	%
Little or No College		
Stayed in first job or type of job	9	30.0
College		
Work—Education—Work	4	13.3
Education—Work	8	26.7
College—Work—Graduate School—Work	5	16.7
Other	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

About one-third (30 percent) got a job after high school or after a short period in college and remained in basically the same type of job until the time of the study. Some had transferred to other companies or organizations and/or received promotions. A few of these women had taken some training related to their jobs. None of these women had finished college.

A few women (13.3 percent) took jobs after high school or after dropping out of college, later attended college, and obtained a different type of job after graduation. They had interrupted their work career by pursuing higher education. Three of these respondents eventually earned master's degrees.

Approximately one-fourth of the respondents (26.7 percent) completed their education and then obtained jobs. After receiving bachelor's

degrees, most of these women (8) had begun graduate study. For the most part, full-time work had not interrupted their education.

Some of the singles (16.7 percent) graduated from college and worked for a few years before beginning graduate school. With one exception, these women had interrupted their work life by pursuing a graduate degree. For some reason(s) after being in the work world for a period of time a graduate degree became more important to these women. They had delayed entrance into graduate school rather than continuing their education after completion of a bachelor's degree.

Four of the respondents displayed somewhat checkered job histories. Two of these women had quit jobs and dropped out of the labor force for a few months. For a period of time, the other two did not hold jobs for which their training had prepared them (e.g., nursing, office management).

A woman's job history may or may not reflect how much planning was involved in preparation for her work. Respondents were asked when they first decided to pursue their present line of work. Examination of Table 9 indicates that at some time 76.7 percent of the women planned to have their current occupation; they chose a type of job and trained for it. Only 23.3 percent did not plan or train for their present job. These women remained in the type of job they initially obtained.

Half of the women, when asked if they expected to be performing the same kind of work in ten years, indicated they did. The women who did not know if they would be doing the same kind of work were asked, "What do you expect to change?" Some of the women (30.8 percent) did not

expect to be doing the same type of work but did not know what they wanted to change about it (Table 10). Only two desired to advance in their present job, but four expected to have different responsibilities in the same type of job.

(17) It would still be on production but . . . in that job you would be able to sit down, whereas now you have to stand.

(29) I might change later on, to be more involved in meeting people, as sort of a receptionist.

Table 9. Work Career Preparation

Preparation	N	%
Planned a Career	13	43.4
Job—Career—Training	10	33.3
Job—No Planning or Special Training	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 10. Future Work Career Plans

Work Plans	N	%
Don't Know	4	30.8
Advance in Present Job	2	15.3
Different Responsibility in Same Job	4	30.8
Pursuing Different Job	3	23.1
Total	13	100.0

Some of the women were actively pursuing a different job by either going back to school or applying for jobs.

Not only were some respondents interested in changing their present job, but many respondents (50 percent) had changed jobs at least once, and some (26.7 percent) more than once. The women were asked to describe their past work plans, where and why they changed. Only their "real" work plans were utilized in the analysis. Some respondents changed their field of work more than once, therefore only their last age at changing work was utilized. Slightly over half of the fifteen respondents (53.3 percent) who changed work plans did so between ages 29-31. Examination of the data reveals a slight trend toward changing work plans as respondents near age thirty. Such changes could be the result of a re-evaluation of one's life style (i.e., a turning point).

Examination of Table 11 reveals that many of the respondents did not perceive any "holding patterns" but still made changes in their work plans between ages 29-31. The percentages are almost identical for women who perceived holding patterns and those who did not. These data indicate that respondents may not have perceived delaying plans or commitments because they desired marriage, but around age thirty they made some changes in their life style. A return to school was the most frequently cited reason for changing work plans (11 of the 15). Respondents did not perceive that a return to school in the late 20s was affected by the possibility they might marry. For these women a turning point could have encouraged them to return to school or they could have experienced a turning point upon completion of their education.

Table 11. Holding Patterns and Changes in Work Plans

Age Work Plans Changed	Presence of Holding Pattern		Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
23-25	1	16.7	1	11.1	2	13.4		
26-28	2	33.3	3	33.3	5	33.3		
29-31	3	50.0	5	55.6	8	53.3		
Total	6	100.0	9	100.0	15	100.0		

The respondents who perceived that a desire to marry had affected their futures were not more likely to have changed their work plans. As a matter of fact, two of the respondents who had changed work plans commented that they chose going to school instead of getting married. Some of the women interviewed had delayed future plans because of a desire to marry (e.g., in making certain purchases and plans). Other respondents did not perceive such "holding patterns" but made some changes in their work plans around age 30. These data lend credence to the belief that around age 30 single women take stock and re-evaluate their social identity, which results in a changed life style, (i.e., they experience a turning point or moment of truth) (Adams, 1974; Donelson, 1977; Kurth, 1975; Strauss, 1959).

Behavior Toward Singles in the Workplace. Some singles perceive they are treated differently at work because they are single. The women were asked, "Do you think the people you work with treat you differently because you are single?" (e.g., expect you to stay later,

work holidays, question about your private life, expect you to accept any work schedule, etc.). Some respondents found it hard to separate their treatment because they are women from their treatment as singles. Seventy percent of the singles perceived their marital status caused differential treatment in their present job in a past job. Examination of Table 12 indicates the respondents perceived that colleagues assume singles have more free time and also question singles about their private lives.

Table 12. Perceptions of Treatment in the Workplace

Perceptions of Treatment	N	%
More Free Time	8	26.7
Questions about Private Life	4	13.3
Questions and Free Time	5	16.7
Questions and Couples' Exclusion	3	10.0
No Response	10	33.3
Total	30	100.0

If singles supposedly have more free time and fewer family responsibilities, colleagues may assume they can expect these individuals to work longer days, work on holidays and/or weekends. Over one-fourth of the respondents (26.7 percent) perceived their colleagues assume singles have more free time.

People may also assume they can question or tease singles about their private life. Whereas 13.3 percent of the respondents perceive this type of treatment, 16.7 percent perceived this treatment as well

as their colleagues' assumption that singles have more free time. A few of the women (10 percent) were asked about their private life but were also excluded from their colleagues' social activities involving only couples.

Some women initially stated they were not treated differently at work because of their single status but after thinking about it they did perceive some differential treatment. Perhaps they had not previously attributed such treatment to their own marital status.

The nature of one's work affects one's work schedule. Therefore, the type of occupation may affect the expectation that singles will work holidays, weekends, or longer hours. If the occupations are compared of the respondents who stated that their colleagues assume the singles have more free time, we find a difference between women in the traditionally female dominated professions (31.6 percent) and those in traditionally female dominated jobs (18.2 percent). However, examination of Table 13 indicates that this difference narrows when this category is collapsed to include all responses referring to the free time assumption (Questions and Free Time). Nearly half (47.7 percent) of the women in the professions versus slightly over one-third (36.4 percent) of those holding traditionally female jobs reported their colleagues assume singles have more free time. The occupational difference is not nearly as great when categories are collapsed.

Future Career Satisfaction

Most respondents (93.3 percent) indicated they were satisfied with their current life styles. However, current satisfaction and anticipated

future satisfaction may not be identical. The women were asked to indicate the level of satisfaction they expected to experience if they were single in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. Respondents were given a card which listed a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied." They did not anticipate great expected changes in satisfaction over the years. Responses varied over the age categories for half (56.6 percent) of the respondents.

Table 13. Occupation and Treatment at Work

Treatment	Occupation			
	Traditionally Female Professions		Traditionally Female Jobs	
	N	%	N	%
More Free Time	6	31.6	2	18.2
Private Questions	2	10.5	2	18.2
Questions and Couples	1	10.5	2	18.2
Questions and Free Time	3	15.8	2	18.2
No Differential Treatment	7	31.6	3	27.2
Total	19	100.0	11	100.0

Examination of Table 14 indicates the perceived changes in levels of satisfaction. The modes of 18 and 14 can be observed for women who expected to remain satisfied through the 60s. A number of women fluctuated in their expected levels of satisfaction. The age of the respondent does not explain the change in expected satisfaction levels and thus the data are not reported.

Table 14. Anticipated Satisfaction with Singlehood by Age Category

Levels of Satisfaction		Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
40s				
50s	Satisfied	18	3	0
	Neutral	2	1	1
	Dissatisfied	2	2	1
50s				
60s	Satisfied	14	0	1
	Neutral	2	2	0
	Dissatisfied	5	2	4

Twelve of the thirteen respondents who anticipated decreased satisfaction over the years thought a lack of companionship, being alone, would make them less satisfied.

- (12) If I stay single through my 40s, I probably will stay single the rest of my life. . . . As you get older you need some people. . . . I might be retired and I wouldn't have anything else to do. . . . I'd be not too happy to be alone.
- (2) I'll be retiring. I might be physically unable to lead as active a life as I do now . . . so I might be more isolated, more alone and it might be important to me to have a partner.
- (30) The thought of growing old alone . . . is a sad thought.

These respondents did not seem to be aware of the probability of a spouse dying before reaching the 60s. Many women in their 60s and older were married when younger but are later alone after the death of their husbands.

Two respondents reported not having children as well as a lack of companionship would make them less satisfied. One respondent only mentioned not having children.

- (11) Because my need for companionship would be greater as I got older. I wouldn't have any children. . . . I think I'd be lonely.

A few respondents (13.3 percent) reported they would be more satisfied being single as they get older. One respondent reported she would be more satisfied because she would not want to change her life style, even though she would regret not having children.

- (6) If I did reach forty and still wasn't married . . . if I did get married the chances of having a child . . . would be very slim and that would bother me because I love children . . . So I would have a hard time with it (if I married). . . . WHY DO YOU FEEL YOU WOULD BE MORE SATISFIED IN YOUR 50s and 60s THAN IN YOUR 40s? I don't think you want to be shaken out of your life style. Not to say I wouldn't do it. I would do it (marry). But . . . by then you probably settle roots into a town . . . a church . . . buy a house . . . and you may not want to undo all that.

Age cannot explain why some respondents expected to be more satisfied being single as they age.

One respondent reported she was neutral about being single in her 40s, but thought she would be satisfied in her 50s and 60s. She saw the possibility of marrying a man with whom she was presently involved so felt fairly indecisive about being single in her 40s. But for the 50s and 60s this indecisiveness would be resolved.

- (13) I think if I felt that's what God had in store for me, I would be very satisfied.

Two respondents stated by the 60s they would be more satisfied being single because they would be resigned to it.

- (24) I think I would probably have decided that that was the way life was going to be and I would accept it.

Some of the women who did not expect their satisfaction to fluctuate over the years were resigned rather than positive about remaining single in the future.

- (28) Satisfied. I guess you might as well be.
- (19) Satisfied. . . . By that time (60s) you would be so old you really wouldn't care.
- (5) Neutral. . . . If I'm not married . . . I would think that I could be dissatisfied, but knowing me, I'm going to accept the fact that I'm single and going to live happily come what may. . . . It would never tip more than dissatisfied. . . . But I would tend to say neutral.

The reason for being less satisfied as an older single (lack of companionship and no children) were also previously reported disadvantages of remaining single. Of the respondents who stated that not having children was a disadvantage, none of them indicated it would affect their level of satisfaction as they aged. Only one-third of the women who stated a lack of companionship was a disadvantage also indicated staying single would make them less satisfied in later years. Perhaps single women in this sample desire children and companionship, but most of them would believe they could adjust if these desires are not fulfilled. Perhaps they believe they can cope with these disappointments, or they have not thought much about aging as a single person. Respondents were requested to state the disadvantages they had experienced. The current perceived disadvantages of remaining single might be quite different from those perceived by never married women in their 60s.

Levinson et al. (1978) argue that around age forty men come to terms with the disparity between what they want for themselves and what

they have gained within particular structures (typically occupational). The inability to achieve certain goals may leave the man discouraged about his future. Women who have not achieved the marital role may be equally discouraged. The women who anticipated less satisfaction as they age referred to the absence of the marital role. Respondents who are aware of the identity changes they have already experienced from remaining single, may perceive an easy adjustment to aging as a single person, i.e., they may have made a basic adjustment. Levinson et al. (1978) suggest that men may compromise their dream when they face major shifts in life direction.

Several respondents seemed to think that the 60s were a very old age, or that by then there would be no chance of marriage.

(2) I might be physically unable to lead an active life.

(12) I might be retired and I wouldn't have anything else to do.

Retirement and aging seemed to be things to dread, but the 60s were perceived to be "old age"—"too old to care."

Single women may confront several issues as they age. One aspect of the adjustment to aging concerns physiological consequences and their accompanying social consequences. Women who desire having children must realize that the reproductive time span has virtually ended. Aging for women in American society has been traditionally associated with declining physical attractiveness. A potential health decline causes the never married woman to question who will take care of her after her family of orientation is dissolved. People who have children may assume their

children will meet this need. Coming to terms with one's own mortality must be confronted regardless of marital status. However, the woman who has never married may encounter more difficulty if she anticipates facing death alone.

Another aspect of the never married woman's adjustment to aging concerns the social and cultural patterns of aging and the associated opportunity structure. Aging and retirement are negatively defined in American society. The woman who expects to retire without a husband with whom to enjoy her leisure time may be more likely to dread retirement than would a married woman, unless the married woman does not want her husband underfoot. Regardless of marital status, there may be a feeling that people will not have reached their work goals before retirement (Levinson et al., 1979).

Most women who ever marry do so by their 30s. The years beyond the 30s are likely to be perceived as a time in which the number of available males decrease and the number of available females increases. This is especially true of the 50s and 60s because on the average men die a few years earlier than women. Singles may have limited opportunities to associate with their married friends who withdraw into families while their children are growing up. After this separation has taken place and children are older, marrieds may continue to exclude their single friends. Friendships are not perceived as being as enduring as family relations in a mobile society. Therefore, the never married may feel less certain than marrieds of the nature of their social and emotional support networks as they age.

Role/Career Models

Single women's conceptions of singlehood may be shaped by particular others, as well as by generalized others. Thus the women were asked to indicate if they knew any women in their 30s who were not yet married when they (the respondents) were teenagers. A majority (70 percent) responded they had known only single women in the community (teachers, neighbors, people at church), whereas one-fourth of the respondents (28.6 percent) had known female relatives who were single as well as women in the community. Some respondents had difficulty judging the ages of the women, because as teenagers women in their 30s were old and not carefully differentiated from women in their 40s and even 50s.

The respondents who had known single women were asked if they formed any impressions of what it would be like to be a single woman in her 30s. Half of the impressions recalled were negative. The "loser" identity was assigned.

- (28) They weren't very nice. They were old maids and didn't care much about young people.
- (1) Horrendous. Terrible. They were old maid school teachers, but I was in Catholic School and not exposed to teachers in their 30s. One was a mean, bitchy woman who married at 40. She was more like a boy and coached the boys.
- (18) I figured they sat at home all the time and read. But I do that now and I'm pleased with it. I didn't realize a person could be content without being married. But I do realize that now.

These reports suggest that the respondents did not learn a great deal about the women's personal lives and utilized stereotypes to supplement their direct experiences.

Other respondents had only positive images of single women in their 30s.

- (14) Very positive. I thought they led a very glamorous life.
- (3) She seemed to be happy with her life. . . . She married in her 40s . . . and seems very happy.

Two had formed both positive and negative impressions of single women.

- (21) One was a little negative; what we called a hygiene honey, that is a P. E. teacher who is homosexual. Others were positive.
- (7) Some had very full lives. I had a cousin who traveled a lot and had a lot of money. It looked like fun. . . . But the school teachers seemed sort of sour and unhappy. I . . . saw different sides of it. But at that time I really didn't think . . . That I hope it didn't happen to me or that I hope I'm like that. I just didn't give it that much thought.

To further examine possible single role models, respondents were asked if they had any relatives who married for the first time in their 30s, later than that, or had never married. Most of the women (83.3 percent) had such relatives. The respondents had more female than male role models. Some women had more than one relative in each category. Thus, the absolute number of total relatives and percentages are not reported because a few respondents with several single relatives (up to five in one family) would skew the results. Some respondents perceived a relative marrying at twenty-five as a late marriage.

- (1) That was older, back then.

A majority of the women interviewed either had known of a single woman or had a relative who never married or married late. The existence of such role models may or may not have influenced the respondents' remaining single. However, it is likely the respondents' perceived image of these role models could have an effect on how the singles perceive themselves.

Career Accounts

Singles are often asked, "Why aren't you married?" Those who ask the question may or may not expect or receive a realistic answer. The women were asked, "Sometimes married people kid singles about being single, or ask them when they're getting married or why they haven't married. Think about the people who might have asked you 'Why aren't you married?' Would you tell me what types of people have asked you this question since you've turned 30?" Their responses were categorized according to marital status, age, and their relationship to the person asking. Most respondents indicated several types of people asked them this question.

Most of the women reported that married (70.0 percent) and older (66.7 percent) people ask why they are not married. The nature of their relationship to the respondents is reported in Table 15.

Infrequent interactants (strangers or acquaintances) compose the largest single type of relationship to people who ask why the single woman is not married (36.7 percent). Thirty-seven percent of the women reported being asked this question by kin (close or distant) and

strangers or acquaintances. Three respondents (10 percent) stated that in addition to kin and strangers or acquaintances, friends also ask why they are not married. Apparently singles perceive that friends are the least likely to ask the question. Some respondents specifically stated that friends are the least likely to ask the question; they already know.

Table 15. Relationship and Requests for Accounts

Relationships	N	%
Strangers or Acquaintances	11	36.7
Kin (close and distant) and Strangers or Acquaintances	12	40.0
Friends, Kin and Strangers or Acquaintances	3	10.0
Friends and Strangers or Acquaintances	2	6.7
Distant Kin and Friends	1	3.3
No Response	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

Singles may offer different accounts depending on the interactants and/or the situation in which the question is asked. Respondents were asked if they give everyone the same answer.

Slightly over one-fourth (eight) of the respondents give the same answer whenever they are asked why they are not married. Nearly all of these women (seven) give serious rather than joking answers. Serious answers were not always the ones these respondents perceived to be the "real" reasons for not marrying.

- (6) I'm just waiting for whatever God has in store for me, and I'm happy as I am. (Real reason—lack of opportunities to meet suitable men.)
- (27) If it happens, o.k. If it doesn't o.k. (Real reason—as a teenager she wanted to enter convent so never planned marriage.)

The women who always gave the "real" reason for not marrying offered a variety of accounts: had never planned to marry, had not found the right man, previous opportunities did not work out. Some told people there was no particular reason.

Respondents who indicated they vary their answers (73.3 percent) were asked, "How do your answers vary with the persons asking and/or the situation?" There are practically no differences in how the respondents' accounts varied. Several women (23.3 percent) stated the relationship with the person asking the question determined the type of account offered.

- (20) It depends if it's a friend. Some people I tell to mind their own business. If it was a close friend you'd answer the question; but if it was somebody sort of a stranger or an . . . acquaintance, I wouldn't feel like it was any of their business.
- (12) If it's a perfect stranger, I say very little . . . just a very short sentence. With my grandmother, I just usually changed the subject.

One-fourth of the respondents (26.7 percent) stated that the reason they perceived the person was asking the question determined the type of account offered.

- (5) It would depend on the sincerity of their question.
- (25) If the question is asked in a teasing manner, and yet I know they're serious, then I'll give them the serious answer. . . . But if they are just fooling around with me then I just give them the answer that I'm going to raise my children first.

- (8) Sometimes I won't even answer the question at all, depending on how the person asks. If someone says it in a joking manner, my stock answer is, "I haven't found anybody who can support me in the manner to which I've made myself accustomed." I don't think that when people ask you that they really want a serious answer.

A few respondents (3) stated that their account depended on the mood they were in and what they think others want to hear.

Other women (23.3 percent) reported that their accounts vary with both the relationship to the person asking, and the reason that person is asking.

- (7) If it's just a casual acquaintance who is just trying to strike up conversation and sort of a lighthearted thing, I'll just say I haven't met the right person. . . . That's a more serious type of situation when it doesn't seem like they're just trying to be nosey.

Examination of these responses reveals that the nature of the account is affected by situational factors.

Single women may or may not know why they have not married. Regardless, other people often ask for such an accounting. The single woman must cope with the question by conjuring up an account, changing the subject, or ignoring the question. Her coping mechanisms may vary with the person asking the question, the situation, the mood she is in and/or what she thinks is expected of her. Obviously, respondents who sometimes give joking answers are not telling these people their "real" reasons for not being married. However, some women (26.7 percent) did provide their perceived "real" reason for remaining single when others ask. All but one of these respondents stated they were not married because they had not found the right person.

In order to ascertain if requests for accounts affect single women, the respondents were asked, "How do you feel when people ask you why you aren't married?" Over half of them (56.7 percent) stated that "it makes no difference" or "it does not make a difference now," although a few of them were sometimes irritated (Table 16). Most of the other respondents (40 percent) reported they get irritated.

- (6) I only get irritated if they persist with it. If . . . every couple of months or so they bring it back up. I don't mind anybody asking, they've got as much right to ask. . . . It's like "how old are ?" and that doesn't bother me. It's just a fact of life.
- (5) The only time I would be irritated is if . . . their asking had a connotation of something's wrong. . . . But most often I will laugh it off.
- (8) . . . Depending on how they ask, it can irritate me. . . . It usually doesn't bother me. After all this time I've gotten so it doesn't bother me.
- (9) It doesn't make a difference now. . . . There was a time when it really irritated me because it seems to me that every day somebody was asking me.

Table 16. Effects of Account Requests

Effects	N	%
Pleased	1	3.3
Irritated	12	40.0
Makes No Difference or Makes No Difference Now	17	56.7
Total	30	100.0

Several respondents (40.0 percent) stated that they are usually bothered or irritated when people ask "Why aren't you married?"

- (7) I feel like it's none of their business. I think it's a very personal type of question . . . because you never go up and ask someone, "Why are you married?"
- (11) A lot of people seem to have the attitude that if you're not married that you must be miserable or something's a little wrong. You couldn't possibly be happy not married; which irritates me.

Regardless of the degree of irritation respondents reported they had experienced, their reasons were the same: people are prying; people assume something is wrong; the frequency and sincerity of the question. Only one woman, who was not confident of her own attractiveness, reported she was pleased when asked, "Why aren't you married?"

Respondents were asked, "When you were in your 20s did people express concern about your being single?" Most of the women (70 percent) responded affirmatively. Over half of the respondents (56.7 percent) reported that other people's concern was greater during their 20s.

- (1) Society worries about taking care of yourself and once you've shown you can take care of yourself, they get over it.

Nearly one-third (30 percent) of the women volunteered that hardly anyone now asks why they are not married.

- (2) Relatives used to ask . . . but since I've been about twenty-five they haven't bothered me anymore. (laughs). I guess you can only ask it so long and then it becomes too repetitive.
- (13) My friends were getting married and they (relatives) figured something was wrong.
- (7) In my late 20s people expressed more concern than in my early 20s. Recently people have told me that someone has said, "I wonder why she never got married?" Like by now (laughs) it's too late.
- (24) They've (parents) decided that I won't marry.

Some respondents (23.3 percent) reported that other people's concern about them was no different in their 20s than it is now. A few (10.0 percent) reported more concern now than during their 20s.

- (11) They think my chances are getting slimmer.
- (19) Not so much (concern) until I reached the 30 point. My family . . . they're afraid you're going to spend your life lonely in old age. . . . Always fixing you up with dates.
- (6) It was in my 20s that I was engaged. They expressed more concern that I was getting married. They didn't think I should be.

Neither present age of the women nor dating relationship with a man explains the difference in other people's concern about their being single.

Most of the women indicated that even though people may continue to ask, "Why aren't you married?" the degree of concern these people express is not as great as it was during their 20s. The people who expressed this concern then are indicated in Table 17. These data show that both kin and friends expressed concern. One-third of the respondents (36.7 percent) reported that kin expressed concern about the respondent being single.

Whereas most respondents presented specific career accounts (e.g., reasons for not marrying) five women presented master accounts for all their careers. These women referred to their religious faith guiding the direction and changes of their various careers. These master accounts emerged from four different questions in the interview.

Table 17. Concern About Single Status

Relationships	N	%
Kin (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.)	11	36.7
Friends (close friends, acquaintances, etc.)	5	16.6
Both kin and friends	6	20.0
No response	8	26.7
Total	30	100.0

In response to the type of job she would like to have in the next 10 years, one woman stated:

- (13) I have a very deep religious belief that God has a plan for your life and that He leads in different directions. . . . At this point I think that He is preparing me for something; I don't know what. But whatever it is, it will be good and I will be rewarded by it. I'm very deeply involved with a friend of mine now. . . . so that might be the direction I'm going.

When this woman was later asked to state the likelihood that she would marry, her response:

- (13) depending on the will of the Lord
also reflects her religious faith.

Two other women referred to their faith in God when they described their reactions to passing their ages of expected marriage.

- (6) I cried for a day. . . . But I got over it real quick. . . . My whole outlook has changed because as a Christian person I've changed inside. . . . I don't get bent out of shape over things like that anymore. I'm willing to let God more or less take care of the situation because I feel He knows what I need better than what I know.

- (29) I got depressed about it . . . and then I turned it all to the Lord's hands. And I said, "Lord whatever your will, will be." It may not happen when I want it and I try to be patient about it. . . . I may never get married. It's whatever He has planned for me.

When asked how satisfied she would be remaining single in her 40s, one respondent stated:

- (13) I think if I felt like that's what God had in store for me I would be very satisfied. . . . If I was sure that was the will of the Lord, I would be very satisfied.

Faith in God also emerged when three women reported the answers they provide when asked why they are not married.

- (6) I'm just waiting for whatever God has in store for me.
- (29) The Lord hasn't sent me a good one (man) yet.
- (9) It's evident that God doesn't want me married at this point.

Summary

The individual's personal career is affected by views of self and transformations of identities. The negative stereotypes of single women are not necessarily accepted, although personal identities may be affected. Respondents reported using positive or neutral terms to describe themselves as singles, but recognized that other people may assign negative identities to them. Singles are not exempt from assigning negative identities to other singles, such as participants in activities designed for singles. The negative stereotypes of singles most frequently are utilized as a basis for identifying socially distant others.

The stereotypes of single people and their life styles suggest there are few, if any, advantages associated with being a mature single. Respondents reported that it was difficult to identify many advantages. The perceived advantages of singlehood were autonomy, freedom from obligations, and opportunities for self-exploration. Some of these advantages were reported as reasons unhappily marrieds cited as reasons to not marry. The perceived disadvantages involved lack of preparation for independence and social constraints.

Two aspects of careers focused upon were entry and reversibility. Few respondents reported being recruited actively to enter their single careers. Half reported their entry was a result of situational reasons for not marrying. Given the nature of these situational reasons, the interpretation could be made that they entered the single career by default. The others reported a lack of interest in marriage for various reasons or satisfaction with their current life styles. A form of career recruitment had occurred in that most respondents reported that married people (particularly those perceived to be unhappily married) had discouraged them from pursuing marital careers.

Over half of the respondents had expected to be married by age 25. Reaching the expected age of marriage resulted in depression for a few of the women; however, the others either did not recall any effect or they set a new age of expected marriage.

Nearly all of the respondents perceived their single careers might be terminated by marriage. Even though most women perceived marriage to be less likely than it was in the past; marriage remained a possible

option. By age 30, two-thirds of the respondents had changed their perceptions of the likelihood of marriage, supporting the hypothesis in the literature that around age 30 never married women experience an identity turning point because they realize the goal of marriage might not be met (Donelson, 1977; Strauss, 1959). Most of the respondents attributed their changed perceptions of marriage to situational factors, that is, changes in situations such as breaking a relationship or moving, may have precipitated identity transformations. A few of the women reported a different type of turning point in that around age 30 they perceived marriage to be more likely than in the past, reflecting changed perceptions of opportunities.

An individual's personal career is a product of multiple specific careers (e.g., occupational, familial). Most respondents reported that for them, continuation of their single careers precluded embarking upon parental careers, which would soon be biologically foreclosed. Not only can involvement in certain others careers, but also the expectations for achievement in one career can affect involvement in another career. Some of the women were aware that they had engaged in "holding patterns" by delaying commitments and/or postponing independence because they had thought they would marry. Some of the women did not perceive they had been involved in "holding patterns," but their patterns of action or lack of action were similar to those of women who were aware of delaying action.

Turning points may result from changed situations, but identity transformations may also make the individual aware of new life options

(e.g., returning to school, changing jobs). Several women had changed their work careers around age 30. The modal reason for changing work careers was to return to school. Most of the respondents reported that their work careers were affected by the single status.

Present life satisfaction was not necessarily related to perceptions of future life satisfaction. Several women anticipated that as they age, life satisfaction would be lower, especially during the 60s, the oldest age category about which inquiries were made. They expressed concern about not having a companion or children when older. Many of the women who did not anticipate changes in future life satisfaction gave fatalistic responses, indicating they would be resigned to the single life style by the 60s.

Most of the respondents reported that when they were younger they had known single women in their 30s (potential role models). Some of those who may have served as role models were relatives, whereas others were women in the community. Most of the respondents had relatives (typically female) who either married for the first time after reaching age 30, or had never married. Both positive and stereotypically negative impressions of the female role models and their single life styles were remembered. Several of the respondents recognized that their negative impressions probably were based on inaccurate perceptions.

Singles often are asked to provide accounts of their lives to explain why they have not married. The respondents reported that the types of persons most likely to request such career accounts were marrieds, those older than the respondent, and casual acquaintances.

The accounts women offered tended to vary (e.g., in degree of seriousness) to situational factors. Several women reported they were irritated with people who requested such career accounts because these people were prying and/or implying something was wrong with being single. Over half of the singles reported that when they were in their 20s, as compared to their 30s, people were more concerned about the respondents' singlehood.

Whereas most women had specific singlehood career accounts, a few had master accounts for all aspects of their lives. All of the master accounts revolved around God's will to which the respondents adjusted.

Thus, the utility of the concept "career" and various postulated career dimensions were explored. The symbolic interactionist conceptualization of "career" provides a framework within which the life styles and experiences of never married women can be examined, although its flexibility limits the conclusions which can be drawn from its application. Identity turning points may occur at any time and lead careers in new directions. Career frameworks based on identity turning points do not assume that individuals move through sequential stages of development. Utilization of the personal career framework allows a focus on the individual's life course. The expansion of the accounts concept to include career accounts and master accounts provides a theoretical foundation for exploring another dimension of careers. Previous conceptualizations of "accounts" have focused on deviant careers and explanations for specific actions; the conceptualization in this study focused on a lack of socially desired action for an indefinite time period.

CHAPTER V

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Donelson proposes that turning points may lead women to change their life styles and/or their views about singlehood. If they more positively identify with the single status (1977:234-235), their expectations for and involvement in social relationships may change. For example, friendships may become more important as the single woman becomes aware that she may never marry. Friends and kin may be perceived as providing the social and emotional support expected from a spouse.

Social Relationships

Singles may be involved with both kin and friends. The characteristics of friends and kin with whom respondents were involved and the activities engaged in with them were examined in order to explore the quality and quantity of singles' social relationships.

Friends and "Closest" Friends

The women were told "I'm interested in the types of people you spend time with away from work. Think of these people and tell me the marital status, sex, age, and their connection to you (work, neighbor, kin, etc.) for each individual." Respondents were presented a card on which the variables were listed.

The characteristics of people with whom the respondents spent time are summarized in Table 18. The number of friends ranged from four to thirteen with a median of six. Most of the friends were approximately the same ages as the respondents. The women had more friends who were slightly younger than were older than themselves.

Table 18. Number, Marital Status, Age and Gender of Friends

Ages	Number of Female Friends		Number of Male Friends	
	Single	Married	Single	Married
Under 20	5	0	4	0
20s	17	10	8	8
30s	22	15	9	15
40s	8	5	7	5
50s	8	8	3	7
60s	4	6	0	6
70s	2	0	0	1
Total	66	44	31	42

With the exception of friends aged 50 to 60, the respondents had more single than married female friends in each age category. In every adult age category (except 20s and 40s) respondents had more married than single male friends. Many of the married male friends were the husbands of married female friends. Respondents had more than twice as many single female friends as single male friends. The fewer single male friends may in part reflect the fact that there are fewer single males than females in the county studied (U. S. Bureau of Census, 1973, Table 37).

The respondents' connections to these friends are summarized in Table 19. As might be expected for adults who were employed full-time,

the setting in which most friendships had been formed was work. Work friends were close in age to the respondents (20-40 years of age). Familial settings, neighborhoods, and churches were almost equally likely places for friendship formation to begin. With the exception of familial associates, most friends were within ten years age of the respondents.

Table 19. Initial Setting for Meeting Friends by Friends' Ages

Ages	Setting					
	Work	Neighborhood	Familial	School	Church	Unspecified
	N	N	N	N	N	N
20s	17	5	8	3	5	8
30s	21	11	4	8	6	9
40s	11	1	2	0	8	4
50s	12	3	5	0	3	1
60s	2	5	6	0	1	2
70s	0	1	2	0	0	0
Total	63	26	27	11	23	24

Respondents were asked to identify the people they felt were their closest friends by marital status, gender, age, connection to the respondent, relationship duration, and whether they lived in the area. The interviewer clarified that "closest friends" were not necessarily those people with whom the respondent spent the most time.

Most of the respondents (83.3 percent) had mostly female close friends. Only 6.7 percent had an equal number of male and female friends, and 10 percent had mostly males as friends. In terms of marital status, half the women had mostly single close friends, whereas 40 percent

primarily had married close friends. Few had an equal number of married and single close friends. Close friends were for the most part within ten years of the respondents' ages (83.3 percent). If they were not within that range they were more likely to be significantly older (13.4 percent) than younger (3.3 percent). Thus, close friends were likely to be similar to the respondents in age, gender and marital status.

Slightly more than half of the women (56.6 percent) initially had met their close friends in a work or school setting. A few respondents specified work and church (6.7 percent) or work and through kin (10.0 percent). Several singles (20 percent) perceived they developed close friendships with people they met in a variety of settings and a few women (6.7 percent) did not specify where they met these friends. The most frequent setting in which close friends were initially met appeared to be work. Thus, it was not surprising that nearly two-thirds (63.3 percent) had mostly local close friends. Yet, approximately one-fourth (26.7 percent) had mostly long distance close friends and only two of those eight women had lived in the area a short time (15 months or less). A few respondents (10 percent) indicated they had approximately the same number of local and long distance close friends. Thus, over one-third of the respondents were involved in a number of long distance close friendships.

The characteristics of friends and close friends were very similar in part because for several respondents they were the same individuals. However, for other respondents there was less overlap, especially for those with close out-of-town friends. Although

respondents were only slightly more likely to categorize their friends and close friends as single rather than married, the friends with whom respondents spent most of their time away from work were single and female. A subsequent discussion of the activities engaged in with others will further consider the variables of marital status and gender.

Ties to Family of Orientation

Families of orientation are dissolved through death; therefore, the respondents were asked to indicate if their parents were living. Both parents of over half of the respondents were living (56.7 percent), while both parents of only one respondent were deceased. Of those with only one living parent, the living parent for nine was the mother and for only three respondents it was the father. Thus, all but one respondent potentially could be involved with one or both parents.

Distance may serve as a basic constraint upon degree of involvement with others. Respondents were asked to indicate approximately how far away their parents lived. Over half of the respondents either lived with (5) or within 30 miles of their parent(s) (13). Of the other 11 with living parent(s), three lived between 70-100 miles from their parent(s) and the others were evenly divided into the 250-500 mile and over 500 mile radius categories.

Although the relationships of adult siblings have received limited attention in the sociological literature, ties to such family of orientation members may be important, especially for those who do not form families of procreation. Twenty-seven of the respondents had

sisters and/or brothers and thus potentially could have close sibling relationships. Respondents were asked to indicate which, if any, of the members of their families with whom they were close. Five stated they were close to their sibling(s) only and five to their parent(s) only. Approximately two-thirds (63.3 percent) of the respondents indicated they were close to both their parent(s) and sibling(s), whereas only one respondent indicated she was not close to any member of her family. Geographic distance from parents did not appear to limit maintenance of close relationships.

In order to further explore the nature of the ties with parents, respondents were asked to specify how often they were in contact with their parent(s) (Table 20). Thus, frequency of visits was ascertained. Twelve of the respondents visited with their parents from one to four times per week; they all lived within 30 miles of their parents. Those who lived 250 miles or more from their parents visited them from one to six times per year with one exception who visited them from one to three times a month. The visiting patterns very directly reflected proximity and resemble those found for marrieds (Axelrod, 1956; Bell and Boat, 1957; Greer, 1956).

Relationship ties can be maintained through telephone calls and letters, also. The women tended to call their parents (17 called 1-4 times per week) more often than they wrote letters, reflecting the close proximity of many of the women to their parents and the frequency of visits. Those singles who did not have weekly telephone conversations had at least one telephone conversation per month. Fifteen of the

seventeen who rarely or never wrote letters to their parent(s) lived within 100 miles of them. Letter writing apparently is not a favored form of communication. However, telephone calls seemed to serve as a means of maintaining long distance or nearby relationships with parents.

Table 20. Type and Frequency of Contacts with Parents*

Frequency	Type of Contact		
	Visit	Telephone	Write
1-4 per week	12	17	5
1-3 per month	4	7	0
3-6 per year	5	0	0
1-2 per year	2	0	1
Rarely/never	0	0	17
Total	23	24	23

*Six respondents were not included in this analysis; five lived with their parents and both parents of one were deceased.

Ties with siblings were explored in a similar fashion (Table 21). Ten of the twenty-six respondents who had siblings but did not live with them visited their sibling(s) one to four times a week and five visited with them from one to three times a month. The patterns of contact with sibling(s) resemble the patterns with parent(s). In terms of visits, this is partially explained by the fact that some respondents indicated that when they visited their parent(s), their sibling(s) were there, also. Singles did not report as frequent phone conversations with siblings as with parents, although as with parents they were more likely to call their siblings than to write them letters.

These findings further support the contention that singles and marrieds have similar patterns of contact with their families of orientation. Litwak and Szeleny: (1960) found in their study of married couples that family cohesion, as measured by frequency of visits, is not adversely affected by geographical mobility, for "persons separated from their families retained their extended family orientation" (1960:392).

Table 21. Type and Frequency of Contacts with Siblings*

Frequency	Visit	Telephone	Write
1-4 per week	10	11	0
1-3 per month	5	7	3
3-6 per year	5	4	3
1-2 per year	3	0	2
Rarely/Never	3	4	18
Total	26	26	26

*Three respondents had no siblings and one lived with a sibling.

Ties with Close Friends

It is difficult to measure how involved individuals are in their relationships with others. In order to explore degree of involvement with close friends, respondents were asked to indicate how often they called and wrote their long distance close friends and the amount of time they spent talking on the telephone with all close friends.

Table 22 shows that 13 (43.4 percent) reported they spent less than one hour per week talking to close friends on the telephone. The second

largest group reported one to two hours spent per week. Six respondents spent three to eight hours per week on the telephone with close friends. In response to this question several respondents made the following types of comments:

(1) I don't like to talk on the phone.

(2) I visit with my friends rather than talk on the phone.

Respondents summarized the amount of time spent talking with friends; therefore, those with more friends might have talked more on the telephone than those with fewer close friends. And, those whose close friends were work associates might have less reason to telephone their friends while at home, given the opportunities for conversation at the work place.

Table 22. Number of Hours per Week Engaged in Telephone Calls with Close Friends

Hours per Week	Number of Respondents	
Less than 1 hour	13	43.4%
1-2 hours	11	36.6%
3-5 hours	4	13.3%
7-8 hours	2	6.7%
Total	30	100.0%

Three-fourths (76.7 percent) of the respondents indicated their telephone calls were local or mostly local. The other respondents were divided evenly into the categories of predominately long distance calls and approximately equal local and long distance calls. If an individual has lived in an area a relatively short period of time, she might have

more friends living further away who would have to be called long distance. Someone who had lived in a community longer might not have as many long distance friends. However, most of the respondents who placed several long distance calls had lived in the area four or more years. Thus, some long distance relationships may have been maintained for a number of years or close friends may have recently moved from the area.

Table 23 presents information on the frequency of contact (by letter and telephone) with close friends. One-third of the respondents called close friends one to three times a month. The frequencies with which letters were written and calls placed were similar. However, 12 of the respondents were either callers or writers; only eight women wrote friends with the same frequency they called them. A few of the respondents indicated that some of their closest friends were long distances away, but yet they did not contact them very often. Perhaps they had been good friends in the past and remembered that previous closeness, although present contact was minimal, or they perceived the relationships as transcending time and interaction.

The respondents maintained contact with members of their families of orientation and close friends. Although geographical proximity apparently limited the frequency and type of contact, all the respondents were actively maintaining relationships which could be termed "close."

Social Activities

Singles may engage in social activities with family, friends or without specific others. Their fellow participants in social activities

may be married or single. Since few of the respondents engaged in activities designed for singles during the period preceding the interview, information is needed about the types of activities they did pursue.

Table 23. Type and Frequency of Contact with Long Distance Close Friends*

Frequency	Type of Contact	
	Telephone	Write
1-2 per week	2	2
1-3 per month	7	10
3-6 per year	7	4
1-2 per year	2	6
Rarely/never	6	2
Total	24	24

*Six respondents had no long distance friends.

Social Activities with Friends

Marriage may drastically affect the types of activities in which a person engages; therefore, the respondents were asked to indicate if they asked their married friends to engage in the same types of activities with them as they did their single friends. Over half (14) indicated they did not. (Two respondents could not make the comparison because they had only married friends and two others could not because they had only single friends.)

The women who did not suggest the same activities were asked to describe the reasons. The most frequent response was that married people have less time to participate in activities because of family

responsibilities or obligations. As a consequence, respondents adjusted to the constraints of their married friends' lives.

- (14) I don't expect my married friends to do anything with me except to allow me to visit them. I don't expect them to visit me because their time is too crushed.
- (9) Their activities need to be suitable for children.
- (29) Sometimes we do (go out to eat) when her husband is working or something like that.
- (7) I wouldn't ask my married friends to go on out of town trips for a few days. . . . I would ask them to do the things that wouldn't take much time. . . that wouldn't require them to be away from home very long.
- (14) If it can't involve their children..... they have to get a babysitter, so it's a very special thing.

Others noted that some of their activities would not be appropriate for a married person.

- (30) If you're going to a party, you don't ask your married friends to go because their husbands may not appreciate it. . . . They're just tied down. It's not . . . that they wouldn't enjoy themselves, but they're just devoted to that one man.
- (5) It would differ if I were not friends with the married person's spouse. . . . As far as going to a movie, I've never been to a movie with a married man.

One respondent explained that she would not invite married friends to attend activities when she would end up being the only unattached person.

- (12) Whether . . . it's a situation where I would feel uncomfortable being along with them. . . . I wouldn't go to a discotheque with married couples . . . where I'd be the only single person there.

Singles were asked if their married friends asked them to participate in the same types of activities their single friends did. Again 14 women responded negatively, but only nine of these women had indicated

they asked their married friends to participate in the same activities with them as with their single friends (Table 24). Four women who previously stated they asked their married friends to participate in the same types of activities perceived that there was a difference in what their married friends asked them to do. When asked to conjecture about why married friends' requests were different, one woman stated simply

(6) They don't ask.

The most frequent response was that married people do not invite singles to go on trips or to participate with them in other activities involving couples.

(26) Some couples don't . . . Like one (the woman) will ask me to do something, where some couples don't include you with them. They don't invite you to go somewhere with them.

(30) If they're going to a party where there are just married couples, they're not going to ask you to go along.

Some of the women indicated marrieds were more likely to include singles in their activities if the single woman participated as part of a heterosexual couple.

(19) A lot of times the married friends want to have a gathering with other married people. Sometimes they think you can just take the guy you're going with . . . and go with them on week-end trips. Which you can't. And your single friends don't ask you to do the same thing because they know you won't. [THE MARRIED FRIENDS EXPECT YOU TO HAVE A MAN?] Yes, and be a couple with them.

Two of the respondents stated that marrieds do not invite singles on trips or to participate in couples' activities but also rationalized that marrieds' family responsibilities limited their time to participate in activities.

- (8) I think married friends don't really have as much time. We seldom travel or take very long trips, things like that.
- (2) Most of my women friends are married. They seem to spend more time with their husband or with things connected to their marriage, their family. . . . If they're having over someone who's single they'll ask me too—to make up an even number.

Table 24. Activities Participation by Marital Status

Marrieds' Requests of Singles	Singles' Requests of Marrieds		
	Different for Marrieds	No Difference	
Different for singles	10	4	Total 14
No difference	4	9	
Total	14		

Three respondents stated that they typically visit their married friends in their homes, whereas with singles they engage in other types of activities.

- (18) The married friends would invite me over for a quiet evening with the children. . . . With single friends, we might go bicycling or something. . . . more mobile.

If married couples desire to engage in social activities as a unit, they may separate their single friends from their married friends. Thus, the women were asked, "Do your married friends ask you to do the same kinds of things with them that they ask their married friends to do?" Half of the respondents perceived differences. Responses to this question were not always consistent with those given to the previous two questions. Only about one-fourth of the women consistently reported differences in activities. And, five respondents who reported there

were differences in response to this question had not perceived differences when asked the preceding questions.

Most of the respondents (87.4 percent) perceived that couples' exclude singles from their couple based activities. They perceived that couples preferred other couples and did not consider inviting women without partners. This practice could stem from the early patterns of double-dating.

- (20) If they're having a get together and they're having husbands and wives, they don't want a single person there. It's better to have couples rather than having one person.
- (30) Because you're a third wheel. . . . If there's two or three couples that's going on a trip, . . . they're not going to ask you to go along. It's not that they're jealous . . . but they don't like a single woman around. Marriage does break up that little gang.

One woman believed that the need to provide social partners for all members of a family led marrieds with children to socialize with other couples who have children.

- (2) If they have children they would tend to invite other people who have children to do similar things with them.

Another also believed that marrieds' activities usually revolve around their children and that when they engage in social activities at night they prefer other couples.

All women were asked, "Why do you think there are differences in what singles do together and what they do with their married friends?" Even though nearly half of the respondents had not indicated differences in such activities in the previous questions, only 26.7 percent had no explanations for differences (Table 25).

Several respondents (40.0 percent) perceived that the marital relationship along with its obligations and responsibilities affected what singles and marrieds do together. Some of the differences were attributed to the children of married people.

- (14) Married people have children and so anything that is done with you, if it can't involve children, then . . . they have to get a baby sitter. So it's a very special thing.

Other differences were attributed to the married woman's obligations to a husband.

- (19) Their husbands expect them to be a certain place or come back at a certain hour.
- (30) Some husbands expect quite a bit out of their wives. They really don't care for them to mess around with their single friends. . . . It's not that they don't like me. They don't want us to get by ourselves. Like I may talk them out of their marriage or something.
- (23) The married friends don't have the time to do as many things as single friends do because they (marrieds) have to administer to each other's needs and their children. . . . My single friends, some of them still live at home with their parents and they don't have a lot to do.

Table 25. Reasons for Differences in Activities by Marital Status

Reasons for Differences	N	%
Coupling	7	23.3
Different interests and responsibilities	12	40.0
Few shared interests and coupling	1	3.3
No response—don't know	10	33.4
Total	30	100.0

Several single women (23.3 percent) believed that not being a couple made the difference in what marrieds and singles do together. The singles thought that it would be awkward socially for them to participate in many adult evening social activities with couples.

- (28) I think it would be kind of silly to go if you were by yourself, unless you took somebody, to go with a married couple somewhere.
- (27) Certain places are more conducive to or have an atmosphere—more of a romantic atmosphere where you would want to have couples.
- (22) . . . Usually dances and single persons don't fit in as well as married couples do in most instances. Too many jealous wives.

Singles do not invite marrieds and marrieds do not invite singles for these reasons: family responsibilities (spouse and/or children), some singles activities are not appropriate for marrieds and vice versa, couples desire the company of other couples, and singles visit with marrieds rather than participate in activities together. Some respondents found it difficult to answer the question. They either had not previously thought about the differences in activities or simply did not know why there are differences in what marrieds and singles do together.

Many of the interviewees perceived that their married friends had less free time because of responsibilities and obligations to a husband and perhaps children. The definition of free time for friendship activities may vary for singles and marrieds. Because childless singles do not have a spouse, both marrieds and singles often assume that the latter have more free time.

For many people the absence of responsibilities to a husband and children may decrease the perceived importance of the single woman's

responsibilities, although singles may have substantial responsibilities and obligations, to parents, other relatives, and friends. If the single woman does not live close to her family, she may develop family-like relationships with friends. That these relationships are not institutionalized nor legitimated through marriage may prevent singles as well as marrieds from defining them as family-like responsibilities and obligations and therefore as equally important and time consuming. If time spent with friends is not defined as fulfilling responsibilities and obligations, then it may be defined as free time. Therefore, both marrieds and singles define the time singles spend with friends as free time, but time spent with family is not defined as free time.

Some singles may share the pair orientation that a number of them attribute to marrieds.

- (12) The only way you can include singles in things that you do . . . is to have a big party. . . . But if it's a seated dinner party, it's hard. . . . It's harder to include other singles unless you want just one more to match you, so it can be even numbered.

Some singles may exclude other singles who do not have partners. Perhaps the social norms about coupling are deeply ingrained, and restaurant and dinner table arrangements reflect this.

The women were asked, "Do you feel that you should include any of your close single friends in social activities you plan?" Singles may feel obligated to always include certain single friends in most of the activities they plan just as married persons may feel their spouse should always be included in certain activities. However, either the respondents

did not experience this sense of obligation, or they misunderstood the question. A typical response was

- (7) Of course I include them; they're my friends. Who else would I invite? I usually return invitations.

Vacations and Holidays

The women were asked, "How will/did you spend your vacation time this year?" Slightly more respondents visited or traveled with friends (33.3 percent) than with family (22.4 percent). Some respondents reported visiting their families on holidays, as well as other times, but they did not define this travel as vacation. A few respondents (13.3 percent) split their vacation time between family and friends.

Since type of occupation might affect the type of vacation one takes (cost, time available for vacation), these two variables were compared in Table 26. There were some differences when occupation and type of vacation were examined. Respondents in traditional female jobs seemed more likely to travel with friends (45.4 percent) than did the women in the more traditionally female professions (10.5 percent). Professional women were more likely to stay at home or work (21.1 percent) than respondents in traditional female jobs (9.1 percent). Some of the professionals were difficult to categorize because two were working on Ph.D. degrees and had utilized their vacation time to work on their degrees and two others had spent vacation time at church conferences or with church groups.

Respondents were asked if their vacation was typical as compared to previous years, and if not, how it was different. A slight majority (53.3 percent) perceived their vacation was not typical. Half of the

sixteen whose vacations were "atypical" usually traveled with or visited friends more.

One respondent stated that in the past she traveled more with friends; thus, what was "typical" had changed.

- (15) When I was younger, in college, I'd go places with friends, but more or less I've become a more family-oriented person.

Table 26. Occupation and Type of Vacation

Vacation Type	Occupation			
	Traditionally Female Professions		Traditionally Female Jobs	
Visit family	2	10.5%	0	0.0
Visit friends	1	5.2	2	18.2
Stay home—work	4	21.1	1	9.1
Travel—family	4	21.1	1	9.1
Travel—friends	2	10.5	5	45.4
Equal family—friends	2	10.5	2	18.2
Other	4	21.1	1	0.0
Total	19	100.0	11	100.0

An additional one-third (31.4 percent) reported that usually they visited or traveled more with both family as well as with friends. In the past, the remaining three respondents vacationed more with family, traveled alone, or had usually not taken a vacation.

Although no respondents reported traveling alone on a vacation in the past year, one respondent stated that in the past she had usually traveled alone.

A few respondents stated they would not go on vacation alone.

- (7) I've never been anywhere like that (major trip) alone.

The women who visited friends on their vacation were asked, "How would you describe your decision to visit with these friends?" Half of these eight respondents stated they were good friends and really wanted to see the friends they visited. This may imply they might want to visit these friends regardless of where the latter live. The other half wanted to see the friends, but also wanted to see the area in which the friends lived.

Respondents who traveled with friends were asked, "How would you describe your decision to travel with them?" The most frequent single response (8) was that they enjoyed or liked being with the friends with whom they traveled. Five respondents (20.8 percent) stated they want to see the same place as the people with whom they travel. They may not travel together because they are close friends but rather because they have similar interests. Since people are attracted to others with similar interests, it was predictable that several respondents (7) traveled with friends because they had similar interests and a close relationship. A few respondents (3) reported they had similar vacation schedules and wanted to see the same place. One respondent reported very practically:

(12) There was no one else to go with.

Half the respondents who traveled with friends decided to travel with certain individuals because they were good friends and wanted to see the same place. Only 20 percent of the respondents did not travel with or visit friends in the past year. Traveling or visiting with friends may be equally frequent for married couples.

One stereotype of singles is that they lead a lonely existence, particularly on holidays; therefore, the singles were asked to indicate how they spent July Fourth, Christmas, and Thanksgiving in the past year. Table 27 reveals singles were about as likely to spend the Fourth of July with family (36.7 percent) as with friends (30 percent).

Table 27. People with Whom Singles Spend Holidays

Relationship	July 4		Christmas		Thanksgiving	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Family	11	36.7	22	73.3	19	63.3
Friends	9	30.0	1	3.3	7	23.3
Family and friends	4	13.3	7	23.3	2	6.7
Other	6	20.0	0	0	2	6.7
Alone	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30	100.00	30	100.0	30	100.0

Even though most of the interviews took place late in August, many of the respondents had difficulty remembering their activities on July Fourth. Several commented that they usually do not do anything special on that holiday. Christmas was obviously a holiday to spend with family (73.3 percent) or with family and friends (23.3 percent), some of whom were dates. Thanksgiving was also a family holiday, but as compared to Christmas, more respondents spent it with friends (23.3 percent). Fewer respondents (6.7 percent) shared Thanksgiving with both family and friends. Because of the nature of their work (nurses, motel clerk) some respondents had to work on holidays, or the days around them, limiting travel time to be with family or friends who did

not live nearby. However, most were able to celebrate the occasion. Two respondents who worked on Thanksgiving stated that their family did not do anything special on that holiday. No one reported spending Christmas or Thanksgiving alone.

Respondents were also asked, "Is this how you usually spend this holiday?" The respondents whose Thanksgiving was different stated that in the past they spent that holiday with family but are now spending it with friends. One respondent stated:

(23) Until my mother died (two and one-half years ago) I always spent it at home.

One woman had spent July Fourth in the hospital but usually spent it with friends, and the other respondents spent it with friends but usually travel on that holiday. The respondent who spent Christmas with friends usually spent it with family.

Activities Alone and with Others

Singles may enjoy or not mind engaging in some activities alone, whereas other activities may be perceived to be less enjoyable if others are not involved. The women were asked to indicate generally how much they liked engaging in certain activities, and then how much they liked doing these activities alone. They were given a card which listed a Likert-type scale ranging from "Dislike Intensely" to "Like Intensely." The differences between generally liking the activity and enjoying it alone are reported in Table 28.

Few respondents enjoyed engaging in any of the activities alone more than with others, although equal numbers found shopping more and less

satisfying alone and most perceived no difference. Shopping is an activity which people must engage in to some degree. If it is perceived as a form of work rather than recreation, it may not be defined as an activity for which there should be a partner (i.e., a social activity).

Table 28. Differences in Satisfaction Level of Engaging in Activities Alone vs. with Others

Activities	Satisfaction Level					
	More		Less		Same	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Evening meal in restaurant	0	0	26	86.7	4	13.3
Shopping	7	23.3	7	23.3	16	53.3
Seeing a movie	1	3.3	22	73.3	7	23.3
Attending church*	2	6.7	9	30.0	18	60.0
Going on vacation	1	3.3	26	86.7	3	10.0
Motels/hotels out of town	1	3.3	18	60.0	11	36.7
Going to theatre (plays)	0	0	22	73.3	8	26.7
Going to a party	3	10.0	17	56.7	10	33.3

N = 29

For only two activities did more than half of the respondents report that it made no difference if they did these activities alone or with others. It is not unusual to see someone shopping or attending church alone. During a church service there are limited opportunities to interact with others, so that the social aspects of the activity involve arriving, visiting, or leaving after the service. Not only might people be less likely to assume the person alone has no one else with whom she can do these things, but these activities may be just as enjoyable alone as with other people. Attending church alone may be

easier than attending a movie or play alone because there may be some regularity to it and one may encounter the same people as interactants.

Activities in which enjoyment is enhanced with interaction (e.g., eating out, movies, vacations, plays, etc.) with others were least enjoyable alone. Two activities which an overwhelming majority (86.7 percent) of the respondents perceived to be less enjoyable when engaged in alone were an evening meal in a restaurant and going on vacation.

Several respondents commented that they had never been on a vacation by themselves.

- (9) I wouldn't want to spend two weeks by myself. . . . Oh, if it's a trip I'd find something to like, but there are better ways to do it.

Others noted they had vacationed alone but preferred to do it with others.

Some singles reported they liked vacationing alone, or it made no difference.

- (27) Hmm, . . . I've done that and I've like it.

- (21) It depends on how much I've had of everybody (lives with parents).

Approximately three-fourths (73.3 percent) of the respondents enjoyed seeing movies or attending the theatre less when by themselves.

- (4) I don't do it as much by myself. . . . It takes an extra effort to go. I must convince myself it's worth it.
- (6) I don't think I've ever seen a movie alone. . . . I never think about going to a movie by myself, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't.
- (5) I still do it but it takes an extra effort.

A slight majority reported staying in motels and hotels when out of town (60 percent) was less enjoyable alone. One simply explained:

(26) I don't want to stay by myself.

The singles' comments about parties were similar regardless of whether they attended alone or with someone else. Parties are different from some of the previously mentioned activities because they may or may not be couple oriented.

(6) It depends on who was giving it and who was there.

Activities the respondents perceived would be less enjoyable alone were activities in which a person by herself would be rather conspicuous. Interaction with others also participating is an enjoyable if not essential aspect of these activities. If a person does these things alone, there may be no one else present with whom to interact. Some people suggest taking along reading matter. If a person vacations alone, she is likely to encounter doing all the listed activities by herself. Few people are seen participating in these activities alone. Those who are seen alone may be pitied, if others perceive singles have no one with whom to do these activities. The respondents who lived alone also preferred going on vacation and staying in motels/hotels with other people rather than by themselves. The women who discussed participating in activities alone tended to refer to doing this "by myself" rather than "alone," thus avoiding the negative absence of others.

Social Support

Women who have not been married may be satisfied with their single life style. Regardless of their anticipated satisfaction as they age,

they develop sources of social and emotional support. One study found that singles depend on friendships for such support (Stein, 1976).

Financial Exchange

Certain relationships may be perceived as sources of financial assistance. "Financial exchange" refers to loans or gifts of money when extra money is needed. Individuals may perceive that financial exchange is appropriate in certain relationships. In this study the focus was not upon who helped whom, but whether financial help had been received or extended. Most of the women (83.3percent) indicated that their family members helped each other financially. This is a slightly higher percentage than was found in studies of married couples (Sussman and Burchinal, 1962). Slightly over half the singles (53.4 percent) reported they had exchanged financial support with friends. Only two of these sixteen women did not also exchange financial support with family members.

Singles may be more likely to get involved in financial exchanges with their family than with their friends. If friendships are perceived to be more temporary than family relationships, then people may be less likely to get involved in financial exchanges with temporary associates. In this sense, singles are not different from marrieds who are also more likely to give or receive financial help with kin rather than with friends (Litwak and Szelenyi, 1964).

The financial status of the single woman, her family, and her friends may determine the necessity of financial assistance. When asked about their financial involvement with family and friends, several

respondents commented that they had not previously been involved in such arrangements, but, ". . . would if they (or I) needed help."

Social Support Networks

One of the assumed negative consequences of singlehood is the absence of the social support that could be provided by a spouse. Emotional support supplied by an adult's family may be limited even when they are close in proximity. In one study, ninety percent of the singles interviewed sought emotional support outside the family, i.e., among friends (Stein, 1976:46).

The social support networks of marrieds and singles may be quite similar, i.e., composed of kin and friends. The relationships in a social support system can provide an individual with intimacy, sharing, caring, and some personal stability. The members of a support system relate to the individual in a variety of roles, i.e., to multiple aspects of the individual's self.

The absence of a spouse in singles' support systems may increase dependence on friendship relationships. However, friendships are not institutionalized like marital relationships. The lack of such social recognition may allow friendships to be perceived and treated as somewhat less important than marital relationships.

Respondents were asked if they had the kind of emotional support usually expected of a spouse. All women responded affirmatively. Over half of the respondents (60.0 percent) depend exclusively on friends for such support. Approximately one-third (33.4 percent) depend on both

friends and family and 6.7 percent depend on family only. Parents were the most frequently mentioned family members who provided social and emotional support. Members of a social support system may be expected to share positive and negative experiences. For example, the individual may have positive experiences: received a promotion or new job, bought a new car, met someone new, bought a stereo. Whereas marrieds may share these events with a spouse, with whom do singles share these incidents? Nearly all the women (96.7 percent) reported that they call friends when something good happens. Some of the women (34.5 percent) called both family and friends. Only 6.9 percent called only their family.

Most of the women (26) reported that they celebrated when something good happens, e.g., passing an exam, receiving a promotion, etc. Half of the respondents (13) celebrate by eating out, six have a social gathering and seven (26.9 percent) eat out as well as have a social gathering. Singles also were asked what they did when something was bothering them. Most of the women (25) responded that they called someone.

Eighteen (72 percent) of those who make calls, call only friends while six (24 percent) call friends and/or relatives. One woman reported calling a sister. Some of these latter women stated that the type of problem determines who they call, i.e., whether family or friends. If it is a problem related to the family, or one family members will understand, the family is called; if not, friends are called. Some women stated that sometimes they do not tell anyone, or they tell people only after thinking it over.

Thus most of the women share their good experiences and problems with only friends; others share good experiences with both friends and

family. Evidently some singles are more willing to share good experiences but not their problems with family members. Even the women who lived with their parents sought friends with whom to talk over problems. These results are not consistent with the findings that marital couples are more likely to appeal to kin than to friends in time of financial and/or emotional need (Adams, 1967; Babchuk, 1965; Bell and Boat, 1957; Sussman and White, 1959). They freely sought advice and confided in parents but were not willing to allow communication with friends to include such intimacies. Singles may depend on one or more friends to provide the type of support that married persons are expected to provide for one another. These data support the findings of Stein (1976) that singles seek emotional supports outside the family.

The singles were asked, "Do you wish you had some other ways to deal with the highs and lows in your life?" Slightly over half the women (53.3 percent) indicated satisfaction with their present arrangements (Table 29). Nearly one-third of the respondents (30 percent) indicated they would like a change; they would like to have a spouse, companion, or one consistent person with whom they could share lows and highs.

- (2) It would be nice to have someone to consistently share the happy and sad things because it's never always the same person. And you can never be certain how happy they're going to be for you and how understanding of the sad things.

Some of the singles thought that friends should not be called upon for assistance too often because the latter might get tired of listening to problems.

- (11) It probably would be better to have a spouse. Friends may get tired of listening to all your problems and feel like they're being used. I guess a spouse would, too; but that's different.

This respondent apparently perceived that spouses are required to listen, but friends do not have to do so. Presumably the marital relationship provides a person who is obligated to listen to problems. Even though singles who have problems typically depend on their friends, sometimes they may be hesitant to call on these friends, i.e., there is an apprehension that friends may get tired of being a listening post or counselor. Their costs may become too high and the friendship revoked.

Table 29. Desired Ways to Cope with Problems

Desires for Change	N	%
No change	16	53.3
Want spouse-companion	9	30.0
Live closer to family/friends	3	10.0
Other	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

As a result of their turning points and recognition they they may never have a spouse on whom to depend for social and emotional support, single women may redefine the importance of friendships. These women may seek, through freinds, the social support that could be provided by a spouse. As compared to a spouse, friendships may be perceived as more temporary (Schneider, 1968). The hesitancy of some singles to burden friends with problems may be the result of a realization that friends are needed as social support, but if the support gets too heavy, friends

can easily withdraw. Unlike kinship, friendships always carry the possibility of being revoked (Bell, 1979:272).

Dating Relationships

The women were questioned about the number of different people they had dated in the past year. Three-fourths of the respondents had dated one or more people (Table 30). Given the decreasing availability of single men, it could be predicted that the women who had not dated in the past year were older. On the other hand, they might be more selective and less interested in dating. Those who had not dated were disproportionately represented in their late 30s. Sixty percent of the women 37-40 had not dated in the past year. Only 22.2 percent of the respondents ages 30-33 had not dated in the past year.

Table 30. Number of Dating Partners in Past Year

Number of People Dated	N	%
0	7	23.3
1	8	26.7
2	5	16.7
3	6	20.0
4 or more	<u>4</u>	<u>13.3</u>
Total	30	100.0

The respondents' relative levels of satisfaction with their dating situations were explored. A slight majority (56.7 percent) responded they were satisfied, including most (71.4 percent) of the seven women

who had not dated in the past year. The level of dating activity is apparently not directly related to level of satisfaction with dating situation for women in their 30s.

Women who had dated one person in the past year could have a long term intensive relationship with that person or have only one date in the past year or various degrees of involvement between those two extremes. Half of the women who had dated only one person were satisfied with their current dating situations; even though two of them were not dating anyone at the time of the interview.

The women who indicated they were not satisfied with their current dating situations were questioned about what changes they would like. Examination of Table 31 indicates nearly two-thirds (64.3 percent) of the respondents would like to date more persons approximately their own age and with whom they have common interests.

- (5) I would like people with more common interests, this age, to date.
- (18) I'm not really dating anybody right now. (I'd like) to date somebody I had at least a couple of things in common with . . . spiritually and intellectually. . . . I'd like for them to have a little more content to them.
- (23) I'd like to date occasionally.

Nearly one-third (5) of the 16 women who were dating someone were dissatisfied with their dating situations. Three of these five women were dissatisfied because they would like to see the person they date more often.

- (7) The guy I'm interested in lives away from here and I don't see him very often.

A couple of the respondents were dissatisfied because they would like to experience a more meaningful relationship. One of these women was involved in dating relationships at the time of the interview.

- (2) I'd like to feel something more than "It's been a pleasant evening." There's no one special. I'd like there to be someone special—that means a little more.

Table 31. Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Dating Situation

Reasons	N	%
More dates—same age and interests	9	64.3
Would like to see more of one person	3	21.4
Would like a meaningful relationship	2	14.3
Total	14	100.0

Singles could have participated in dates during the past year, but not perceive that they were involved in dating relationships. The women were asked if they were presently involved in a dating relationship with a man or a woman. Slightly less than half (46.7 percent) were involved with a man and only two respondents (6.7 percent) were involved in a dating-type relationship with a woman.¹ Their responses are

¹One of the two respondents who reported having a dating relationship with a woman obviously had a limited dating relationship with her. Examination of her entire interview reveals that it is probable that she mistakenly referred to her social activities with her female friend as a dating relationship. Her responses to other questions indicated she was interested in relationships with men only. She saw a 50 percent likelihood of marriage; reported there are few men available in this area to date and does not believe in sex outside of marriage nor intend to live with a woman in a sexually exclusive relationship "because I'm a Christian." When this woman was asked if she would change her living

incorporated in the analysis. Of the 16 women who were involved in dating relationships 11 were satisfied with their current dating situations.

The women who were involved in dating relationships were asked how long they had been involved in them. Since one respondent was currently involved in dating relationships with six different men, and therefore six different lengths of time, her response to this particular question was coded as "no response."

Examination of Table 32 reveals that 40 percent of the respondents involved in dating relationships had been dating the same person for more than six months but less than one year.

Table 32. Duration of Current Dating Relationship

Duration	N	%
6 months or less	2	13.2
More than 6 and less than 12 months	6	40.0
1-2 years	0	0
3 years or more.	7	46.8
Total	15	100.0

Several women (46.8 percent) had been involved in the same dating relationship from three to five years. Not surprisingly, five of these

arrangement and how, her comment was:

(16) The only thing I would change is if I was married. It would probably be a different house.
Thus she may have misunderstood the term "dating relationship," because women may plan "dates" with each other to go to a movie, or to dinner.

respondents (71.4 percent) were satisfied with their dating situations. The women who were not satisfied with their relationships expressed a desire to spend more time with one particular person. There is not necessarily an association between length and seriousness of relationships. Relationships are often characterized according to their duration and/or intensity. These characteristics may act independently or conjointly. Only two of these seven respondents expected to marry or live with the person they were currently dating.

The 16 respondents involved in dating relationships were asked about the intensity of those relationships. A slight majority (56.3 percent) characterized their dating relationships as serious. Some respondents found it difficult to characterize their relationships. Perhaps the nature of the relationships had not been explicitly defined by both parties or the woman was uncertain about how serious the relationship might become in the future. These women tended to answer "casual—probably." They apparently preferred to underestimate rather than overestimate the seriousness of the relationship.

One interpretation of the respondents' difficulty in identifying the intensity of their relationship would be that traditional gender roles prescribe that the man should define the relationship. Until the man informs the woman how serious he is, she does not know whether or not the relationship will become more intense or even continue. Even though nine of the women defined their relationship as serious, only three of them indicated they have a commitment to this one person and see no one else. The other six women evidently do not define serious

dating relationships as exclusive relationships; thus, it is not surprising that the majority (56.3 percent) did not expect to marry or ever live with the person they were currently dating. Only one of the respondents expected to marry or live with her dating partner in the future.

Friendships vs. Dating Relationships

Single women may depend on friends for social and emotional support, but how important are their friendships when a date enters the picture? Some writers assert that in the past, female friendship was perceived as a way to pass the time until the right man (or any man) came along. Dating relationships were seen as having a quality of investment, in that marriage might result, or at least the dating experience might enhance marriage prospects (Seiden and Bart, 1975:193). The respondents were given a hypothetical situation. "Let's suppose that you made plans to see a movie or go to dinner with one or two of your friends, and a person you occasionally date calls you for a date the same evening. What would you do?" Over half (60 percent) of the respondents stated they would keep their plans with their friends. Some of these women would keep their previous commitment but explain the situation to him or try to see him later.

- (11) If I had already planned something with my friends I would go ahead and do that, even though I might not want to . . . and try to explain it to him.

Seven women (23.3 percent) indicated the particular relationship or situation would determine their actions. For some respondents, the characteristics of the potential date would be the determining factor.

- (26) It depends on how much I like him. . . . If I really liked him I would drop the friends and go out with him.
- (7) If it was a man I hadn't seen in a while and I really wanted to see and he wasn't going to be in town very long, I would probably call the friend and say . . . "Can we make it another night?" . . . but if it was somebody I wasn't really interested in anyway I'd say "No, I already have plans."
[WHAT IF IT WAS A LOCAL MAN AND YOU WERE INTERESTED?]
I'd probably say, "I've got plans tonight."

For others the relationship to the friend determined whether or not they would break plans with the friend.

- (17) It would really depend on the friend. . . . If it was a close friend I hadn't seen for a while . . . and the evening was really important to them . . . I would keep the plans. If not close and it really didn't make a difference, I would postpone it.
- (12) If they were good friends I'd probably call them . . . and cancel. . . . If they weren't I'd . . . tell the man he'd have to call me earlier, that I'd already made plans.

A few respondents reported that the situation would determine their actions.

- (15) I'd keep the plans . . . unless it was something I just didn't want to do to begin with.
- (22) If it were with one other person, I'd say I had plans. If it were with two other people and those two were friends, . . . if it was something I was interested in, I'd tell my friends something else had come up.

Some singles (16.7 percent) indicated that it would be appropriate to break plans with friends in order to have a date.

- (30) This is standing. . . . If you get a chance to go out . . . my friends, we know this . . . you go out with your date.

Although the majority of the women stated they would honor a previous commitment, the comments of many of the respondents indicated the value of a date made such decisions difficult.

Respondents were then asked what they had done when they had encountered such decisions. Approximately two-thirds of these women (16) indicated they had kept the plans with their friends, while nine (36 percent) had chosen to go on the date. Those respondents who cancelled plans with friends were asked if they cancelled them more, less, or about as often as in the past. Five of those women perceived that their behavior had changed; in the past they had been more likely to cancel plans with friends in order to have a date. A number noted the reasons for their changed behavior.

(23) We all did it (cancel friends) when I was younger. It was a known thing if you had a date, forget the other thing . . . in my teens and twenties.

(30) . . . I do it less now (cancel friends). It's not as important now as it used to be. (I) used to think "you gotta have a date," but if the guy's not important, I don't do it. I'd just as soon be with my friends. If a guy calls at the last minute I won't change my plans with my friends.

The other four women felt their behavior had not changed and continue to break plans with friends to have a date. Singles who kept plans with friends in the past, believed they are about as likely to continue to do so, if not more likely.

Some of the singles who reported that they are now less likely to take the date qualified their response by also commenting that they have not recently faced this choice.

(12) I haven't dated much lately.

(26) I haven't recently faced this choice.

The value of engagements with friends may increase when alternative engagements are seen as less available or even unavailable. Particularly

for the women who are not more likely than in the past to keep plans with friends, friendship is being defined as important to thier lives. This may be an effect of the previous finding that more respondents depend on their friends for their systems of social and emotional support.

Although the age distribution of the respondents was uneven there were age differences among the respondents who keep or cancel plans with friends. The women who maintained plans with friends tended to be older (32-37) with a mean age of 34.8. The respondents who broke plans with friends were in the early 30s (range 30-32, $\pm = 30.8$). The postulation could be made that as single women age, they are less likely to cancel plans with friends in order to have a date because after encountering a turning point, they define friends as more important than in the past, and they have fewer opportunities in which a choice must be made. These factors may not act independently. Having fewer dates may precede a turning point, which may result in a redefinition of one's own identity and her definition of friendship.

The women were asked if their friends had ever broken plans with them for dates. Those who answered affirmatively (60 percent) were asked their reactions. Ten of these 18 women (55.6 percent) reported that when their friends broke plans with them for dates such behavior was understandable.

(26) I don't blame them if they get a better offer.

A few respondents specified circumstances when such behavior is acceptable.

- (5) . . . if it were with a person that I knew they weren't just going out for the sake to be going out . . . if it's really beneficial to them or they thought it was.
- (18) It's usually been a good reason, like somebody coming in from out of town they hadn't seen in a long time. And when it was explained to me it was fine.

Six of the singles (33.3 percent) reported being irritated with friends who had broken plans in order to have dates.

- (11) [It] makes me feel that I'm not that important to them. If something came along they're more interested in, they'd shove me aside.
- (4) My feelings were hurt. It shows a priority and makes your evening a mess when you plan to go somewhere and then you're by yourself. At the same time you can understand if she likes the guy, she'd better grab him while she can. . . . But it's still not nice.

Only two of the eighteen who had friends who had broken plans reported they were happy for their friends when the latter broke plans in order to have dates. Only one of these two respondents reported also breaking plans with friends in order to have a date.

There seems to be a relationship between the respondents' cancelling plans with friends and their attitudes about their friends who do the same thing. Most of the women (8) who break plans to have a date are either happy or it makes no difference when their friends break plans to have a date. Half of the six women who keep plans with their friends are irritated and half (8) reported it makes no difference when their friends break plans to have a date. Ten of the respondents order to have a date. The other eight women (44.4 percent) responded that friends continue to break plans. However, a few reported that it does not happen very often.

More respondents perceived that their friends broke plans to have a date than reported they did themselves. Even though Table 33 indicates the percentages are the same, as compared to themselves, twice as many respondents reported that friends break plans to have a date. Twice as many friends keep plans now, as compared to the past; but also twice as many friends are likely to continue to break plans to have a date. Perhaps when friends have broken plans in order to have a date, respondents were more likely to remember it. The respondents' memory may not be as vivid when they break plans with friends to have a date. In either case, if such plans had been indefinite, the respondents may not have perceived plans had been broken. Alternatively, perhaps respondents were hesitant to admit they cancel plans with friends if they have an opportunity to have a date.

Table 33. Respondents' and Friends' Likelihood to Choose Dates

Frequency	Chose Date			
	Respondent		Friend	
	N	%	N	%
Less frequently	5	55.6	10	55.6
No change	4	44.4	8	44.4
Total	9	100.0	18	100.0

The respondents who do not cancel plans with friends may recognize the important functions of friendship. If single women seek social and emotional support through friends, then efforts must be made to maintain these relationships. "The society as a whole stands to gain, since the important social functions which are played by women's friendships can

only be filled better when their importance is recognized" (Seiden and Bart, 1975:225).

One family sociologist argued that married women satisfy their interpersonal needs through family rather than through friends. This may have supported the belief that women do not need female friends (Bell, 1979). Traditionally, women's interaction with other women has been given a low priority. A higher value has been assigned to interaction with men since they were perceived to be more interesting than other women. Women's competition for men has been detrimental to the forming of friendships among women. Their success has been measured by the social status of the men with whom they associate and marry. Since women have been expected to compete with each other for men, and to give priority to relationships with men, female friendships have been given a lower value and importance. If this is true, then female friendships have had to be legitimated so people will take them seriously and realize the sacrifice women must make if they are to be maintained (Seiden and Bart, 1975:208). Friendships which provide social support may take more effort and be more important to maintain for the single women.

Alternatively some marrieds and singles, males and females, may be similar in that they may routinely make plans with friends and then cancel those plans if they perceive there is a more attractive alternative. One's marital status and gender may not be the variables to examine. Married people and men may be just as likely as single women to cancel previous plans if presented with attractive, valued alternatives. Another possibility is that such opportunists may be unwilling to make definite plans with friends. If plans are kept indefinite and a better

opportunity is presented, then the person may see nothing wrong with breaking the indefinite plans. This could have influenced why respondents perceived that friends break plans more than themselves.

Initial Contacts with Friends and Dates

Since so few singles participate in activities organized for singles they are not likely to meet many friends in that way. The women were asked where they usually meet women and men with whom they become friends. Examination of Table 34 indicates that almost all respondents meet female and male friends through work or at school.² Nearly half (14) also met women at church, but only one-third met men at church. One-third of the respondents (10) met women friends through other friends, neighbors, or relatives, but nearly half (14) met men friends through other people. Most respondents reported meeting male and female friends through more than one of these sources, e.g., through other friends and at work.

Table 34. Sources of Establishing Female and Male Friendships

Sources	Friends	
	Female	Male
Through work or school	29	24
Church	14	10
Through friends, neighbors or relatives	10	14

²Some of the respondents were currently attending college or graduate school as well as working.

Perhaps fewer respondents met male friends at church because as compared to females, fewer males attend church (Walum, 1977). Women were slightly more likely to meet male rather than female friends through other people.

Respondents were also asked, "Where do you usually meet people you date?" Table 35 summarizes initial contacts with dates. About an equal number of respondents reported they met dates through work compared to respondents who met dates through friends. Comparatively, there was a wider separation of these two categories when respondents were asked where they meet male friends. They were about as likely to meet dates through work or school as they were to meet them through other people. This is not true for meeting male friends. That so many single women meet dates through other people is not surprising in this couple-oriented society. Married friends may be very eager to play the matchmaker role but single women may or may not be so eager to comply. Only one respondent reported that she met dates at bars. Her response is consistent with the literature on the "singles scene" (Gordon, 1976), which reports that most singles do not meet lasting companions at bars.

Table 35. Sources Establishing Dating Relationships

Sources	N	%
Through work or school	19	63.3
Through friends/neighbors	18	60.0
Church	7	23.3
Other	2	6.7

Sexual Relations

The women were asked whether or not sexual relations presented any special problems for single women. Half of the respondents (53.3 percent) indicated there were no special problems. The other respondents gave reasons, and several gave multiple reasons. The most frequent reason was that men and women have different expectations with regard to sex, (i.e., that men may be more utilitarian in their sexual relationships and women more personally committed).

(11) Women are more involved in emotional relationships than men. . . . Men don't take it as seriously.

(7) There's a fear of being taken advantage of and that's all he's interested in.

(15) I want an emotional involvement (or commitment) before sex.

Eight women expressed a fear of pregnancy, while five comments were made about social disapproval.

(4) The neighbors watch and tell.

(2) Marriage makes sex more acceptable.

Two women noted that singles do not always have the opportunity for physical relations.

(2) Sex is not always available when the desire is.

The problems are similar to the sexual problems of college women (Tavris and Offir, 1977:68) thus for some single women these are apparently long-term problems.

The women were asked, "Have you ever lived with a man in a sexually exclusive relationship?" Nearly one-fourth (23.3 percent) responded that they had; an additional 16.7 percent had lived with a man on weekends or several nights per week but had maintained a separate residence.

Respondents were also asked if they had ever lived with a woman in a sexually exclusive relationship. Two said they had, but only one was not interested in sexual relationships with men. All other respondents emphatically stated that they had no interest in a sexually exclusive relationship with a woman.

They were asked if, in the future, they thought they would live with either a man or a woman in a sexually exclusive relationship. Over half the women (60 percent) indicated they would not live with a man without marriage but several (12) left themselves open to the possibility. Only five of these twelve had previously lived with a man and two others had lived with a man several nights per week but had maintained separate residences. Thus, over half (7) of the twelve had previously lived in a similar arrangement.

The women were asked, "If you could change your living arrangement, what would you like to change about it?" Nearly half of the respondents (13) liked their present living arrangement and were not interested in changing it. Owning a house was desirable for some of the singles (6). Over one-third (11) would like to make changes about the people with whom they live. Six would like to marry or have a man around the house. Two women would like to live with nonrelatives (one to share her house with boarders, another a communal arrangement).

Another respondent who did not want to live alone indicated she would rather live in a house with her parents, a husband, or girlfriend rather than in an apartment.

Summary

Regardless of their marital statuses, people usually desire to know others on whom they can depend for social and emotional support. Marrieds anticipate receiving such support from spouses. Singles depend on various friends (Stein, 1976) and kin. "Social support network" was a sensitizing concept utilized in this study to refer to the persons on whom singles depend for social and emotional support. Respondents reported sharing the positive aspects of their lives with both family and friends, but tended to share problems only with friends. Exchanges of financial assistance tended to involve kin rather than friends. The lack of institutionalization of friendships constrained the degree of interdependence singles and their friends were willing to develop. Some of the respondents perceived that friendships can be revoked if too many or too burdensome demands were made of friends.

Respondents' maintenance of family of orientation relationships did not appear to be constrained by geographical distance, although frequency and type of contact was affected. Ties were maintained by visits, telephone calls, and letters. Holidays, especially Thanksgiving and Christmas, were typically spent with kin, in keeping with societal traditions. All respondents also frequently were in contact with local friends and many with long distance friends.

The women reported having married and single (both male and female) friends, but they spent more time away from work with other single women. Most respondents perceived differences between the activities in which they participated with marrieds and activities with other singles. They

perceived that marrieds had less free time than did singles and that certain activities were apparently appropriate only for heterosexual couples because the respondents perceived unattached singles were excluded.

Whereas marriage is expected to involve companionship in American society, singles are often stereotyped as lonely persons engaging in activities alone. Respondents perceived that some activities were less enjoyable when other people were not involved (e.g., seeing a movie, eating out), whereas enjoyment of other activities was not affected. The distinction between these types of activities is that enjoyment of the former activities may be enhanced by interaction with participating others.

The dating relationship was another type of social relationship explored. Most of the respondents had dated one or more persons in the past year and over half of the women were currently involved in a dating type relationship. The majority of the respondents reported satisfaction with their dating situations, including most of the women who had not dated in the past year. Only one respondent was involved in a dating type relationship with a woman. Some of the women had established long-term dating (e.g., "keeping company") relationships, but few of these women expected to marry or live with the person with whom they were involved.

Females are socialized to value highly dating relationships with men. However, as single women realize their opportunities for dating and marriage are less than in the past, they may assign more value to

their friendships (nonsexual) with other women. If an opportunity for a date became available after plans had been made with a female friend, most of the respondents indicated they would honor their commitments to the friends. In the past, some of the respondents had broken plans with female friends in order to have a date. Reported changes in behavior were attributed to a lesser importance placed on dates and fewer occasions which required making a choice between dates and friends.

Contrary to mass media reports of widespread involvement in alternatives to marriage (e.g., living together), few of the respondents had lived with a man in a sexually exclusive relationship, and only two had lived with a woman in a similar arrangement. A few others reported living with a man only a few nights a week. Over half of the women did not anticipate living with a man only a few nights a week. Over half of the women did not anticipate living with a man, to whom they were not married, in the future. Only one woman was willing to consider living with a woman in a sexually exclusive relationship in the future; the others emphatically rejected the possibility.

The "social support network" concept is very useful for examination of social relationships and networks which are not highly institutionalized. The concept can be utilized to uncover what types of exchanges are involved in various relationships.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

It is assumed that an adult in American society is a person who is married or will marry. Technically, marriage involves a legal contract; however, it involves much more than prohibitions about sexual conduct, assignment of financial responsibilities and regulations for terminating the contract. When a person marries there is social recognition of a status change. The typically brief marriage ceremony serves as a rite of passage which both certifies to the community that the person has attained adulthood, is stable, mature, and responsible and introduces the person to the social world of marrieds. Newlywed women have recognized that other married women introduce newlyweds into one part of the marrieds' social world by sharing their trials and tribulations of being married. For other newlyweds it is a somewhat unsettling experience to recognize that in the marrieds' social world people are no longer seen as individuals, but rather in terms of pairs.

People who never marry are a problem.. Given the expectation that an adult is a married person, only young people are expected to hold the never married status. For a long time, older never married women have been depicted negatively. The "old maid" stereotype suggests that older never married women are physically unattractive and have unpleasant personalities. As the children's card game "Old Maid" suggests, no one wants to have or be the "old maid." While at least some people continue to believe in this stereotype, during the late

1960s and the 1970s another stereotype emerged in the mass media, "swinging single." Since marriage as an institution was undergoing various assaults during this time period, it perhaps is not surprising that this idealization of singlehood emerged then. The "swinging single" stereotype emphasizes as positive aspects of singlehood what marriage prohibits—lack of institutional restrictions on sexual behavior, financial obligations to others, and enduring commitments to others.

One impetus for this research was a desire to ascertain to what extent the conflicting stereotypes of singlehood were based in reality. Another reason was to learn if there is a singles' social world, for the singles' literature suggests that singles perceive that they are excluded from many social activities of marrieds, from the marrieds' social world. A more general concern was to explore how individuals coped with remaining in a status which others and perhaps the singles themselves expected would be held only temporarily.

Empirical Findings and Theoretical Contributions

Like marrieds, mature singles have diverse responsibilities (e.g., at work, to families of orientation, in their communities) and their lives change over time. In other words, singles have careers which involve various roles and related status and identity transformations. The concept of personal careers permitted examination of how marital status affects various other aspects of a never married's life.

Some roles may be more difficult for singles to play than for marrieds because singles lack certain socially recognized role partners,

but other roles (e.g., the friend role) may be easier to perform. Recognition that singles have role partners who perform at least some of the functions typically expected of spouses led to formulation of the sensitizing concept of support relationship. Some individuals may have a limited number of relationships, whereas others may have many of them.

The concept of social support network was developed in order to examine patterns of social relationships. Although the size of support networks varies, a minimal level of support from others probably is necessary in order for any person to maintain positive views of self over time. Young adults, those who have recently moved, and those in temporary work positions may not have support networks which are clearly defined or developed. Intensified recognition that one will be single for the foreseeable future, that one must play multiple roles (some of which traditionally involve a spouse as a role partner), that one will be in a particular location for an indeterminate period of time, are some conditions which should lead to the establishment of supportive relationship networks.

Selves/Identities

The concept of self has been used in many disciplines and assigned too many definitions to assume agreement on its meaning. Various components of the self have been postulated (e.g., self-concept, self-image, self-esteem, and self-awareness) and most measures of the self are focused on only one of the components. Thus, there is general dissatisfaction with the ability of most measures to depict "the self."

In recent decades sociological social psychologists have directed their attention to identities (views of the self) held by the individual and others. Despite variations in the specific definitions of identity, there is general agreement that the following linkage exists: status $\rightarrow$ role $\leftrightarrow$ identity. Thus, conceptualizations of identities emphasize the self as a social product and de-emphasize the impulsive ("I") aspect of self. However, symbolic interactionists do not argue that identities are socially determined. Institutional arrangements and interaction with various others provide input for identity formulation, but the individual is an active agent who constructs his or her personal identities.

A person has multiple personal identities. Some identities may be interrelated (e.g., being young and being sexually desirable). McCall and Simmons (1966) and others have proposed that identities may be arranged hierarchically in terms of salience and prominence. Other social psychologists and gender role specialists have argued that some key statuses (e.g., race and gender) may affect expectations (roles) associated with other statuses. In this study a somewhat diffuse but prominent single identity was found to influence other identities (e.g., those related to familial, friendship, and work roles). The never married identity was not always salient for the respondents, although it could become salient in many situations. And, the respondents basically had positive views of themselves as singles, although they recognized that others assigned negative identities to women such as themselves.

Sociologists typically argue that people are most likely to stereotype others that they do not know very well. Before the "appropriate" stereotype can be invoked for an individual, the individual must be placed in a social category. Negative stereotypes have been used to characterize a wide variety of individuals who share the common status of never married. Such stereotypes of singles may influence the social identities people assign to never married women whom they do not know, for both forms of typing involve categorizing individuals on the basis of their shared never married status. Social identities are assigned to specific others. When describing the assignment of social identities to strangers in a particular social setting, Goffman argues:

Society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories. . . . When a stranger comes into our presence, then, first appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category and attributes, his "social identity" (1963:2).

Thus, people who do not know or only casually know a never married woman may assign a negative social identity to her when they first interact with her. Participants in singles' activities may be assigned negative social identities (e.g., as losers) because of the social setting which provides knowledge of their marital status. Those who participate in such activities may be forced to accept the negative social identity of a loser (Edwards and Hoover, 1974).

The maintenance of positive views of oneself is not accomplished without difficulty if general views of people who share a common

characteristic with one are negative. When respondents were asked to identify advantages and disadvantages associated with the single status, they found it difficult to identify advantages, and a number could identify only one significant advantage. The women seemed to have thought previously more about the disadvantages and less about the advantages of remaining single, suggesting that they shared with others the tendency to focus on the negative aspects of singlehood.

Careers

The general definition of career is "progress or general course of action of a person through life, or through some phase of life, as in some professions or undertaking some moral or intellectual action" (Urdang and Flexner, 1973). In general, sociologists have focused on individual's careers through organizations and institutions, while psychologists have focused on the process of maturation (i.e., changes in internal states). Symbolic interactionists have utilized the general definition of career and emphasized changes in individuals' conceptions of themselves and others.

Some symbolic interactionists (Glaser and Strauss, 1971; Lindesmith et al., 1977) have attempted to identify various career dimensions. In this report, the utility of such dimensions for depicting the similarities and differences in never married women's personal careers was investigated. The dimensions examined were: nature of career recruitment or entry, degree of (ir-)reversibility, types of turning points, interrelationships of various careers, future career plans, role/career models, and career accounts.

Entrance into long-term single careers generally occurred through default, failure to marry, rather than selection of singlehood. Most women reported that numerous contingencies when they were younger had resulted in their not marrying (e.g., the right man had not been met at the right time or promising relationships had not resulted in marriage). Nearly all of the women reported that others (especially people who were or had been unhappily married) had tried to discourage them from marrying. Some of the factors those others suggested for not marrying were cited by the respondents as advantages of singlehood. By the time of the interview, some of the singles found they lacked interest in marriage and/or had developed enjoyable life styles and thus were less interested in marriage than when they were younger.

When younger, over one-half of the respondents had thought they would be married by age 25. The majority of those respondents either set new ages for marriage upon reaching or passing age 25 or did not recall the passing of that age as having any effects on them. A few women reported temporarily experiencing depression when they reached their expected ages of marriage. Some women continued to set progressively older ages of expected marriage as they reached previous target ages, suggesting that although their single careers had lasted longer than they had expected, they did not anticipate lifelong single careers.

Single careers generally were not perceived to be irreversible; they could be terminated at least temporarily for marriage. The women were reluctant completely to foreclose marriage or to embrace the never

married role. However, they generally perceived that the likelihood that they would marry was substantially lower than it had been in the past and they no longer anticipated that marriage would structure their adult lives.

In American society, several ages (21, 30, 40, and 65) have been treated as especially significant for adults. Although there is data on the adjustments of married men to various birth anniversaries (e.g., Levinson et al., 1977), most discussions of the impact of birth anniversaries are not based on empirical research. One of the implicit goals of this research project was to ascertain if respondents reported changes in their self perceptions or behavior around age 30. In fact, around age 30 many of the women had changed their perceptions of the likelihood of marriage, supporting the argument that approaching or reaching age 30 may cause a single woman to rethink her life (i.e., to experience an identity turning point) (Donelson, 1977; Strauss, 1959). Changed perceptions of the likelihood of marriage generally were related to specific changes in their lives (e.g., moving, terminating a love relationship, completing formal education, decreasing opportunities to meet men), rather than enduring personal attributes (e.g., physical unattractiveness, personality flaws). A few noted that their perceptions of men and marriage had altered.

Data were collected on various aspects of the women's lives, for individuals have multiple careers. Careers are interrelated in varying degrees. Generally, the respondents who expressed interest in having children perceived that they needed to be married in order to bear

children and thus that it was unlikely that parenthood would be a career for them. Given these women were between ages 30 to 40, they must have been aware that soon biological parenthood would be no longer an option (i.e., that the likelihood of biological parenthood was more limited than the likelihood of marriage). Whereas singlehood was perceived to be reversible, non-parenthood eventually would not be.

Various respondents reported that expectations of marriage had affected their pursuit of careers other than parenthood. Some women had engaged in what were conceptualized as holding patterns. They reported delays in making commitments, plans, and in establishing their independence—presuming that a marital career would shape most other aspects of their adult lives. Other women did not perceive having delayed making plans because they expected to marry, but their patterns of actions or lack of action fit into the holding pattern conceptualization (e.g., delay of establishment of a separate residence from their family or returning to school).

Work careers may provide a central focus for adult life for some people, just as marriage does for others. Singles' advice books often recommend that women become more involved in their work. Most of the women had planned to some extent a work career when younger; however, they did not report that they had aspired to have intense professional careers. Several had changed their work plans between ages 29 to 31. Such changes in work careers may reflect identity turning points, confirming the hypothesis loosely formulated in the singles' literature that around age 30 many never married women experience changes in their

expectations of marriage and also plans for work or other careers. The symbolic interactionist conceptualization of identity turning points is useful, for it suggests that there is variation in when these transformations occur, what identities result, and how acutely aware individuals are of such experiences. The respondents' answers indicated at least two transformations typically had occurred: respondents had changed their perceptions of marriage and its likelihood and they had changed their work career orientations.

Most respondents stated that they were satisfied with their current life styles, but the levels of satisfaction anticipated during their 50s and 60s tended to be lower. Most of the women who foresaw no change or increases in their future levels of life satisfaction anticipated resigning themselves to singlehood as their fate. Anticipated resignation or decreased levels of satisfaction both may result from never married women coming to terms with the disparities between their goals and achievements. Levinson et al. (1978) discussed how married men in their 40s experienced such a disparity in goals and achievements, as a result of failure to achieve particular occupational goals.

Some psychologists have emphasized the importance of negative and positive role models to women's occupational career pursuits, although they typically have not focused on role models for singlehood. Most of the respondents reported that when they were younger they knew to some extent women who never married or married late. Some recalled negative impressions of these women and their life styles which the respondents thought, in retrospect, probably were inaccurate judgments. Others had

positive or mixed impressions. Rather than assuming that these unmarried women in their pasts were significant role models, it may be more relevant to investigate what individuals served as "achievement-specific significant others" for the respondents (Ridgeway, 1978). A woman may not choose to model herself totally after another, but instead she may focus on particular role behavior as admirable or desirable. Significant others who themselves do not exhibit certain desired traits may positively influence an individual to pursue these goals. A teacher who more positively evaluates career women than homemakers may serve as an achievement-specific significant other who directly or indirectly discourages a woman from pursuing the full-time homemaker role.

Never married women may not "know" why they have not married; but their career accounts provide insight into the identities they desire to project and their retrospective interpretations of their lives. Married people and those older than the singles who are involved in friendly but not close relationships with them are more likely to ask the singles to account for their singlehood than anyone else. Several respondents stated that they were irritated when people requested such accounting, given the negative identity implications that singles perceived were underlying such requests. For most of the respondents the nature of the accounts varied according to situational factors, supporting Harré's (1977) situational conceptualization of the accounting process.

The literature on accounts has been focused primarily on explanations of specific actions (Scott and Lyman, 1968). A single woman usually is

not called upon to account for why she did not marry yesterday, but rather why over time she has not engaged in the socially expected behavior. The deviance conceptualization of accounts could not be applied without modification to the examination of singles' careers.

A "master account" concept emerged from the analysis of the data. The few women who presented "master accounts" (i.e., life tales) quite clearly attributed the direction and changes of all their various careers to "God's will." Their comments emphasized fatalism—what will be will be. However, underlying these remarks may have been a sense of religious "calling." Career researchers should try to ascertain the prevalence of various types of "master accounts" for they may be offered by different categories of people.

The most important overall contribution of this research involved the utilization and refinement of the personal career framework to facilitate understanding of the changing perceptions of selves and others experienced by never married women. Such careers do not involve particular sequences of stages with each built on preceding ones, which are encountered by all at specific times. This study was focused on singles' life courses in terms of the impact of specific organizations (occupational, familial, religious) and less formally structured aspects of adult life (e.g., social relationships). This and other research raises fundamental questions about the theoretical utility of the family life cycle model and other adult developmental models which assume that everyone will marry and have children (Nock, 1979).

Relationships

The sensitizing concept of social support network proved to be a very useful research tool. An underlying assumption of the concept is that in order to maintain particular views of themselves over time, individuals must receive some support for those views and their related role performances from others.

Brittan (1978) has proposed that in today's mass society an individual may be conceived of as an actor who plays many roles and changes roles with considerable detachment—in other words as alienated. Numerous interpretations of Erving Goffman's various works have suggested, on the basis of his analyses that either people are empty or hollow and all that is real about them are their masks or that people are scared, duplicitous performers who are fearful constantly that their "true" apparently unworthy selves will be uncovered. If social support networks exist, such views of humans as alienated actors can be questioned, for these views assume that people are not involved in close, multi-faceted relationships with others. The social support network concept suggests that people become involved with others who provide them with support for more than isolated performances. Turner's (1978) conceptualization of the self as impulse and Zurcher's (1977) of the mutable self suggest that in today's society people may rely on a limited number of supportive others because support for an overall view of self rather than for specific role performances is required.

In this report a woman's relationships with surviving members of her family of orientation, friends, and/or kin were conceptualized as

forming her social support network, whether or not she perceived of them as forming a network. Several aspects of these networks were examined. The networks varied in size. Within a network, the degree of involvement in and the nature of the exchanges in specific relationships differed. Some relationships were perceived to be less likely to endure or more vulnerable to revocation (e.g., some friendships) than others (e.g., parent-child relationships). The last dimension (vulnerability) particularly has been neglected in network research.

Based on respondents' answers to various questions, it was concluded that expectations varied, depending on the type of relationship. Respondents tended to share good news with both family members and friends, but they were less likely to share problems with family members. The singles more often reported exchanging financial assistance with kin than with friends. The less institutionalized nature of friendship ties may make individuals more wary of straining these relationships, at least in certain ways. Some of the women were apprehensive about depending on friends too heavily for emotional support, although they were more likely to expect emotional than financial support from friends. Friends were not perceived as feeling required to provide the consistent support expected of a spouse or kin, regardless of the singles' own behavior.

Most women reported that they were close to some surviving member(s) of their families of orientation regardless of geographical proximity; however, the nature and frequency of their contacts were affected by distance. Perhaps as a result of marital status and/or regional

differences in frequency of family visits by adults, the respondents apparently visited their parents more frequently than did married couples studied by other researchers (Bell and Blumberg, 1959).

Friends potentially may be male or female, single or married. However, Kaufman (1978) found that the networks of single faculty women tended to consist primarily of other single women. Most of the respondents had both married and single friends, but the people with whom they spent the majority of their time away from work were generally other single women. The activities in which relationship partners engage deserve further examination, for recent research evidence indicates that shared activity preferences are more strongly associated with liking than attitudinal similarity (Werner and Parmelee, 1979). Marrieds were perceived to have more constraints on their "free" time than singles. Certain activities were viewed as more appropriate than others to engage in with couples.

Single women also may be involved in or desire to be involved in another type of potentially supportive relationship—a dating relationship. Most of the singles reported that their friendships were important to them, that commitments to friends should be honored if subsequent to making such plans there were opportunities for dates. A few of the women stated that when they were younger they would usually cancel plans with friends in order to take advantage of an opportunity for a date.

The mass media have reported that young unmarrieds are choosing to live together in relationships similar to marriage before they marry.

About one-third of the respondents reported they had lived part-time or full-time with men in sexually exclusive relationships. The respondents generally were unwilling to consider entering into live-in relationships with men in the future. Such relationships may have all or most of the disadvantages of marriage but few of the advantages (e.g., commitment to a shared future). All but one of the respondents were unwilling to consider entering into such a relationship with a woman.

Limitations of the Research

Symbolic interactionists have not formulated clearly the concept of personal career or the dimensions of such careers. In this research an attempt was made to verify and build upon existing formulations of the career framework because it is useful for the examination of life style adaptations. However, the framework is not developed fully and therefore it has limitations. Thus, the conceptualization of careers requires further elaboration before specific career types can be identified.

In all types of social research, some subjects may have a tendency to provide "socially desirable" responses. The tendency to provide "socially desirable" responses may have affected some of the data collected for this study. For example, when asked to discuss their friends, people may have been hesitant to indicate they had only a few or did not have diverse social contacts. Some of the respondents may have felt compelled to describe previous opportunities for marriage or to deny that they would break commitments with friends in order to go on

dates. There are no easy ways to control for the tendency to offer desirable responses; however, the respondents appeared to provide the most honest answers that they could to the researcher's questions. The researcher utilized numerous probes which could have uncovered false reports.

Generalizability is another major issue. A random sample of never married women in a specific over-30 age category would be difficult to obtain in any locale. Thus, snowball sampling may continue to be the most appropriate sampling technique although it has obvious limitations (non-independence of units, probability of selection). Studies in other regions of the country would provide a basis to ascertain if differences between findings obtained from these Southern respondents and those reported for respondents in the urban North were a result of regional variation, degree of urbanization, and/or research design.

All of the women interviewed were white. This was by design, for very few blacks lived in the area in which the study was conducted. Future research on never married women should include blacks so that racial comparisons can be made. Higher rates of singlehood among blacks may result in different careers and interpretations of singlehood. Stein (1978) has suggested that mobile blacks may encounter more difficulty developing support networks than similar whites, given their limited numbers. On the other hand, they may not have the same negative experiences as whites who have not married, since they are proportionately a larger subgroup and blacks' views of marriage may not be as positive as whites are.

The semi-structured interview guide developed for this study was appropriate given the exploratory nature of the research. Future researchers could provide scales for respondents to use for answering a number of questions. For example, some women's hesitancy to indicate the level of involvement of their current dating relationships might have been counteracted if they had been presented a scale ranging from "very involved" to "casual." Research on never marrieds has not reached the level of development at which mailed questionnaires would be appropriate, and the type of data required to address the issues focused on in this study simply cannot be obtained through the use of highly structured questionnaires.

Future Research Directions

In order to depict more completely the careers of never married women, additional research should be conducted utilizing never married women in older age categories. The fact that around age 30 many respondents experienced identity turning points is reflective of the structure of American society, which demarcates being under 30 as substantially different from being over 30. Reaching age 30 may be more critical for unmarried women than for other individuals. It is widely known that it is unlikely for women past their 20s to enter first marriages and generally believed that women are less attractive or desirable to men when they are over 30. Turning points also may be somewhat structured for older women (e.g., reaching age 40, undergoing menopause, passing the peak of a work career, experiencing the death

of close family members). Of course, longitudinal data would be desirable, but it is more difficult to obtain than cross-sectional data.

In order to ascertain the effects of gender upon singles' careers, the life styles of never marrieds of both genders in similar age categories must be investigated. Bernard (1972) has argued that one consequence of the American marriage gradient is that the women who never marry are the "cream of the crop," whereas the men who do not marry are the "bottom of the barrel." Research comparing never married females and males should include control variables (e.g., income, occupation, education, and mental health).

Given that several categories of persons are designated as singles (never married, divorced, and widowed), career data should be collected on women and men who formerly were married. Re-entry into a singles' career upon divorce or widowhood may be associated with different career life styles. Data collected from the different types of singles identified above and never marrieds in other regions of the country could help to substantiate and/or refine the conclusions about careers, as well as to specify further the nature of singles' social relationships.

Future researchers could supplement the collection of interview data with life histories and/or diaries reporting activities for a specified period of time. Interviews with each member of a single's support network could generate greater understanding of how networks function.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Code # _____

1. Year Born: _____

2. Job Title: _____

3. Religious Affiliation: Protestant (Specify) _____
Catholic _____
Jewish _____
None _____
No Response _____
Other _____

4. Education
Elementary School Graduate _____
High School Graduate _____
Attended College _____
College Graduate _____
Attended Graduate School _____
Master's Degree _____
Doctorate _____
Post Doctorate Work _____

5. How long have you lived in _____ ?
Less than 6 mos. _____
Less than 1 year _____
Years _____

6. What advantages have you experienced from being single? (Freedom, Independence, Privacy, Self-Development, Spending Money)

Which are the two most significant for you?

7. What disadvantages have you experienced from being single?
(Financial, Lack of emotional supports, Loneliness, Safety/Security, Stigma, Restricted Social life, Help with car, etc.)

What are the 2 most significant for you?

8. a. In general, are you satisfied with you current life style?
Yes No
- b. Does being single affect your opportunities for self development?
If yes, how? Yes No
9. a. Do you expect to do the same kind of work you are doing now
for the next 10 years?

IF NO: What do you expect to change? Would you like to have a
different job than you have now?

- b. When did you first decide you would like to pursue your present
line of work? This specific or general line of work?
Age _____

c. What were your work plans before then?

d. What changed your work plans?

e. Would you briefly tell me about the kinds of full-time jobs
you held before you started the job you now have?

- f. Do you think the people you work with treat you differently
because you are single? (Expect you to stay later, work
holidays, ask about your private life, accept any work
schedule?) YES
NO

IF YES, In what ways?

10. a. Do you use any of the following words to describe yourself to
people? (CARD)

	<u>SELF</u>	<u>OTHERS</u>	<u>KNOW/DON'T KNOW</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Bachelorette	_____	_____	_____	_____
Career Woman	_____	_____	_____	_____
Never Married	_____	_____	_____	_____
Old Maid	_____	_____	_____	_____
Single	_____	_____	_____	_____
Spinster	_____	_____	_____	_____
Swinger	_____	_____	_____	_____
Unmarried	_____	_____	_____	_____

- b. Which of these words do you think people generally use to describe single women?
- c. Do you think they use different words to describe women they know or women they don't know? Which?
- d. Which, if any of the words, do you think describe single women positively? Negatively?
11. a. Are there any singles' groups in the (city) area that you know about?
YES
NO
- b. Are there entertainment places which cater to singles?
YES
NO DON'T KNOW
- c. Are there occasions planned for singles?
YES
NO DON'T KNOW
- d. Do you ever participate in any activities designed for singles?
YES NO

IF YES: Which ones have you participated in?

How many such activities have you participated in during the past year?

Why do you participate in these activities?

WHY DO YOU THINK OTHER PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN THESE ACTIVITIES?

In general, have you been favorably impressed with the women you met at singles activities?

YES
NO

In general, have you been favorably impressed with the men you met at singles activities?

YES
NO

12. How likely do you think it is that you will ever marry? Would you state the likelihood as a percentage?

- a. In the past, did you think marriage was _____ as you do now?
 more likely _____
 less likely _____
 about as likely _____

IF YOUR FEELINGS HAVE CHANGED: Can you identify when they
 changed? Age _____
 Why?

- b. Has your desire to marry ever affected the way you planned
 your future? YES
 NO

IF YES: How?

- c. When you were in your teens, did you have some approximate age
 by which time you thought you probably would be married?
 YES
 NO
 DK

IF YES: What was it?

IF AGE IS PASSED: How did reaching that age affect you?

13. a. Using this scale (CARD), how satisfied would you feel remaining
 single in your _____
 40s _____
 50s _____
 60s _____

Very Satisfied
 1

Satisfied
 2

Neutral
 3

Dissatisfied
 4

Very Dissatisfied
 5

IF ANSWERS VARY WITH THE YEAR: Why do you feel you would be
 more (less) satisfied being
 single then (age category)?

14. a. Would you like to have a child(ren)? YES
 NO

IF YES: (1) Would you like to bear your own child
 as a single person _____
 as a married person _____

(2) Would you be interested in adopting a child
 as a single person _____
 as a married person _____

b. Do you feel your desire to have (or lack of interest in having) children has affected your interest in getting married?

YES

NO

15. When you were a teenager did you know any women in their 30s who were not married?

YES

NO

IF YES: a. Who were they? Neighbor _____
 Kin _____
 Other _____

b. Did you form any impressions about what it would be like to be a single women in her 30s?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) IF YES: Can you tell me what these impressions were?

16. Do you have any relatives who married for the first time in their 30s, later than that, or have never married?

YES

NO

IF YES: How are they related to you?

	Late	Never
Father	_____	_____
Mother	_____	_____
Sisters	_____	_____
Brothers	_____	_____
Aunts	_____	_____
Female Cousins	_____	_____
Male Cousins	_____	_____
Uncles	_____	_____

17. a. Sometimes married people kid singles about being single, or ask when they're getting married, or why they haven't married. Think about the people who might have asked you "Why aren't you married." Would you tell me what types of people have asked you this question since you've turned 30?

CLOSE
 regular friends _____
 close relatives _____

DISTANT
 Without regular contact _____
 In large group _____
 Distant relatives _____
 Strangers _____
 Acquaintances _____

MARITAL STATUS
 Singles _____
 Marrieds _____
 Divorced _____

AGE
 Old _____
 Young _____

- b. Have you given everyone the same answer? YES
 NO

IF YES: (1) What is it?

- IF NO: (1) Do you give different answers depending on who asks the question?

YES
 NO

- (2) Do you give different answers depending on the situation you're in?

YES
 NO

- (3) How do your answers vary with the persons asking the question and/or situation?

- c. How do you feel when people ask you why you aren't married?

Pleased _____
 Irritated _____
 Makes no difference _____

- d. Do you feel you know why you remained single?

YES
 NO

IF YES: Why? (Give one or two major reasons)

18. a. When you were in your 20s did people express concern about your being single?

YES
NO

- IF YES: (1) How does it compare to the concern you presently encounter?

Greater _____
Less _____
About the same _____

- (2) Who were those people who were so concerned?

19. a. Do some people tell you that you should not get married?

YES
NO

- IF YES: (1) Who are they?

- (2) What reasons do they give you?

20. a. Where do you usually meet women with whom you become friends?

- b. Where do you usually meet men with whom you become friends?

21. I'm interested in the types of people you spend time with away from work. Think of these people and tell me the marital status, sex, age, and their connection to you, for each individual. (CARD)

<u>MS and Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Work/Neigh/Kin/Other</u>
Sing Male	_____	_____
Sing Fem	_____	_____
Mar Male	_____	_____
Div Male	_____	_____
Div Fem	_____	_____

22. Think of the people you feel are your closest friends. These may or may not be the same people with whom you spend the most time. Tell me the marital status, sex, age, their connection to you, how long you've been close friends, and if they are local or live away from here, for each individual.

Mar Status and Sex	Age	Work/Neigh/ Kin/Other	Years	Local/ Long Dist.
Sing Male	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sing Fem	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mar Male	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mar Fem	_____	_____	_____	_____
Div Male	_____	_____	_____	_____
Div Fem	_____	_____	_____	_____

23. a. In a typical week, how much time do you spend talking on the phone with your close friends?
- b. Is this local or long distance? What percentage of each?
- c. How often do you contact your long distance friends?
Write _____
Call _____
24. a. Could you tell me the kinds of activities you do with your close friends? Include the things you ask them to do as well as the things they ask you to do.
- b. Do you ask your married friends to do the same kinds of things with you that you ask your single friends to do?
YES
NO
IF NO: What are the differences?
- c. Do your married friends ask you to do the same things with them that your single friends do?
YES
NO
IF NO: What are the differences?
- d. Do your married friends ask you to do the same kinds of things with them that they ask their married friends to do?
YES
NO
IF NO: What are the differences?

e. WHY DO YOU THINK THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN WHAT SINGLES DO TOGETHER AND WHAT THEY DO WITH THEIR MARRIED FRIENDS?

f. Do you ever feel that you should include any of your close single friends in social activities you plan?

YES

NO

IF YES: Why?

25. a. Married people presumably have a spouse on whom to depend for emotional support (caring, sharing problems and joys, etc.). Do you have a person(s) on whom you depend for that kind of support?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) Who?

b. When something good happens to you, how do you deal with it? Do you call someone?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) Who?

c. Do you celebrate?

YES

NO

IF YES: (2) How?

d. When something is seriously bothering you, how do you deal with it? Do you call someone?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) Who?

e. Do you wish you had some other ways to deal with the highs and lows in your life? (dif living arrangements, spouse, live closer to friends, or family).

f. Do you and your close friends ever help each other financially?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1)

MAJOR

MINOR

26. a. Let's suppose that you made plans to see a movie/go to dinner with 1 or 2 of your friends, and a person you occasionally date calls you for a date the same evening. What would you do?

b. Have you ever faced this choice?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) What did you do?

c. Have your close friends ever broken plans with you in order to have a date?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) How do you feel when they do this?

d. Do your friends do this more, less, or about as often as they did in the past?

MORE _____

LESS _____

ABOUT AS OFTEN _____

e. What about you, do you do this more, less, or about as often as in the past?

MORE _____

LESS _____

ABOUT AS OFTEN _____

27. a. Are your parents living?

YES

NO

MOTHER _____

FATHER _____

IF YES: (1) Where do they live?

(2) About how far away would you say your home is from your parents' home?

b. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) Sex Age Marital Status (Sing/Mar/Div)

_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	

c. Are you close to any or all of the members of your immediate family?

YES
NO

IF YES: (1) Which?

d. How often do you visit, call or write one another?

	PARENTS	SISTER	BROTHER	SISTER	BROTHER
VISIT	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
CALL	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
WRITE	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

e. Do you help out one another financially?

YES
NO

IF YES: (1) MAJOR
MINOR

28. How will/did you spend your vacation time this year? (1978)

	MOST	LESS
--	------	------

a. visit family	_____	_____
b. visit friends	_____	_____
c. stay home	_____	_____
d. travel with family	_____	_____
e. travel with friends	_____	_____
f. travel alone on package tour	_____	_____
Kind? singles, etc.	_____	_____
g. travel with friends on package tour	_____	_____
Kind? singles, etc.	_____	_____
h. work	_____	_____
i. other (specify)	_____	_____

(1) Is this typical? YES
NO

IF NOT: How is it different from what you've done in other years?

A. IF YOU VISIT FRIENDS: How would you describe your decision to visit with these friends?

- a. really wanted to see them _____
- b. wanted to see the area _____
in which they live
- c. similar vacation schedule _____
- d. other _____

B. IF YOU TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS: How would you describe your decision to travel with them?

- a. really wanted to see them _____
- b. wanted to see the same place _____
- c. similar vacation schedule _____
- d. other _____

29. A. How did you spend the following holidays in the past year?

	Family	Friends	Neighbors	Travel	Alone
a. Fourth of July	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Christmas	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Thanksgiving	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

B. Is this how you usually spend these holidays?

YES
NO

IF NO: (1) How is it different from what you've done in other years?

30. Would you use this scale (CARD) and indicate how much you usually like doing the following things:

Dislike intensely	dislike	neutral	like	like intensely
1	2	3	4	5
			OTHERS	ALONE
a. eating an evening meal in restaurants			_____	_____
b. shopping			_____	_____
c. seeing a movie			_____	_____
d. attending church			_____	_____
e. going on vacation			_____	_____
f. staying in motels/hotels when out of town			_____	_____
g. going to theatre (plays)			_____	_____
h. going to a party			_____	_____

31. a. How many different people have you dated in the past year? _____

b. Are you satisfied with your dating situation? YES
NO

IF NO: What would you like to change?

- c. Are you presently involved in what could be called a dating relationship with a

MAN
WOMAN

YES

NO

IF YES: (1) How long have you been involved in it? _____

(2) Would you characterize it as:

Casual

Serious

(3) Do you have a commitment to this one person and see no one else?

YES

NO

(4) Do you expect to ever marry or live with this person?

YES

NO

- d. Do you think sexual relations present any special problems for single women?

YES

NO

IF YES: In what ways?

32. a. Where do you usually meet people you date?

- b. Have you ever lived with a man in a sexually exclusive relationship? (in which you were involved sexually only with that one person?)

YES

NO

- c. Have you ever lived with a woman in a sexually exclusive relationship? (in which you were involved sexually only with that one person?)

YES

NO

- d. Do you think you will in the future?

MAN

WOMAN

33. a. Would you tell me some things about your present living arrangement?

Type of dwelling?

Apt/Room/House

Live alone/others

Alone/Kin/Commune/Other

Male(s) Female(s)

- b. How long have you lived in this arrangement? _____
- c. If you could change your living arrangement, what would you like to change about it?

34. In which category does your income fall? (CARD)

- a. Below \$4,000
- b. \$4,000 — 5,999
- c. \$6,000 — 7,999
- d. \$8,000 — 9,999
- e. \$10,000 — 11,999
- f. \$12,000 — 13,999
- g. \$14,000 — 15,999
- h. \$16,000 — 17,999
- i. \$18,000 — 19,999
- j. \$20,000 — 24,999
- k. \$25,000 — 30,000
- l. Above \$30,000

35. Is there anything else you would like to say about your life as a single person?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

APPENDIX B

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 37916

Dear Ms. :

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. My dissertation research project is a study of women between 30 and 40 years of age who have not been married. The purpose of the study is to learn about the lifestyle patterns of single women. Currently, there is very little scientific information about singles. Your friend (name) suggested you as a potential participant for this study.

The responses of all participants will be kept in the strictest confidence. All participants' interviews will be assigned code numbers in order to insure anonymity. No participant's name will be used in any report of the study findings. After the study is completed, a summary of the findings will be available to the participants.

In a few days I will telephone you to arrange a convenient time and place for a personal interview. If you would like to verify any information about this project, you may contact the supervisor of my dissertation research:

Dr. Suzanne Kurth
Department of Sociology
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee 37601
Phone: 615-974-6021

Since I am a faculty member at East Tennessee State University, you also may obtain verification by contacting:

Dr. Robert Sessions, Chair
Department of Sociology
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, Tennessee 37601
Phone: 615-929-4370

In order to increase understanding of singlehood, information must be collected from people who are currently single. I hope you will agree to participate in this study; it should be a pleasant experience. Thank you for giving this request your serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Cynthia S. Burnley

APPENDIX C

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

You are requested to participate in a study of women who have not been married. The study will contribute to the understanding of the life situation of single women.

As a participant, you will be interviewed for approximately one hour by the research director. The interview will be audio recorded to assure accuracy. The success of the study is dependent on your honest replies. There are no expected answers. The goal is to learn about different single lifestyles.

Your anonymity will be assured by the use of a code number for each respondent. Your name will not be used in any report of the findings of this study.

The research director will be glad to answer any inquiries regarding procedures. After the study is completed, a summary of the findings will be available to you, if you desire to see them.

You are free to decline to answer any questions or withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the study at any time. However, we believe it will be a pleasant experience.

Cynthia S. Burnley, Research Director
Department of Sociology
901 McClung Tower
University of Tennessee
Phone: 974-2153

Department of Sociology
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, TN
Phone: 929-5313

I consent to be a participant in this study.

Signature _____

Date _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone Number _____

VITA

Cynthia Sue Burnley was born in Nashville, Tennessee, July 28, 1946. She was reared in Gallatin, Tennessee where she attended elementary and secondary school. In 1964 she graduated from high school and entered Martin Junior College in Pulaski, Tennessee. Upon graduating from Martin College in 1966, she attended Middle Tennessee State University for the summer term only. In the Fall of the same year she entered Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee and in June 1968 graduated with the Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education—sociology. During the same month she entered the University of Tennessee as a graduate student in the Department of Sociology. She was awarded the Master of Arts degree with a major in sociology in March 1970. In the Fall of 1975 she returned to the University of Tennessee to begin study for the Ph.D. in sociology which was awarded August 1979. She has been a faculty member in the Department of Sociology at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee from 1969 to present.