ALECIA FAYE GALL'S THESIS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Human behavior is a topic that has sparked interest among philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, artists, writers, business and government leaders, magicians, and even fortune tellers. Although the reasons for their intrigue and their findings are as varied as the color spectrum, one question remains in controversy--why do people do what they do? More specifically, the question is raised concerning the factors that influence people's everyday choices. While some everyday choices may appear to be insignificant to the outsider looking in, those choices are likely to be the result of some planning, some decision-making, some exchanging, and possibly, some sacrificing. Value theory recognizes that people's behavior inherently requires these frequent, unavoidable choices due to the unpredictable quality of human life. Choices are constantly being made based on our personal value systems. Symbolic interactionism illuminates these exchanges by stressing the subjective defining of rewards, punishments, costs, and values.

Frequently, we may want two things, but due to conflicts and incompatibilities, must choose only one (Handy 1969). For example, a person cannot decide to wear both a skirt and a pair of pants without repercussions such as ridicule or discomfort, so she is likely to choose just one.

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

Modern American society often forces women to choose between a personally fulfilling domestic life--meaning a family, marriage, or both--and a professionally fulfilling life--meaning personal achievements such as a career (Gerson 1985). On the one hand, women in their twenties and thirties whose mothers lived through the bra burning of the neofeminist movement have been socialized to believe that they can and should accomplish great things professionally. However, at the same time that these women are told they have infinite potential, they are experiencing massive road blocks due to conflicts resulting from limited resources--time, energy, money, and commitment. Both the role of wife and that of graduate student can be extremely demanding, especially if great value is placed on both roles. The role models for women currently in their twenties and thirties may have been working mothers, but those working mothers, products of the 1950s and 1960s, were likely to commit their

lives first and foremost to their husbands and children. Placing highest priority and value on these roles likely left little room for professional or independent growth. The fairness of the exchanges these women engage in are judged subjectively by each of the women, based on past experience, reference groups, and expectations. Exchange theory points out that people's behaviors are motivated by a desire to maximize rewards and minimize costs; symbolic interactionism adds a valuable factor to this explanation--the subjective definition of the value of the exchanges. In other words, though exchange theory may explain why a woman cooks dinner for her husband despite having to study for an exam, symbolic interactionism accounts for why she made that particular choice--the rewards gained by cooking dinner were greater or more valuable than anything to be gained by studying.

For some wives the imposing conflicts inherent in today's expectations may result in a devastating compromise, and ultimately the sacrifice of career, family, or both. If a woman chooses to attempt both roles simultaneously, the perceived quality of and satisfaction with both her career and family may also suffer. Our society prescribes values for women and then forces them to make daily choices based on those values. As a result they may suffer negative

societal sanctions or they may sacrifice personal or professional goals. Cooley's (1964--originally 1902) "Looking-Glass Self" concept indicates that people are motivated to behave in ways that promote a positive self image. Person "A" role-takes in order to see how person "B" sees and judges person "A," and person "A's" self-feelings and perceived self image are a result of how person "A" interprets person "B's" opinion (or what "A" perceives "B's" opinion to be). Therefore, the exchanges one makes and the value and judgment of those exchanges are motivated by an underlying desire to see one's self in a positive light. If one does not perceive the exchanges to be fair or reasonable, one's self image is affected because one would not be motivated to engage in unreasonable behavior as defined by one's self or by others.

Although the divorce rate seems to have stabilized to 4.7 per 1,000 people or 1.2 million divorces in 1992, that number is still significantly high when compared to 1960 when the divorce rate was only 2.2 per thousand people or 400,000 divorces in America (Aburdene and Naisbitt 1992). Furthermore, a disproportionately high marital disruption rate exists among highly educated women, those with five or more years of college (Houseknecht and Spanier 1980). With an increase in the number of women entering graduate school, value conflicts resulting from the simultaneous valuing of

educational pursuits and domestic pursuits are deserving of sociological attention. Veroff, Kulka, and Douval (1981) found marital problems to be the most frequent reason people seek psychological assistance; therefore, information yielded by this research that pertains to marital satisfaction that this research discovers could be helpful.

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

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

make daily choices between commitment to husband/family versus commitment to educational development.

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

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

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

A feminist perspective on exchange theory provides a foundation from which to explore the married, female graduate students' experiences. Do they experience value

conflicts? How do they make daily decisions concerning their professional and domestic lives amidst inherent demands and conflicts between the two roles? What influences their choices in commitments? Do their choices somehow affect their satisfaction with and the quality of their marriages, their education, and themselves, and, if so, how? Symbolic interactionism describes how they make these decisions and perceive their circumstances.

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

A qualitative analysis of the value conflicts experienced by married, female graduate students reveals patterns and themes that provide insight into their personal struggles, costs, rewards, and daily events. I believe that the personal interviews and the end product yield valuable clues into what it is like today for wives pursuing higher

education. The ultimate benefit of this study is the collection of a few clues about what makes people do what they do in the circumstances under observation in this study.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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

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

Married women who are pursuing a higher-education degree are in a position in which they must make daily important decisions, which may ultimately affect satisfaction with their lives and marriages. Kennier and

Townley (1986) have studied young, re-entry graduate students and found that for women the major value conflicts were "career versus family" and "commitment to an intimate relationship versus freedom and independence" (p. 18). A feminist perspective on exchange theory provides an appropriate explanation for the minor and major exchanges women in our patriarchal society are forced to make.

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

Exchange Theory

Exchange theory is based on the notion that people are motivated to engage in behavior based on a desire to maximize rewards and minimize costs. Originating with the work of George C. Homans in the early 1950s, exchange theory is an attempt to explain social behavior focusing on "psychology, people, and the 'elementary forms of social life'" (Ritzer 1996, p. 267). Similar to economic theories (rational choice theory, in particular), Homans used the concepts of rewards and costs to explain motivation for

behavior. The exchanges in which individuals engage to maximize rewards and minimize costs take place between two or more persons; however, as will be explained later, by synthesizing exchange theory with symbolic interactionism one can conceive of the exchanges as also taking place with an individual and his/her "self." In Homans' view, the social actor is one who is goal-oriented and profit-seeking.

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

The rational choice or rationality proposition of George Homans' exchange theory claimed that one weighs the potential rewards against anticipated costs in order to maximize rewards that are of the most value and are acquired most easily (Homans 1974). In other words, one considers what action to take based on the value of the reward and the probability of acquiring it. Some research (e.g., Hatfield,

Sprecher, Utne, and Hay 1985; Hatfield and Traupmann 1981) has found that the amount and equity of exchanges are very important among couples. They also found that couples who perceive their exchanges to be equitable are more satisfied with their marriages. Exchange theory focuses on the social structures and the change and actions of actors within those structures, addressing such issues as societal norms and implications of exchange, be they equitable or not (Cook, O'Brien, and Kollock 1990).

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

The exchanges are not reasonable if the wife must

sacrifice personal growth or knowledge, both of the world and of herself. In order to integrate education with marriage successfully she must balance both roles so that neither succeeds at the cost of the other. Central to this notion is Homans' (1974) aggression-approval proposition, which states that if one performs an act and does not receive the anticipated rewards, one is likely to become frustrated. The second part of this proposition states that if one performs an act and receives either no punishment when expected or a greater reward than was anticipated, one will be content and come to value that act even more. Therefore, if the married, female graduate student's education and marriage do not provide the rewards she has expected, she is likely to become frustrated and possibly report less satisfaction with those areas of her life. Margaret Mead (1972) points out that married college students are deprived of the opportunity to grow personally and learn about themselves, deprived of reaching their "true" selves' potential. This deprivation, she says, is due to the inherent responsibilities associated with maintaining a marriage and to the societal norms that force the two partners to work for the good of the couple, not necessarily for the good of each individual. The exchange may become one of self sacrifice for the survival of the marriage, and ultimately a double-edged sword.

The roles that one performs are in constant competition for limited resources. Between work and family, the competition over time is likely to be won by work, due to immediate and ambiguous deadlines, pressures, and sanctions. This situation is also the case in the educational realm. The pressures, deadlines, and reputation maintenance all impose strict limitations on the students' schedules if they are to be successful. For the married, female student, however, society not only traps her into that role but also imposes gender discrimination, as she has been socialized to believe that her commitment to marriage and family should override her commitments to professional developments. She is socialized to value both commitments simultaneously; yet, these two values are often conflicting.

According to Homans' (1974) value proposition, rewards have varying value for different people. The more the rewards of some act are positively valued, the more likely a person is to continue to perform the corresponding act. Therefore, if the rewards of education are highly valued by the married, female graduate student, she is likely to continue to pursue that education despite costs, such as less time available to spend with her husband. The same situation exists if the rewards of marriage are highly valued. What is likely to happen if the rewards of both are highly valued is that the woman will choose between them

based on which role is more deserving or needing of her time, energy, money, and devotion. This choice is ultimately a choice between conflicting values. Values are one of the factors that drive the decision-making process. One could conclude that the simple, daily decisions concerning her marriage and her education made by the married, female graduate student are reflections of her values. It is possible that the conflicts between values could be a major contributing factor to the satisfaction with and performance of both roles.

The value conflict that one may experience while attempting to integrate two such demanding roles as spouse and graduate student is experienced more severely among women than among men. This situation is due primarily to the fact that, although husbands are reporting more egalitarian attitudes toward marriages than in the past, in practice it is the wife who still performs the majority of household tasks (Booth and Edwards 1985; Pyke 1994). This finding may mean that husbands do not place the same value on household chores and home maintenance as do their wives. With such a strong commitment to marriage and family, the wife pursuing a higher education must make sacrifices. The problem is not that sacrifices are made; the problem lies in the perpetual and systematic location of women in a patriarchal society. Although choices must be made, the

result may not be in the best interest of the wife if such choices are made against the status-quo, and produce negative social sanctions. "Feminist sociologists argue that women may find themselves so overwhelmingly limited by their status as women that the idea of projecting their own plans onto the world becomes meaningless in all but theory" (Ritzer 1992, p. 492).

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

Symbolic Interactionism

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

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

Individuals engage in symbolic interaction with others and themselves. These interactions, in turn, constantly alter, develop, and change the individual--the self. Because humans are born without a self, life is a series of symbolic interactions that serves the development of the self. Essential to this theory is the notion of subjective

reality. In other words, the symbolism of the interactions lies in the perceptions of individuals. Interactions are not objectively symbolic or inherent, rather they are subjective imputations of individuals. For example, a fit and trim body is not intrinsically defined. Humans define it as important, and as such it is symbolic.

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

The Synthesis of Symbolic Interactionism and Exchange Theory

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

> This nakedly utilitarian schema is inadequate because: (a) the "alternative acts" of social conduct "appear" most often in lingual form, as a question, stated by one's self or by another; (b) it is more adequate to say that individuals act in terms of anticipation of named consequences. (p. 326)

One might question whether or not every, single action is a calculated reaction based on rewards and costs. Central to the synthesis of exchange theory and symbolic interactionismism, exchange theory does not necessarily consider the exchanges to be symbolic interactions. Interaction is not a key concept to exchange theory. Herein lies the synthesis of the two theories.

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

Exchange theory offers propositions useful in predicting how a person might act given a specific situation; however, generalizations are not always possible. Symbolic interactionism explains why, by adding that behaviors are subjectively defined as valuable in terms of rewards and costs by individuals through symbolic interactions. For example, exchange theory might explain why one chose to carry an umbrella with him or her to work, even though his or her hands were full: one decided that being able to avoid getting wet was worth the cost of carrying a heavier load. However, symbolic interactionism explains that one must first define getting wet as a

negative consequence of going out in the rain without an umbrella. One's definition of the situation is based on how others might think of him or her when he or she arrives at work soaking wet and how he or she will feel about this judgment.

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

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

defining of exchanges as symbolic interactions.

A combination of exchange theory and symbolic interactionism is the springboard from which this research was analyzed. This new perspective allowed me to combine the best of both worlds in an effort to best describe the experiences of married, female graduate students. A discussion of research methods used follows.

CHAPTER VII: FINDINGS

VALUE CONFLICTS

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

Standards

Defining an "equal" marriage proved difficult for the respondents, yet in general they described two types of equality--equality in division of labor and equality in the less rigid sense of taking up the slack for each other, compensating for each other as Brenda and Faye described. Equality in marriage was defined by Deidre as even rather

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

Although the equality issue, in terms of attitude, appears to be one of considerable importance to the majority of respondents, amazingly several were concerned with "pulling their own weight" within the marriage (despite the fact all except Brenda felt that they completed the vast majority of household tasks with little or no assistance from their husbands). Lynn described the biggest

disadvantage of being both married and in graduate school simultaneously as a "pressure to handle" much more than is actually possible: "I am not really working full-time if you add everything up, so [the biggest disadvantage would be] the struggle with trying to maintain school and feeling like I need to pull the weight around here because he is working more." Ellen says she works as hard as she does because she <u>is</u> married: "I would say that I probably work as much as I do because I <u>am</u> married [and] I feel like I do have to carry my weight around the house."

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

fifteen women experience pressure.

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

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

Similarly Alice commented that: "He doesn't expect anything out of me really, except he would like me to be a little bit more organized." According to Deidre, "I think he just expects me to love him, be kind to him. He doesn't expect me to clean and cook. He wouldn't care if I ever cooked. He wouldn't say anything." If such <u>is</u> the case among all but one of the husbands, why do these women, when faced with

such a great challenge as being married and attending graduate school full-time, continue to doubt whether they contribute enough? I can only conclude that either all of these women are sadistically obsessed with perfection, or, more likely, they have been socialized by a system that has failed to consider the best interest of these women. Brenda notes that the high goals she has set for herself are not only self-imposed but also result from a sense of commitment to her mother, as her mother keeps a second job to help Brenda pay for her schooling.

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

contributions to and roles within the marriage to obtain a clearer vision of the value attached to what is sacrificed--the perceived costs--and what is gained--the perceived rewards.

Husband's Role

The division of labor within each of the marriages, according to the wives with whom I spoke, was either traditionally divided (the wife performing the majority, if not all, of the household chores and the husband performing either a minimal amount or none of indoor chores but performing the outdoor ones) or shared to varying degrees. Even among those who claimed that the chores were shared (seven), five reported that they probably did more than their fair share of the chores. Eight wives reported that they performed the majority of the household chores while seven said the chores were shared, though not necessarily equally. It is interesting that none of the wives claimed that her husband was responsible for the majority of these chores. Both Karen and Lynn declared that the split was approximately 70-30. It is important to note, as stated in the previous section, that the contribution of the husband, as reported by his wife, may be somewhat influenced by her standards for cleanliness and organization. In other words, if a wife has very high standards for how clean her home

should be--she wants the dishes done immediately after a meal and no dust ever to be found on her furniture--she may report that her husband is not particularly helpful because he does not conform to her standards. However, relatively speaking, he may contribute a great deal to keeping house--doing the laundry, cooking, or cleaning the bathroom.

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

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

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

Similarly, Deidre said she does most of the work primarily because, "he cannot do it to suit me." Her husband is

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

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

Sharing of household duties is not the case for all the wives in this study. Marie has hired a cleaning lady to assist. Even with two children, Marie says, "I do them all. Everything!" When asked how the household chores were

divided, Helen simply responded: "My husband mows." She discusses how much she is displeased with her husband's minimal efforts:

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

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

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

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

> I think he does laundry because he runs out of clothes

> faster than I do....If I was the one needing laundry he might say that I could find something else to wear.

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

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

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

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

> Of course, I am not happy with 70-30, but I guess it is better than.....I know a lot of friends whose husbands don't do squat, so I guess I feel lucky

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

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

Six of the wives indicated that their husbands were primarily verbally supportive of their going to graduate school. Brenda's husband emphatically says to her that, "My wife is going to be a Ph.D.!" Similarly Deidre's husband "always [says] that he is proud of me." Ellen, Georgie, and Karen's husbands express their support for their wives by telling or bragging about them to their friends and/or families. As Ellen said,

> I just know some of the things he just says to other people, which he may not say to me. Like I heard him talking to his mom the other day about when I get my Master's and she's been doing....all this. Although he doesn't act real excited about it, from what other people have told me, he's excited for me. He never really told me, but it is kind of neat that he's talking to someone else about my career.

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

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

When asked how their husbands were supportive of their attending graduate school, five of the fifteen respondents said that their husbands were "actively supportive" by listening to their wives' problems (Alice), asking if they need anything when they are studying (Carla), helping with housework (Faye), helping with extracurricular activities at school (Deidre), and by helping with house/school work as Brenda said:

> Well, for example, yesterday I had some work to do that I call, "busywork," and we had to read five chapters and make up questions for each other and a bunch of other stuff. Along with that we had to write those questions out on cards to hand in. I was busy preparing something else for class, and I asked him, "Honey, I am really busy. Would you please (I had already typed out the questions) copy these onto the cards?" And he was like, "sure, just give them to me." A lot of times he's basically got my classes memorized, and if he sees I am running late, he'll go get my bookbag ready or grab me like a cup of yogurt. He's really supportive, and it helps.

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

> [He is supportive] just because he lets me do what I need to do to get it accomplished. If I have to go to school at night, that is fine with him. Like I said, he does gripe. Also because he lets me talk about it, complain about it, tell him where I am on it. He understands because he's in school, too.

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

fulfilled by the husbands.

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

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

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

being efficient in scheduling or being able to do a thousand things at once though both skills would probably significantly reduce the stress levels. I discovered three ways in which what I call "maintenance strategies" were employed by the married, female graduate students in an effort to minimize the costs and maximize the rewards of their present situations.

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

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

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

discussion is Goode's acknowledgement that

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

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

Goode's (1960) work on role strain is relevant to the present discussion, despite the fact that I focus on role conflict. Assuming that the symptoms of role strain and role conflict are similar (anxiety, tension, stress), one might also imagine that the methods for relieving those

symptoms to be similar. In other words, if one has a cold and experiences a painful cough, he or she might take cough medicine just as he or she would if suffering from pneumonia. Though arguments are made for Goode's six methods of relieving the symptoms of role strain, this study found little support for them.

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

The first category of compensation is "comparison." As I noted earlier in the section, Husband's Role, using reference groups to compare oneself seemed a regular practice among some of the respondents--particularly if they described their current situation favorably.

> I hear some of these people [graduate students] talking about...Well, I've got to go home and cook my husband dinner, and he won't help me at all, et cetera." (Brenda)

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

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

> Yeah. I think I would be very unhappy if I wasn't in a relationship and if I was living with my parents. I

> probably would have shot myself by now! I'm a much happier person, and I do not think I would be happy in her place [her own place at an earlier time].

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

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

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

was the life she was leading:

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

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

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

Similarly, Brenda pointed out to me a number of times how important it was to her to have the choice and opportunity to go to graduate school, and Ellen said, "I knew what I was getting into." I also found it interesting how these women

described their social lives, or rather non-existent social lives in the majority of the cases:

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

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

really concerned with learning more." By defining the situation as such, she is maximizing the rewards she values the most and minimizing the costs she despises the most.

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

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

In other words, Lynn is dealing with the fact that the chores are not getting done in a manner acceptableby consciously changing what is important--changing the rewards. By defining the reward as a clean and tidy home that she cannot achieve, she would be setting herself up for constant disappointment; however, by lowering her standards, she can accept a less neat home as a reward and still also reduce the guilt of ignoring her husband or have other rewards, such as more time to spend with her husband. Marie also had to lower her standards though she spoke regrettably about it: "I had to kind of lower my standards. I can't be perfect at everything. I had to kind of realize that." Alice noted that she changed her standards regarding her performance in graduate school: "I used to be really, really competitive about getting As, but now I am really concerned about learning more." Opal came to the same conclusion:

"When I came here, I was determined to get a 4.0, but I kind of had to stop and think if that was necessary in order for me to be happy, and it is not."

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

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

Although I did not ask respondents how they perceived me, one might say, based on the responses given, that they believed me to be a "90's woman," meaning that I had non-

traditional values. Their opinions may have been derived from the particular questions I asked, the probes I employed, or my demeanor during the interviews. Regardless of how they acquired a view of me as interviewer, how they defined the situation is essential. They may have wanted me to percieve them a certain way, thus employing "motive talk" to achieve this goal.

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

Reality is subjective. This chapter illuminates the notion that rewards and costs are not objectively defined, rather beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. Despite these efforts to satisfy the self's desire for equilibrium and fair exchanges, value conflicts still occur. The

question now must be asked: How do these value conflicts affect the married, female graduate student's perceptions of and satisfaction with her marriage and education.