Personal and Professional Expectations of Students at California Polytechnic State University

Based on Socialization of Gender Norms in Education

Marisa Wishart

Social Sciences Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Abstract

Two hundred and one students from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo completed a one page survey regarding their role models and expectations for life after graduation in order to gain insight on the gender differences that are present within the student community. The results were analyzed using cross tabulations in IBM SPSS and supported the hypotheses (1) traditional gender roles, such as men as the provider and women as the domestic caretaker, will be reflected by survey respondents, and (2) due to a lack of female role models for women in professional fields, women are less likely than men to be listed as professional role models. A literature review discusses the history of women in higher education and the influence of gender norms on the United Stated education system, and details on the current status of women in United States society, the limitations for women and men because of culturally imposed gender roles, and solutions and methods for actively breaking down gender norms and expectations are also provided. The progressiveness and influence of the Gender Equity Center (which emphasizes both healthy masculinity and femininity and open campus dialogues about issues pertaining to gender) at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, is also discussed.

Key Words: gender, education, gender norms, gender expectations, women, men, students, role models

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Based on Socialization of Gender Norms in Education

United States has taken enormous strides in terms of gender equality over the last century. Women now have the right to vote, attend college, and have been able to enter many professional fields that were previously closed. In education, girls seem to have surpassed boys; they get good grades and enter universities at a higher rate than their male counterparts. So why is it that women in the U.S. make on average only 77 cents to every dollar that a man earns (AAUW, 2011)? Why are there fewer women than men representatives in congress, fewer women on boards of major corporations, and why have no women been voted into the White House? If gender equity is no longer a problem as many citizens and media pundits seem to imply, then why is the U.S. number 91 in Worldwide Rankings of Women in the National Legislature (Lawless and Fox, 2012)? These questions indicate that gender inequality continues in U.S. society, though it is masked by a handful of female accomplishments.

Despite significant gains made by the feminist movement, women are underrepresented in prestigious positions in schools, businesses, and government, preventing female students from finding role models and mentors to guide them to their goals. This, coupled with our society's gendered expectations of women as the primary caretaker and men as the primary breadwinner contributes to gender inequity in U.S. society. Research conducted by David and Myra Sadker in their book, *Failing at Fairness*, suggests that the root of gender inequality in the United States starts in the classroom and is perpetuated throughout higher education. Gender roles and stereotypes influence American girls to become mothers and caretakers while accomplishments made by other women encourage girls to seek a career. Unfortunately, having a successful career and simultaneously running the home is difficult for many women because they do not receive

equal treatment in either sector. Through a survey administered to California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) students as well as existing research, this paper will study the ways in which gender affects education, the workplace, and the expectations of life after college for both men and women. It will conclude with steps we can take to overcome gender inequalities of our society.

This report will consist of five sections. The first section will be an exploration of existing literature and research that seeks to explain how gender norms have been created and continue to be perpetuated in U.S. society, as well as why this is an issue that needs to be addressed. Section two is an overview of the methods that were used to conduct a sample survey of Cal Poly students, consisting of questions about their expectations about life after graduation with regards to marriage, family, and income prospects. Section three describes the survey results themselves, analyzing the ways in which traditional gender norms are upheld amongst the students of Cal Poly. Section four is a discussion of the findings, focusing on how they reflect existing research and the implications for Cal Poly students. This section also stresses the importance of awareness, the need for outreach, and future studies regarding gender inequity. Section five concludes the paper, reiterating that despite the tremendous achievements that have been made by women to expand opportunities and create a more inclusive and equitable society, traditional gender roles are still holding both men and women back, preventing them for achieving their full potential. In addition, it discusses the ways in which the Cal Poly Gender Equity Center is actively working to break down these gender roles in order to provide the best education and college experience possible for students. Indeed, United States society is at a crucial point in history, when women have more power than ever before and younger generations see the benefit of an equitable society; it is imperative that we take this opportunity to create a

culture in which individuals are valued for their contribution to society and no longer limited to the narrow confines of traditional gender roles.

Section 1: Literature Review

Women have achieved numerous rights and privileges in the past couple centuries, not only in the arena of civil rights and anti-discrimination legislation but also in the realm of higher education. It wasn't until 1833, less than 200 years ago, that women and men were even allowed to attend the same college, and it was not a common practice. Oberlin College was the first "mixed" college in the United States (Sadker and Sadker 1994), yet just because women were admitted did not mean that they received an equal education. As Sadker and Sadker note, women at Oberlin continued to be restricted by the religious and social values of their time, and were still separated from men within the institution, taking specialized courses for "Ladies". This reinforced their primary role as wives and mothers, and there was concern as to what would happen if education was expanded beyond the domestic circle (21). This attitude did not abide quickly, and the gendered expectations of women as wives and mothers continued and was commonly cited as a reason that women should not be exposed to the same education as men. In 1873 Dr. Edward Clark "asserted that prolonged coeducation was physically dangerous to the reproductive health of females" however, the physical harms of "prolonged coeducation" apparently had no adverse effect on men (31). Not only was this blatant discrimination widely accepted, but it also implied that women only had value if they produced children, and this mind-set was carried into the early 20th century, internalized by most women, who began to see college "as a four year dating game, a prelude to married life" (164). Most of these women were wealthier and less serious about their education, enrolling in literature, social sciences, health

courses, and liberal arts (studies considered appropriate for a woman) while men continued to claim the "hard" sciences, such as engineering and agriculture (164).

Virginia Sapiro also points to education as a method of reinforcing gender roles in her book *Women in American Society: An Introduction to Women's Studies.* She states that "education has been designed to help children find their place in society. Their place, and thus their education, has been defined partly by their gender" (145). The introduction of women into higher education started to become more acceptable in the early 20th century, and while "motherhood was still woman's primary mission…it was a subject to be studied and pursued scientifically" (152). Although both men and women were able to receive a college degree, they were receiving drastically different educations. Like Sadker and Sadker, Sapiro references the early degrees available to women, home economics and domestic science (151), as an example of the role higher education played in the reinforcement of gender norms and expectations. These early college educations provided women with the tools needed to run their homes, keeping them in line with the strict role of wives and mothers that society had placed upon them. But nonetheless, "gender stereotypes and prejudices…served as mechanisms that helped allow mass education to grow cheaply in the United States. For women, the expansion of teaching jobs, even if they were poorly paid, meant the opening of a sector of jobs appropriate for a decent lady" (149). Despite the gendered education they received, women were able to receive a formal education, and began breaking out of their traditional roles. Today, women are entering college at higher rates than their male counterparts and are viewed as ideal students, often receiving higher grades than male students. Women are now represented on school boards of all levels, and have achieved high level positions not only in education, but also in government and business (Sadker and Sadker 1994, Sapiro 1999, Tarr-Whelan 2009).

Although the situation for women in all aspects of society has improved, and more overt forms of sexism and discrimination are no longer legal, there continues to be a gender difference in the courses in which students enroll, contributing to a lack of women holding positions of power and influence. This gender gap reinforces the notion that men are career-oriented providers, placing women in the position of the primary domestic caretaker (Sadker and Sadker 1994). In high school, "more boys than girls continue to enroll in advanced calculus, computer science, and physics classes" leading them to dominate the "hard" sciences once they reach college; "soft" sciences and humanities however, continue to be a female majority (Sadker et. al. 2009, p. 218). This gender bias is perpetuated within high school and higher education, but has much deeper roots which can be traced back to early childhood education. Studies have shown that gender differences in the classroom appear as early as preschool, where "teaching often focuses on competencies that girls already have; thus girls may receive less new education than boys" (Sapiro 1999, p. 155). From the very first moments in the classroom, children are taught how to behave in a social setting. Teachers, therefore, have a tremendous role and responsibility in the education of these young minds as they teach students not only lessons in reading and math but also how to behave in U.S. society. Education is an incredibly important and influential aspect of the socialization of children, and often the most significant lessons are those that students receive in the subtext: the subtle words, actions, and interactions that shape their personalities and sense of identity for the rest of their lives. This type of gendered subtext is often unidentifiable by most educators, parents, or the students themselves (Sadker and Sadker 1994).

Girls and boys often receive encouragement to pursue different fields, or are told that they are talented in one area without being encouraged to explore others. The social construction

of male and female subjects begins in elementary school and is internalized as students move up into higher education, then perpetuated as they raise their children or teach new students. Many times, teachers are unaware that they are channeling students into different areas based on their gender. Sapiro cites studies of elementary school children that suggest teachers spend more time with female students during reading classes and more time with male students during math and science classes. When male students receive more attention during math classes, they are more likely to do well; this contributes to the perception of math as a male subject, leaving girls with less confidence in their abilities as well as pressures to abandon the subject due to social conformity. The same is true for boys in subjects that girls excel in, such as reading and writing. Studies indicate that "boys and girls do well on school problems that are directly related to what they view as appropriate gender norms and poorly on those at odds with these norms" (Sapiro 1999 p.160). Because of this, early childhood education is an institution that must be reformed. If the education of young children becomes more equitable, and traditional gender norms that have been internalized are consciously challenged and removed from the classroom, the insidious sexism and gender bias that is present in U.S. education, and therefore U.S. society, will begin to fade as children receive equal help and encouragement in all areas regardless of their gender (Sapiro 1999; Sadker and Sadker 1994).

A main avenue of social construction of gender norms in education is school curriculum. In their research, Sadker and Sadker discovered that all major school textbooks covered an overwhelming amount of male accomplishments, while rarely, if at all, mentioning female achievements (Sadker and Sadker 1994). In order to help solve this problem, they compiled a list of non-sexist guidelines in order to assist textbook publishers in the quest for inclusivity in education. More than ten years later, however, nothing had changed. In *Still Failing at Fairness,*

the updated version of their previous publication, the Sadkers and Karen Zittleman discovered

that men continued to dominate the school curriculum in every subject, especially science and

math, but also language arts and books for independent reading. Examples of men and their

achievements were readily available to students and were the topic of classroom discussion,

while women tended to be confined to a paragraph or an insert, seen as a side note not worthy of

the same attention as their male counterparts. In children's reading books, most representations

of women were stereotypical and less active then the male characters. (Sadker et. al. 2009).

The lack of role models for American girls is a problem that is rooted in education and

school curriculum and continues to permeate nearly every modern institution. Sapiro references

psychologists who stress the key position of role models in the development of a child's identity

and in providing them with examples of the possibilities available for their futures (1999 p. 159).

If students do not see examples of women in their classes, the U.S. education system is

broadcasting the message that women are not as important as men.

Underrepresentation of women in school curriculum gives students a skewed view of the

world, one in which "men are seen as the movers and shakers of history, scientists of

achievement, and the political leaders. Boys are routinely seen as active, creative, brave, athletic,

achieving, and curious. In striking contrast, girls are often portrayed as dependent, passive,

fearful, docile, and even as victims, with a limited role in or impact on the world" (Sadker et. al.

2009 pp. 88-89). The impact of these gender imbalances are compounded when one considers

that teachers not only make a majority of their curriculum decisions based on school textbooks

but that students spend anywhere from 80-95 percent of class time using them (Sadker et. al.

2009 p. 88). This leads both girls and boys to infer that women are less valuable members of

society than men, and as a result their opinions of the value of women are lowered (Sadker et. al.

2009 p. 96). To illustrate this trend, Sadker and Sadker conducted a study among elementary school children. Students were asked to write down a list of famous men and famous women, excluding athletes, entertainers, and "Mrs." in front of a male name. Students averaged a list of twelve men and five women (compared to eleven men and three women from the same activity more than a decade before). The most women listed by a single student were nine, compared to thirty four men. When they asked students why they thought this occurred, the answers varied. Some thought that because women are home makers they are less likely to be famous. Others believe that women were in the support roles but men made the actual discoveries, and some thought that maybe they just have not learned about women. This simple study not only illustrates that gender norms and expectations are already present in the minds of young students, but it also demonstrates the need for curriculum reform in elementary school in order to reduce the gender gap in modern U.S. society because "when [children] read books about females that accomplish outstanding deeds, both girls and boys believe that women are capable of great achievement" (Sadker et. al. 2009 p. 305).

There are those who argue that the underrepresentation of women in school curriculum is not due to sexism but is instead a clear dictation of the facts, suggesting that men made and continue to make more contributions to U.S. society than women. Rather than being an explanation, however, this belief is merely another example of our society's internalization of gender stereotypes. Information on women and their notable contribution to American history, academia, and society is available, just missing from the textbooks that are employed to educate the young minds and future leaders of America (Sadker et. al. 2009). And when this omission is not challenged by an authority figure such as a teacher or a parent, students are lead to believe that the role of women both historically and presently is less than the role of men. As Sadker and

Sadker eloquently noted, "When girls do not see themselves in the pages of textbooks, when teachers do not point out or confront the omissions, our daughters learn that to be female is to be an absent partner in the development of our nation" (Sadker and Sadker 1994 p.8). By integrating females into school texts in all subjects, not only will students learn that women are equal contributors to the development of society, but female students will be able to picture themselves in these roles, no longer limiting themselves to traditionally female fields.

Increasing the amount of women in positions of power in academia is another crucial step in providing the resources and encouragement to young women interested in higher education. Successful all girls' schools and colleges tend to have more female science and math faculty than co-ed institutions, and they attribute their schools' success to these female role models and mentors (Sadker et. al. 2009 p.245). And while much progress has been made, co-education universities continue to be dominated by men, and there are less female and minority mentors available, shutting many women out of the student-mentor connection (Sadker and Sadker 1994, Sadker et. al. 2009). This process leads male professors to "prepare men to become the faculty of the future" leaving women without the resources to increase their presence in higher education. (Sadker and Sadker 1994 p.167). The lack of female professionals in universities not only provides fewer mentors for female students, but those that are available often have to sacrifice more than their male colleagues in order to attain their position, which has been found to discourage some female students from pursuing their aspirations (Sapiro 1999 p.160). Sapiro also cites research that suggests that women have less confidence in their own abilities (Sapiro 1999 p.160), indicating the need for mentors and role models to encourage women to achieve their goals.

In the professional setting, both boys and girls are constantly surrounded by men in positions of power and women in subordinate roles. As Sadker and Sadker illustrated in their books, it is incredibly difficult for young girls to imagine themselves in male dominated fields if they are not exposed to examples of women in these areas (Sadker and Sadker 1994; Sadker et. al. 2009).

> "If children see business offices where men, for the most part, are managers and women are secretaries; if they see hospitals where males are mainly doctors and females are nurses; and if in their schools they watch male principles giving direction to mostly female teachers, they reach an inescapable conclusion: that men are bosses and women work for them" (Sadker et. al. 2009 p. 299).

Instead of being presented with opportunities to explore and refine their interest and skills, girls and young women today continue to be indoctrinated with society's narrative that professionally, they will be subordinate to men, and their most important role is that of a wife and a mother. As Susan J. Douglas illustrates in her book *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*

> "our national mythology teaches us that Americans are supposed to independent, rugged individuals who are achievement-oriented, competitive, active, shrewd, and assertive go-getters…women, however, are supposed to be dependent, passive, nurturing types, uninterested in competition, or success, who should conform to the wishes of the men in their lives" (Douglas 1995 p.17).

Sapiro echoes this sediment, stating that

> "the gendered messages children receive are not simple; they are self-contradictory…they are told that in democracy, all children are given an equal chance and that math, science, and technology are important in the modern world. However, schools blunt these encouraging messages by offering conflicting ones to girls. Girls are still often subtly told that their most important role is that of a wife and mother (even if she also studied physics) and that a girl should not sacrifice her femininity to pursue her education or career" (Sapiro 1999, p. 159).

Because these gender roles are taught early in children's education, they are internalized and affect individuals for the rest of their lives. Women are not challenged or pushed to achieve

their full potential in education, and this sets them back in the workplace. Teachers tend to give

girls less feedback, whether it is positive or negative, yet they praise and criticize boys, helping

them learn from their mistakes and instill them with the confidence that many girls do not

receive (Sadker et. al. 2009). Girls also tend to underrate their own work, while men tend to

overrate their abilities (Sapiro 1999 p. 163). This gendered education and socialization has

profound effects on the workplace; today, in the 21st century, women continue to make

significantly less money than men for the same work, even if they have the same credentials

(Sadker et. al. p. 203). This pay gap differs depending on the job type, and in some fields women

make less than the average 77 cents to a man's dollar. In 2009, when *Still Failing at Fairness*

was published, "female physicians and surgeons [earned] 38 percent less than their male

counterparts, female college and university teachers [earned] 25 percent less than men, and

female lawyers [earned] 30 percent less than male lawyers" (Sadker et. al. p. 299). The U.S.

struggles with gender equity not only in education and the workplace, but also in politics and

business; "times have changed, and so have women, but the paradigm of who leads remains

virtually the same" (Tarr-Whelan 2009 p. 6).

The United States lags behind most industrial and many industrializing nations in terms

of female representation in national legislature, and U.S. women continue to be underrepresented

in government and in the corporate world (Sadker et. al. 2009 p. 289). Despite the efforts of the

feminist movement, which are substantial and should not be overlooked, women are still on the

outskirts of policy development and decision making, and continue to be "overworked,

underpaid, isolated, uncertain, and powerless" (Astin and Leland 1991 p.144). Women have

entered the workplace in record numbers and are now in top positions in nearly every sector, yet

the glass ceiling, that invisible force that keeps women from reaching the highest positions in the

workplace may have been cracked, but it has not been shattered. Employers were forced to open

their doors to women, but they did not "analyze the situation of women, respond to their needs,

an bring them up to speed so that they could become a profitable source…it did not significantly

alter our perception of what are appropriate roles and behaviors for men and women" (Astin and

Leland 1991 p.148). Anti-discriminatory legislation, while being a powerful force in the fight

toward equity, is not enough to change attitudes and deeply rooted gender roles. The top down

approach can only take the movement so far; a restructuring of the social system in which we

operate is necessary to remove the strict gender norms and traditions which currently govern.

As women continue to enter all areas of the professional world, the question that has

plagued U.S. society since Oberlin College first opened its doors to women remains: what

happens when women move too far out of the domestic circle? There are many who believe that

women in the workforce has destroyed traditional family values, yet the inescapable fact is that

women need their jobs, and they will continue to be employed (Sapiro 1999 p. 485). The

question now needs to focus on how we can balance the responsibilities that women carry in the

home with the demands of the workplace. Many scholars argue that women will not be able to

infiltrate fields that are traditionally dominated by men because these high profile positions

"[exclude] every other human activity," and many women who are career driven find that the

crucial years that define and shape their role in the professional world occur simultaneously to

their peak reproductive years. (Sapiro 1999 p. 485). Many female university students who started

out with clear career ambitions find that by the end of their college education, they are planning

for employment that will allow them to attend to the demands of motherhood (Sadker et. al. 2009

p. 247). Many women also feel that their career goals are not as valuable as those of their

partners or husbands, and as time goes on there is a gradual yet persistent decline in the career

objectives of many college women (Sadker and Sadker 1994 p. 185). Women who do, however, follow their career paths and become professionals often take a shorter maternity leave, indicating that there is a tradeoff for women: a career or a family. As Sapiro states, "the productivity demands on American workers has increased so much during the last quarter of the 20th century that it is hard to extract the flexibility out of work life to balance family demands unless there are explicit policies facilitating this flexibility" (Sapiro 1999 p.460). Gender equity in the workplace cannot solely come from companies hiring more women; they need to put policies in place that allow employees, both male and female, to balance family and their career. Flextime, parental leave (for both men and women), dependent care, work from home, and support networks are all policies that can be implemented to help women balance domestic and work life, as well give men the opportunity to shoulder some of the responsibilities at home.

Not only would a paradigm shift to a more equitable society benefit women, but men would also be free of the strict confines of the gender norms that they are expected to conform to. In fact, a change in the way U.S. society views the responsibilities of men is necessary in order to change the way society views the responsibilities of women; in other words, until men become active and equitable partners in the domestic sphere, women will not be able to achieve their full potential in the workplace. Sadker and Sadker comment on this issue, and are advocates for both men and women to challenge the gender norms, believing that all genders benefit from the removal of gender restrictions (Sadker et. al. 2009). Contrary to popular belief, gender equality and women's rights do not aim to make women superior to men; the issue of gender equity is not zero-sum, and everyone will benefit from a change in attitudes and a reform of gender roles. There are psychologists who believe that the removal of socially imposed gender roles would benefit men by "encouraging boys to express their emotional feelings and other

qualities that have been shut off by conventional definitions of masculinity" (Sadker et. al. 2009 p. 207). A restructuring of gender roles would also lessen the alienation of men who do not fit the narrow confines of masculinity, and all men would be free to pursue areas that interest them rather than being channeled into traditionally masculine career paths (Sadker et. al. 2009). As the Sadkers and Zittlemen point out, "the male stereotype is far more entrenched in our culture than the female stereotype. Gender bias is not now, nor ever was, a competition between boys and girls. Gender bias is a two-edged sword: it curtails the futures and happiness of both males and females" (Sadker et. al. 2009 p. 293).

In the book *Masculinities in Higher Education* various authors illustrate how gender roles and the education system confine men to traditional views of masculinity, but since they are not an oppressed group, their problems are difficult for most to comprehend, if they can see them at all. The authors and editors of the text acknowledge that tackling the deeply rooted notions of masculinity is a difficult task, but stress that both men and women will thrive in a society where gender roles are removed, because if one gender is oppressed, all are oppressed (Laker et. al. 2011). The editors state in their introduction that while they recognize the significant role men play in the historical and continued oppression of women, they hope to bring attention to the suffering of men in order to involve them in the fight for gender equity (Laker et. al. 2011). The same forces of masculinity such as dominance, violence, self-reliance, and status that blunt opportunities for women continue to hold men back as well, and a deconstruction of gender roles would expose the harmful effects of patriarchy and sexism, "[threatening] people's allegiance to traditional gender roles" (Ladker et. al. 2011 p.18). Educators in higher education can make change in their own institutions by providing all students, regardless of gender, a safe space to resolve identity conflicts and "[transition] into a version of adulthood where patriarchy, sexism,

homophobia, misogyny, misandry, sexual harassment, and all forms of abuse and oppression ends with them" (Harper and Harris 2010 p.10).

The traditional male role often underemphasizes family life and parenting, and instead encourages men to find value in work and salary (Sadker et.al 2009 p.300). Men are expected to be the breadwinners, even among the younger generations who wish to have an equitable home life. Kathleen Gerson interviewed 120 men and women between the ages of 18 and 32, and discovered that the overwhelming majority of not only women, but also men, thought that the ideal marriage was an egalitarian one, with domestic and professional responsibilities split between partners. But she also discovered that many of these young men and women thought this might be an unattainable goal, and while the fallback position of most women was a self-reliant one, the majority of men believed that a neo-traditional family style (in which women are the primary caretakers and men the financial support) was a better fallback option. This reflects the findings of many other sources quoted in this piece: that the gender roles of men are more deeply rooted in U.S. society, and much more difficult to overcome. Perhaps one of the greatest steps to gender equity is a reform of perceived domestic duties and responsibilities, making masculinity inclusive of all types of men, whether they strive to have a career, be a stay at home parent, or anything in between. Many women have found a safe space within the women's movement to discuss the ways in which they are limited by society and can work to overcome these gender barriers. Yet the narrative that men are encouraged to conform to is one of strength and individualism, creating an environment that is hostile to free expression and identity. Because of this, Laker feels that educators have "a professional and ethical responsibility to educate all students and to develop our pedagogy in a sophisticated and informed manner" (Laker et. al.

2011 p. 67). By re-defining what it means to be a man, society will be one step closer to closing the gender gap in education, the workplace, the home, and society as a whole.

Unlike boys in U.S. society, girls are socialized to be well behaved and polite, not aggressive or strong willed. They are raised believing that their voices, opinions, and actions are not as valuable as those of boys, that they are fragile and emotional, and that they are unequipped to handle certain jobs, but are naturally suited for motherhood. If girls are taught this message and are not pushed to speak their minds and achieve their full potential in academics, they will struggle to do so in other aspects of their lives (Sadker et. al. 2009). The fight for gender equity is not over; the roots of inequality are deep and it will take time, patience, and effort to make lasting and substantial change. Awareness of the issue is essential: once individuals are able to see the problem, and to see how change will benefit them regardless of gender, then the women's movement that has been in place for decades may finally result in an equitable society. But women are not the only ones responsible for bringing about change; parents, teachers, school administrators, law makers, and civil leaders must all do their part. Change will not be easy, and it will have to come from multiple institutions. Deconstruction of gender norms, equitable education for girls and boys, a balanced domestic circle with men as active participants, and more representation of women in politics and business are all crucial in creating an equitable and productive society for all citizens.

<div align="center">Section 2: Research Design, Methods, and Procedures</div>

After reviewing existing research and literature on the topic of gender equity, it is apparent that while women today have nearly unlimited opportunities and are represented in nearly every institution, they are still not regarded as highly as men. The previously cited research by Sadker et. al. suggests that even college educated women are likely to fall into

traditional gender roles throughout their education or afterward, sometimes sacrificing their own professional career goals so their husbands can thrive in the workplace. They also found that many women look for jobs that will allow them to pursue motherhood, yet men are not expected to do the same. When women do enter the professional world, they often have less flex-time benefits and typically have to choose between work and family, a decision that the majority of men never face (Sadker et. al. 2009). These findings are intriguing, and I was curious to see how students at Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo would compare: would they too conform to the gender norms that are so insidious in our society?

These questions lead to my hypotheses. Because gender norms and expectations are still prevalent, I believe (1) traditional gender roles, such as men as the provider and women as the domestic caretaker, will be reflected by survey respondents. Due to a lack of female role models for women in professional fields, (2) I believe women are less likely than men to be listed as professional role models.

Through a one page survey administered to 201 Cal Poly students of various years and majors, I was able to gain some insight into the gender differences of the expectations of life after college for a small sample of Cal Poly Students. Surveys were administered to general education classes and academic clubs and organizations in order to reach a variety of students. Respondents were asked via the survey to indicate their gender, year in school, major, and race or ethnicity. They were also asked to list three personal role models, referring to individuals who had influenced their personal morals and values, as well as three professional role models, referring to individuals who had influenced their education and career path. This part of the study aimed to identify any trends among gender differences in role models. Assuming respondents

would list the most influential role model first, only the first of the three responses was analyzed in each category.

The second half of the survey focused specifically on students' expectations for life after graduation. Respondents were asked via the survey to choose from a list of options how they envisioned their life at age 35, satisfaction with their current field of study, expected income, expected family life, perceived financial pressures, and amount of time they expected to take off from a future job in order to care for their children (see appendix for full survey questions).

Responses were coded and entered into the program IBM SPSS, with each question as a different variable. Gender was used as the independent variable in each analysis. Cross tabulations were used to determine the relationships between the independent and dependent variables, and Chi Square tests determined statistical significance for each analysis (this study used a p-value of 0.05). For the purposes of this study, the gender category of "other" was coded into missing values due to a low percentage of respondents identifying with this gender category (only four respondents identified as "other" while 65 identified as male and 132 identified as female).

Section 3: Results

Not all of the variables tested had statistical significance, but those that did support the idea that gender norms play a role in the expectations for life after graduation for Cal Poly students. Both the personal and professional role model crosstabs showed statistical significance, yet they yielded slightly different results than expected. Due to the nature of this paper, only the results of the professional role model variable will be discusses, and these results are displayed below in table one.

Table 1

Respondent's Professional Role Model (Percent Within Respondent's Gender)		
Participants	Male Role Model	Female Role Model
Male	80%	20%
Female	51%	49%
Pearson Chi-Square = .004		

This data does support the hypotheses (2) "women are less likely than men to be listed as professional role models." As is shown in table one, out of respondents that specified the gender of their professional role model, only 20% of male respondents and 49% of female respondents listed a woman, and this result was statistically significant. These findings indicate that gender does indeed play a part in role model selection, as both men and women were more likely to list a man as their professional role model (although for women, the percentage is very close to 50%) and indicates that men especially tend to look up to individuals of their own gender. Of respondents that specified the gender of their first professional role model, 80% of male respondents chose a man as their professional role model, compared to 51% of female respondents. Professional role models for female respondents were almost evenly split between men and women, with 51% listing a male role model and 49% listing a female role model. These percentages support the existing research mentioned in this paper which suggests female role models are either not available because they are underrepresented, or they are less desirable as mentors because their personal sacrifices for their career are so great.

Hypothesis one, which stated that traditional gender roles such as men as the provider and women as the domestic caretaker will be reflected by respondents was also supported. Three variables (respondent's expected annual income, respondent expects to take time off from future job in order to care for children, and the amount of time respondent expects to take off of work in

order to care for children) all showed statistical significance and imply that among the Cal Poly students that were surveyed, traditional gender roles and expectations are reflected.

As shown in table two (below), male respondents are more likely than female respondents to expect to have a higher annual income ($90,000 or more) and female respondents are more likely than male respondents to expect to have a lower annual income ($59,999 or less). This is especially apparent when looking at the extremes: 0% of male respondents, compared to 5% of female respondents, expect to make $29,999 or less. 17% of male respondents expect to make $120,000 or more, while only 5% of female respondents expect to make that amount of money annually. While these results do indicate that gender plays a role in expected income, it is also important to note that the majority of respondents from both genders expected to fall in the middle of the pay scale ($60,000 to $89,999).

Table 2

Respondent's Expected Annual Income At Age 35 (Percent Within Respondent's Gender)					
Participants	$29,999 or Less	$30,000 to $59,999	$60,000 to $89,999	$90,000 to $119,999	$120,000 or More
Male	0%	17%	41%	25%	17%
Female	5%	20%	54%	17%	5%
Pearson Chi-Square = .010					

The first hypothesis was also supported when analyzing results from the variable "Respondent expects to take time off from future job in order to care for their children." As we can see in table three below, 71% of female respondents expected to take time off to care for their children, compared to only 47% of men. Again, it is important to note that a sizeable amount of respondents were unsure of their expectations, and chose the "Don't Know" option when answering.

Table 3

Respondent Expects to Take Time Off From Future Job In Order To Care For Their Children (Percent Within Respondent's Gender)			
Participants	Yes	No	Don't Know
Male	47%	32%	22%
Female	71%	7%	22%
Pearson Chi-Square = .000			

The specific amount of time that respondents expected to take off of work in order to care for their families is also a significant variable that supports the first hypothesis. Table three did indicate that a majority of male respondents expect to take time off of work to care for their children. However, the actual amount of time is gendered, as is shown in table four: Of those who expect to take time off of work in order to care for their children, 24% of male respondents expect to take approximately one month off (compared to 6% of female respondents). Only 10% of male respondents (compared to 27% of female respondents) expect to take multiple years off of work in order to care for their children. There were a rather large percentage of respondents who chose the "other" response (31% of male respondents and 20% of female respondents) but among these there were some subtle gender differences. Many of the male respondents expected to take "as long as it takes" or other open-ended amounts of time off while many female respondents who chose other were in-between categories (2-3 months, 6 months- 1 year, etc.).

Table 4

Approximate Amount Of Time Respondent Expects To Take Off From Future Job In Order To Care For Their Children (Percent Within Respondent's Gender)					
Participants	1 Month	6 Months	1 Year	Multiple Years	Other
Male	24%	31%	3%	10%	31%
Female	6%	34%	14%	27%	20%
Pearson Chi-Square = .010					

Section 4: Discussion and Implications for Future Research

The survey results indicate that among the Cal Poly students surveyed, gender has an influence on their expectations for life after graduation. Men are more likely to expect to make the highest salaries and more likely to expect to take less time off of work to care for their future children. This supports the research cited and the thesis of this paper: that although women have gained so much in the past decades, gender inequity is still present, and in order to make lasting change on a societal level we must re-define the gender roles and delve into what it means to be a man and women in U.S. society.

The survey also indicates that gender is an important factor in role model selection, and supports the work of Sadker and Sadker, as well as other authors cited in this paper. These authors contribute some success, especially female success in higher education and the workplace, to role models and stress the importance of mentors and role models for women who are struggling with societal expectations of their gender and their own aspirations. If more women begin to hold higher positions of power and influence, it is likely that they will send an encouraging message to other women and girls. This will work in the same way for men, who already have a significant amount of role models in positions of power, but have few models of men who are stay at home fathers or at least take on an equal share of housework and child rearing. By focusing on both of these areas and removing the societal expectations and stigma related to work (whether it be housework or professional work) and gender, society will become more equitable.

Before any of this can happen, however, societal awareness of the gender inequity that is so pervasive and hidden in modern U.S. society must take place. Many Americans are unaware that gender inequity exists due to the enormous strides that women have taken and the many

accomplishments that women have achieved. My hope is that this research will start a dialogue on the role gender plays in the future of both female and male Cal Poly students, and I strongly believe that this project will benefit those who wish to better the situation of both women and men in our school and our society at large. We cannot begin to solve the problem if our society does not first recognize that one exists, and that is where my I hope to make a difference with this research. This project is part of a larger movement that aims to bring the issue of gender inequality to the forefront of society and begin a dialogue that can bring about change.

Although this project did yield interesting results, there is much more work that can be done and ways in which this study could be stronger. In the future, I would like to conduct a more extensive study, including a detailed questionnaire as well as interviews that discuss family background, race, class, religion, and education in order to get a more encompassing and integrated view rather than simply skimming the surface with one independent variable. Ideally, this future study would encompass students at a variety of higher education institutions, comparing the more traditionally prestigious universities to community colleges and state universities. I would also like to discuss the attitudes that respondents have to traditional gender roles: if and why respondents believe they exist, how it makes them feel, how they would break out of them, and if they believe that equity is possible.

Section 5: Conclusion

Gender bias and inequality still exists in U.S. society; as Margret Mead said, "if a fish were an anthropologist, the last thing it would discover would be water" (Sadker and Sadker 1994 p. 266). We do not see the gender inequity and the way it affects the future of our citizens because we are so used to it being there. This inequity keeps women in traditional roles of caretaker (even if these women are educated at prestigious universities) and out of positions of

power and prestige. Without these female role models, young girls have trouble imagining

themselves capable of attaining the careers and status that men are able to. Yet, gender inequity

also greatly affects boys and men in our society, who face great stigma and judgment from their

peers if they do not fit the rigid definition of masculinity.

      Research such as this is one step in beginning a dialogue around gender topics that are so

widely accepted that we do not even question them or see them as problems. I want to stress that

I am not advocating for "sameness" with this research. As Sapiro states in the very beginning of

her book, "we can conclude, even from the small amount of information we have examined thus

far, that men's and women's lives and activities are not just different; they are unequal" (1999 p.

29). I recognize that there are differences between men and women. Truly, there are differences

between every person, and those differences can be beneficial, bringing varying ideas,

perspectives, knowledge, and beliefs together to create a more sensitive and inclusive world for

everyone. That being said, unless we have gender equity, meaning a fair and equal chance for all

to pursue their goals and passions regardless of gender, our differences will not lend themselves

to a positive society, instead they will contribute to the already present gender gap.

      The task at hand may seem daunting, but an alteration of our society's perception of

gender and the creation of an equitable culture can, in my opinion, be achieved. However,

change needs to come from above and below, from our institutions to our individual attitudes. It

is important that government, education, and family begin to see women and men as equal

partners in every aspect. By taking the stigma away from working mothers and stay at home

fathers, providing both maternal and paternal leave, and providing flex time benefits for men and

women, we will be on the right path to gender equity in U.S. society. It is also crucial to start an

open dialogue around gender and the education system, instructing educators on how to actively

challenge traditional gender roles and gender segregation in the classroom, and encourage the revision of school curriculum to accurately reflect the significant contributions made by women in every field.

Gender roles and inequality have historically been seen as a woman's issue. It is time for us to break away from this assumption. Gender inequality affects us all, and while is hard enough for women to see how the gender norms can negatively affect men, it can be just as difficult for men to see how gender norms can negatively impact their lives. But with an open dialogue and a re-framing of the women's movement into a movement that improves life for us all, regardless of gender, we will be one step closer to an equitable society. There are already a few college campuses that are heading down this path, and Cal Poly is one of them. In 2011 the Women's Center was re-opened as the Gender Equity Center, creating not only a safe space and resource for women on campus, but for men as well, promoting healthy masculinity and dialogue among male students on campus. The work of this center is crucial, and while some cannot yet see the value of such a controversial space it is a necessary and important step in ending gender inequality. We are at a turning point in our society; the younger generations of men and women see the value of an equitable society and wish it for themselves and their future families. We must not let this opportunity pass us by: change is possible, but only if we decide to take action and actively advocate for gender equity in our own lives and the lives of others. It may seem impossible at this point, but less than one hundred years ago it seemed impossible that women would be able to vote. As a society we have come a long way since that time, but we cannot stop now. We must keep fighting to create a better world for every individual in generations to come.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Respondent's Professional Role Model (Percent Within Respondent's Gender)		
Participants	Male Role Model	Female Role Model
Male	80%	20%
Female	51%	49%
Pearson Chi-Square = .004		

Table 2

Respondent's Expected Annual Income At Age 35 (Percent Within Respondent's Gender)				
Participants	$29,999 or Less	$30,000 to $59,999	$60,000 to $89,999	$90,000 to $119,999	$120,000 or More
Male	0%	17%	41%	25%	17%
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Female	6%	34%	14%	27%	20%
Pearson Chi-Square = .010					

Appendix B

Survey: Informed Consent Waiver

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN SURVEY OF POSTGRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

A survey on Cal Poly Students' postgraduate expectations is being conducted by Marisa Wishart for a Senior Project in the Social Sciences Department at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The purpose of the study is to analyze the expectations that Cal Poly Students have for life after graduation.

You are being asked to take part in this study by completing the attached questionnaire. A prospective benefit of your participation is a better understanding of the postgraduate expectations of current Cal Poly Students. Your participation will take approximately five to ten minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may also omit any items on the questionnaire you prefer not to answer. Your responses will be provided anonymously to protect your privacy.

If you have concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at (805) 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Dean Wendt, Interim Dean of Research, at (805) 756-1508, dwent@calpoly.edu. If you have questions about this research or would like to be informed of the results, please contact Marisa Wishart at mwishart@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by completing and returning the attached questionnaire. Please retain this consent cover form for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.

Survey

Cal Poly Students' Postgraduate Expectations

1. What is your gender: Male   Female   Other

2. What is your grade level: Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior

3. What is your major: _____

4. Please write in your race/ethnicity: _____

5. Please list three personal role models (individuals who influenced your personal morals and values). If the individual is not well known, please specify their title (parent, teacher, businessperson, politician, etc.) rather than their name.

    _____, _____, _____

6. Please list three professional role models (individuals who influenced your education and career path). If the individual is not well known, please specify their title (parent, teacher, businessperson, politician, etc.) rather than their name.

    _____, _____, _____

7. How do you envision your life at age 35? Mark all that apply.

___ Having a career	___ Being a stay at home parent	___ Being financially stable
___ Having a part-time job	___ Being married	___ Owning a home
___ Having a Master's degree	___ Having children	___ Don't know
___ Having a Doctorate	___ Being in a serious relationship	___ Other_____
___ Attending graduate school	___ Being single	

8. What do you expect your annual income to be at age 35?

     $29,999 or less $30,000-$59,999 $60,000-$89,999 $90,000-$119,999

     $120,000 +

9. If financial stability was not a factor, and you could choose any major or field of study, would you be in the major you are now?   Yes   No   Don't Know

    a. If no, what major would you choose? _____

10. Do you plan on having children in the future?

    Yes   No   Don't Know

    If yes, please answer the next two questions.

    a. Do you feel pressured to choose a career that allows you to achieve financial stability in order to one day provide for your children?

Yes   No   Don't Know

b. Do you expect to take time off from your future job in order to care for your children?

Yes   No   Don't Know

If yes, approximately how much time do you expect to take off?

1 month   6 months   1 year   Multiple   years

Other_____