

**The Emerging Gender Gap in Education:
Its Implications for the Economy, Marketing, and Society**

By

**Z. S. Demirdjian
California State University, Long Beach**

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**California State University
Department of Marketing
1250 Bellflower Boulevard
Long Beach, California 90840**

zdemirdj@csulb.edu

Tel. (562) 985 – 4764

Fax. (562) 985 -5543

The Ultimate Gender Gap1 – Study for ABAS Conference, 05

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Abstract

For many years women have languished in the shadow of men, mainly being relegated as the rather inferior pea in the human pod. In the last 30 years, however, women have emerged as the dominant sex in education, which had been until recently men's exclusive domain. In other endeavors, women are also taking stiff challenges in stride such as in business and the professions. Title IX and Gender and Equity Act of 1972 helped women bridge the gulf between the boys' and the girls' scholastic performance on college campuses. Women's celebrated accomplishments would raise the eyebrows of many a male chauvinist diehards with unbounded perplexity and great surprise. Recent statistics are presented to show the women's legendary progress. Despite their inroads made in a man's world, women still face many hurdles in their quest for equality and equity.

The Emerging Gender Gap in Education: Its Implications for the Economy, Marketing, and Society*

Introduction

Human behavior in general is complex, but of the two sexes, females are the mysterious ones, especially to men. Recent studies are unraveling, though, the enigmas of women with startling findings.

For 350 years, men outnumbered women on college campuses. Women have been put down in the United States as being inferior to men in many areas. Just a century ago, the president of Harvard University, Charles W. Elliot, refused to admit women because he feared they would waste the precious resources of his school. In February of 2005, Harvard University President Larry Summers again got embroiled in controversy when he said something to the effect that women are not fit for science.

Recently, however, that myth has been debunked. In the last 30 years, women have imperceptibly gained the first place in education. In 1991, for the first

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time ever, female students surpassed male students in numbers on U. S. campuses across the nation. Since 1971, the number of women earning degrees in the field of business has grown astronomically.

In this paper, I would like to share with you some of the recent developments with women in the area of education only and their implications for the economy, business, and society.

For a historical backdrop, according to Barry Munitz (1991), the former Chancellor of the California State University system, between 1971 and 1990, the percentage of California State University female students earning bachelor's degrees in business and management soared from under 10 percent to 50 percent. Currently, California State University, Long Beach, has 52 per cent of its students being female, and the University of North Caroline's student body consists of 60 per cent female. A silent revolution is taking place in women outdoing men. The 21st century perhaps will be the "First Female Century."

Historical Perspectives on Generation Gap

In 1960s, one of the bases for the gap among groups of people was age. The youth of society rebelled against the establishment (older generation). The "Flower Children" advocated free love anytime, anyplace, anywhere. The slogan trumpeted was "Make love, not war!" Drugs proliferated the minds of the youth and fried their brains. Age differences created divergence in thinking and preference. Marked differences in preference for products, mainly in music,

movies, clothing, dating, and the like existed. Thus, marketing began to divide a market into different age and life-cycle groups.

Applying the “generational gap” in segmentation, for example, Procter & Gamble targeted its Oil of Olay ProVital Series brands at women over 50 years of age (Accessed online 2002; Sloan and Neff 1998). Another well-known example is McDonald’s differentiated marketing strategy in which the company targeted children, teens, adults, and seniors with different ads and media (Kotler and Armstrong 2004). Thus, company marketing efforts focused on benefiting from the existing age and life-cycle groups who obviously had been in substantial numbers possessing the requisite buying power.

Recent Applications of Gender Gap in Business

In 1980s, the basis for the gap within society was gender, not age or sex. Segmentation based on sex has always been practiced in marketing of female or male specific products, such as maternity clothing and after-shave. Biologically based characteristics that distinguish males and females are referred to as sex differences, while gender is a psychological phenomenon referring to learned, sex-related behaviors and attitudes (Zimbardo and Gerrig 1996).

Market segmentation had become the buzzword for effective marketing by the mid 1980s. Although sex segmentation has long been used in clothing (e.g., maternity), cosmetics (e.g., lipstick), and magazines (Madmoiselle), companies began to employ gender segmentation in other product categories to better satisfy

the needs and wants of their target markets, for example, in such asexual products and services as cars, home improvement tools, hotel accommodations, etc.

Since research has shown that women buy nearly half of all new cars sold in the United States and that they influence 80 percent of all new-car purchasing decisions, the automobile industry began to use gender segmentation extensively. To accommodate women's difference in frames, such as less upper-body strength, and greater safety concerns, cars were designed with hoods and trunks that are easy to open, seats that are easy to adjust, and seat belts that fit women better. In the area of safety, air bags, remote door locks, trunk release from inside the trunk, etc. were incorporated in the new cars. General Motors, for example, equipped its Cadillac Catera with an air-conditioned glove box to preserve such items as lipstick and film (Marketing News 1992; Halliday 1997; Quinlin 1999).

Based on a research study findings which indicated that women make 90 percent of all home improvement decisions, Lowe's launched a family oriented campaign that reaches out to women buyers (Cuneo 1997; Hughes 2001). In the same vein, the Internet has also began to reach out women through a growing number of Web sites. Included in these sites are Oxygen Media's fresh and hip Girls On Web site for twenty year olds (WW.oxygen.com) and iVillage (www.iVillage.com), the leading women's online community offers solutions to women. As the dominant decision maker, women soon gathered clout with progressive marketers who had women the focus of their marketing programs.

The New Gender Gap in Education

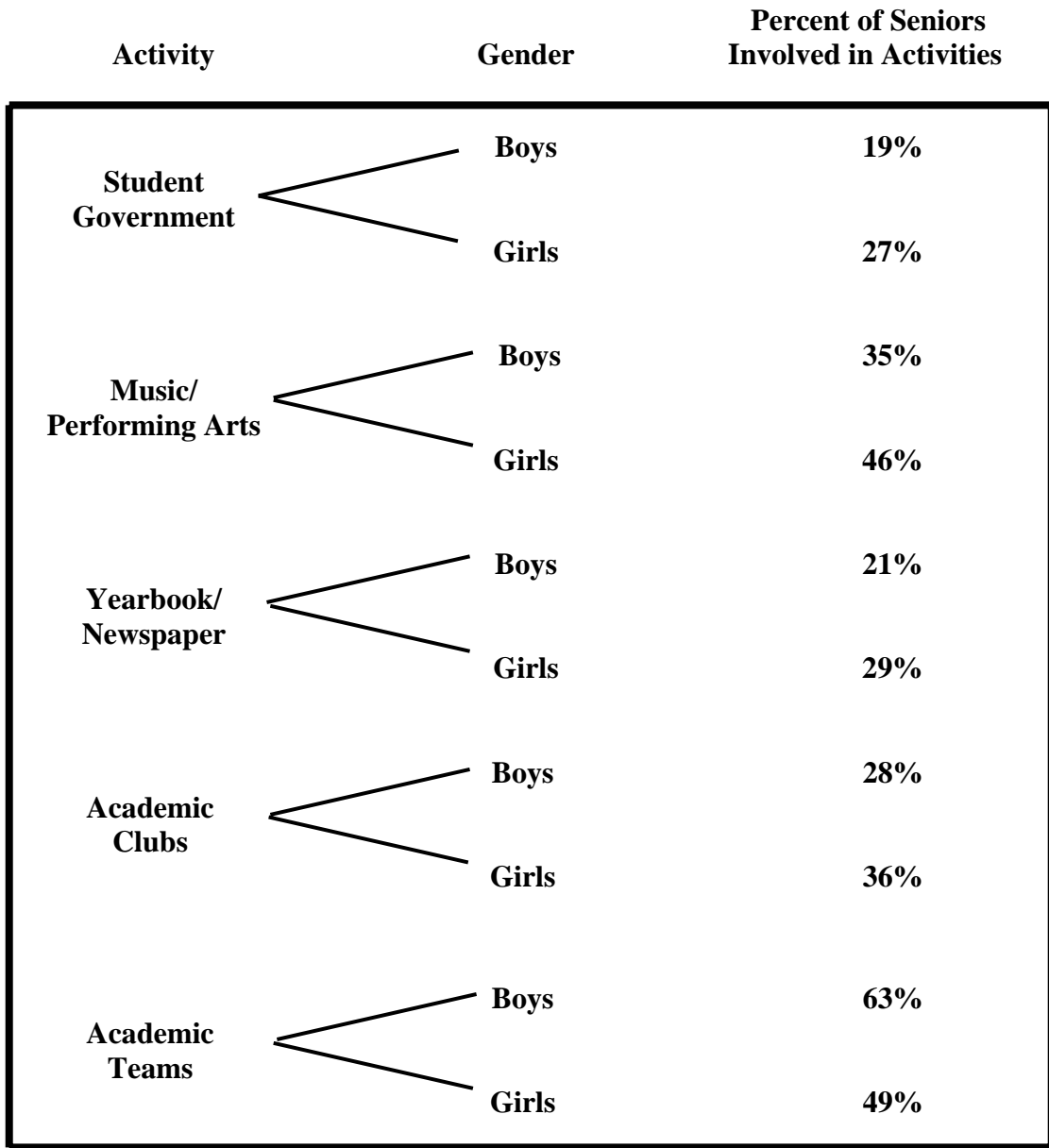
In 1991, for the first time the number of women attending college and universities exceeded that of men. College campuses around the nation have been swelling by female student population. According to Conlin (2003), since 1990s, from kindergarten to graduate school, boys have been becoming the “second sex.” Conlin (2003) also reports that “Girl Power” reigns at Rising Sun High School in Rising Sun, MD., nearly every student-activity post, leadership position, and academic honors spot is held by females as shown in Figure 1. The female control on power at Rising Sun is emblematic of a historic gender reversal in education.

Figure 2 shows how girls outshined the boys in some scholastic areas. That boys are unable to hold a candle to girls when it comes to verbal communication has already become a common knowledge. As for Boys’ Club, special ed students at Ottumwa (Iowa) High School are mostly male, as is the case across the U.S. campuses (Business Week 2003).

Now, in every state, every income bracket, every racial and ethnic group, and most industrialized Western nations, women rule, earning an average of 57 per cent of all bachelor’s and 58 per cent of all master’s degrees in the U.S. alone. The

Figure 1

Dominance of High School Senior Girls in Extracurricular Activities



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2000

Figure 2

The Widening Gap Between Boys and Girls Performance in Selected Scholastic Areas of Reading, Math, and Special Education

Selected Areas Of Performance	Gender of Student (12 Grades)	Average Score on a Scale of 0 to 500
Reading	Boys	212
	Girls	222
Math	Boys	303
	Girls	299
Special Ed Requirement	Boys	73%
	Girls	27%
Emotionally Disturbed	Boys	76%
	Girls	24%

Source: U. S. Education Department

statistics in Table 1 and Table 2 clearly show girls outdoing boys regardless of ethnicity.

Table 1

**Number of U. S. Women Awarded Bachelor's and
Master's Degrees per 100 Men in 1999-2000
Along with an Estimated Projection for 2009-2010**

Degree Received By Women	In 1999-2000	Estimated in 2009-2010
Bachelor's Degrees	133 (33% more)	142 (42% more)
Master's Degrees	138 (38% more)	151 (51% more)

Source: Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies, 2002

Women, thus, are dominating in education. They have established themselves as the premier sex in education. Online chat rooms and clubs are being established by calling themselves Gender Gap. Education is the underlying force for one's economic welfare. Women are conquering the world this time not through seduction of Adam, but through brainpower.

It should be noticed that in most of the industrialized world, females received more college education and advanced degrees than their male counterparts in 2000 and in 2002. As the data in Table 2 indicate, bachelor's degree awarded to he Native American males have considerably declined in 2002 by 36%, while the female graduates have increased by 35%.

Table 2

Bachelor's Degrees Awarded in 2000 and in 2002 to U. S. Students by Race/Ethnicity as a Percentage of Total

Race	Gender	Percent of Total	
		2000*	2002**
White	Male	44%	44%
	Female	56%	56%
Blacks	Male	33%	33%
	Female	67%	67%
Hispanics	Male	38%	39%
	Female	62%	62%
Asians	Male	46%	45%
	Female	54%	55%
Native Americans	Male	76%	40%
	Female	24%	60%

Source: *Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development, 2003

**National Center for Education Statistics, 2002

Implications of the New Gender Gap

For the Economy, Marketing, and Society

Campbell (1989) contends that a “male” mind is no longer a requisite attribute for national leadership positions. Norway elected the first woman Prime Minister followed by Britain, Iceland, India, Israel, and Sri Lanka. Hargreves’ (1989) research has shown that creativity occurs equally in both sexes, but jobs demanding creative input are not usually as evenly distributed between the sexes.

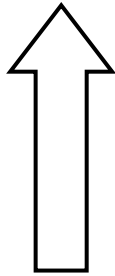
Traits such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, independence, and self-confidence have traditionally been attributed to the male sex, while neatness, tactfulness, gentleness, and talkativeness have been normally ascribed to the female counterpart. Such stereotypical sex roles have been found to be blurred, if not exaggerated (Broverman et. al 1972). Compared to “just-a-job” female workers, “career-oriented working women tend to hold or aspire to get professional positions. Career-oriented women are driven more by a need to achieve in their chosen careers. These highly educated women are fiercely competitive and self-confident, otherwise they would not hit the “glass ceiling” dome and try to shatter it.

Women will dominate the white-collar jobs, but the blue- and pink-collar jobs (i.e., nursing and secretarial) will remain mainly for men. Table 3 shows the steady increase of women entering the work force. Convinced of their competence, women are proliferating most professions. As a result, women will have greater disposable and discretionary income to spend. Manufacturers will design products

for woman like the automobile industry, the hotel industry, and others are doing to capitalize on this growing lucrative market.

Table 3

The Steady Growth of Women Ages 25 to 54 Entering into the Labor Force from 1953 to 2003

Year	Percentage	
2003	78	
1993	75	
1983	65	
1973	50	
1963	45	
1953	38	

Source: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003

In 1988, Working Woman magazine surpassed all other North American business magazines in circulation, including Fortune, Forbes, and Business Week. The trend is moving from male dominated society to female dominated society. Thus, women will become the focal point for marketing strategy formulation since they are reaching a critical mass in virtually all white-collar professions by providing the economy with educated work force. Education is the basis for a viable society, healthy economy, and sound business. Therefore, women are excelling at the source of what is good for society.

Will men be better off with all these changes? Besides getting some egos bruised, most men would welcome women's metamorphoses toward betterment for women are their mothers, sisters, or wives. They are men's natural partners. For one thing the age of the dumb, but beautiful blonde, is waning. The weight of available evidence indicates that we would have more of a stable society that would try to avoid violence and crime because women obey rules better than men (Campbell 1989).

In an attempt to explain women's meteoric rise in education, a number of contributing factors are usually offered. One of the main factors is that for 30 years the focus at schools has been to empower girls, in and out of the classroom (i.e., the Girl Project). Classrooms became more girl-friendly by including teaching styles that catered to them.

Title IX, the Gender & Equity Act, and the powerful influence of women's movement spearheaded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton -- all of which created an environment in which discrimination against girls was heavily penalized in 1972. In the past, parents had different expectations for their sons and daughters. Block (1983) reasons that the norm was for parents to give their girls "roots" to build homes and families, but they give their boys "wings" to soar to new heights. Recently, however, "Once the chains were off, girls soared," Conlin (2003) concludes.

Major Hurdles Facing Women on the Road to Equality and Equity

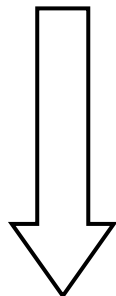
Women still face some major hurdles, even though they are building a female scholastic dynasty while the boys are losing the crown once they wore for centuries. Some of the major hurdles are income disparity for equal work, opportunities to acquire wealth through work rather than inheritance, continued portrayal of them as sex objects in the ads, the resistance to let women break through the “glass ceiling” is still a reality, and the growing social problem of mismatch between men and women for compatible marriages.

Income – Income has been one of the most sensitive issues for women for it has far-reaching implications for their economic well being. Women between the ages of 20 and over 65 make on the average 21 percent less than their male counterparts as the data in Table 4 indicate. The disparity in earnings is greater for women between the ages of 35 and 65 and over, who make 25 percent less than men. The highest disparity of earnings is for woman 65 and over, who make less than 26 per cent less than their male counterpart. Stedham, Yamamura, and Satoh (2003) report that marked wage differentials also exist in Japan. In most Japanese companies, anywhere from ten (10) to twenty (20) per cent differential exist between male and female employee wages (Changing Roles 2002). It seems that the disparity in gender wages has been germane to all countries around the world, and there is no telling as to when the inequitable gap will be bridged.

Table 4

Women's Earnings as a Percent of Men's Median Weekly of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers in 2000 and in 2003 Dollars

Women's Age Range	Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings (100%)	
	2000*	2003**
20 to 24 years old	88	94
25 to 34 years old	82	87
35 to 44 years old	75	76
44 to 54 years old	76	73
65 and over	74	71



Source: *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000
**U.S./ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003

Women have still a long way to go before they could bridge the wide gap in earnings. Kim's (2003) research has shown that throughout the decade of 1990s, there has been an upward mobility in the occupational distribution for female workers, which will translate into a positive gain in their earnings, possibly resulting in the narrower gender earnings gap in the future.

Wealth - About ninety per cent of the world's billionaires are men. Among the super rich in the U.S., only one woman, Doris Fisher (the co-founder of Gap,

Inc.) made it her own wealth rather than inherited it. Even Martha Stewart with her astute, but perhaps secrete, knowledge of the workings of the stock market could not make the billionaire's club, especially after K-mart's bankruptcy which cast a shadow on the Martha Stewart brands. Her recent status of being accused of illegal financial dealings has not helped her business empire, either (Kadlac 2002). Women have a long trek ahead for striking rich on their own since opportunities are made scarce for them by their male counterparts. Additionally, child bearing, child rearing, and home making responsibilities demand most of their attention and energy. As a result, it would be challenging to toss in a career into an already crowded juggling game.

Objectification – Women are still portrayed as objects for men's sexual gratification, especially through the media despite the fact that government regulations of advertising in different countries forbid advertisements that are sexist or sexy or that sexually objectify their models. For example, in Malaysia, the Ministry of Information's Advertising Code states that women should not be the principal objects of an advertisement or intended to attract sales unless the advertised product is relevant to women. Similarly, Portuguese law prohibits sex discrimination or the subordination or objectification of women in advertising (Boddewyn 1991).

Here in the United States, certain companies are taking measures to curb the practice of objectification of women. For example, Anheuser-Busch has stated that it will abstain from portraying women as sex objects (Teinowitz 1991; Miller 1992). These are merely token gestures in stemming the age-old abuse of women mainly because sex simply sells. Therefore, it would be difficult to dissuade businesses from using sex to sell their products and services.

The Glass Ceiling Syndrome –Related to income, job discrimination has not been a lower case issue for women. The dome of the proverbial glass ceiling has not been shattered yet for males still mainly hold executive positions. In most corporations, the president, the chief executive officer, and the director ranks are still reserved for males. It has been increasingly and persuasively being told that women who strive to become top managers all too often hit a “glass ceiling” which effectively halts their progress. That invisible, but very real, barrier causes multiple damage by injuring the individual, the company, and the economy. Women know that if they do not shoot for the stars, they would never get close to the moon.

If American business is going to remain globally competitive, and the American society genuinely equitable, the glass ceiling must come down and women given a real chance to reach the executive ranks based on merit regardless of their sex. There are two compelling reasons. The first one is equity. The second one is in the new millennium the vast majority of the work force are already female and they are proving themselves to having the talent and the energy to handle executive level

positions. Therefore, artificial barriers should be lifted from women's path to the top of the organizational hierarchy.

The Mismatch – (This topic is not related to the recent movie!) The condition of imbalance in backgrounds of better-educated females and lesser-educated males are creating social problems. For example, among African Americans, 30 per cent of 40- to 44-year old women have never married, owing in part to the lack of men with the same academic credentials and earning potential as the data in Figure 3 show. Currently, the never-married rate is 9 per cent for white women of the same age as portrayed in Figure 4.

Despite all of these obstacles, women will continue with their great strides toward equality, if not surpassing their counterparts in the classrooms, in the board rooms, on the Capital Hill, and in any other endeavor which requires mental power. Although women's achievements in education are remarkable and are certainly celebratory, the progress seems to come with a great social cost, for marriage is one of the most important institutions in any society to cause it diminish in its importance or incidence.

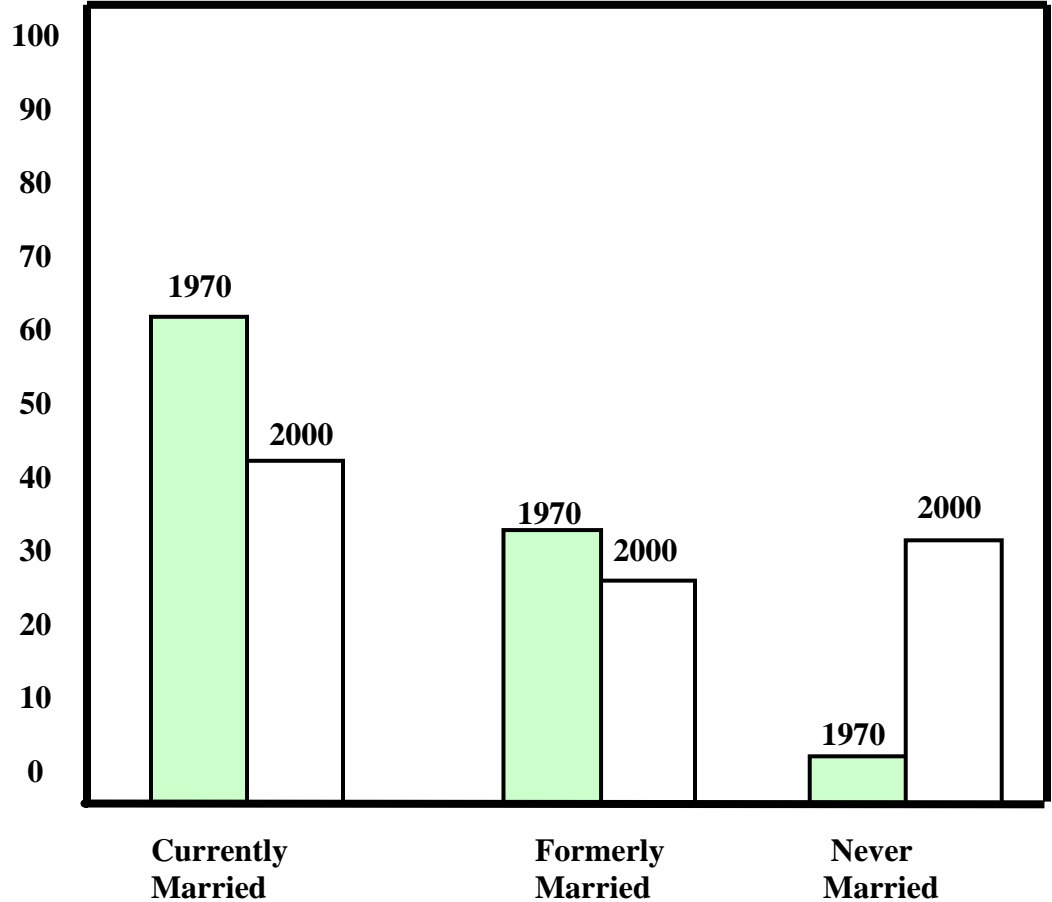
Out of All These changes, Are There Any Positive Results for Adam?

Undoubtedly, yes. Women will be striving to achieve a higher stratosphere of success. Childbearing, child rearing, and juggling a career would eventually take a

Figure 3

**Marriage Decline Among Black Women Ages 40 to 44
Due Partly to Mismatch in Male-Female Backgrounds
(i.e., Education, Earnings Potential, Etc.)**

Percent



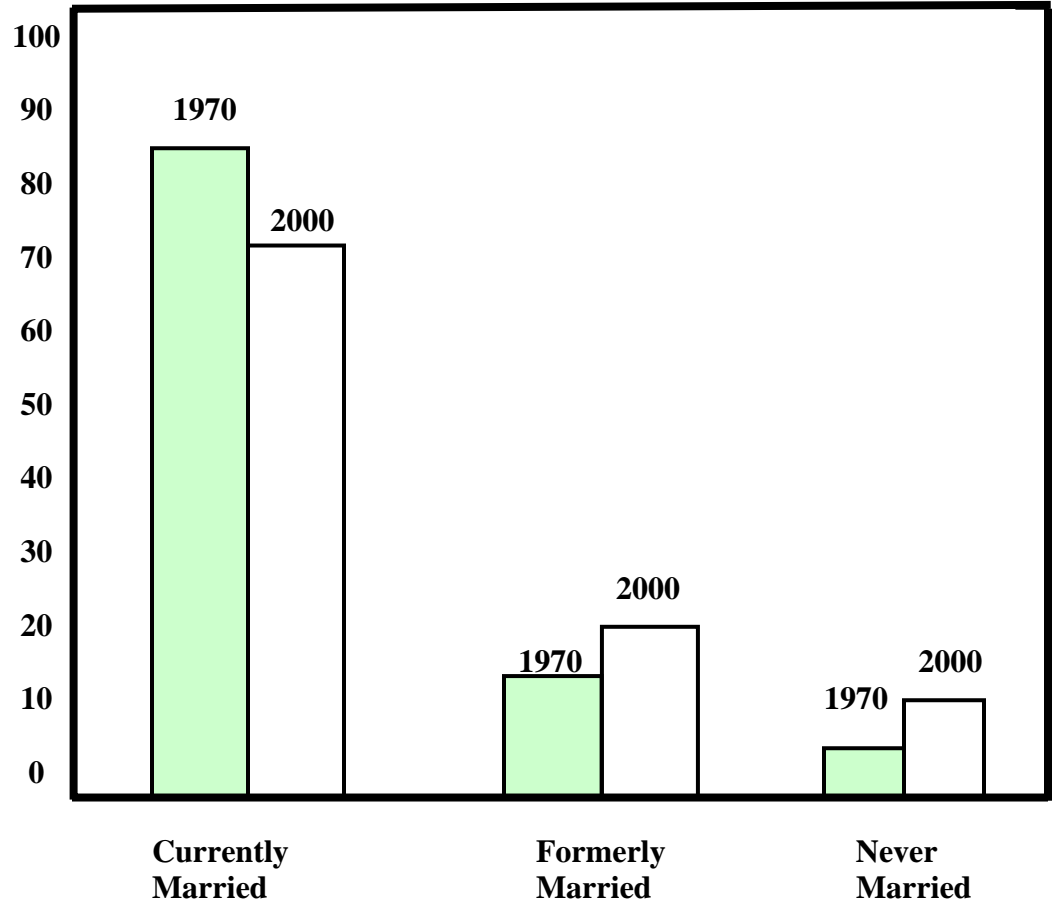
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2000

toll on Eve. Thus, she would have a shorter life span. Therefore, men would outlive women. In this way, men would enjoy women's wealth after their relatively

Figure 4

**Marriage Decline Among White Women Ages 40 to 44
Due Partly to Mismatch in Male-Female Backgrounds
(i.e., Education, Earnings Potential, Etc.)**

Percent



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2000

early, if not premature, death. Although, this statement is said in jest, it does contain high probabilities of happening in this brave new world.

Will the human family become like a pride of lions? The female works (hunts), bears, and rears her cubs, while the male sports a mane and mainly serves to protect the pride and to serve occasionally as a stud for procreation. This is not to say that men will be placed on the endangered species list, but there is no denying the fact that society is going through the evolutionary process of changing gender roles. Women will clamor for equality more intensely yet in the future now that they have proven that they could rival men's contributions to society. After all, the common denominator of the activities of living things can be reduced to "competition for power" for survival and growth. Women do not seem to differ sharply from men in this instance. While women are ahead in education, they lag behind their male counterparts in income and in holding prestigious positions. It is a battle "royal." The battle is brewing because some men are not allowing women to obtain equal pay for equal work, and not giving them the opportunities to get high-ranking positions based on competence and not on gender.

Legend has it that Sigmund Freud had admitted a defeat in his practice by saying, "The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is: 'What does a woman want?' Had Freud been here today, his answer would have been: "Normal woman simply want equal opportunities in life."

With all seriousness, women's progress is men's progress. The responsibility of providing for the family has traditionally fallen on the shoulders of the husband as the provider or the breadwinner. With women's inroads in the work force, both partners share the responsibility for women will contribute to the family, and at the

same time, fulfill their self-actualization needs. Obviously, this is a win-win situation.

In conclusion, will society be better off with women in the driver's seat? Most likely, with their rather law-abiding attitude and behavior and nurturing nature, the world will have relatively less conflict and war. Moreover, if women were to maintain the momentum they have gained during the last 30 years in education, they would become quite possibly the Ultimate Gender of our society within this millennium. Committed to social change, many progressive companies in every industry or profession are already embracing the challenge of diversity and shattering glass ceilings. The stark realization is hitting home that women are determined to stick to their guns for equity. Enlightened executives of the day are beginning to perceive women now through a rather clear, objective lens as equal partners in life.

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