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The Legacies of Lindenwood:

249

A Survey of What Female Graduates did After College

Elizabeth Dalton

This project looked at the women who graduated from Lindenwood College in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985 to see whether or not they used their degrees outside of the home. The hypothesis that more women would use their degrees outside of the home as a result of social changes as the decades increased was not supported as the trend began to decrease with the 1975 class.

Over the years, the social climate of the times has had a great impact over women's career seeking behavior, thus, some privileged women began obtaining degrees in higher education. Lindenwood University, a school that began as a place designed specifically for women to gain higher education was founded in 1857 by George and Mary Sibley. Their purpose was to offer an education to women that rivaled other institutions. Families from all over the country would make an effort to send their young daughter to Lindenwood College with the hopes that she would be educated and would marry a prestigious man (Jones, 1970). Later in the mid 1900s, while the average woman's goal was still, above all, to marry, various social changes occurred throughout the United States, presenting women with the ideology to pursue a career after graduating college as well as maintain a family (Jones, 1970). This study is one that revolves around history and women's reactions to the changes around them. Thus, the root of the project is embedded in historical summation of what occurred that would propel women to obtain and use their degree outside the home or any instances that occurred that would have discouraged women from using their education outside of the home.

In 1950's America, the typical woman was welcoming back her husband or potential husband from the Second World War (Kossoudji & Dresser, 1992). She had most likely worked some type of job as a response to "Rosie the Riveter," a fictitious woman created by the United States government who encouraged other women to take on the jobs that the men left behind to better propel American troops into a victorious war. "Rosie the Riveter," also encouraged women to give up the jobs to the returning men and return to their traditional lives of maintaining their house for their family. Most women had no problem returning to their role as a housewife as it was widely publicized as a desired ideal. "The suburban housewife was the dream image of the young American woman...she was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found feminine fulfillment," (Friedan, 1963, p42). A woman's education dictated her marriage partner, thus, much importance was placed for a woman from the upper-middle classes to obtain a very good education to fulfill their goal of the American housewife. This emphasis placed on female domesticity gives reason as to why some women did not use their degrees outside of the home in the 1950s, and also why women's enrollment dropped from forty to thirty-one percent in 1950 (Woloch, 1996).

Throughout the 1960s, the number of women enrolled in higher education in America doubled (Woloch, 1996). Women began studying the same subjects as men as opposed to the prior feminine curriculum. Those women who attended college also became active in the various social movements in the 1960s such as the Civil Rights Movement (Freeman, 1973). Throughout the movement, women worked along-side men to gain equality between blacks and whites. As a result, women began quietly advocating for gender equality as they saw parallels between the blacks and whites compared to women and men. The growing rise of enlightenment, spawned from the college campuses of the 1960s, gave heed to women's

involvement in the workforce and the demand for more equality (Freeman, 1973). Although the reaction to the Civil Rights Movement was very relevant to women craving recognition outside of the home, the typical college woman seemed to not be able to see past her marriage (Woloch, 1996). There was also a fear held by some women that any type of achievement would deter possible marriage partners (Woloch, 1996). This might explain why there was a dramatic increase in women attending college, as well as an increase in women using their degrees outside of their home but also why the increase in women using their degree was less than those obtaining them.

The year 1970 marked extreme development in women obtaining college degrees and then using them to find work outside of the home. A simple invention of the pill is cause for such change (Goldin & Katz, 2002). Although the pill was initially released in the 1960s, it did not gain popularity among the majority of women until the late 1960s as a result of legal issues; single women were not legally prescribed the pill until this time. The availability of the pill made it possible for women to choose when they wanted to have children or if they wanted them at all. This made the possibility of obtaining work very easy as the question of pregnancy was now off the table and women became viewed even more as equals to men (Goldin & Katz, 2002). Women could now pursue graduate degrees and careers. Women also began to want to have careers as much as a marital life and throughout the 1970s, men began to find it attractive that women had careers thus further propelling women to pursue careers outside of the home (Goldin & Katz, 2002).

Throughout the 1970s, the feminist movement began to gain steam, as well as other movements like the homosexual movement as well as the Black Panther movement. The growing amount of drugs, violence, and sex attributed to these movements caused the majority of

Americans to view them as too radical and not at all effective (Buhle, Murphy, & Gerhard, 2008). Thus, when conservative women such as Phyllis Schlafly began to encourage Congress and her fellow Americans to stop the passage of the Equal Right Movement (ERA), and succeeded, the feminist movement tumbled to shambles (Buhle, Murphy, & Gerhard, 2009). Throughout the 1980s, Republican presidents such as Reagan began advocating the importance of the family; women began feeling the pangs of guilt of not being with their families and took it upon themselves to maintain a kept home (Buhle, Murphy, & Gerhard, 2009). Even though feminist ideology was buried, women still were expected to obtain an education as well as continue to work outside of the home, giving heed to the social pressure of balancing two circulating ideals of what constituted a woman. From women only expecting to clean and keep the home, to the idea of women working only in the workforce to a combination of the two left women grasping onto their socially defined ideals of what was expected of a woman; thus women were still graduating from college and pursuing careers in the 1980s (Buhle, Murphy, & Gerhard, 2009).

The purpose of the present study was to compare the paths the women who graduated from Lindenwood College took from the 1950s to the 1980s. The study was done to show that the career choices of women who graduated Lindenwood College in the 1950s throughout the 1980s mirrors society's as a whole reaction to events such as the women's liberation movement, the advent of the birth control pill, as well as other instances in women's history. The hypothesis of this study predicted that women who pursued higher education in the mid-1900s then used their degrees outside of the home, would pave the way for those to do the same in later decades by contributing to the women's liberation movement. This would propel more social acceptance

of women working outside of the home. Gradually, in later decades, more women would use their college degrees outside of their home.

Lindenwood College education was initially intended for women only. Lindenwood Archives provide a wealth of information about women who attended the college, socially as well as academically. Lindenwood and its graduates can benefit by relating women's education and progress through various time periods in American history. This shows that the school played a pivotal role in the changing of women's education and career choices. The researcher reviewed books and journals with information regarding this subject to provide explanations to explain the data gathered from Lindenwood University. The researcher then gathered the data from the Lindenwood Archives from the graduating classes of 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985 and then researched the women in the University's alumni records to see what the graduates did after college. The experimenter then analyzed the particular reasons why there was either more or less women using their degrees in each particular decade by using the information gathered in various scholarly books or journals.

Method

Data

The experimenter used data that Lindenwood University Alumni Services had previously collected from the graduating classes of 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985 to conduct an archival study. Because this information is available to the public, no informed consent was used. Lindenwood College catered to the education of women, thus only the data of the women who graduated Lindenwood in these classes was used. All of the women who gave information to Lindenwood College, that graduated in said years of study, after graduation were used in the study.

The experimenter used the yearbooks of the seniors that graduated in 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985 to gain information of those ladies who graduated those said years located in the Lindenwood University Archives. The yearbooks gave the name and major of each senior who graduated each particular year. The experimenter also used the “Lindenwood College Alumnae Directory,” published in 1969, the “Lindenwood College Alumni Directory,” published in 1990 and the “Lindenwood College Alumni Directory,” published in 1997 which contained information on marital status and career paths, including graduate studies of all those women who contributed said data after graduation. The experimenter used pencils to record the information on paper and then used a computer to enter the collected data into SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to further analyze the data. The study was an archival study, thus there are no independent and dependent variables. All the information was retrieved from data that was previously collected by Lindenwood University’s Alumni Services and used to find out how many women who graduated from Lindenwood College used their degree outside of the home. To further understand the results, the researcher compared them to the climate of the times by using various books notated in the references section of the paper.

Procedure

The researcher first used yearbooks of the graduating classes as a whole, separating the classes of 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985. The researcher recorded how many graduates encompassed each particular class and their majors. Then, the experimenter used the “Lindenwood College Alumnae Directory” published in 1969, to attempt to follow up on the graduates of 1955 and recorded their marital status. After, the researcher followed the graduates in all the classes of 1955, 1965, 1975 and 1985 by looking at the two volumes of the “Lindenwood College Alumni Directory,” one published in 1990 and the other in 1997. The

researcher recorded information pertaining to the women's marital status, her career and any graduate education. The experimenter then entered data into SPSS to generate percentages of how many women used their degree outside of the home within each class.

Results

Descriptive statistics were used and showed that 45.5% of the women who graduated in the class of 1955 used their degree outside of the home whereas 6.8% of those worked as "homemakers" inside of the home. The other 47.7% of the class's occupation could not be followed up on. In 1965, 55.4% of the women graduates used their degree outside of the home and 2.7% did not, 41.9% of the graduates' data sighting occupation could not be found. In 1975, 40.5% of the women graduates used their degree outside of the home whereas 4.8% did not and 54.8% of the women in that class's data could not be found regarding occupation. In 1985, 33.3% of women who graduated from Lindenwood College used their degree in an occupation outside of the home, 3.7% worked inside the home, and 63% of those graduates' data concerning occupation could not be obtained (see Figure 2).

Throughout the four individual years that were researched, the most common majors were within the humanities division and the education division (see Figure 1). Those who graduated within these four years most commonly married (see Figure 3). Using Chi Square analysis, the researcher found that in the 1955 class, four women attended graduate school upon graduating from Lindenwood College. Two were married, constituting 5.3% of those of the class who had married and two were single, 66.7% of those who stated that they were single. In the 1965 class, 11, or 25.6% of those who were married attended graduate school and two, or 25% of those who stated they were single attended graduate school. In the 1975 class, 10, or 29.4% of those who married attended graduate school and 4, or 36.4% of those who said they

were single attended graduate school. In the 1985 class, 1 woman who was married, or 12.5% of those who married attended graduate school, yet no one else attended graduate school.

Discussion

The results showed that there was an increase in women who graduated from Lindenwood College who used their degree outside of the home in the class of 1965 as opposed to 1955 but the numbers were reduced in the 1975 as well as the 1985 class. Thus, the researcher's hypothesis of the number of women who used their degree outside of the home would increase throughout the classes of 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985 was not supported with this research. This could be explained by lack of provided knowledge of the graduates of the last two years. Also, this could be explained by the decline of women in the classes of 1975 and 1985 because of Lindenwood College's lack of enrollment. Fewer women attended the college at the time, thus the effects of events such as the women's liberation movement that was referred to earlier with much importance, could not be seen within the minimal graduates of the college.

Lindenwood has always been a private institution thus normally; the college most likely did not lower its tuition to increase its attendance until their financial standing in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, women of higher status might have attended the college to obtain a well rounded education and marry. Yet, because of their status, women could work if they wanted or continue their education and go to graduate school. Whereas those women, especially those in the 1985 class could not obtain graduate education perhaps because of their wealth but also because of the college's negative standing in the academic community. This could explain the higher numbers of those with occupations and went to graduate school in the 1955 and 1965 classes as opposed to the 1975 and 1985 classes. The financial standing of the

college could have had a substantial affect upon the women who attended at each specific time and could have been an extraneous variable that affected the results of the study.

The majority of women who attended the college in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985 graduated with majors in the divisions of education as well as humanities (see Figure 2). Perhaps those graduates who majored in areas within these two divisions engaged their occupation as a teacher either within or outside the home to further propel her family. Thus, it might also be inferred that the majority of graduates from these said years felt an occupation as a teacher was the most rewarding.

Some problems that effected research were the inconsistency of the archival documents used. As stated previously, the researcher first gathered the names and majors of the graduates in each individual class by the use of the yearbooks in the Lindenwood University's Archives. The 1975 yearbook did not provide the names of those who graduated or their major. Thus, the researcher then referred to the Alumni Directory to view those names of those who graduated in 1975. As a result, various majors of those graduates were not stated and even less information were provided concerning the graduates' marital status as well as their occupation. Another inconsistency that further profited any confidence in gathered information was the Alumni Directories as a whole. In the 1985 yearbook, one graduate was listed in the Alumni Directory as a graduate of the 1984 class. Thus, the researcher then used the concrete tool of research, the yearbook as it was a primary source of the time and was left pondering what other small inconsistencies were within the various secondary sources provided by the alumni services.

Although the results provided did not support the proposed hypothesis that more women would use their degrees outside of the home, there might reason as to why it did not. Throughout the 1955 and 1965 classes, more women stated that they had married than they did their

occupation (see Figure 1 and Figure 3). These women felt the necessity to report that they had indeed married but could not also report as to whether or not they had an occupation. Thus, it can be inferred that these women who did not list their occupation did not do so because they did not have one. One might infer that these women did not report their occupation because they did not want to waste their time but the question that arises is that many of these women, especially in the classes of 1955 and 1965 did report their marital status so one does wonder why they did not just state an occupation as well. Of course there is no data to back this inference. One might obtain the answers to this mystery by sending out a survey to those who graduated from Lindenwood College or actually conduct interviews of these former graduates.

Some occupations listed by women in the 1955 and 1965 class consisted of being a church organist and other various light-hearted occupations that one might assume were hobbies as opposed to actual careers. Of course, one cannot label any occupation as more significant than any other but questions arise of what women considered a profession and whether or not that differed throughout these four decades. Perhaps further research can be conducted into what was considered an occupation by women throughout the mid to late 1900s and how that affected their pursuit of a career.

If one were to recreate this study, one might want to research data from more than one class from each decade to better gain a representative sample of those Lindenwood graduates from the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and perhaps include the 1940s as well. Perhaps surveys or actual interviews asking these graduates to explain their actions after college could be used for further detailed research. Some questions that might be included in these surveys and interviews would consist of, whether or not they had worked at all and if so, was it right after college or later in their life, whether they were married and had a family and if so,

whether or not they stayed home to care for them or continued working. Also, one might want to ask their salary made from their occupation and whether or not it was used to support the family or as excess funds for the family.

The results and discussion of this study can be regarded as a contribution to Lindenwood University's history. They can show how this small school reacted with social changes that affected the entire country. Women in the 1950s and 1960s did obtain careers and attended graduate school and could be assumed to pave the way for the advent of the women's liberation movement. Unfortunately, because of Lindenwood's past, it is difficult to analyze such a relation. This data provides a wealth of information, and some more organization, for anyone interested in the women who graduated from Lindenwood as well as the college's archives.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1: How many women used their degrees outside their home compared to those who were homemakers or did not list an occupation who graduated in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985.

260

Figure 2: How many claimed majors within the divisions of Lindenwood College of those graduates who followed up with Alumni Associations for the years 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985.

Figure 3: Women who reported their marital status as opposed to those who did not from the years 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985.

Figure 1: Occupations After Graduating for the Years 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985

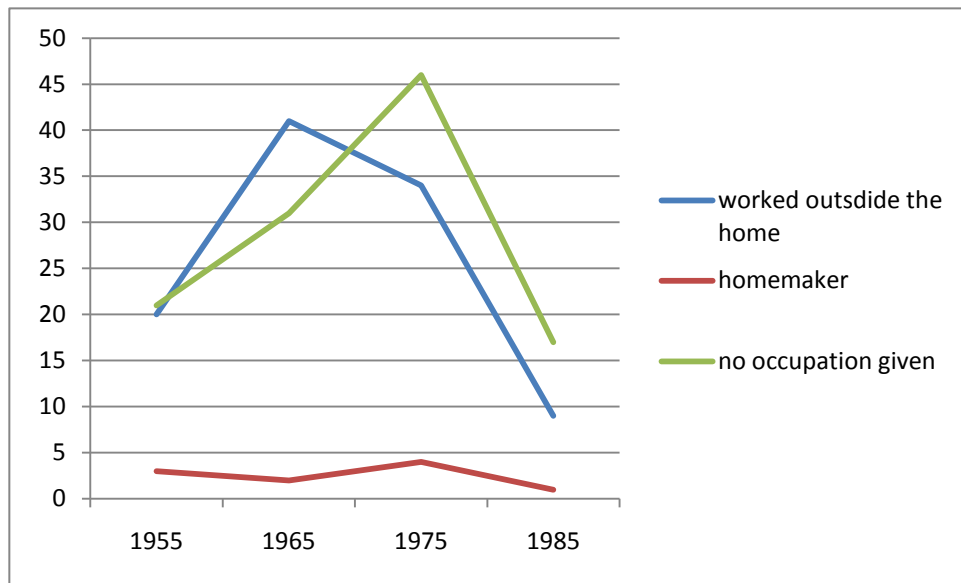


Figure 2: Divisions Studied by the Graduates of 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985

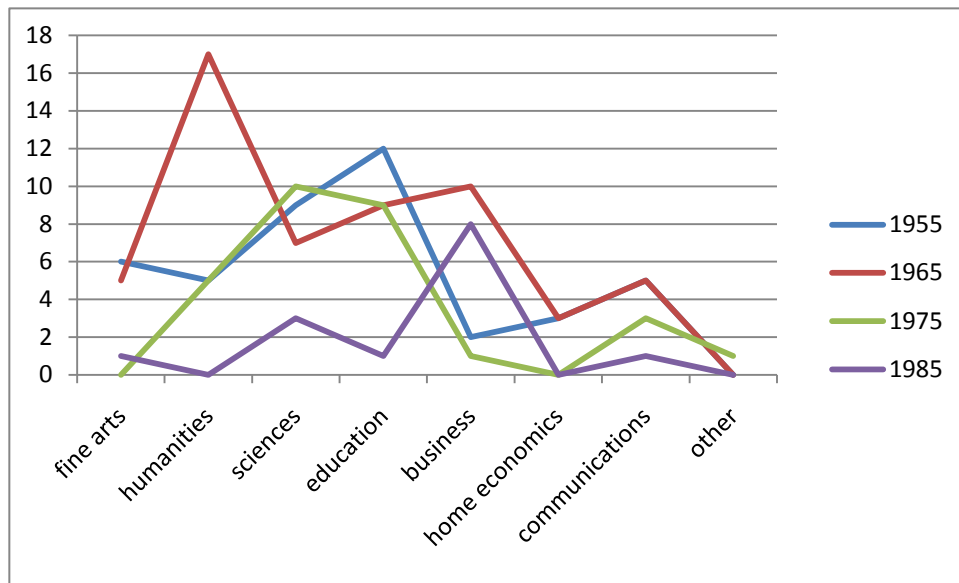
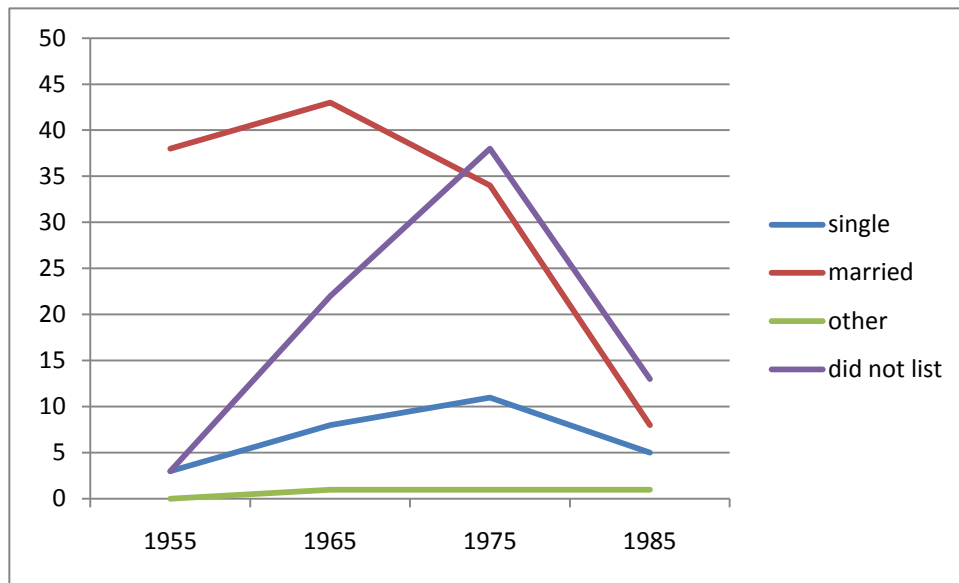


Figure 3 Marital Status of the Graduates of 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985



Author Note

Special thanks to Paul Huffman who provided a wealth of information by opening up the archives for research and pointing me numerous times in the correct direction. He and his archives provided yearbooks and alumni data that enabled me to conduct my research as smoothly and efficiently as possible.