

ISR *update*

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

Family Values

Belief in Marriage and Family Life Remains Strong

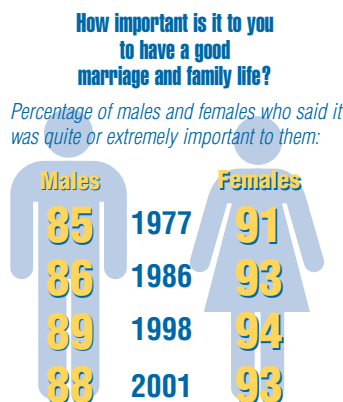
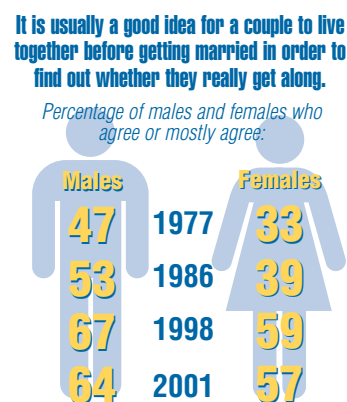
Despite major changes since the 1960s in public attitudes toward divorce, premarital sex, and nonmarital cohabitation, commitment to the institutions of marriage and parenthood remains strong, according to ISR sociologist Arland Thornton, who received a Merit Award from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. In a recent issue of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Thornton and ISR co-author Linda Young-DeMarco analyzed data from a variety of sources, including the ISR Intergenerational Panel Study of Parents and Children and the Monitoring the Future Study, to show how norms and values about marriage and intimate relationships have changed—and remained the same—over the last four decades.

The great majority of young peo-

ple today not only plan to marry, Thornton says, but also expect to stay married to the same person until death

Marriage has not only become more voluntary, but with one notable exception, it has become less powerful as an institution that controls individual behavior, particularly sexual expression, living arrangements and childbearing, Thornton notes. Among the young,

How Young Adults Feel



These data on attitudes about marriage and parenthood among high school seniors come from the ISR Monitoring the Future Study, an ongoing study of the behaviors, attitudes and values of American secondary school students, college students, and young adults that started in 1975. Each year, a total of some 50,000 8th, 10th and 12th grade students are surveyed. In addition, annual follow-up questionnaires are mailed to a sample of each graduating class for a number of years after their initial participation.

intervenes. **“Only a small fraction of young Americans believe that a good marriage and family life is not important,” Thornton says, “or that it’s unlikely they will stay married to the same person for a lifetime.”** In fact, he points out, young Americans were slightly more committed to the importance of a good marriage and family life in the 1990s than they were in the mid-1970s. Most also say they’re likely to want children if they marry.

While support for marriage and parenthood remains high, the meaning of these institutions has changed dramatically in recent years, according to Thornton, with both much more voluntary today than in previous decades.

acceptance remains high for sex between unmarried adults, with only a minority of Americans now believing that cohabitation and unmarried childbearing are morally wrong.

Since the 1960s, though, attitudes toward extra-marital affairs have not relaxed, Thornton notes. An even larger majority of American men and women surveyed in the late ‘90s expressed the belief that extramarital sex is always wrong (81 percent of women and 75 percent of men) than did so in the early ‘70s (77 percent of women and 68 percent of men). “While marriage has lost much of its power to control the sexual behavior of the unmarried,” he says, “its control over the sexual behavior of the married may have increased.” ■

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From Adolescence to Adulthood

Many Flourish, but a Few Flounder

If you can just get your kids through the terrible teens without too much trouble, the rest of their lives should be pretty clear sailing, according to the common wisdom. While that's true for most young people, a new ISR study shows that about 20 percent of those who had high levels of well-being during their senior year in high school were doing much worse by age 26. "Moving from high school into young adulthood is a critical transition," says ISR developmental psychologist John E. Schulenberg, who conducted the study using national panel data from the ISR Monitoring the Future study, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. "This transition provides new roles and opportunities for young people to flourish, in contrast to the sometimes stifling atmosphere of high school. For most, well-being tends to increase during this period. But some young people who functioned well in high school do indeed fall apart."

Schulenberg presented some of the preliminary findings from his

study in June at a national symposium on the transition to adulthood. For the study he analyzed data on more than 2,900 young people initially surveyed as 18-year-old high school seniors from 1977 through 1995, then followed up at ages 21-22 and 25-26. Based on responses to survey questions at all three times, Schulenberg and colleagues assessed whether respondents were thriving, making it or floundering in key domains that represent some of the most important developmental tasks of early adulthood, including education, employment, financial autonomy, romance, leisure, and leading a healthy lifestyle.

Despite much apparent pessimism reflected in popular songs and movies about finding the right romantic partner, the study showed that slightly more than half of the young adults were thriving in their love lives, with success in this domain defined as being married or engaged (whether cohabiting or not), and not being divorced, by age 26. About 43 percent were thriving in the category of education, defined as graduating from either a four-year college or from a two-year college if that was their goal. About 41 percent were financially autonomous, with all their financial resources supplied either by themselves or by a spouse by age 26.

Success with these key developmental tasks was related to young adults' trajectories of well-being, Schulenberg found, with thriving in the domains of employment, romantic involvement, and citizenship particularly strong predictors of improving well-being for both young men and young women. "Certainly much of a young person's foundation is set long before leaving high school," notes Schulenberg. "But the actual experiences of young adulthood also help to set the stage for the course of adult life." The study findings suggest, he adds, that for some people, the roots of adult dysfunction run shallow rather than deep, going back only to the years right after high school rather than all the way back to early childhood. ■

Men, Women and Children After 9-11

ISR Survey Probes the Long-Term Impact on U.S. Families

For many Americans, especially women with children, the emotional impact of last year's terrorist attacks continues, according to an ISR survey of the same nationally representative sample of U.S. adults conducted one month, six months and one year after September 11, 2001.

Both men and women living with children under the age of 18 were not only more shaken by the attacks than other Americans when surveyed right after September 11, but they also remained more shaken when interviewed nearly a year later, according to ISR director David L. Featherman, a member of the research team on the How Americans Respond survey. Funded in part by the Russell Sage Foundation and the Howard R. Marsh Center in the U-M Department of Communication Studies, How

How Young Adults are Doing on Key Developmental Tasks			
Percentage of 26-Year-Olds			
	Thriving	Making It	Floundering
Education	43	36	21
Employment	28	58	14
Financial Independence	41	29	29
Romance	51	32	16
Leisure	32	47	21
Healthy Lifestyle	28	57	16
Citizenship	40	45	15
Religion	29	45	26

Source: U-M Institute for Social Research 2002

Americans Respond is an on-going ISR research project.

As many polls have already reported, women were more shaken by 9-11 than men. But the ISR survey, following the same sample for twelve months, found that **women living with children carried by far the most persistent psychological burden, remaining more shaken a full year later than women who don't live with children.** "Women may be more willing to say they're shaken than men," Featherman says, "since women are generally more comfortable disclosing feelings of vulnerability. But what's really interesting here is that **there is something about the presence of children that seems to make women less able to recover.**"

Men living with children were much more shaken than other men right after the attacks (with 47 percent compared to 32 percent, respectively, reporting being shaken "a great deal" or "a good amount.") But by a year later, both groups of men had rebounded, with about one-third and one-quarter, respectively, reporting that degree of personal insecurity.

A year after the terrorist attacks, parents and other adults living with children reported the same level of anxiety and distress in children as they initially reported last October. Nearly 30 percent said their children had been more easily annoyed or short-tempered in the past week, 23 percent reported children had more trouble keeping their minds on what they were doing, and about 14 percent said the children had been more easily startled by ordinary noises. "Research on children suffering from trauma indicates that adults typically underestimate the extent of the injuries that children will report about themselves if they are asked," Featherman notes.

In some ways, however, the latest survey suggested that adults were finally becoming slightly less worried about

how their children were doing. When first interviewed a month after the attacks, 43 percent reported talking with children about things that worried or frightened them in the past week, compared to 32 percent of those surveyed in August. And while 54 percent of those interviewed immediately following the attacks reported reassuring children that they were safe in the past week, just 34 percent said they did so in August.

In the most recent survey, the ISR researchers also asked a series of questions about adult interactions with children, in general. Four in ten (38 percent) said that since Sept. 11 they had been talking more than usual with children 17 or younger about world events. Thirty-six percent said they had been talking with children more than usual about people from other cultures or religions, and 32 percent said they had been alerting children to possible dangers in their lives related to terrorism. "Even adults without children at home still seem quite vigilant about children's well-being," says Featherman.

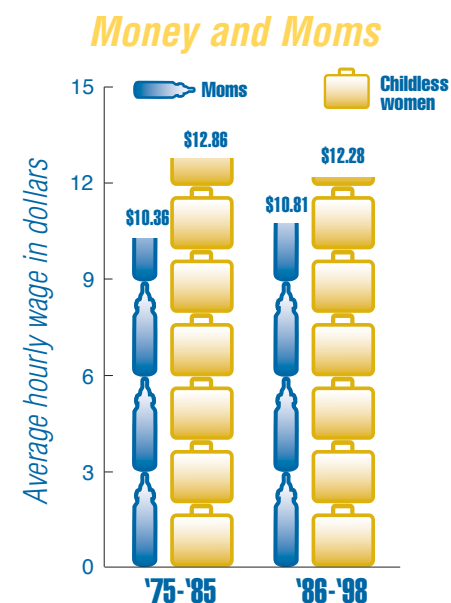
In other respects, however, the passage of time seemed to signal a return to normal in the attitudes of American men and women with children at home. Suppose you could change the way you spend your time, survey respondents were asked. Would you like to spend more time with your family, less time, or about the same amount of time as you do now? Right after Sept. 11, 80 percent of men and 91 percent of women with children said they'd like to spend more time with their families. A year later, only 35 percent of men and 41 percent of women with children said they'd like to spend more time, and 7 percent of women with kids admitted they'd like to spend less time with their families.

For more information, visit the How Americans Respond website at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~dahowell/har.htm> ■

The Price of Motherhood

A Lot Has Changed But Wage Penalty Still Exists

The wage gap between men and women has narrowed over the last few decades, but a new study shows that another kind of wage gap remains surprisingly intractable. Today's mothers earn about \$1.50 an hour less than



childless women, according to a new study conducted by ISR researcher Sarah Avellar with support from the National Institute for Child Health and Development. For the study, the first to analyze changes in the motherhood wage penalty over time, Avellar compared longitudinal survey data on about 5,500 women ages 21 to 42 from two nationally representative samples, one surveyed between 1975 and 1985, the other between 1986 and 1998.

After statistically controlling for education, work experience and other differences between mothers and women without children in each of the two groups, Avellar found that women who were mothers paid a small but persistent wage penalty. In the earlier period, for example, childless women

earned about \$12.86 an hour, on average (in 1993 dollars), while mothers earned about \$10.36. In the more recent group, the difference, also in 1993 dollars, was \$12.28 compared to \$10.81.

Although women's labor force patterns have changed dramatically over the last 20 years, with many more mothers working both full-time and part-time, Avellar's study also shows that important differences in the work patterns of mothers and childless women remain. "Women today have more years of part-time work experience than their earlier counterparts," she notes, "suggesting that juggling a job and a family is still considered mainly a mother's struggle, rather than the responsibility of two parents."

"If women continue to be the parents largely responsible for childcare, mothers will not be able to catch up to the wages of childless women, let alone to their male counterparts," Avellar says. "Since the majority of women have children, this penalty is far-reaching and will likely remain a critical contributor to inequality in the workplace." ■

Absent Dads

How Many Live Apart from Their Children

With the role of fathers in children's lives now a public policy issue as well as a private concern, a new study is the first to quantify the likelihood that biological fathers will live apart from their children. While about half of all U.S. children will not live with their biological fathers at some point before adulthood, the proportion of fathers who will move away from their children has, until now, remained unknown. For the study, researchers at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Bowling Green State University and the ISR analyzed data on a nationally representative sample of 1,409 men surveyed as

part of the ISR Panel Study of Income Dynamics between 1968 and 1997. All the men lived with their child's mothers at the time the child was born. **The researchers found that 28 percent of dads moved away from their children at some point during the 30-year period.** The research was funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Analyzing the risks over successive five-year periods, the researchers found a period of flat growth in the proportion of nonresident dads for most of the 1970s, followed by a decade of sustained increase from the late 1970s through the late 1980s. During the 1990s, the increase leveled out, supporting other trends that suggest the last decade of the 20th Century was a time of slower change for U.S. families.

"We found that men who were cohabiting with their child's mother were more than twice as likely as men who were married to live apart from their children," says University of Massachusetts sociologist Sanjiv Gupta, who conducted the analysis with ISR associate director Pamela Smock and Wendy Manning of BGSU. "We also found that the proportion of Blacks who become nonresident fathers was much higher than the proportion of whites—41 percent compared to 24 percent."

In addition, the researchers found that every additional \$1,000 of income reduces the risk of paternal non-residence by 2 percent, providing support for the contention that family stability is undermined by economic hardship. They further found that the mother's income as well as the father's is an important predictor of paternal presence. **"Fathers are less likely to leave their children when the mothers earn higher incomes and work a greater number of hours,"** says Smock, "a finding that adds to the growing body of evidence that women's income may have a stabilizing rather than disruptive effect on family patterns." ■

Boys Will Be Boys?

Gender Gap Widens During Kindergarten

Girls make more progress in reading and writing than boys do during kindergarten, a University of Michigan study shows, and it isn't because "boys will be boys." Contrary to popular belief, differing levels of self-control or aggression between little boys and girls do little to explain this early gender gap. Instead, a new University of Michigan analysis shows that higher female achievement is mostly explained by the approaches girls bring to the learning tasks at hand: eagerness, organization, flexibility, persistence and independence.

"Girls not only start kindergarten with an advantage over boys, but they also actually learn somewhat more than boys do during kindergarten," says Douglas D.

Ready, a graduate student at the U-M School of Education, who presented the findings August 19 at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Chicago.

For the analysis, Ready and colleagues Laura LoGerfo, David Burkam and Valerie E. Lee, a faculty associate at the ISR, analyzed data on 8,701 boys and 8,182 girls who were in kindergarten during the 1998-99 school year. The children were tested first in the fall and again in the spring, as part of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education. For each test, an adult spent about an hour with each child, assessing basic skills such as letter recognition, beginning and ending sounds and word recognition, as well as more advanced skills including reading comprehension. Teachers were also asked how often children displayed interpersonal skills, self-control, external and internal problem behaviors, and positive approaches to learning, including organization, attentiveness and persistence.

While previous studies had shown that girls start kindergarten with a higher level of literacy skills than boys do, Ready’s study is among the first to document that this gender gap accelerates during the school year. “We were inter-

ested in analyzing how behavior influences classroom learning,” he explains, “rather than providing a ‘snapshot’ of the relationship between achievement and behavior at a single point in time.” For individual children, Ready

notes, the findings indicate that good learning style may “trump” bad behavior. But for classroom teachers, the practical implication is that they might best assist boys academically by focusing on the learning approaches boys use. ■

Financial Favoritism?

Parents Give Unequal Amounts to Adult Children

Adult children don’t receive even roughly equal amounts of money from their parents, according to a recent analysis of data on about 7,000 U.S. families from the ISR Health and Retirement Study, funded by the National Institute on Aging. “The assumption is that parents love all their children equally, and the expectation is that they’ll give equal amounts of money to them,” says Brent Berry, a former ISR researcher now at the University of Toronto. “But this study found substantial inequalities in the amounts of money parents give to children who don’t live with them, at least in the course of a single year. **In fact, less than 8 percent of families with more than one child gave about the same amount of money to adult children.**”

Berry found that parents were relatively tight-fisted, with only a minority of parents—about 40 percent—reporting that they gave adult children \$100 or more in a year. Among whites, adult children with lower incomes were more likely to receive money from their parents than their more affluent siblings. But among Blacks and Hispanics, low-income adult children were no more likely than their higher-income brothers and sisters to receive financial help from mom and dad. “Parents with limited financial resources may ration financial assistance, giving to children who can benefit most in the form of paying college expenses, while giving other kinds of support, such as housing, to other

children,” speculates Berry, who is one of three brothers who have all received some financial assistance from their parents over the years. In his study, Berry found that living within 10 miles of a parent has an opposite impact on parental open-handedness for whites and Latinos. White children who live close to their parents are 27 percent more likely than their siblings to get money from parents while Latino children who live nearby are 58 percent less likely to receive any money. Both white and Latino children with children of their own are more likely to get money from their parents, suggesting that the presence of grandchildren can be an important factor explaining why older parents give more to some adult children than others. Berry also found that among Black

families, parents give 22 percent less to male than female children, with single Black mothers especially likely to favor daughters over sons when it comes to providing financial help. Since he examined parental giving in the course of a single year, Berry emphasizes that patterns of inequality may change over longer periods of time. “We did find a decline in the amount parents give to adult children as the children get older,” he notes. “But even though we controlled for many factors, including the adult child’s age and income, we weren’t able to look at many other factors that might influence why parents would give to one child and not another. Maybe some children just ask for more than others,” he speculates. “Or maybe there’s a different degree of emotional attachment or closeness that’s reflected in the amounts the parents give.” In other words, the reason could be that Mom and Dad like you better than they like me. ■

Who Gets Money from Mom and Dad

Percent of Non-Resident Adult Children

	White	Black	Latino
Male	20	14	12
Female	22	19	15
Under Age 25	38	29	22
25-30 Years Old	22	17	13
30 and Over	14	12	10
In School	42	37	29
Married with children	15	11	10
Single with children	24	17	17

Helping Aging Parents

Boomer Men Step Up to the Plate

The “Me Generation” may not be all that self-centered after all. At least middle-aged boomers are pitching in and helping their aging parents about as much as the older cohort of “war babies,” according to a study by ISR research scientist Martha Hill and New York University researcher Jean Yeung. **They also found that the gender gap in care-giving is narrowing a bit, with boomer women a little less likely, and boomer men a little more likely, than their older counterparts to spend time helping elderly parents.** For example, in 1992 about 31 percent of men and 33 percent of women born between 1945 and 1954 spent time helping their elderly parents, compared to about 28 percent of men and 38 percent of women born between 1935 and 1944.

“Since men as well as women are a substantial part of the picture in helping elderly parents,” says Hill, “policies designed to help workers in the struggle to meet family obligations and labor market commitments should take men as well as women into consideration.” The research was presented this past spring at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America and at an International Time Use Conference in Waterloo, Canada.

The study, which was funded by the National Institute on Aging, analyzed data on nationally representative samples of men and women with parents at least 65 years of age, drawn from the ISR Panel Study of Income Dynamics. In all, the researchers found that 35 to 45 percent of middle-aged to somewhat older children were providing some type of help to elderly parents during the course of the year, either

spending time with them or providing help in the form of money. Financial help was the less common form of assistance, provided by just 8 to 15 percent of households with adult children. But the amounts of money given were substantial, averaging about \$2,000 over the course of a year.

Workers remained committed to their jobs while helping their aging parents, Hill and Yeung found, taking short-term absences from work to care for ill relatives but not reducing hours worked over the long term. “The evidence suggests that middle-aged workers are not opting out of the labor force to assist their elderly parents,” says Hill, “but rather are juggling work with parental care.” For some, she notes, the time spent caring for parents is substantial. For both boomer and “war baby” generations, men who were helpers averaged about 100 hours of assistance and women about 160 hours a year. Some of the middle-aged and older workers surveyed put in 1500 to 2000 hours on the job and then another 1500 to 2000 hours assisting their elderly parents.

So where does all the time come from? Most adult children provide help in small amounts on

a regular basis, according to the researchers, with those living close spending several hours a day helping frail parents and those living further away putting in more time on the weekends. The added strain of this long-term juggling act needs to be taken into account by employers and by public agencies, Hill says. “As a society, we should invest in developing policies to help workers and employers meet their family obligations while continuing their labor market commitments as well. Without better work-family policies, the added strain and anguish of juggling so many obligations is likely to exact a lasting toll.” ■

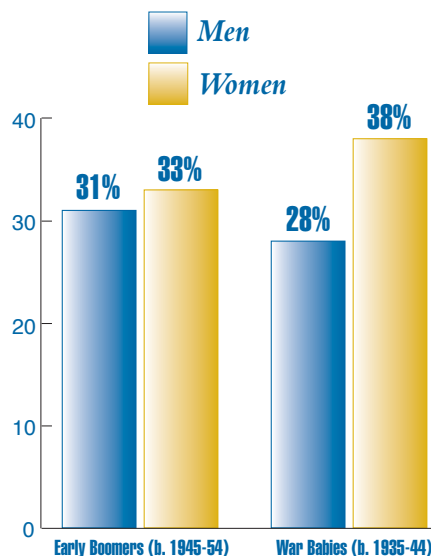
Older Moms

Study Suggests the Perils of Postponing Parenthood

Women who wait to have a first baby until they finish their educations and establish careers may be reducing their chances of long-term evolutionary survival as well as short-term reproductive success. A recent study by U-M behavioral ecologist Bobbi Low, who directs the Evolution and Human Adaptation Program at the ISR, shows **that an unexpected implication of postponing first-time parenthood is likely eventual extinction of the older mother’s lineage.** “We older moms are going extinct,” says Low, the author of *Why Sex Matters* and a professor at the U-M School of Natural Resources and Environment.

Low and collaborators Carl Simon and Kermyt Anderson used statistical models to investigate whether advantages in education and income compensate for delayed first births and lower lifetime fertility a few hundred years down the road. Their analyses suggest that modern women may have gone too far in trading off reproductive

The Shrinking Gender Gap in Eldercare



value (youth and good looks) for resource value (a good education and a good job), even though this trade-off is a perfectly reasonable strategy, according to Low, for producing “super kids” who will thrive in the highly competitive environment of most modern societies.

Over about 220 years, the descendants of wealthy, late-reproducing women declined from 11 percent to about 5 percent of the population, the statistical models found. The proportion descended from the poorest women also declined. But descendants of lower middle class women increased from about 33 percent to about 60 percent of the population. “If you want to see your line persist, then it’s probably optimum to start reproducing in your early to mid-20s. But if you want to have a wonderful lifestyle, you’re probably better off either not having children or having them as late as possible,” says Low, who gave birth to her first and only child, a son, when she was in her mid-30s. ■

Time Crunch

Do Busy Parents Create Busy Children, or Vice Versa?

As the school year gears up and the pace of activities quickens for millions of American children and their road-weary parents, who’s driving whom? Are parents pushing their children to participate in a growing number of activities, or are the kids themselves setting the frenetic pace of contemporary family life?

“The parents we studied weren’t pushing their children to be involved, or over-scheduling them against their wishes,” says Janet Dunn, an ISR anthropologist. “It was the children, for the most part, who asked their parents if they could be involved, after

hearing about activities at school or from friends.”

Funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Dunn and colleagues at the ISR Center for the Ethnography of Everyday Life and Central Michigan University have been conducting an in-depth study of 23 middle-class, mostly two-parent families in a small Midwestern town. Dunn interviewed at least one of the parents and one of their children between the ages of 9 and 12, and also spent time observing both the children and their parents at school and in the community at large.

A few children were involved in just one or two extracurricular activities. But most participated in several, including Girl or Boy Scouts, after-school sports and music programs, religious education classes, the school safety program, and private swimming, dance, gymnastics, karate, music or art lessons.

Busy parents say yes to all these activities for reasons beyond the obvious wish to please their kids and help them have fun. “Parents believe that children’s involvement in any activity has an array of long-term benefits,” says Dunn. “These include developing a suite of skills, including teamwork and a sense of responsibility, that parents feel are best learned outside the home. Most also believe that involvement in any activity is better for children than just sitting around and watching television.”

www.ethno.isr.umich.edu ■

Life after High School

What Happens to Princesses, Brains and Jocks?

In the 1985 film “The Breakfast Club,” writer/director John Hughes introduced five types of high school characters that still resonate with many people: Jocks,

By Age 24, Percent Who Had:

	Seen a Psychologist	Attempted Suicide	Graduated from College
Jocks	6	6	30
Princesses	21	11	36
Basket Cases	25	14	29
Brains	18	3	49
Criminals	20	12	17

Princesses, Basket Cases, Criminals and Brains. Now researchers from ISR and the University of Arizona have followed up to see what happens to these types after high school. The study is part of the on-going Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions, directed by U-M psychologist Jacquelynne S. Eccles, a senior research scientist at ISR.

For the study, published in the Journal of Adolescent Research, Bonnie Barber, Margaret Stone and Eccles asked 900 sophomores, “Which character in the movie ‘The Breakfast Club’ is most like you?” The students were instructed to ignore the character’s sex and base their choice on the type of person each character was. **Twenty-eight percent identified themselves as Jocks, 40 percent as Princesses, 12 percent as Brains, 11 percent as Basket Cases and 9 percent as Criminals.**

The researchers then followed these young men and women through the age of 24, collecting information every few years on their substance use, educational attainment, job characteristics and psychological adjustment. “We found that Breakfast Club identity choices often predicted both levels and long-term patterns of substance use and mental health,” reports Eccles, “suggesting that the impact of sophomore identity may extend well beyond adolescence.”

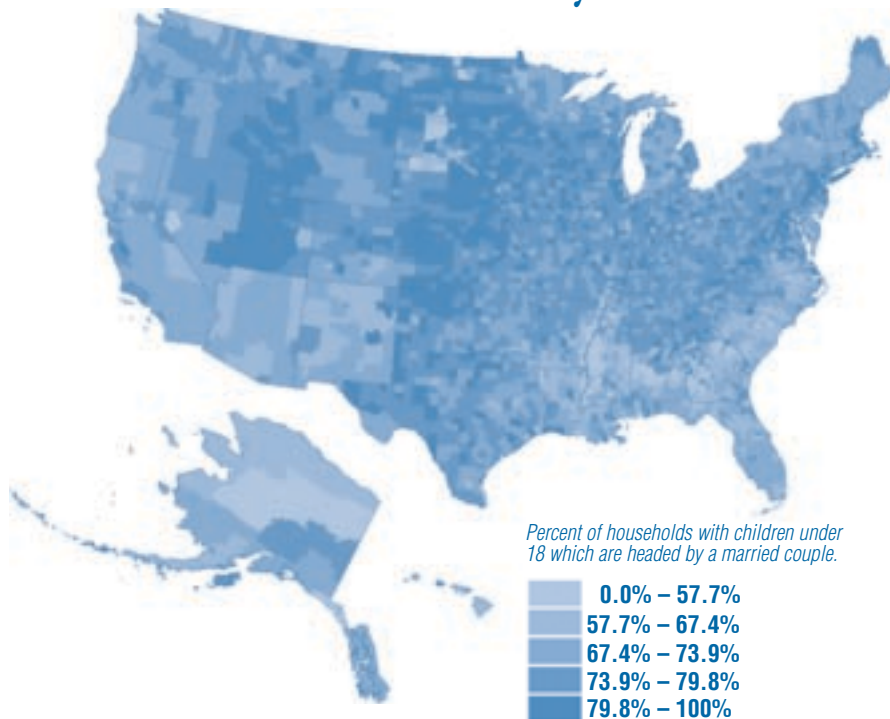
Only 6 percent of Jocks reported that they had visited a psychologist by age 24, compared with 25 percent of Basket Cases, 21 percent of Princesses,

20 percent of Criminals and 18 percent of Brains. Jocks, particularly female jocks, were earning more money than other groups at career-line jobs. Overall, the mental health of Jocks of both genders was better than that of other groups, but they were more likely to be in alcohol recovery programs (5 percent) than any other group except the Criminals (11 percent). Basket Cases were the most likely to report having tried suicide (14 percent), with Criminals and Princesses close behind at 12 and 11 percent, respectively. Brains (3 percent) and Jocks (6 percent) had by far the lowest rates of attempted suicide.

Why do 10th grade identities seem to have such lasting predictive effects? "To some extent, adolescents choose the crowd they're in," says Eccles, "but they are also assigned to a crowd by their peers, as a result of their behavior and personalities. As they go through high school, and decide—or not—to participate in various activities from sports to performing arts and school government, they consolidate specific skills, attitudes, values and social networks that together exert a far-ranging impact on the transition to adulthood." ■

Statshot

Nuclear Families: Where are They?



Scope out where they are, using CensusScope (www.censusscope.org), a user-friendly ISR web site that presents Census 2000 data analyzed by the Social Science Data Analysis Network headed by U-M demographer William Frey.

This map, which is searchable on-line for state-by-state charts and data, shows that in most areas of the U.S., the majority of children under 18 live in households headed by a married couple, although these households may or may not include both of the child's parents. ■

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