

THE EFFECTS OF GENDER, GREEK STATUS, AND GENDER IDEOLOGY ON LIFE GOALS AMONG UNDERGRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

A stratified random sample of 154 undergraduates at a primarily undergraduate liberal arts institution voluntarily completed a confidential survey questionnaire ranking 19 life goals. Analyses revealed significant overall differences in the relative value placed on life goals both by gender and by Greek status (between members of sororities/fraternities and Independents). Significant differences between men and women persist when controlling for Greek status. When controlling for gender, however, a gender-specific pattern in Greek/Independent differences appears. Among college men, significant differences in the ranking of life goals exist between Greeks and Independents. In sharp contrast, significant differences between Greeks and Independents disappear among college women. Gender ideology also plays a significant role in the ranking of life goals but does not fully explain or account for the differences noted by gender and/or by Greek status. The implications of these data for campus politics and policies are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Studying life goals among undergraduates raises important questions about younger Americans' values and aspirations today. These values and aspirations, embodied in undergraduate students' rankings of specific life goals, encompass elements of both individual and cohort identity. The relative importance that students, as individuals, assign to achieving financial success, material wealth, personal happiness, social connections, and the like, help them define who they are, who they want to be, and what they want to do with their lives. In contrast, looking at the relative ranking of students' life goals, collectively, helps us understand how an emergent cohort, like Gen Y, defines the American Dream and the degree to which a common, homogenized cultural script dominates young people's social and economic aspirations today.

Studies of American values, culture, and character are nothing new. They run the gamut from the 19th century observations of visitors like Alexis de Tocqueville to the systematic, highly detailed, sociological observations of Lloyd Warner (1963) and his colleagues a century later. Continued popular and scholarly interest in the topic can be seen in the success of Bellah, et al.'s (1985) study of Americans' "habits of the heart." Why so much attention to these questions? Because studies such as these help us understand individuals' goals and aspirations for success and happiness amid the ever-changing shape of the American Dream

(Karabell 2001).

What do today's undergraduates want? That is an empirical question. They are members of Gen Y (Paul 2001a), socialized by demographic and historical events distinct from those which shaped the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers and even the Xers before them. Events like Columbine and 9/11, the White House and celebrity scandals of the 1990s, MTV, talk shows and reality tv, all factor into who they are and what they want out of life (Paul 2001b). But what goals do they see as most important in life? Love? Happiness? Financial success? Relationships? Do all members of Gen Y seek the same thing, following a common cultural script, or do their aspirations vary and if so, how? These are the questions addressed here.

STUDENT LIFE GOAL RESEARCH

Scholarly interest in undergraduates' life goals and aspirations is broad ranging. Some higher education research focuses on identifying the range of goals among American college students (American Council on Education and the University of California 2001) while other research focuses on the relation of student goals to other outcomes and factors. Morgan, Isaac, and Sansone (2001) and Flowers (2002), for instance, focus on the importance of student interests and goals relative to their choice of career paths, while Mervis (2001) investigated the problem of mismatched student goals and career preparation. Perrone, Sedlacek, and

Alexander (2001) were concerned about perceived barriers to career goals, while Gonzalez, Greenwood, and WenHsu (2001) focused on the effects of the perceptions of parenting styles on student life goals themselves. Kasser and Ryan (1993), in contrast, concentrated their efforts on the effects of high levels of materialism, in particular, for personal well-being. Investigating what they call the "dark side of the American Dream," they identified significant negative psychological impacts among college students and non-college teens who defined materialism and financial success as a "central aspiration." More recently, Kasser found

that strong materialistic values are associated with a pervasive undermining of people's well-being, from low life satisfaction and happiness, to depression and anxiety, to physical problems such as headaches, and to personality disorders, narcissism, and antisocial behavior. (2002 22)

This negative correlation has been detected in a broad range of cross-national studies (for a thorough review of the psychological literature on materialism and personal well-being, see Kasser 2002).

In contrast to previous studies, in which differences among college students are generally subsumed when looking at life goals, we (Abowitz & Knox 2003a) found significant differences between men's and women's assessments of post-baccalaureate life goals. In a random sample of undergraduates, women rated social connections, friends, and family more highly in their hierarchy of future life goals. This is not surprising, in one way, since the importance that women, in general, assign to social relationships is supported by other research. Cherry (1998) and Heckert, et al. (2002), for example, also found that women overall value relationships more highly. Furthermore, the importance of close friends for women was noted by Jones, Bloys, and Wood (1990). In addition, Seery and Crowley (2000) found that women work harder than men to maintain positive family relationships. And yet, given the more modern and egalitarian gender ideology espoused by many college women, gender differences such as these, which reflect more traditional ideas of women's "natural" roles, are somewhat surprising.

In a sample of all Greek students (Abowitz

& Knox 2003b), we also found that gender had a similar effect on life goals among students who were members of fraternities and sororities on campus. Although there were significant differences between fraternity men and sorority women in the sample of Greeks, these students generally ranked personal happiness and relationship goals most highly. That fraternity and sorority members would rank personal and relational goals more highly than material ones is somewhat at odds with the most common stereotypes and behaviors for which campus fraternities, in particular, are known. Most studies focusing on fraternities and sororities center on their exclusionary nature (Lord 1987) and traditional views of gender (Kalof & Cargill 1991; Robinson, Gibson-Beverly, & Schwartz 2004) or on their anti-social behaviors, including student hazing (Newman 2002), binge drinking (Cashin, Presley, & Meilman 1998; Dowdall, Crawford, & Wechsler 1998), academic dishonesty (Storch & Storch 2002), sexual aggression and substance abuse (Humphrey & Kahn 2000; Johnson & Stahl 2004), and culture of date rape (Boswell & Spade 1996; Kalof 1993; Martin & Hummer 1989; Sanday 1990).

Past studies of student life goals and aspirations, however, leave important questions unanswered. Our concern in the present study is to discover the ways in which gender and specific factors such as fraternity/sorority membership and gender ideology simultaneously affect student life goals, given the importance of gender and Greek status in the identity politics of campus life, and the ways in which Greek status have been linked to traditional views of gender. Specifically, how does the effect of Greek membership on students' life goals interact with the effects of "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman 1987) that we have seen? Are sorority women more likely to reflect traditional gender ideology in their ranking of life goals as compared with college women who are Independents? How will fraternity men's ranking of college goals compare with non-fraternity men once gender ideology is taken into account? That is, to what extent might differences between Greeks and Independents in their ranking of life goals be attributable to differences in gender ideology rather than to Greek status per se? Whether or not students with more traditional views of gender initially self-select or are more likely to

be selected into Greek life on campus, Greek organizations in themselves promote a more traditional view of gender among their membership (Lottes & Kuriloff 1994; Stomblor & Martin 1994). The effects of Greek status on more general life goals and aspirations, controlling for gender ideology, however, have not been previously considered.

In disentangling the effects of gender, Greek status, and gender ideology on students' rankings of life goals, we attempt to address an additional but important question. Is there a common cultural script by which these students define the good life, that is, their version of the American Dream? Is there a relatively undifferentiated ranking of life goals among undergraduates or are there significant between-group differences? We hypothesize that students' rankings of life goals reflect differing aspirations among undergraduates, between men and women and between Greeks and Independents. In addition, we hypothesize that differences in life goals by gender and by Greek status are attributable to differences in traditional gender ideology. Thus, the hierarchies of life goals that students report are the result of a complex interaction among these factors.

SAMPLE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

A random sample of 154 undergraduates at a primarily undergraduate, liberal arts institution in a mid-Atlantic state voluntarily completed a confidential 140-item questionnaire during the spring of 2001, including a ranking of 19 life goals. The sample was stratified by gender and class year and subjects were randomly selected from among all full-time undergraduates enrolled at the university. Students selected for inclusion in the study were first contacted by the principal investigator by mail with a formal invitation to participate. In exchange for participation, students who completed the survey were entered into a lottery for one of several prizes awarded at the end of the semester. Prizes consisted of gift certificates to the campus bookstore. Students received no class credit for participation. Student research assistants followed up both by phone and by email to encourage those selected to complete the questionnaire. A three-month window was established for data collection. Students completed the questionnaire under the supervision of the first author and her research

assistants. The overall response rate was 40 percent.

In terms of sample composition, 60 percent of the respondents were female. In regard to class rank, 20 percent of the respondents were first-year students, about 25 percent each came from the sophomore and junior classes, and roughly 30 percent were seniors. The sample was almost evenly divided between members of Greek organizations (51%) and Independents (49%), which is a slightly less "Greek" sample than the campus overall (55%). Of the Greeks, 60 percent were members of a sorority; 40 percent, a fraternity. The sample was overwhelmingly white (90%) and almost 60 percent of the students came from rural areas or small towns. In addition, these students identified strongly with the "upper middle" class (53%), with two-thirds reporting their family income as "above average" or "far above average." Finally, 71 percent reported that both parents currently work outside the home.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test our hypotheses, we first examined differences in the between-group means for each of 19 life goals among students in the sample. We looked at: 1) overall differences between Greeks and Independents, men and women, 2) differences between Greeks and Independents controlling for gender, and 3) differences between men and women controlling for Greek status. Finally, we examined the significance of traditional gender ideology on student life goals controlling for both gender and Greek status.

Greek and Independent, Men and Women: Overall Differences

The overall rankings of general life goals among undergraduates are presented in Table 1. Columns 2 and 3 contain the mean value reported for each life goal (in the order of most to least importance) for Greeks and Independents (without regard to gender). Columns 5 and 6, to the right, report the overall means for men and women in the sample (without regard to Greek status). The means by gender reported here confirm the data reported in our earlier study (Abowitz & Knox 2003a). They are discussed in greater detail there. To achieve these scores, students rated each life goal on a five-point scale, from 1 ("it's one of the most important things") to

Table 1 - General Life Goals (mean values)

Life Goal	Greek	Independent	Sig. Diff.	Men	Women	Sig. Diff.
Being happy	1.06	1.09		1.12	1.05	
Being well-educated	1.44	1.62		1.64	1.45	
Being in love	1.47	1.53		1.61	1.43	
Being financially secure	1.66	2.03	.05	1.78	1.88	
Having a fulfilling job	1.71	1.61		1.78	1.58	
Having romance	1.82	1.75		1.76	1.80	
Getting married	1.86	1.95		2.05	1.81	
Having children	1.95	2.12		2.12	1.98	
Being cultured	2.22	2.49		2.51	2.25	
Having nice things in life	2.40	2.76	.05	2.59	2.57	

5 ("not at all important"). Thus, *the lower the mean value reported, the more important the life goal to the respondents*. Students were asked to rate the life goals in Table 1 without reference to any particular point in time, that is, without any specification that these were their current goals or goals for some future point in time. The significance of the difference between group means for each life goal is reported in columns 4 and 7, respectively. Only between-group differences significant at the .05 level or higher are noted.

The data in Table 1 reveal that the most important general life goal for these undergraduates, whether Greeks or Independents, men or women, was "being happy." No other value was close to that of personal happiness. In addition, being well-educated and being in love rank above financial security and having nice things in life. Overall, we see that the more materialistic goals of the American Dream, while important, are not central in these student's lives. Table 1 reflects other noteworthy similarities in the general hierarchies of life goals among Greeks and Independents, college men and women. Not only do all students regard being in love and having romance similarly, they all reported these goals as more important than getting married and having children. But are these goals at all related to students' assessments of happiness? Further analysis indicates that they are, in fact, related. Correlations among life goals reveal that "being happy" is positively and significantly ($p \leq .05$) associated with getting married ($r = .16$), with having kids ($r = .18$), and with being in love ($r = .19$). The effects are not large, but they are statistically significant. Further, being happy is also positively correlated ($p \leq .01$) with having romance ($r = .24$) and having a fulfilling job ($r = .27$).

What is *not related* to happiness for these students is having financial security and having nice things in life.

These correlations confirm that materialism as an aspiration, and materialist goals in particular, are not the basis for these students' happiness. Indeed, having nice things in life is shown to be the least important of these life goals. If we simply look at the overall hierarchies of life goals among Greeks versus Independents on campus, among men versus women, we see a surprising degree of commonality in the relative rankings. It is important to note, however, that even the lowest ranked goals reported in Table 1 have *some* overall importance to these students.

Despite these general similarities, there are some significant differences between groups to note in Table 1. Although no significant differences appeared here between men and women, there are significant differences between Greeks and Independents on two life goals in particular. While the students in this sample do not equate material success with happiness, Greek students ranked financial security as significantly more important than Independents (1.66 versus 2.03) along with "having nice things in life" (2.40 versus 2.76). Not surprisingly, given the monetary costs associated with Greek life (initiation fees, annual dues, special event fees, and the like), members of fraternities and sororities in this sample are more likely to report family income as "far above average" ($p \leq .05$) and to report their families as being in the "upper class" and "upper middle class" than Independents ($p \leq .05$). They are likely accustomed to a more affluent lifestyle and their relatively higher ranking of financial security and material things in this study reflects a desire for this to continue. In

Table 2 - Post-Baccalaureate Life Goals (mean values)

Life Goal	Greek	Independent	Sig. Diff.	Men	Women	Sig. Diff.
Having close friends	1.40	1.57		1.61	1.40	.05
Having relatives	1.44	1.70	.05	1.78	1.43	.05
Having my own family	1.45	1.74	.05	1.73	1.51	
Having a life partner or spouse	1.46	1.57		1.59	1.46	
Having a career and work	1.59	1.59		1.63	1.57	
Having free time and relaxation	1.77	1.97		1.78	1.93	
Having a lot of social acquaintances	2.46	2.97	.05	2.75	2.69	
Having a tie to religion or a church/synagogue	2.92	3.17		2.93	3.12	
Having a role in public life/politics	3.79	3.68		3.79	3.71	

this regard, then, their view of the American Dream is somewhat distinct from that of their non-Greek counterparts.

The data in Table 2 show the ranking of life goals that students reported when specifically asked to "think about your life after graduation." Life goals were rated using the same five-point scale as in Table 1, with lower values reflecting greater importance to the respondents. The data are organized as in the previous table.

In Table 2, we see again an overall similarity in the hierarchies of life goals among Greeks and Independents but some important differences. In spite of the greater emphasis on financial security and material things noted in Table 1, Greek students have not lost sight of the importance of relationships. On all relationship variables (having close friends, relatives, children, spouse/life partner, and social acquaintances), they rated these life goals more highly than Independents. Some of these ratings were significantly higher ($p \leq .05$), including the importance of having relatives (1.44 versus 1.70), a family of one's own (1.45 versus 1.74), and a lot of social acquaintances (2.46 versus 2.97). Greek students appear to value their personal relationships and social connections more highly, but this effect could be confounded by the greater proportion of women among the Greek sub-sample (60%). These differences need to be disentangled from the effects of gender, as we see later, before the patterns take on clear significance.

On the right side of Table 2, where the mean values on post-graduation life goals

are reported for undergraduate men and women, we see a slightly different hierarchy emerge. As noted in Abowitz and Knox (2003a), when the time horizon specifies life *after graduation*, significant gender differences appear. Women give significantly greater emphasis than men do to the importance of having close friends (1.40 vs. 1.61) and relatives (1.43 vs. 1.78) in their lives.

Greek and Independent Differences Controlling for Gender

To answer the question about whether the Greek/Independent differences noted above would increase or decrease when gender is held constant, we turn to the results presented in Table 3. The top half of the table ("general life goals") presents the results on those goals for which students were not given a time reference (as in Table 1). The bottom half ("post-baccalaureate life goals") contains data on the importance of life goals "after graduation" (as in Table 2). In effect, the table shows which differences between Greeks and Independents persist once the effects of gender are removed.

Looking carefully at the table, one very important point emerges about how gender and Greek status interact in the formation of undergraduates' life goals: significant differences between college men (Greeks versus Independents) persist while the *statistically significant differences between college women disappear*. Gender trumps Greek status in its effects on undergraduate women's life goals and aspirations.

Among the men, fraternity members

Table 3 - Student Life Goal Means by Greek Status Controlling for Gender

Variables	Men (N=58)		Women (N=95)	
	Greek (n=26)	Independent (n=33)	Greek (n=52)	Independent (n=43)
General Life Goals				
Being financially secure	1.48	2.00**	1.75	2.05*
Getting married	2.00	2.09	1.79	1.84
Having children	1.96	2.24	1.94	2.02
Having nice things in life	2.12	2.97**	2.54	2.60
Being cultured	2.42	2.58	2.12	2.42*
Being in love	1.58	1.64	1.42	1.44
Being well-educated	1.54	1.73	1.38	1.53
Being happy	1.12	1.12	1.04	1.07
Having romance	1.77	1.76	1.85	1.74
Having a fulfilling job	1.85	1.73	1.63	1.51
Post-Baccalaureate Life Goals				
Having own family	1.42	1.97**	1.46	1.56
Having a career and work	1.50	1.73	1.63	1.49
Having free time and relaxation	1.65	1.88	1.83	2.05
Having close friends	1.46	1.73	1.37	1.44
Having relatives	1.46	2.03**	1.42	1.44
Having a lot of social acquaintances	2.19	3.18**	2.60	2.81
Having ties to religion or a church or synagogue	2.65	3.15	3.06	3.19
Having a life partner or spouse	1.42	1.73	1.48	1.44
Having a role in public life or politics	3.88	3.73	3.75	3.65
*p < .10				
**p < .05				

viewed financial/material things as more important, including: 1) the importance of being financially secure (1.48 vs. 2.00, $p \leq .05$) and 2) having nice things in life (2.12 vs. 2.97, $p \leq .05$). In addition, Greek men also saw social/emotional connections as more important, including: 1) having a family of their own (1.42 vs. 1.97, $p \leq .05$), 2) having relatives (1.46 vs. 2.03, $p \leq .05$), and 3) having a lot of social acquaintances (2.19 vs. 3.18, $p \leq .05$).

Through the logic of the elaboration model above (see Babbie 2004, for an excellent overview of the methods and logic of elaboration techniques), we are able to specify how Greek membership affects college student life goals. In the partials in Table 3, we see that among men, the significant differences remained or increased in size whereas among women, all significant differences in the rating of life goals between Greeks and Independents disappeared. These data tell us several things. First, there is not a singular cultural script among undergraduates in terms of a hierarchy of life goals, rather, the data suggest somewhat different values and

priorities exist among students. Although there are broad similarities in overall rankings, suggesting some common cohort effects, there are important differences as well. Second, these data make clear that Greek life is not a singular system differentiating members from non-members regardless of gender. The effects of Greek status on life goals vary by gender. Among undergraduate women, it is their experiences as *women* that matter most, not their experiences as Greeks or Independents. For undergraduate men, their status as *Greeks or Independents* is a significant factor.

Gender Differences Controlling For Greek Status

To further specify these relationships, we also looked at whether gender differences persist among undergraduates once the effects of Greek status are controlled. These data are presented in Table 4. Considering only those differences significant at the conventional level ($p \leq .05$), we see several important distinctions between the life goals of

Table 4 - Student Life Goal Means by Gender Controlling for Greek Status

Variables	Greek Students (N=78)		Independents (N=76)	
	Men (n=26)	Women (n=52)	Men (n=33)	Women (n=43)
General Life Goals				
Being financially secure	1.48	1.75**	2.00	2.05
Getting married	2.00	1.79	2.09	1.84
Having children	1.96	1.94	2.24	2.02
Having nice things in life	2.12	2.54**	2.97	2.60*
Being cultured	2.42	2.12	2.58	2.42
Being in love	1.58	1.42	1.64	1.44
Being well-educated	1.54	1.38	1.73	1.53
Being happy	1.12	1.04	1.12	1.07
Having romance	1.77	1.85	1.76	1.74
Having a fulfilling job	1.85	1.63	1.73	1.51
Post-Baccalaureate Life Goals				
Having own family	1.42	1.46	1.97	1.56*
Having a career and work	1.50	1.63	1.73	1.49
Having free time and relaxation	1.65	1.83	1.88	2.05
Having close friends	1.46	1.37	1.73	1.44*
Having relatives	1.46	1.42	2.03	1.44**
Having a lot of social acquaintances	2.19	2.60**	3.18	2.81*
Having ties to religion or a church or synagogue	2.65	3.06	3.15	3.19
Having a life partner or spouse	1.42	1.48	1.73	1.44
Having a role in public life or politics	3.88	3.75	3.73	3.65
*p < .10				
**p < .05				

fraternity men and sorority women, but only one significant difference among Independents. Among all Greek members, fraternity men rated being financially secure, having nice things in life, and having a lot of social acquaintances as more important than sorority women did. The overall differences seen in Tables 1 and 2 as differences between Greeks and Independents in general, we now see as most important to fraternity men. This clarifies the gender differences noted in Table 3 and in previous research (Abowitz & Knox 2003a).

Furthermore, the only significant difference found between undergraduate men and women who were *not members* of a Greek organization (the Independents) was in post-graduation goals: the importance of having connections with relatives. Among the Independents, women rated such connections more highly than men (1.44 vs. 2.03, $p \leq .05$). This difference helps us to understand that not only do Independent women value family connections more highly than Independent men, but from Table 3 we also know that

Greek men value these family connections more than Independent men – thus highlighting a difference that cuts two ways – across gender and across Greek lines.

The data in Tables 3 and 4 together help us better specify the role of gender and Greek status in regard to student life goals. First, gender interacts with Greek status to increase differences in the life goals among men (between Greeks and Independents) but not among women (for whom significant differences by Greek status disappear). Second, gender and Greek status interact such that the significant differences in life goals that persist between undergraduate men and women are quite distinct for Greeks and all but non-existent among Independents. These data show that differences in how undergraduate men and women do gender, particularly for men, is contingent on Greek status. While all students value happiness generally, it is fraternity men who appear to most value the traditional material/financial goals of the American Dream.

Differences Controlling for Gender Ideology

As shown in the previous analyses, gender differences in life goals among undergraduates persist even controlling for Greek status and Greek/Independent differences in key life goals persist among men. To determine whether these differences can be accounted for by differences in gender ideology, we introduced the level of traditional gender ideology as a control variable. Student acceptance of traditional gender ideology is measured by their response to nine items, each rated on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 ("strongly agree") to 5 ("strongly disagree"). Students responded to a series of statements on the role of women in relation to motherhood and work roles. Agreement with these statements reflects a more traditional and patriarchal (less egalitarian) view of gender, such as the view that working mothers cannot establish good relationships with their children, a husband's career should come first, preschoolers suffer with a working mother, it's better for the family if the mother stays home and father earns a living, and so on. The scale ranges from a possible score of 9 (strongly agreeing with all traditional items) to 45 (strongly disagreeing with the traditional views of gender), thus, the lower the overall score, the more traditional a student's view of gender. Responses ranged from 22 to 38, with an overall sample mean of 30. The level of traditional gender ideology between undergraduate men and women in the sample differs significantly overall, with men being more traditional in their view of gender ($p \leq .01$). And to our surprise, given what has been reported previously in the literature, there is no significant difference in the level of traditional gender ideology between Greeks and Independents overall.

Before doing the multivariate analyses with gender ideology, we first examined the zero-order correlations between gender ideology and life goals. As we might expect, holding more traditional views of gender was significantly correlated ($p \leq .01$) among students with giving greater importance to getting married ($r = .26$), having their own children ($r = .31$) or having a family of one's own ($r = .20$), having a spouse or life partner ($r = .20$), and having ties to a religion, church, or synagogue ($r = .26$). There was also a significant negative correlation ($r = -.22$) between traditional gender ideology and the importance assign-

ed to "being cultured" – the more traditional the student's view of gender, the less important this goal. None of the other life goals, not even the importance of work and career, were significantly associated with gender ideology overall.

Second, to determine if the differences in life goals found previously by gender and/or Greek status could be attributed to, or explained by, differences in gender ideology, differences in life goals between men and women and between Greeks and Independents were re-analyzed at three different levels of traditional gender ideology. Gender ideology was recoded to reflect high, moderate, and low levels of support for traditional/patriarchal views of gender. Among students holding very traditional views of gender (53 students were coded "high" on the traditional gender ideology scale), only one of 19 life goals had a significant difference by gender: highly traditional men placed greater importance than their female counterparts on ties to a religion, church, or synagogue (2.29 vs. 3.07, $p < .05$). Among students expressing only moderate support for traditional gender ideology ($n=47$), one life goal differed significantly by gender: these women placed greater importance on having relatives than men (1.29 vs. 1.79, $p < .05$). But among students who report the most egalitarian views of gender ($n=47$), three life goals had significant differences. First, women with more egalitarian views were more likely to value the "nice things in life" than their male counterparts (2.54 vs. 3.17, $p < .05$). Second, these women placed greater value than men on being "happy" (1.00 vs. 1.25, $p < .01$). And third, they valued having relatives more (1.40 vs. 2.08, $p < .01$). Thus, when we control for gender ideology, students holding the most egalitarian/least traditional views of gender exhibit the greatest number of differences in life goals between men and women.

Looking at differences between Greeks and Independents by gender ideology, we see the greatest number of significant differences in life goals among students espousing the most traditional views of gender. Among highly traditional students ($n=53$), we find Greeks give more importance than Independents to having financial security (1.48 vs. 2.04, $p = .01$), having relatives (1.36 vs. 1.84, $p < .05$), and having a lot of social acquaintances (2.36 vs. 2.88, $p < .05$). Among those with moderate views of traditional gen-

der roles ($n=47$), two variables differed significantly between Greeks and Independents: Greeks rated having free time more highly than Independents (1.65 vs. 2.07, $p < .05$) as well as having a lot of social acquaintances (2.30 vs. 3.07, $p < .05$). The least number of differences in life goals between Greeks and Independents were found among students with the most egalitarian views of gender: here Greek students valued having close friends more highly (1.36 vs. 1.73, $p < .05$).

Our third step was to analyze life goals while controlling simultaneously for all three of these variables: gender, Greek status and gender ideology. Looking at the effects of Greek status among women at each of the three levels of gender ideology, two significant differences appeared that had been suppressed in Table 3: 1) among women with moderately traditional gender ideology ($n=28$), sorority members valued having free time more than Independents (1.60 vs. 2.13, $p < .05$) and 2) among women with the most egalitarian views ($n=35$), sorority members valued having close friends more than Independents (1.33 vs. 1.71, $p < .05$). No significant differences in life goals by Greek status were found among highly traditional women.

Among men, significant differences by Greek status persist at all levels of traditional gender ideology: 1) among those with the most traditional views of gender ($n=23$), fraternity men valued having "nice things" more than Independents (2.00 vs. 3.08, $p < .01$), 2) among those with moderate levels of traditional gender ideology, Greek men valued having a lot of social acquaintances much more than Independents (1.71 vs. 3.17, $p < .01$), and 3) among those with the most egalitarian views of gender, there were no significant differences. Thus, of the five significant differences noted previously among men (in Table 3), two persist once the effects of gender ideology are controlled. In addition, three prior effects disappeared – two of which (having a family of one's own and having relatives) are both significantly correlated with level of gender ideology.

Finally, we turned the analysis around to elaborate the results in Table 4 by level of gender ideology. Among Greek students, there were three significant differences between fraternity men and sorority women originally. When we control for the level of gender ideology, two of these differences remain while the third disappears. And addi-

tional differences take on significance. Specifically, among Greeks with highly traditional views of gender ($n=28$), two significant differences appear: 1) these fraternity men value "nice things" more than similar sorority women (2.00 vs. 2.59, $p < .05$) and 2) these men value ties to a religion, church, or synagogue more than women (2.18 vs. 3.06, $p < .05$). Among Greek students characterized by moderate levels of traditional gender ideology, men valued having a lot of social acquaintances more than women (1.71 vs. 2.62, $p < .05$). Finally, among Greeks with the least traditional views of gender, two new variables showed significant gender differences: 1) these women valued being happy more than the men (1.00 vs. 1.25, $p < .5$) and 2) these men valued romance more than the women (1.25 vs. 2.14, $p < .05$). This latter finding (men valuing romance more) is not an uncommon finding (see Sprecher & Metts 1999).

Among Independents, only one life goal in Table 4 appeared to differ significantly between men and women (having relatives, which women valued more). Once the level of gender ideology is taken into account, this life goal continues to vary significantly by gender among all but those with the most traditional views of gender. Among those with moderate views of gender ($n=27$), women continued to value having relatives more highly (1.27 vs. 2.00, $p < .01$). Among those with the least traditional gender ideology ($n=22$), three life goals now vary significantly between undergraduate men and women: 1) women valued having nice things more (2.57 vs. 3.38, $p < .05$) although not highly overall, 2) women valued having a fulfilling job more than men (1.29 vs. 1.88, $p < .05$), and 3) these women also valued having relatives more (1.36 vs. 2.13, $p < .05$). Among Independents with highly traditional gender ideology ($n=25$), no significant gender differences appeared. So we see two things here. First, the most significant difference by gender among Independents in Table 4 is not eliminated by controlling for gender ideology. And second, some gender differences among Independents were previously suppressed by the absence of a control for gender ideology.

Together, these data (both by gender and by Greek status) show that gender ideology does affect students' rankings of life goals. On the surface, students with more traditional views of gender assign greater importance

to the more traditional goals of marriage and family. But below that, gender ideology plays a complex role. Some differences in life goals persist both by gender and by Greek status when controlling for gender ideology. Some differences appear that were previously masked. Few disappear, contrary to our initial expectations.

The data in these last analyses should be read with caution, however, given the overall sample size and limited number of cases in each analytical category once all the independent variables are introduced. The results are suggestive of important differences, rather than definitive. But these successive analyses, from the simple bivariate to the more complex elaborations with gender ideology, indicate that when it comes to undergraduates' life goals and aspirations for the future, a single cultural script does not adequately describe or reflect their views as members of Gen Y. Despite some social critics' claims that the popular media is homogenizing American culture, creating a common middle class consciousness and definition of the good life (Zweig 2000), college students' views of what's important in life are shaped by more immediate factors: the way they do gender in daily life, the way they manage their campus identity as Greek or Independent, and by the way they define the ideology of gender in society at large.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results presented here paint a complex picture of the effects of gender, Greek status, and gender ideology on undergraduates' aspirations and life goals. Some students continue to define women's work as the private domain of home, friends, and family while others espouse more modern/egalitarian views of gender and assign less importance to marriage and parenthood as life goals. Although all students here value happiness, for some that goal is more closely associated with ideals of hearth and home, while for others, it is more closely associated with the image of material success so often embodied in ideas of the American Dream.

There are significant differences in the ranking of life goals among and between students – differences between men and women, between Greeks and Independents (especially among undergraduate men), and between those who hold more traditional and

more modern views of gender. Contrary to expectations, neither the gender differences in life goals nor the differences by Greek status were explained away by considering students' support for traditional gender ideology.

From the perspective of campus politics, if one is concerned about the effects of Greek organizations on campus life and culture, these results suggest that the differences that exist between Greeks and Independents are not simply the product of differences in gender ideology, that is, of Greek students' greater adherence (male or female!) to the more traditional views of gender. Regardless of how sexist such organizations may be (Lord 1987), on a practical level, the solution repeatedly advanced by faculty on many campuses to eliminate sexism (that we should eliminate Greek life), is not one that these data support. The most significant differences in traditional (patriarchal, i.e., sexist) views of women in these data appear not between Greeks and Independents on campus, not even between Greek and Independent men, but rather between undergraduate men and women in general. Thus abolishing the Greek system will not be a cure or "fix it" for the campus.

Furthermore, the similarity of life goals among college women, whether Greek or not, suggests that the effects of Greek life vary by gender in important if as yet unclear ways. From fraternity road to the sorority chapter houses, on an interpersonal as well as political level, we are dealing with two Greek "systems." Sorority women overall are not significantly more traditional in their views of gender than their Independent counterparts nor do their life goals differ significantly. Even controlling for gender ideology, differences among college women are slight. And although fraternity men appear to espouse somewhat different life goals as compared with men who are not in fraternities, they are not the sole bastion of patriarchal views of gender. Thus the problem, as such, exists more broadly on campus (as it does in society).

In terms of campus policy, awareness programs designed to address problems of sexism need to be targeted to reach a broad undergraduate audience. All students on campus, not just Greeks, need to hear the message. Inasmuch as general education requirements reach the broadest range of

undergraduates, these data support the national trend seen on the curricular side – the increasing inclusion in general education programs of courses that address the problematic “isms” of human diversity and identity, including courses on issues of gender and gender inequality.

One final note of caution must be introduced here. There is, with a sample from one college campus, always the issue of selection bias. Are students from an elite private institution selectively different in their hierarchy of life goals from students at larger and/or public institutions? Are students in four-year programs different from students at community colleges? Do all Gen Y college students put personal happiness above financial success? Are students from working and middle class families likely to rate the importance of bourgeois success more highly than students from more affluent backgrounds? Having less assurance of family connections and financial support down the road, students from less economically advantaged families might be less inclined to put the less “practical” goals of happiness, romance, and love above things like financial security.

To partially allay this concern, the effects of family class background were briefly considered. The rankings of life goals were analyzed both by subjective family class position and reported family income. While the importance assigned by students to having financial security and material things did vary significantly by family class position, they were both *more* important to students from “upper class” families, not less important. When family income was considered, no significant differences appeared in the ranking of life goals. The differences observed all run counter to what we would expect to see if the concern that students from more elite or privileged families (more likely to be found at an “elite” liberal arts institution?) more easily disregard the importance of material and financial concerns. In this sample of college students, albeit at an “elite” liberal arts institution, those who come from *less* advantaged family backgrounds place less, not more, importance on achieving financial success and material comfort after college and are *more* likely to value public service.

To conclude, we have shown that the effects of gender, gender ideology, and Greek status on student life goals are varied and

complex in and of themselves. However limited these data, they give us important insights into our students’ lives and aspirations. Nonetheless, to fully understand undergraduates’ life goals and values we need more and better data. We need samples from public and private institutions of varying size and type to understand the values of this new generation, Gen Y, and how its members differ in their quest for the good life. With such data we can investigate how individual and family background characteristics interact with the contextual characteristics of campus life to shape undergraduates’ rankings of life goals. And finally, we need to begin to follow the trail from students’ espoused life goals to the choices they make for life after school. How do they view prospective jobs? What job traits do they value most? What kind of jobs do they associate with “happiness”? And finally, we need to study Gen Y’s idea of the American Dream in a more direct way. Do they believe they can “have it all”? Do they see the American class system as one of merit or sponsorship? These are important lines of investigation for future research.

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