

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

THE DETROIT AREA STUDY

1974 Report to Respondents

You may remember being interviewed during the spring or summer of last year by a member of the Detroit Area Study staff. It seems like a long time ago, but we have been busily studying the information you gave us here in Ann Arbor, and we have finally come up with some conclusions! At the time you were interviewed, you told us that you would like a copy of our results. This is the report we promised, especially prepared for you, our respondents.

PURPOSE OF THE DETROIT AREA STUDY

As your interviewer may have mentioned, the Detroit Area Study (DAS) of the University of Michigan has been conducting interviews in and around Detroit for over twenty years. The DAS has two main purposes-- to gather information that is useful to social scientists and to train graduate students at the University. The surveys conducted in the past have given us a lot of information about such things as the religious beliefs, political attitudes; and the way of family life of Detroiters. Many books and articles, as well as numerous doctoral dissertations have been based on the information that has been gathered from people like you.

The educational task of the DAS is conducted by the University's Department of Sociology. Graduate students, who someday hope to run research projects of their own, get experience in writing and testing the interview. Although the main ideas of the project are suggested by faculty members, the students play a large part in the entire project. They conduct about half of the interviews themselves.

You were one of 438 women in Detroit and the surrounding area that we talked to last year. You were chosen totally at random from all the households in the area. In addition, all the women in our sample had to be between 18 and 65 years of age at the time of the interview and had to have worked for at least ten hours per week for two months in the last two years. Of course, all interviews are completely confidential, and no names are ever put together with the responses in any way.

The 1974 DAS was about working women. We were interested in your attitudes about women's rights, your satisfaction on the job, and other questions about your attitudes. In addition, we wanted to know about the kinds of jobs you have had in the past few years and some information about each of them. We hoped we would get a better understanding of the typical patterns that working women have, and whether it is anything like the pattern we find for working men.

DESCRIPTION OF THE 1974 DETROIT AREA STUDY SAMPLE

There was a total of 438 women in our sample last year. Of this number 78% were white, 21% were black, and 1% was listed as some other racial category. Over half the sample, 60%, said they were Protestant, 35% said they were Catholic, and 4% were Jewish. Very few women said that they had no religious preference.

The level of education was typical of a cross-section of the community. Almost half of the sample (48%) had completed high school, while 21% had not. One fourth (25%) of the sample either had some college training or had finished college. A few (6%) had more than four years of college or some higher degree.

The majority of the women (67%) are married, with only 12% having never been married at any time. Almost three-quarters of the sample (73%) have had children at some time in their lives.

Since this was a sample of working women, we were interested in what kinds of jobs you have had. At the time of the interview, 76% of you were working, while 24% were unemployed for some reason at that time. (All of you had worked in the last two years, however). The jobs you had were mostly the ones usually considered "women's jobs." Clerical workers had the largest number, with almost 100 secretaries or other clerical workers. Teachers were the next largest group with 29 women, followed by bookkeepers and cashiers, nurses, waitresses, and sales clerks. We also had some unusual jobs, including a college professor, a writer, and even a belly dancer!

Finally, the average age of all the women was 37 years.

WOMEN IN THE HOME

One of the things we wanted to know from the 1974 DAS was about the changing role of women in the home. There has been a lot of talk recently about changing the traditional patterns of what women do around the house. We asked about your attitudes towards men sharing in housework and found that most of you (80%) thought that men should share the household chores. However, you also reported that in your own homes, you still do most or all the housework. Most of you also agreed with the statement that most men don't help around the house, whether they should or not.

Questions about children and working mothers were also on our survey, and they revealed some interesting things. We asked you how many children you thought was the ideal number for a family in America today. Most of you (60%) thought that two was the ideal, but only a third actually had this number, with some having more and some having less.

Many of the questions we asked about your attitudes have been asked of other groups of women in the past, so that we can see how these attitudes have changed over time. This makes an interesting comparison. The last time these questions were asked was in 1970, when the "Women's Movement" was just getting into full swing. A comparison of your answers with those shows that women's attitudes have become more "liberal" over the four years between 1970 and 1974. Here are some examples dealing with women and their families and homes.

	<u>Percent Agreeing in 1970</u>	<u>Percent Agreeing in 1974</u>
1. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	56%	73%
2. Men should share the work around the house, such as doing dishes, cleaning and so forth	52%	80%
3. It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.	76%	58%

Finally, we asked some questions about who makes decisions in your households, and we found that decisions were made just about equally between husbands and wives. The majority of you said that you and your husband share equally in decisions about where you are to live and with

whom you get together socially as a couple. When it comes to jobs, the husbands decide about what kind of job they are going to have, while you have the most say in whether you are going to work or not.

WOMEN AT WORK

The major part of our 1974 DAS study was about women on the job. We asked questions about many facets of your work experience--what kinds of jobs you have, how much you made, and your attitudes about these jobs, among other things. Analyzing this information was the hardest part of our study, but it revealed some interesting things about women in the American labor force.

One of the most remarkable things was the high level of satisfaction with the jobs that you have. Of the women that were currently employed, 80% said that they were satisfied to some degree with their jobs. We also asked the question, "If by some chance you inherited enough money to live comfortably without working, do you think that you would work anyway?" A majority (67%) said "Yes," although some would change the type of work they are doing. Some typical comments were "I'd go crazy if I had to stay in the house all day," or "I like getting out and meeting other people." By and large, it seems that most women who are working or have worked, like working and would not quit if they had a chance.

On the other hand, most women we talked to said that they were working for financial reasons (67%) with other reasons being secondary. Since money was an important issue, we asked you about your attitudes on money and job security. Once again, we can compare the answers you gave with those given in 1970. Here are some examples:

	<u>Percent agreeing in 1970</u>	<u>Percent agreeing in 1974</u>
1. A woman should have exactly the same opportunities as a man	67%	85%
2. Men and women should be paid the same money if they do the same job	95%	97%
3. A woman's job should be kept for her when she is having a baby	59%	87%
4. Women should be considered as seriously as men for jobs as executives or politicians or even President	60%	85%

Once again, women seem to have become more "liberal" in their attitudes about the role of women in our society. But if you compare these numbers with those on page 4, you will notice that women feel differently about their role in the home and their role at work. In both cases, women are more "liberal" in their attitudes than in 1970. But women seem to be more "traditional" when they talk about their home and their families. They still see problems in a marriage where the wife is the main breadwinner, for example. On the other hand, in the job market, women are insisting that they be treated equally with men, and that special allowances should be made for their special needs, like time off the job to have children.

However, our research also showed that women have a long way to go before they are treated equally in the job market. You may remember we asked you questions about the jobs you have had for the last ten years. We did this so that we could see the pattern of employment that women have, rather than just the kinds of jobs they have at any one point in time. Using a survey done in 1971 by the Detroit Area Study, we had similar information about working men in the Detroit area. A comparison of the kinds of work patterns

that men and women have revealed some interesting things.

Among these findings was an analysis of how men and women are rewarded differently in the job market. Many researchers have found that women tend to make about 35% less than men on the same types of jobs. We wanted to know why this takes place. We usually think that background factors like education and experience lead to better paying jobs, and this is what we find for men. However, women do not seem to be rewarded for the same things men are in terms of income. Women with better education and more work experience tend to have jobs with lower incomes than those that a male with the same education and experience would have.

The same process seems to be working for promotions in a particular occupation. We usually think that the longer someone works at a particular job and the more tenure he has, the more promotions or raises he is likely to have. This pattern works for men, and we can actually predict what kind of income changes men will have over their careers by using this information. Once again, however, women are different. Even those women who are in "career" jobs are not promoted in the same way men are. The income difference grows greater as men are promoted while women stay at the same level.

Does this mean that there is active discrimination by employers against women? Most of you didn't seem to think so. We asked if being a woman helped or hurt you in trying to be hired and promoted on your jobs. A large majority (83%) of you said that it either helped or had made no difference. The problem for women seems to be the types of jobs that they have. Most women are in occupations that don't have many "levels". That means they can't be promoted, because there is no place higher to go. Many women are also in jobs that they can leave when they need to (such as when they have children) and

return to work when they want or need to, and this seems to be one reason why women are concentrated in these kinds of jobs.

So it appears that right now, even though women would like to have "equal opportunity" to compete with men for all types of jobs, there are other reasons, like family responsibilities, which keep them from doing so. It will be interesting in the years to come if this pattern changes for both men and women.

Finally, we asked you about people whom you work with and people who are your friends. Even though most of you said you liked the people you worked with, you don't usually meet with them outside the job. Of the people you get together with socially outside of work, only a small part were met on the job. Most women seem to keep their jobs and their home life separate.

A FINAL NOTE

In this little report we have tried to touch on most of the sections of our questionnaire, and to give you some idea about what other women in and around Detroit thought and did. We haven't covered everything and it will still be some time before we are finished analyzing this huge amount of information that you gave us. However, if you have any other questions, or if anything is unclear about this report, please drop us a note at the Detroit Area Study, 3528 LS&A Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48104, and we will try to answer your questions as best we can.

Finally, we would like to thank you again for your cooperation. Without your help as "volunteers", the kind of research that we did in the 1974 Detroit Area Study would not be possible.

