"A woman must have money and a room of her own..." — Virginia Woolf

I am a new teacher, a beginner, a novice. I look young; I feel young; I am young. Everyone tells me how young I am: my fellow faculty members, my students, and the woman at the campus traffic office who issued me my faculty “A” parking sticker last year, but not before cocking her head to the side and asking with skepticism, “You are on faculty, aren’t you?” This year similar incidents have occurred, like the time when I tried to sit at a devotional in the southeast corner of the Hart Auditorium, but was informed that “these seats were reserved for faculty only”; or the time when I went to check out a book at the library and after handing the librarian my faculty I.D., still got asked if I was a teacher, as though the card belonged to someone else and I had pilfered it.

For the most part, such frequent encounters confirming my youthful appearance flatter me. However, many people equate youth with inexperience, ignorance, and stupidity—all of which I fear giving evidence of at any inopportune moment, say at a department meeting full of professors who invariably detect nonsense when they hear it. Now, having acknowledged my probable naivete as well as my lowness on any campus totem pole, I am hesitant to offer advice to veteran Ricks professors concerning most issues. Yet I feel compelled to discuss a particular subject which has become a special interest for me here at Ricks College: advising women. In other words, I’m going to jump on this year’s Advising Bandwagon and propose several things I believe we should consider when a young woman—distinctly different from a young man—comes to us for advice, and I grant that some of you may already be wise to these differences; nevertheless, I believe in being reminded of things I think I already know, and I suspect you probably do too. In addition, I certainly understand that most things we should do as advisers apply to all students, regardless of gender. For instance, we should show genuine concern when a student—female or male—gathers enough courage to enter our offices and ask even the simplest of questions. Furthermore, we should listen attentively, clarify any confusions, provide useful information, and encourage them through inevitable times of despair. But while carrying out these general duties, I believe we should also seize the opportunity to provide particular advice geared to students’ needs because of their gender. In this discussion, I am obviously most concerned with the specific needs of young women, although I recognize young men require similar specific help, but I will deal directly with their needs here.

Why do I feel this distinction between women and men students is necessary when we are advising? Because based on my LDS female friends’ lives and on my own experience as a dutiful, yet naive teenage girl, I believe young LDS women are enculturated in potentially harmful ways, which jeopardizes their educations and their futures. As advisers, we should be conscious of these tendencies and try to guide often idealistic students away from traps into

1 The quote is from an important early feminist work in which Woolf argues that women need financial security as well as a “place” of their own in order to write fiction. In general, I believe money and secure places are vital for women’s success at any profession.
which many will fall. Specifically, I believe that farsighted advisers will encourage, persuade, and even push and shove women to seriously set goals toward achieving satisfying careers, since those young women who plan their future based solely on goals of marriage and family become precariously dependent on future husbands who may or may not appear, and who may or may not remain a part of their lives. The following two scenarios will illustrate.

First Scenario. Just before school started, a sophomore came into my office for advice. She sat, slumped in her chair, telling me she had wasted time and money summer term by nearly failing business law and was worried about more waste the coming semester. This led to her major admission, however, which went like this: “And really, Sister Bush, if everything goes as it has been, I’ll be married soon and living on a farm, so it won’t matter anyway.”

I suppressed a scream.

She then rehearsed what I call the Mormon Girl’s Catch Phrase: “I better learn to do something though, just in case anything happens to my husband.” In my opinion, such misguided notions give evidence that too many LDS young women have been led to believe that their education is primarily a kind of widowhood insurance policy, rather than an end in itself which might benefit them as human beings. Moreover, statistics from church headquarters show that something indeed will happen to a large percentage of these young women’s husbands—when and if they ever do find husbands.2

Second Scenario. I am dancing with a male friend of mine who has just finished talking to an in-coming freshman. Dave is a handsome blond with dimples who knows how to work a dance floor. I never expected him to tell me anything I really wanted to know about what a man thought. He surprised me. After wiping sweaty hands against his pant legs, Dave related he and his previous partner’s conversation, implying that this discussion was not unlike ones he had had in the past.

Dave says, “Tell me what you think of this girl,” probably hoping a twenty-seven-year-old woman like me could help him evaluate this freshman’s attitude toward her future.

“I asked her what she was majoring in, and she said pre-dent.” Apparently she wants to become a dental assistant, which will take four years. Then I asked her how she planned to do that. “And get this,” Dave tells me, rolling his eyes. “She said, ‘Oh, I’ll get my two-year degree and then we’ll see what happens.”

“Now,” Dave asks, “what do you think she means by saying, ‘we’ll see what happens?’”

However, he and I both knew the answer to his question already, and that answer is this: Some young women at Ricks College come here with only tentative, short-term plans for the future, waiting to “see what happens,” because they hope to get married—even though many claim very high-mindedly that they do not. I am always skeptical of such claims because I know how important a social life is to the majority of them; but at the same time, I also fervently believe most women really do come here to be educated. I just think that for young LDS females, marriage is equally important, which inevitably affects the way they choose majors and set career goals. For example, at Ricks College, elementary education seems to be a popular choice as a major for women. I have a good friend who began her elementary education degree

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2 In a phone conversation with Kristen L. Goodman, head of Church Research and Evaluation, she told me recent statistics show 34.2% of LDS women in the United States live as singles. This total breaks down as follows: 18.7% of LDS women have never married, 1.2% are separated, 7.8% are divorced, and 6.5% are widowed.
here at Ricks, and she raves about the program. I’m sure it prepared Janet well to become the excellent teacher she is, and there was nothing inherently wrong with her decision to major in elementary education. As a matter of fact, for her, the decision was extremely right. But a young woman who chooses an elementary education major over a political science major because she believes elementary education would better prepare her for motherhood — even though she is actually more interested in government — misses the opportunity to explore careers outside traditional choices frequently made by LDS women. In fact, she is very much like the young LDS man who slightsthis own education by choosing science over English, not because he enjoys science more than literature, but because he can make considerably more money as a doctor than as a writer.

Now, before I have the science and education department disappointed in me, I want to qualify my assertion by assuring that I believe many men enjoy science and will make fine doctors. Likewise, I believe many women enjoy elementary education and will make equally fine teachers; the world needs both competent physicians and gifted educators. However, in my opinion, women and men should enter those professions because that’s where their interests and abilities lie, not because they think one profession is better suited to being a male provider or a female caretaker. As Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, asserts, “Masculinity has no monopoly on the mind, and femininity has no exclusive dominion over the heart” (20). Yet young people frequently choose majors based on these stereotyped male and female roles, overlooking their actual interests and abilities in favor of professions they think will suit them as women or men, not as individuals.

For example, last year one of my best male students finally decided to major in nursing rather than pursue a career as a doctor because he really did want to be a nurse, not a doctor. Similarly, during the past two weeks alone, I have had three women come into my office registered as elementary education majors. Two had chose the major because many of the women in their family were teachers, and also because they had never really considered any other profession. In fact, one of those young women told me she was determined to finish her degree in elementary education—no matter whether she liked it or not—because she thought she ought to finish something. After discussing her love for writing poetry and her enthusiasm for reading literature, she changed her mind and felt excited about majoring in English, a move she had never contemplated. The second young woman also planned to change from elementary education to English, and the third was seriously considering psychology — a field which had always fascinated her, but which I think she had neglected to consider because as a woman, she thought she ought to choose majors like elementary education.

Now to return to my conversation with Dave. I think the freshman he danced with who was waiting to “see what happens” is much like the three young women who came into my office as elementary education majors, because all four seemed to have chose majors and planned their futures primarily with marriage in mind — just what we have taught them to do. But their

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3 Two recent articles in The Scroll reported that both accounting and computer information systems are presently promising career choices for women because these fields offer part-time or flexible hours, good working conditions, and high salaries (19).

4 I recognize that this seems to be a contradiction for me to insist on special considerations toward young people because they are women or men, and then also suggest that we not lock them into certain major because of their gender, but this is not a contradiction, it is simply an irony.
decisions were short-sighted and were also hindered by the assumption that they would be charting their futures according to an as yet unrealized life with some husband, who, for all four of them, was presently nonexistent. What struck me as refreshing about Dave’s discomfort toward the freshman’s wait-and-see-attitude, was that he did not like the idea of women postponing more long-term, significant plans toward their futures, which he assumed should be decided according to their own ambitions. In addition, he told me he thought men were supposed to intervene and change women’s plans, not create them, as this freshman seemed to believe a man would eventually do.

As an LDS woman who had once been in a similar “wait-and-see” position, I sympathized with this freshman, and remembered when I, too, had avoided thinking very far into the future after college because I thought I would be making major life decisions with some mysterious man who would be appearing any year now to give my life ultimate direction. Before facing the reality I met head on when I graduated from BYU without a husband, I had never thought of women’s plan-making in the way Dave had conceived it. That is, women should plot a course for their education and careers just as men do, taking into account interests, abilities, and even financial benefits. Then, if the course varies because of a spouse’s influence—fine. But if no spouse appears, at least a woman has charted her own course, thereby avoiding inferior employment and unnecessary emotional trauma.

For many, this probably seems obvious, something I should have known before Dave told me. But I did not—at least not when I was an undergraduate at BYU. And I fear that other young LDS women are as deluded by romantic notions—accumulated through years of talk about courtship and temple marriage—as I was. It is important to know also that I was not a dizzy female. I graduated valedictorian from my high school and went to BYU on two scholarships. I planned to get my degree. I also planned to get married, follow my husband to wherever he found employment, give birth to children, and work part-time. Except I never got married. And now that I have had to make plans on my own and have experienced what I believe to be unnecessary pain, I know—that young women should be encouraged to make plans based on their life as it is in the present, not as it might be in the future, especially in regards to mystery husbands. After eight years at BYU faithfully attending opening and closing socials, 14-Stake firesides, ward parties, dances, and innumerable family home evenings, I still graduated single. “Don’t worry,” says my bishop, my mother, my boss. “You will get married.” And these days I simply nod in agreement, knowing they mean well, and knowing I have found some measure of peace. What I fear, however, and what I would like to help other young women avoid is the unnecessary suffering many will endure because their plans for the future are even more nebulous than mine were, and thus, for them the trauma is potentially greater. I also think that our LDS subculture is partly to blame for making young women vulnerable, because even though we claim to value education for young women, we young women sense the “true” exigency—marriage. And we also know we’ve got to be quick about it because we’ve been attending young adult activities long enough to know that there-aren’t-

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5 In a special 1985 issue of The New Era devoted to careers, Linda Prusse Christensen has written an excellent article which addresses how young people should prepare for the future just in case their “storybook marriage with a happily-ever-after conclusion” does not materialize.
Anna Tueller, head of Meridian School in Provo, speaking of her own anxiety as she faced graduation from BYU without a husband, says that at twenty-two she “faced a crisis of such magnitude that even now I cower at the memory” (Cornwall 28). I empathize with Anna Tueller because I faced a similar crisis. However, I feel fortunate (even blessed) to have been hired at Ricks, enjoying financial security as well as intellectual and professional stimulation which validates me in numerous ways. I’m also fortunate to live near family and have made several friends in Rexburg. My greatest concern then is not for myself, but for the young women who are like I was, making educational decisions about what to major in and how many years to go to school based on some unknown future husband and family. If we don’t help women to think in more productive ways about their educations and their futures (which I will discuss later in this essay), then hundreds of other young women may not be as fortunate, nor as well prepared as I was to face the temporary uncertainties of life as singles. And many will be single, only slightly fearing that possibility now, not really believing “it could happen to them.” Here in Rexburg—a community bulging with traditional LDS families and their accompanying minivans—I sometimes sense that many do not seem entirely aware of the thousands of single, LDS adults who cluster in cities like Salt Lake and Provo, or who scatter themselves throughout the country, living alone or with roommates in situations quite different from what they had expected to live. Elaine Jack, General Relief Society President, stressed the diversity of women’s situations at this October 1990 women’s conference, and likewise, Neal Maxwell, when speaking to the Ricks College faculty here on October 15, 1990, reported the small, twenty percent of traditional LDS families in the church today. These realities, which demonstrate how much people’s lives veer markedly from the ideal, make our task as educators, advisers, and ecclesiastical leaders vital for the futures of young women—and young men, too.

We should be preparing young women to face the possibilities of life as singles, whether their singleness results from not finding a mate, or from finding a mate and then losing him through divorce or death. The problem is that young women 18, 19, and 20-years-old do not actually believe they will be single. Yes, many fear it, but like any unforeseen trauma, they do not believe in its actual possibility. Likewise, many parents (mine included) do not really believe their children will have to face the world without a spouse. That is a dilemma families would rather not consider. But what if your daughter does remain single throughout college? What if she graduates without a husband? What if she lives at least several years alone? What if she marries poorly and must get divorced? What if something really does happen to her husband,

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6 Statistics compiled in a 1980 demographic study of Church members prove what women have known all along—the odds are in the men’s favor. The study shows that for young people aged 20-29, there are only 89 LDS men for every 100 LDS women. In addition, there are only 19 active LDS single women for every 100 active LDS single women over 30 years of age (Goodman 90). Moreover, according to this study, “marriage to an active male is demographically impossible for many active single females over 30” (91). To say the least, these are discouraging statistics.

7 In this essay, “Waiting in Stillness,” given at a BYU women’s conference, Tueller relates her experience with a great deal of humor, but at the time of crisis, nothing appeared very funny.

8 His statistics were probably drawn from the same 1980 Church demographic study which showed that less than 1 out of 5 households, or 19%, “currently has an ‘ideal’ family situation with temple-married parents and children in the home” (Goodman 95).
and she becomes a young widow? Have you encouraged her career goals sufficiently that she feels secure as well as happy about the profession she would enter, or has she only been going through the motions of an education, only taking classes that would seemingly help her as the mother she expects to become? Does she like what she's studying? Would she want a job in that field, or has she chosen her major mainly according to what LDS women traditionally choose rather than considering a number of equally worthy alternatives? Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has stated that "almost the entire field of human endeavor is now open to women, in contrast with difficult restrictions that were felt only a few years ago." He encourages women to "get all the education [they] can." And also, to "train [themselves] to make a contribution to the society in which [they] will live" (96). My goal as an adviser at Ricks College, and my suggestion for other advisers, is to encourage women to choose more wisely and to take their education toward a career very seriously; however, the only way we will succeed in encouraging them to take their education seriously, is if we take them seriously ourselves.

During her talk at last year's March 27, 1990 devotional, Marie Hafen cautioned that "anyone who uses church teachings as an excuse for thinking women should not wholeheartedly seek an education does not understand what the church teaches" (20). I think as faculty members we all know how vital educations are for women, but we must recognize that those educations are really meant to prepare women for careers outside a home, not only as training to become better mothers. Most young women also know their education is important, but when that knowledge is filtered through years of indoctrination about marriage and motherhood, they may become confused about why they are really seeking professional training. Even a young woman like me who was not raised in a traditional LDS home (my mother is a businesswoman; my father is not LDS) sometimes felt confused and even saddened to think that I was pursuing a profession which I might conceivably be asked to give up. And even when this very sacrifice is asked of married women so that they can stay at home caring for their children, I think we do single women a disservice when we claim that education is important, but also avoid saying the word "career" to them. Ideally we want women to be mothers, not career women, yet everyone knows our lives rarely follow ideal patterns.

In her 1990 devotional talk, "Celebrating Womanhood," Sister Hafen stressed career-oriented educations for women, keeping in mind that this orientation did not preclude marriage. As a student at BYU, I remember all three of my college bishops encouraging, prodding, and advising me to stay virtuous and get married. I cannot recall any of these three bishops openly encouraging, prodding, and advising me to finish my education so that I would be prepared to secure employment at a well-paying job that I also enjoyed. These three bishops, all fine men whom I admired, probably did not talk to young women about educating themselves for careers because they feared young women might think this kind of encouragement would sanction mothers working outside their homes, thereby endorsing a lifestyle in conflict with our prophet’s explicit instructions. However, someone must mention careers for women, else what would be

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9 Many will probably be critical of me when I call giving up a career to stay at home and be a mother a "sacrifice," sincerely believing that motherhood is the greatest calling a woman can achieve, and thus, no sacrifice at all. For the most part I would agree, yet I also maintain that when a person educates herself for at least 4-6 years toward a profession, asking her to give up the actual use of those skills, not to mention the money, the prestige, and any other satisfying benefits that would bolster her self-esteem is asking her to give up something of value to her in hopes of achieving some higher good, which is what LDS people term a "sacrifice."
the goal of women training themselves, except for motherhood—a noble profession to be sure, but one which many simply do not realize as soon as others, or even at all. (And, of course, women will always need to be prepared for divorce, a husband’s death, or financial stresses that require fathers and mothers to work.) As far as I understand Elder Maxwell’s remarks, in addition to Elder Carmack’s predictions during the Faculty-Staff Dinner on August 29, 1990 during which he discussed the far-reaching influence of LDS women—we women, single or married, will be making our mark throughout the world, so a woman’s education is meant to reach beyond her home, and not merely by raising little boys or by being the good woman behind every good man.

What more then should we do for young women as their advisers, educators, and ecclesiastical leaders here at Ricks College? Well, as I have been saying, we should press our advisees to choose majors that interest them, and we should say the word “career” to them—often. Perhaps while taking your showers, you could all rehearse saying the word “career,” practicing for that critical time when a young woman comes to your office wondering what she should do with her life. I believe in the power of words like “career” to change perceptions and to adjust people’s focus, because I also believe that how we use language often reflects our true cultural attitudes. And this leads me to another thing we can do at Ricks to promote young women’s success, and that is to eliminate any sexism from our language which might exclude or demean women, even unintentionally.

When I insist that no one in my classes use “he” as a gender neutral pronoun, I invariably provoke some students to anger, because a majority of my students (men and women) still think “he” is an inclusive term referring to both males and females. Yet when I start giving handouts that use only “she” as the inclusive pronoun, young men frequently revolt, and even rightly accuse me of reverse sexism, which I don’t deny since I prove the point that they do not want to be called a “she” any more than I want to be called a “he.” In addition, I try to help them understand that thinking the pronoun “he” accounts for men and women is outdated and sexist, even though many who continue to use it are well-intentioned, albeit poorly conditioned. This usually leads to discussions about the courage of women who finally stood up to such male-biased notions, all the while facing criticism from intimidating, powerful sources—which they still do. As one of my male students observed in his final English 114 essay, “I soon learned that the preconceptions I had of the feminist movement were largely erroneous; before our study of sexism and exclusive language, I thought this was just a passing fad that would die with the feminists.” Russ learned that for centuries, women have been excluded or their accomplishments trivialized by a male dominated society. And he learned that our language, which favors men, often reflects this phenomenon. Some claim that making the effort to change our language by doing things like writing “he or she” is a pain in the neck. They would rather not be bothered.

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10 According to the 1980 demographic study, some married couples “need the wife’s income to maintain even a modest standard of living.” The study also notes that guidance and tolerance toward working women is desirable since “the stresses and strains of the job may be heightened for some of these women by official opposition to employment as well as by greater family demands stemming from having larger families” (Goodman 104).

11 For discussions on sexist language and its effects, refer to such works as Mon-Made Language by Dale Spender, “Of Girls and Chicks” by Francine Frank and Frank Ashen in Language and the Sexes; or The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing by K. C. Miller and Kate Swift.
(A number of these same people would rather not be bothered by women in the work force either.) In some cases, I would agree that including the female pronoun creates awkwardness, but there are plenty of alternatives to these sometimes clumsy constructions, like revising singular pronouns to plural ones, as in, “Students should recognize the value of their educations,” rather than, “A student should recognize the value of his or her education.” And yet I am often in favor of intentionally writing “his or her” construction because even though it produces a kind of “bump” in an otherwise smooth-flowing sentence, the “bump” makes readers think about women, and thus, women become consciously included in the discussion rather than unconsciously excluded.

Not only can we insure that our language affords women respect, we can also make efforts as teachers to encourage more female participation in our classrooms. Generally students learn better when they participate in class discussions, yet women, sometimes for fear of being perceived as unintelligent or as unfeminine by speaking out, remain quiet, allowing more vocal men to carry the discussion. This leads to men doing most of the discussing, further surpassing women in their understanding, and thus, their education. I try to be conscious of any male hegemony in my literature and composition classes, and I make the extra effort (which it is) to encourage female students’ comments by giving positive reinforcement when they do speak and by actually requesting responses from them when they do not. I realize there are male students who are just as timid as some female students; I try to encourage them too. But as teachers, I think we should be aware of making the special effort to include women.

Another thing I think we can do even more of at Ricks is to provide examples of successful women for young students to look to as role models. Especially when we talk to them about numerous leading women in the church, we should detail these fine women’s personal achievements and be careful not always to refer to them as some man’s “lovely wife.” Most have accomplished a great deal on their own and deserve recognition for those achievements. As educators, we can talk about the success of women in our particular fields, but preferably not in any token way. Recently I’ve learned that in the eighteenth century women achieved great success and acclaim for their novel writing, yet according to critic Dale Spender, their achievements have been “edited out of literary history,” and a “false version has been substituted in its place.” What this means is that there is good evidence to prove most of what I learned in college about the history of the novel is false, because “a distorted version which makes no mention of women’s former greatness, but which presents the birth of the novel solely in terms of men” is taught at most universities and in many books (Belsey 27). Are there similar falsehoods being perpetuated in your disciplines? Or have women’s contributions simply been overlooked? Women need strong role models, whether they know it or not. I would encourage you to search for them in your own fields and provide young women significant female achievements to which they may also aspire.

A final summary caution: When we encourage female students to educate themselves toward motherhood and careers, young women will necessarily feel some anxiety and confusion about the relative importance of each. From my own experience, leaders telling me to become marketable while simultaneously prodding me to marry so I could stay at home and be a mother made me feel like life was actually put “on hold” until some unknown man answered my call. Who knew when, if ever, he would pick up the phone? I anticipated his own call to me for eight years. But eventually, I got tired of waiting; I got tired of dialing; I finally hung up. Thankfully, there have been alternative calls to answer. What this means for others is that we must honestly
validate careers for single women while they “hold the line” in anticipation of that greater call to be mothers in Zion.

Please don’t think I am unaware of the many Ricks faculty and students who are serious about educating women. Hundreds of young women who come here are intensely serious about their education. I’ve met them. I sing praises to them. When I attended BYU, I was deadly serious about my education, and I was also offended when people implied that I had really only gone to BYU to “catch” a man. I had not. I definitely wanted a degree—and a husband. For young LDS women, I think getting both an education and a worthy priesthood holder out of college would be ideal. Unfortunately, hundreds do not realize this idea. So what do they do then? They weep. And also, for perhaps the first time in their life they start making REAL plans. Like men, they must find a job, and they must decide where they would choose, by themselves, to live.

During my first year of graduate school in English at BYU, I wrote the following in my journal: “If I never get married, I will probably have to be successful at something. This thought frightens me.” Understand that I honestly reveal these fears to you because from all outward appearances I was an independent, self-assured, successful student who had a lot going for her. Yet even I was scared, and I was scared because I had never really believed I would have to get a job on my own. I never believed I would be facing the uncertainties of any future life by myself, and neither did at least five of my close friends or numerous other women (and even men) I met in graduate school. What I am asking is that we as faculty members and ecclesiastical leaders encourage young women to make plans independent of some mysterious man who may or may not appear in their future. I do not believe we should speak of him quite so much, except perhaps to make them aware that he does not yet exist. After all, questions about future husbands and families often only hinder a young woman’s ability to carve out a future for herself that will be financially secure and personally satisfying.

If we really are serious about educating women, then we will push them to finish their degrees and obtain careers, regardless of whether they find and keep husbands or not. Joyce Carol Oates, one of the finer American writers alive today, was determined not to marry. At 22 she was a graduate student in English and had made plans to get her master’s degree and Ph.D.—a decidedly independent woman. But she met her future husband at a reception for graduate students and within three weeks was engaged. Within another three months she was married. “I think back to that time,” says Oates, “and to that young woman stubbornly studying in her room. And I think: What are our lives but stories told to us?—continually astonishing us, continually revising themselves” (7). Young women at Ricks College would also have the ability to revise their lives if and when they meet their husbands. Moreover, for a young woman, revision of her life to include a husband and family would be much less painful than facing blank pages and had not dared to write as a single.

I believe in eternal marriage. I believe in husbands, and babies, and even in mothers

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12 By the way, I think that some of my women friends are still single not because there is something “wrong” with them, but because there may be something “right” with them. They are intelligent, attractive, talented people who simply have not married. I believe there may be explanations for some women remaining single longer than others, but the reasons are not always because “she is overweight,” or “she is eccentric,” or “she is too outspoken.” I’ve seen enough overweight, eccentric, outspoken married women (no offense intended) ever to be convinced that such flimsy reasoning explains why one woman marries and another does not.
giving up careers to stay at home and care for those babies. I would like to think all of this is in my future. But I often feel unmoored in a sea of well-intentioned LDS married people who place emphasis on husbands and children to such an extent that I must strain to validate my own single lifestyle. I live in a society that constantly reminds me marriage and children are what gives life meaning. (Listen during any fast and testimony meeting and you will hear that sentiment repeated throughout the hour). But I have neither a husband nor a child. Is it any wonder then that I sometimes find difficulty arriving at any other conclusion than that my life does not hold meaning? No. However, I have come to learn that this is not true, and other single young women must know it is not true as well, whether they are single because they have not married, or because they have been divorced or widowed. One way the people who make up Ricks College can validate other lifestyles is to talk about women contributing to our society professionally, as though careers were actually desirable and not merely prophet bashing. If we do not do this, then we are being dishonest with women, and we are also confusing them, whether they consciously recognize that confusion or not.

Works Cited


