The Under-30 Generation

YOUR CAREER: YOU CAN START AT $40,000 A YEAR

BY BLYTHE HOLBROOKE

The initials M.B.A. on your resume can spell instant success. But to get them, you need good undergraduate grades, some experience in the working world and—most important—a clear idea of what you want.

With half the country's population having gone to college, a simple B.A. hardly makes you special. What will make you special, in the view of top educational counselors and employment placement specialists, is a strong, substantive undergraduate major, *plus* a business degree, preferably on the master's level.

"Let's face it, we live in a very credentials-conscious society," says Martha P. Leape, director of the Undergraduate Office of Career Services at Harvard University. She concurs with the prevailing notion that since the mid-1970s college students generally have become more concerned with seeking lucrative careers than with saving the world. The change has as much to do with tightening familial purse strings as it does with shifting ideologies. The rampant inflation of the past decade, along with escalating tuition fees, has made undergraduate students stop and think about why they are going to college on a more personal level. In these times of economic stress, even entering freshmen are looking ahead and trying "to get a clear idea of how they are going to support themselves in adult life."

Back in the 1960s, a decade of civic and social upheaval, the cream-of-the-crop headed into government work, Leape observes. Nowadays, "the best-and-the-brightest" are examining their options in the private sector, she notes. And they see private enterprise as the area providing the most rewarding careers not only in monetary terms, but also "in offering an exciting challenge."

But to enter the private sector, you have to prepare. You no longer can simply get away with being "well rounded." You have to choose your courses selectively. The dilettante's approach—taking what appeals to you at the moment—can be wanton and wasteful as far as a future career is concerned.

Leape and her associates at Harvard stress that career preparation really begins early in the undergraduate years. By no means should you tailor your education to fit some mythical projection of what the job market is going to be like when you graduate, but at the same time you should do all you can to enhance "your marketability." In other words, even if you major in French literature and write your senior thesis on the poetry of François Villon, it wouldn't hurt your job prospects in the business world if you took some electives like economics, accounting and computer-programming. "To spend four years in college and not deal with numbers in today's world is unrealistic," says Leape.

This, of course, is just *basic* preparation. And it will help you get a good job, perhaps in the international division of some large bank. But it won't help you rapidly progress up the corporate ladder. That's where the graduate business degree comes in. Many students will go right to work after they get a B.A., but the percentage who go on to graduate school at some point before they reach 30 is ever increasing. For (CONTINUED ON PAGE 158)

DIVORCE: HOW TO GET YOUR LOVE LIFE TOGETHER

BY SIMI HORWITZ

Present-day pressures have resulted in a higher rate of young marital breakups than ever before. Here are some of the more common sources of conflict in couples under 30. Once acknowledged and dealt with, they can help you avoid the same mistakes the second time around.

Divorce is not a new phenomenon, and it has always occurred with greater frequency among young couples. Romantic notions and unrealistic expectations are still major factors in divorce under 30. But today, there are special stressors: whether or not to have children, unprecedented financial pressures, two-career rivalries, role conflicts and problems of self-development, along with the perennials, sex and in-law difficulties, which have led to a higher-than-average divorce rate.

According to the Bureau of Census, in 1968, 29.5 per thousand women who married between the ages of 20 and 24 got divorced within a short period of time. In 1978, the number had risen to 52.8. In 1968, 22.5 per thousand women who married between 25 and 29 got divorced soon after, compared with a whopping 42.4 a decade later.

"One of the major factors for the rise is that there is no overwhelming pressure to be or stay married, especially in urban areas with so many lifestyles to choose from," maintains Dr. Laura Singer, founder and president of *Save A Marriage, Inc.*, a counseling service in New York City. "There are divorced people, couples living together without marriage, homosexual couples, and single women who are doing just fine. But perhaps even more relevant is that we're living in a culture of instant gratification. If things do not work out or we are not satisfied *immediately*, there's the feeling 'I can leave and find something better.' This attitude is especially prevalent among young couples without children."

Getting Married: The Wrong Reasons

"Many young women continue to be obsessed with the idea that a husband can 'rescue' them from financial difficulty or boredom or troublesome parents or low self-esteem," reports Holly Brown, administrative supervisor of The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services in New York City. "They still believe they will meet someone who can solve all their problems and bring them happiness. However, nobody is responsible for another person's well-being: Contentment and confidence come from within, along with their opposites."

It is also not uncommon for a man in his mid- or late-20s to decide suddenly he needs stability and security—and to view marriage as the magic solution, says Brown. Many such men already have con-

siderable sexual experience and may choose a partner for mostly narcissistic reasons—among them, the belief that a traditional commitment will "cure" them of any further desire to stray. Obviously, marital status alone cannot automatically confer a sense of permanence, yet the myth prevails.

"Even more important, by searching for some elusive goal of harmony and order through marriage," Brown adds, "these men are making the unrealistic assumption that their wives are looking forward to domesticity or rearing children fairly soon." But with most women under 30 now putting career before family, such notions can lead to conflict. And when the imagined or (CONTINUED ON PAGE 160)

BIG MONEY: MAKING IT YOUNG!

To reach a financial pinnacle in any field while still in your 20s is one dramatic way to define success. In these interviews, four top achievers chart their own routes to such early-won gains—and point to possible strategies for following suit.

Earning a six-figure annual income before turning 30 may be mere fantasy to most of us, but some early-bloomers have proven it can be done. Such women *are* extraordinary cases—less than one per cent of those employed full time earn even $25,000 or over (compared to 12 per cent of men)—and any search for patterns reveals a few not-so-common denominators in these precocious routes to the top.

None of the enormously energetic, motivated women profiled here has reaped success without a heavy investment of work *and* total commitment to her chosen field. Each one views her early financial security as only a partial, even incidental, reward, rather than an end in itself. And not one is content to rest on former achievements or consider herself as having "arrived." Instead, the desire to earn big money and make a lasting professional mark serve as continuing catalysts—generating new ambitions and fresh ideas, while fueling the determination to expand and excel.

Debrah Charatan-Berger/ President, Bach Realty Inc., NYC

To head any commercial real estate firm in a city as hard-driving as New York is itself a stunning success. To be 25 and female and earning close to $200,000 in that position—after barely two years on the job—is a phenomenon. Starting out from a cramped basement office with a borrowed typewriter and makeshift desk, Debrah Charatan-Berger now runs the only all-women-staffed realty company in the city, if not the U.S. She sells buildings for investment, development and resale—expected to gross a half million dollars this year alone—and describes herself emphatically as "the best in the business."

Charatan-Berger's story is a rags-to-riches classic: Born in Brooklyn to European immigrants, she worked 40-hour weeks at 14, while still in high school—waking at four a.m. every weekend to be at her bakery job by five.

Without typing skills, she had a hard time landing an office job after graduation. But one employment agency offered her a three-day stint writing party invitations for a multimillionaire (real estate) company chief. "I figured it was a way in—and once I entered I'd work so hard the firm wouldn't be able to do without me." They weren't. The second day she was hired as a secretary at $115 a week. (Allowed to attend college early mornings and start work by 11, she usually finished at eight or nine every night.) It was her first exposure to "incredible" wealth: Her new boss enjoyed a personal chauffeur and every other conceivable luxury and the proximity proved intoxicating—she was hooked.

Charatan-Berger points to a series of "special relationships" that helped launch her career. One woman, a properties manager at the firm who was planning to leave, taught her what she knew about the business and groomed her for the spot within six months. "As soon as she left, I asked my superior just to try me out, to give me the chance to replace her. After all, I still couldn't type too well, so he'd have to find a better secretary!"

Given a pay boost to $200 a week, she proceeded to learn everything about residential buildings, from how to buy, gut and renovate to the finer points of marketing, management and maintenance. "I had to calculate the rents, hire supers and staff, decide which companies would get the elevator contracts, and so on. I often didn't know what I was doing the first year, but I improvised a lot. My attitude is that you can learn almost anything if you're determined enough. Besides, you don't have to know *everything* to manage a business or make decisions—but you should always know whom to ask and how to delegate."

After five years and many raises, she was suddenly asked to leave—shortly after a new partner joined the firm. "He apparently decided that a *man* should fill my position—to uphold an image. I was 22 and making $25,000—already top dollar for that job and company. The idea was to replace me with a 35-year-old who would look more credible when the bankers walked in."

The rejection stung badly. But being forced out was a blessing in disguise because she had (CONTINUED ON PAGE 66)

IS PROMISCUITY PASSÉ? AN INTERVIEW WITH DEBORA PHILLIPS, M.D.

There's a growing disenchantment today with promiscuity—both the word and deed. A well-known sex therapist shares her insights about the subtle new shift in values, and the search for greater intimacy and lasting commitment.

For many of us, the very word "promiscuity" carries moralistic, judgmental overtones—and a decidedly anti-feminine ring. As Maggie Scarf writes in her book, *Unfinished Business: Pressure Points In The Lives Of Women*, "It smells of the double standard . . . And a (negative) verdict is generally implied," far more often in reference to women's sexual behavior than men's. The term itself is passing out of favor among therapists and public alike, though the behavior it describes is by no means obsolete—yet.

Strictly speaking, promiscuity means casual, fleeting sexual encounters with strangers; one-night stands without emotional involvement. It's the multiplicity that counts; two or three such incidents do not constitute a case of promiscuity—a chronic pattern does. Breakups are among the most frequent triggers of promiscuous behavior in men and women, although men are more likely to go on a sexual binge in response to the trauma of a splintered relationship or to a new-found sense of freedom after divorce.

Are "promiscuity" and sexual experimentation on the decline? Among college students there is seemingly less conformity to sexual pressure than ever before—and this age group generally forecasts what will be happening in the general culture. Many more women in their late teens and early 20s are virgins, or are at least openly admitting the fact and, more important, not feeling as inadequate about it. They are seeking more value-laden relationships, whereas their counterparts five, 10 years ago, viewed sexual freedom itself as the ultimate value. Loneliness, lack of intimacy and sharing, more than the absence of sex, is the growing source of discontent among the dateless and single on campuses and in major cities today.

During the '80s, we are trying to build on the shift in standards of the previous decades—from the inhibitions (CONT'D. ON PAGE 164)