April 17, 1989

Dear

In 1981 you participated in the third round of the longitudinal study of the Mills classes of 1958 and 1960. We now invite you to join in a fourth round, which will conclude our study of about 30 years of your young and middle adulthood.

You and your classmates entered the adult world at a special time in history, just before major changes in gender roles. A wider variety of life paths was available to you than to women before or since, and you have been perceptive and articulate in describing your feelings and experiences as you proceeded along these life paths. We have combined your accounts with personality inventories and demographic information to produce innovative research of high quality. The Mills Study is becoming one of the outstanding sources of information about adult development.

When I wrote you in 1981, I said that the personality development of women between adolescence and midlife was largely unstudied. That this statement could not be made today is attributable in part to you and the Mills Study. However, you were then at the threshold of middle-age, and now we want to follow you into your 50s. This fourth round of investigation, like the third, is being funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

As in the past, most of the important questions we want to study require information from the same people at different times in their lives. For this reason, we very much want you to participate again. We have enclosed a sheet that asks about your willingness to join in the study. It also requests some factual information that will help us in our planning. Whether or not you wish to participate, please fill out this form and return it at your earliest convenience.

If you agree to join the study, you will receive two inventories and a questionnaire in several sections. We have tried hard to reduce the amount of time the material will require. A major advantage is that most of the questions refer only to the last eight years, rather than to the 22-year-period covered in 1981. However, to realize the potential of the study, we need to ask about many facets of your life. We estimate that the materials can be completed in less than 8 hours, but that some of you will want to spend more. Some questions are easy to answer, but those that require reflection may be the most interesting. We hope that the time you spend will be personally rewarding for you. We know that in giving it, you are making a contribution to the social sciences that only you can make.

This time we are requesting permission to send some questions and a short

inventory to pass on to your partner, if possible, or to your closest friend. Less than two hours of time would be involved. This information will strengthen the study, but you are under no obligation to agree to the request or to pass the material on. A letter and consent form for your partner or friend is enclosed. Please return this consent form with your information sheet in the return envelope that is also enclosed.

Upon receipt of your completed materials, we will send you any of several kinds of feedback that you request (you will receive a checklist). These include a report on your personality profile, copies of selected portions of what you wrote about yourself at earlier periods of your life, first findings from the fourth follow-up, and copies of some of our publications.

Please know that we continue to be interested in you whatever your life style and however well or badly life is going for you at the moment. We deeply appreciate your help in the past and hope that with your help now the fourth wave of the Mills Study will bring an understanding of middle-age and women's life patterns that will be important to planners, decision-makers, and to all of us who live out our lives in the contemporary world.

Sincerely,

Ravenna Helson
Principal Investigator

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