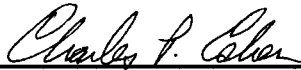


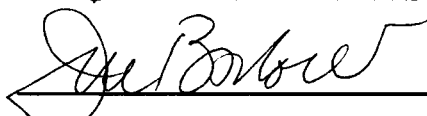
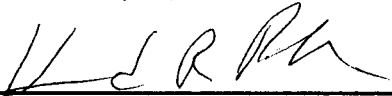
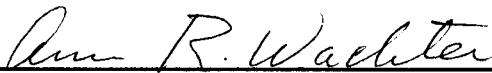
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Abigail Sills Lang entitled "A Phenomenological Investigation of the Experience of Aging in Midlife Women." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.



Charles P. Cohen
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:



Vice Provost
and Dean of The Graduate School

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
OF THE EXPERIENCE OF AGING IN MIDLIFE WOMEN

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Abigail Sills Lang

June 1988

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is only at the end of a project such as this one that acknowledgements can become articulated. Like aging itself, those who were figural varied from stage to stage. During various phases of this research I felt at times totally alone, without any help and figured it was only my own integrity which would get me through. Those were times during which I could not write this acknowledgement. Then there were other times during which I felt thankful to everyone past and present such that I could not possibly fulfill my gratitude towards them in an acknowledgment of reasonable length. For the people who helped me were not only those who had a direct bearing on this project, but those, who by being there, enabled me to continue and complete this investigation. By being there they enriched my life and made this project possible.

I wish to thank my committee members for their time, interest and willingness to allow me to focus my attention in those areas which were most salient for both study and personal requirements. Throughout the years Dr. Charles Cohen has provided me with a model of professional and academic excellence. His many courses have not only been instrumental in shaping my orientation to psychology but have been a continued source of fascination and

stimulation for which I have been and always will be thankful. Moreover, his friendship has meant a great deal to me personally.

To Dr. Howard Pollio whose humor, impassioned energy, and spirited erudition provided me with the means and the momentum to sustain the efforts required to complete this study. In addition, to the Phenomenological Research Group of the University of Tennessee, over which Dr. Pollio presides, which explores issues related to phenomenological research, I give my thanks. Not only for their intellectual efforts and pragmatic suggestions but for their moral support I am indebted to each of them.

To Professors Jack Barlow and Ann Wachter I would like to offer my thanks for their interest, diligence, and expertise in the area of gender identity. I am aware of the burden of just reading these investigations.

I also wish to thank those people who agreed to be participants in this study. For without them, their openness to discussing their personal experiences, their enthusiasm for the subject, and their cooperation throughout, I would not have finished. To each and all of them I am grateful. To the reliability rater: who took the time and effort to read numerous statements, I also give my thanks.

Finally, there are all those people who have had both direct and indirect impact on this study during these years. I would like to thank Dr. Randall Lang for his friendship, commitment, love, and for being available for me whether for direct help or for his presence. In the latter he taught me the value of "benign neglect" which had been presented to me many years before by Dr. Cohen. Dr. Lang's unshaken confidence that I could finish my studies gave me sustenance of which I was sorely lacking at times.

To my parents, Harold and Mary Jane Sills and Emily and Aram Kerian I offer my gratitude for their years of financial help and patience during the extended years of my professional studenthood. I truly appreciate their support in spite of their concerns that I would eventually be an "old" Ph.D. rather than a midlife one. I could not have completed this project without them. I add a special commendation to my mother who, for all our years of feuding and caring, never waived in encouraging my studies. To my son, Erik A. Poast, whom I sorely missed seeing during part of this project, I offer my thanks. Our talks, visits, and arguments have provided me with an understanding of my life and aging which I would have missed without him. Moreover, that he understood the necessity for me to complete this project in spite of the

limitations it placed on him, gave me confidence in his abilities.

There are, of course, innumerable others of which only a few can be mentioned. To Bettina Hansen, my long time friend and mentor whose quiet encouragement never deviated, I thank you. Sheila and Doug McCoy, my neighbors, were always willing for me to walk up our road for respite and companionship. To Dr. Eugene Cord for his excellence in supervision and for his friendship thereafter I offer my continuing friendship. To Dr. Wayne Maxwell and the staff at the Center for Mental Health in Montrose, Colorado, I thank you for your encouragement and patience. I would also like to thank those people both past and present who have provided encouragement and support throughout these long years: Dr. Harold A. Ries and Richard Honey.

ABSTRACT

The goal of this investigation was to clarify and describe the experience of aging in midlife women. A phenomenological-empirical approach was chosen, and 12 articulate, mature women were interviewed about their experience of aging. Interviews were semi-structured and were tape recorded. A theoretical and empirical literature review was also conducted.

Analysis of the data involved verbatim transcriptions of the interviews and progressively collapsing the transcripts into "significant statements" from which the thematic content could be gleaned. This procedure emphasized fidelity to the participants' own words. A comprehensive list of themes was identified, which were then collapsed further into three areas of thematic focus. Major themes of the experience of aging in midlife women were identified as 1) anticipating, 2) discovering, and 3) becoming. All interviews were coded according to the thematic system. A scoring manual was constructed summarizing the themes and presenting examples of significant statements representing each thematic concern. Inter-rater reliabilities were calculated for three independent raters.

Results were discussed in terms of research approach, and in relation to previous theoretical and empirical research on the nature of women and aging. The relation of this study to earlier phenomenological studies on the experience of time and of body was discussed. Results were also considered in relation to the issues of differential gender identity.

The need for longitudinal studies to clarify the nature of aging over the course of life was considered as well as the need for phenomenological studies on men to help differentiate the various needs and issues of midlife persons. The application of the present thematic structure to therapy was suggested, as well as further research into the relationship between differential gender issues and therapeutic process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

For man is that ageless creature who has the faculty of becoming many years younger in a few seconds, and who, surrounded by the walls of time through which he has lived, floats within them as in a pool the surface level of which is constantly changing so as to bring him within range now of one epoch, now of another (Proust, 1981, p. 627).

In this study the life cycle is viewed as an integrated, organic whole. Each period contains all other periods. Yet, the entire span is governed by time and the epochs of one's life. The study of the coexistence and interpenetration of periods can be best captured at midlife. Chronological age is neither the marker that it was earlier when to become older meant bigger, more attractive, more important, nor is it the marker assumed later when old age means decline and, alternatively, distinction. Midlife is a bridge between youth and old age. There is a clear sense of differentiation from both the younger and the older generation (Neugarten, 1968). Life is structured in terms of time left until death rather than in terms of time since birth. It is not a reversal of direction but a consciousness of there being an "end."

The self-perception of midlife is fundamentally an experience of being different from ourselves in youth. It is an awareness not of being aged but of aging. The eventual meaning of growing older is contextual in the sense that experiences arise from the interaction between our thoughts and the realities of our lives.

Aging is the unique transaction of our body with time, and of self with others. Although it begins at conception, and is experienced as a universal phenomenon, growing older is intensely personal, shaped by direct and profound encounter with it. It is suffused by our discovery of death and inextricably linked to the passage of time. Existential-phenomenological psychologists assert that time is one of the several essential aspects of being. Keen (1978) claims that a complete description of human existence must include the experience of "Being a body in space," "Being with others," and "Being a self in time." Time provides one of the backdrops of being. We live into the future as a reckoning of the meaning of the present; we live into the past as a reckoning of the meaning of the events of our memory. Aging is experienced against the backdrop of memories and anticipations permeating the present.

It is time and others which presage the inexplicable strangeness of aging and which give meaning to our present

experience. The elusive, chimeric quality of aging is, in part, derived from this astonishing duality. Our bodies change, but the me inside does not. "Can I have become a different being while I still remain myself" (DeBeauvoir, 1972, p. 283). The "who" that we are, we come to know during our youth. In most instances an awareness of our separate existence is known long before adulthood arrives. We are overtaken upon discovering that the face in the mirror is remarkable both by its inexplicable likeness to and by its relatively unfamiliarity with the "me" that I came to know in youth. Our bodies change; the me inside does not.

The change is denoted both by its subtle unfolding and its dramatic jolt. Our private experience reveals little about our age. We feel dumbstruck that the "...passage of universal time [has]...brought about a private, personal metamorphosis..." (DeBeauvoir, 1972, p. 283). It is not that the body fails to inform us, but the signs and sighs are ambiguous. Is it illness or age, temporary or chronic? It appears that we need to be aware of our age before we can detect it in our body. Our inwardness fails to delineate duration. Our aging is more apparent to others than to ourselves.

For the outsider it is a dialectic relationship between my being as he defines it objectively and the awareness of myself that I acquire by means of him.

Within me it is the Other -- that is to say the person I am for the outsider -- who is old: and that Other is myself (de Beauvoir, 1972, p. 284)

At approximately age 40, men (Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977) and women (Block and Davidson, 1985, Giele, 1982, Neugarten, 1968; Rubin, 1979) become aware that they are closer to the end of their life than they are to the beginning. We feel an urgency that time's relentless progression is marching upon us. In the cipher of time it appears reasonable to be aware of our mortality. Often there seems little reason to rejoice at one's accelerating years which bequeath not only physically imposed disabilities but socially imposed limitations. Our current affliction with youth engenders deep doubts about our ability to continue in ambiguous differentness.

The impact of aging is different not only by virtue of personal history and social context; it is also differentially experienced by sex (Block and Davidson, 1985; Bell, 1970; de Beauvoir, 1949/1961; 1972; Giele, 1982; Moss, 1970; Sontag, 1972). Men are subject to feeling vulnerable and discontent with their accomplishments and lack of rewards (Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977). They begin a journey of evaluation and assessment, looking to the past for understanding, to the present for satisfaction, and to the future for hope.

Compared to men, however, it is women who experience growing older most acutely (Freedman, 1986, Melamed, 1983; Moss, 1970; Nowak, 1977; Sontag, 1972). In the last fifteen years there have been vast political and social changes in western society, yet there still remains more permissiveness toward aging men than aging women.

Masculine characteristics such as competency, autonomy, and mastery do not decline with age. On the contrary, such proclivities are enriched and perfected with time. Comely curvaciousness, occupational incompetency, and helplessness are not enhanced by time. Being an attractive companion, having children, and nurturing them are seen in the context of youth which is endowed with beauty and fertility. A woman's attractiveness and reproductive capacities, upon which her social status is often based, become irrelevant with age.

In fairy tales, the young and beautiful girl-princess marries and lives happily ever after. The middle-aged queen is depicted as a witch, deformed and wicked, consumed by jealousy and enraged with the youthful princess. Fairy tales are myths that frequently reflect the deeper meanings of our social situation. Given our cultural milieu women have reason to fear aging. Both in research and folk wisdom, there is an acknowledgment that

women tend to love men for their character whereas men tend to love women for their appearance.

Physical attractiveness counts more in a woman's life than in a man's. Beauty is uniquely identified with youth and women. What this harbors is that in an era when our lifespan is increasing, and for women especially so, the latter half of her life is shadowed by the apprehension of unremitting loss. It is not merely that patriarchy is anchored in biology, it is that woman's bodies -- their reproductive role and the meanings attributed -- serve to set them apart initially. Since they are designed to create and preserve, they are defined in relationship to their bodies, to their children, and to their men.

If our body does not impose on us definite instincts from birth, as the body of an animal does, our body does at least give general form to our life and stable continuity of disposition to our personal acts....The body is the universal means by which we possess a world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 171).

Beauty, femininity, and youth decisively influence a woman's self-concept. More frequently than a man, a woman equates herself with what she looks like, or what she thinks she looks like, or what she believes others think she looks like. Her self-concept is highly related to her own perceptions of attractiveness. Men's self-concept is related to their feelings of effectiveness and fitness. Men tend to judge themselves by what they do, women by how they look. Men view competency as

attractive; women view competency distinct from attractiveness. Men's ratings of personal attractiveness correlate well with other people's ratings; that is, men appear more realistic (Cross, 1971). There is little connection between women's perceived attractiveness to others and her satisfaction with her body image. Even those women who personify the myth of allure, face the fact relatively early in life that their beauty is ephemeral.

Moreover the events of midlife, namely changes in time, others and body affects the sense of self. If midlife brings an end to some relations which form a connection on which a woman relied as well as the activities in which she engaged and through which she judged herself, a sense of loss of identity can be expected.

Who are you?" said the Caterpillar...."I - I hardly know, Sir, just at present," Alice replied rather shyly, "at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then (Carroll, 1971, p. 35).

An interest in understanding midlife has been sparked by an expanding study of the life course as a whole. The study of adulthood, until recently, has not been investigated despite recognition of it as a period of productivity and gratification. It was guaranteed to come into focus. If one studies childhood, adolescence, and

old age, certain questions are bound to arise. Old age reverberates with one adjective: decline. Decline from what? If childhood and adolescence are developmental periods, one asks, development towards what?

One must also question the amount of time it has taken researchers to involve themselves with the issue of midlife. It is always less taxing to study others. In addition, the age of education of the 50s and 60s have given rise to scholars who are now themselves middle age, having to come to terms with its problematic nature. They have come to terms with it in both a personal and scholarly manner (Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1978; Rubin, 1979; Sheehy, 1974; Smelser and Erikson, 1980; Vaillant, 1977). Further impetus for these projects are the significant social changes that have arisen over the last 40 years that have made this period even more problematic: WWII, the Cold War, the Nuclear Age, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Act attendant with the radical change of sexual mores, the economic necessity for dual career couples, the lowered marriage rates for women, the tendency for the childbearing years to concentrate early in the life cycle, resulting in the "empty nest" syndrome occurring earlier, all of which bracket women's involvement with the family.

With renewed interest in the life cycle has come an increased interest in women's development. There appears to be a consensus that established theories do not accommodate or appropriately evaluate gender differences in the lifespan. "Psychologists have found sex differences in their studies from the moment they started doing empirical research" (McClelland, 1975, p. 81). But gender is viewed dichotomously: The model has been fixed at the masculine end; otherness refers to female.

Just as for the ancients there was an absolute vertical with reference to which the oblique was defined, so there is an absolute human type, the masculine....Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being....She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other (de Beauvoir, 1949/1961, pp. xv-xvi).

The male experience has been confirmed as normative, the female deviant. In a now classic study by Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosencrantz and Vogel (1970), mental health experts were requested to rate a list of adjectives reflecting their views of healthy personality. Divided into three random groups, some clinicians rated traits for a "normal male," others for a "normal female," and still others for a "normal adult." Results indicated that characteristics attributed to healthy adults were similar to those assigned to healthy males. By contrast, traits

ascribed to healthy females differed considerably from healthy adults. Healthy women were rated as less independent, more subordinate, less objective, and more emotional than their male counterparts. In addition, preoccupation with appearance was considered normal for healthy women but not for healthy persons. In this study, it was impossible both to be a well adjusted woman and a well adjusted person.

There has been a willingness to have a single scale of measurement with regard to human beings. That scale is more often than not derived and standardized on the basis of men's observations and interpretations of data which in turn are drawn from the study of men. In general, the developmental study of women has been structured, from childhood on, upon a masculine domain. Despite the exclusion of women from these samples, researchers (Kohlberg, 1981; Levinson, 1978; Osherman, 1980; Vailliant, 1977) have attempted "to create an overarching conception of development that could encompass the diverse biological, psychological and social changes occurring in adult development" (Levinson, 1978, p. 8). There are two points to this proposition: first, those who believe that any valid theory requires the experience of both sexes, and second, those who are skeptical.

Science itself is genderized. Even in ordinary conversation, it is associated with maleness and masculinity.

[T]he characterization of both the scientific mind and its modes of access to knowledge as masculine is....significant....connot[ing] autonomy, separation, and distance....a radical rejection of any commingling of subject and object....consistently identified as male and female (Keller, 1978, p. 415).

Keller (1978) asserted that this everyday association went far beyond the fact that most scientists had been men. This association is viewed not only in regard to Western culture, but to the concept of scientific inquiry as a whole, growing out of the idea of science as objective. The prestige of science rests upon the radical separation of self from object world as the only reliable source of knowledge. "The relation specified between knower and known is one of distance and separation. It is that between a subject and an object radically divided" (Keller, 1978, pp. 414-415). Man is the knower and subduer, and nature (feminized) is the mystery and the continent to be known and subdued. This understanding of scientific knowledge grew out of a cultural tradition in which nature was seen as female.

Keller traces this connection not only to the cultural, but to the psychological arena as well, and specifically to the preoedipal period of development. As children develop a sense of separate "I-ness," it is

accomplished with reference to the other, namely the mother. Males, in particular, develop a sense of autonomy and disidentification with the mother, in part, due to cultural pressures against retaining connections with that seen as feminine.

cultural definitions of masculinity....can never appear feminine....autonomy....can never appear relaxed, [and] (cultural definitions) conspire to reinforce the child's earliest association of female with the pleasure and danger of merging, and male with both the comfort and the loneliness of separation. The boy's internal anxiety about both self and gender is....echoed by the cultural anxiety,...lead[ing] to postures of exaggerated and rigidified autonomy and masculinity....to - defend against that anxiety and the longing which generates it (p. 426).

Self-selection takes place. Individuals in whom this form of masculine anxiety regarding separation and autonomy were heightened also were drawn to those activities in which these qualities were seen as the most substantial form of knowledge. Specifically, the view of science as the shrine of objectivity attracted persons who had an affinity toward scientific activity. The profession, in turn, reinforced that particular concept of science and served to attract further those persons who adhered to that vision of scientific endeavor. A cultural scientific cycle reproduced itself.

In physics, the concept of the separation of observer and observed, necessitated a modification in perspective, in part, because developments in quantum mechanics

required a change. These theoretical advances led to a conflict between objectivity and the need to master and dominate with a equal need to embark on "...a quiet conversation with Nature" (Wald, Cited in Keller, 1982, p. 599). Psychology lags behind the very science it sought to emulate.

There is substantial evidence that women perceive and construe social reality differently. These differences center around experiences of attachment and nurturance (Chodorow, 1978a, 1980; Dinnerstein, 1977; Giele, 1982; Gilligan, 1980, 1982). Given that women see themselves in relationships of connection, transitions appear to involve changes in understanding with regard to responsibility and to activities of care. The shift to midlife may witness a redefinition of care in helping and pleasing others. The ethic of responsibility can become an anchor of personal integrity that is self-chosen.

Theorists are challenging the notion of the non-normative "other" sex comparison made of woman.

It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve - a story which shows among other things that if you make a woman out of a man, you are bound to get into trouble. (Gilligan, 1982, p.30).

Rather than make an evaluative statement charged by difference, researchers are looking to the critical differences in and of themselves unencumbered by evaluative statements. Benjamin (1978, 1980, 1981),

Chassquet-Smirgel (1970, 1976), Chodorow, (1978a, 1978b, Dinnerstein (1977), Fast (1984), Giele (1982), Gilligan (1982), and Rubin (1979) have taken a second look at the second sex. Within this context, difference is descriptively noted without judgment. Propositions are often stated as if they were normative for both sexes. But are they? Do women as well as men have mentors? If so, are they of the same character? If not, are there other people who perform like functions? Are women like men propelled by a dream? If so, is it the same dream (Levinson, 1978)? More to the point, is the apparent sequencing of concerns and issues at midlife invariant for both sexes? And, if invariance occurs, does it have the same meaning for each sex? Or, does the particular biological, sociological and psychological make-up of women effect their interpretation of self at midlife. Do they give the same meaning to aging as did the men in Levinson's study (1978)? In order to understand such questions, a study must adopt with a descriptive approach. Such quest will allow new constructions, if necessary, of that which constitutes the experience of aging for midlife women.

My intention for this project is to provide a general theoretical view of psychoanalytically oriented writings having a direct bearing on the subject of women.

Inclusive in the broad framework of analytic theory are existential perspectives. Following the theoretical review, relevant empirical contributions will be considered.

Research Approach

When we consider that to understand one woman is not necessarily to understand any other woman; that even if he could study many women of one rank, or of one country, we would not thereby understand women of other ranks or countries; and even if we did, they are still only the women of a single period of history; we may safely assert that the knowledge which men can acquire of women, even as they have been and are, without reference to what they might be, is wretchedly imperfect and superficial, and always will be so, until women themselves have told all that they have to tell. (Mill, 1869. Cited in Rossi, 1970, p. 130).

This study describes the aging experience from the perspective of those who live it. With that in mind, one must search for the proper methodology to investigate this experience. Most researchers use questionnaires and checklists. A few studies have attempted to examine the experience in depth, but with relatively structured interview formats. Few studies confine themselves to the perspective of the participant only. People in psychology experiments are frequently reduced to statistical numeration. Individual particularities are ignored in lieu of generalizations. With demonstrated certainty this approach is not only useful but necessary.

Computational quantification is important. Only by understanding the meaning being measured, however, does quantification make sense. Not infrequently researchers assume the meaning inheres in the numbers and is understood by all. Before making generalizations about aging at midlife, however, it makes more sense to look at individual experience. As Keen stated (1975):

To understand a piece of behavior, first we must see that behavior in the context of the person's immediate perceptual field....Second, we must see that field in the context of the person's world: How he construes it and his place in it....Third, this process of understanding is an articulation of what we already implicitly understand. His behavior speaks to us, and we understand it as his speaking--as an expression of his being-in-the-world. The goal of phenomenological psychology is to open for our understanding as many layers of that expression as we can (p. 29).

Phenomenological research organizes its methodologies around the lived experience of research participants (Colaizzi, 1973, 1978, Dapkus, 1982; Giorgi, 1967; Keen, 1975; MacGillivray, 1985; Valle & King, 1978), attempting a monistic philosophy to replace the traditional Cartesian dichotomy between mind and body, experience and behavior. Experience and behavior are seen to be equally important components of psychological inquiry (Pollio, 1982). Contemporary theorists see concerns of women centering around relationships, care, and responsibility. Furthermore, these issues are seen contextually; therefore, it seems appropriate to choose a methodology

that is in itself contextual, and congruent with women's experience.

Purpose and Goals of Research

According to Keen (1978) phenomenological knowledge does not yield new information as much as it explicates that which we already know but don't know that we know. Dapkus (1982) investigated the experience of time and MacGillivray (1985) studied the experience of the body. In this study, body and time are seen from the perspective of aging, and aging is seen as a way of viewing both phenomena. The goal of this project is to describe women's experience of aging at midlife as accurately and faithfully as possible.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Deficit Model of Femininity

The chief protagonists in the early controversy surrounding Freud's formulations on feminine development were, of course, Freud (1905/1953, 1923/1961, 1924/1961, 1925/1961, 1926/1959, 1931/1961, 1933/1964), Jeanne Lampl-de-Groot (1927/1965), Ruth Brunswick (1940/1948), Helene Deutsch (1930/1948, 1944, 1945), Karen Horney (1924/1967, 1926/1967, 1932/1967, 1933/1967, 1935/1967), Ernest Jones (1927/1938, 1933/1938, 1935/1938), and an important transitional figure, Melanie Klein (1928, 1932/1959, 1937/1964).

Freud considered female psychology as arising from woman's original genital deficiency and her subsequent need to hide or overcome that defect. His papers from 1905 (1953) through 1931 (1961) elaborated this theme. In 1905/1953 he outlined his fundamental assumption in the development of femininity. "The sexuality of little girls is of a wholly masculine character" (p. 219). In the first phase of infantile sexuality sexual monism existed for both sexes. The penis was the only organ acknowledged. Ignoring Muller's observations

(1925/1932), he felt that prepubescent girls experienced no vaginal sensations. Both sexes not only ignored the vagina; for each it was nonexistent.

In the second phase, the male became aware that girls were without a penis and, therefore, unlike him. Initially, the phallic boy failed to denote this difference as sexual, believing that both sexes have penises. Upon discovering that this was not the case and further realizing that only women had children, he came to an understanding that their defect was due to castration, which in turn led him to fear for his own integrity. Little girls also realized they were missing something. They, too, viewed it as castration and coveted the missing organ, desiring to be like males.

In his 1923/1961 paper, Freud completed his view of infantile sexuality, concluding that little difference existed in the organization of adult and child sexuality. In both there inhered a choice of object and an instinctual investment in that object. The former was genital and the latter, phallic. Because only the male organ was recognized, however, it was only in males one could view the consequence of sexual change.

Problems in the oedipal period for both sexes were determined by the original matrix. The boy had a secure, masculine base in anatomy and instinctual orientation as

well as a heterosexual orientation based on the relationship with his mother. For him oedipal processes arose when he perceived his father as a rival for his mother's affection. Fearing his father's castration of him, he gave up the fantasied, incestuous relationship with his mother and identified with his father, all of which enabled him to take a critical step in solidifying gender identity.

The girl's problems was more difficult. At this point she had a masculine focus with a masculine instinctual orientation and a primary love object that was homosexual -- all of which had be repudiated to achieve feminine gender identity and a heterosexual orientation. Oedipal processes arose for her when she became aware that her sexual organ was not as large, and was, therefore, inferior to the boys. In anger, she turned away from her mother and towards her father. In this process she took a step from homosexual to heterosexual orientation. Her next developmental progression did not occur until after puberty when she invested her interest from the clitoris (male anatomy and masculine aim) to the vagina.

In 1924 (1961), Freud declaring "Anatomy is Destiny" (p. 178), stressed differences in oedipal development in boys and girls. He turned his attention to girls' development but confessed that his material "becomes far

more obscure and full of gaps" (p. 177). In boys the dissolution of the oedipus complex was instigated by the castration complex. Since excitement leading to masturbation was linked to his Oedipal desires, the boy feared loss of his penis if he masturbates, attributing such threats to his mother. It was, however, the sight of the female genitals that gave reality to his fears; fears which gained credibility as he related to earlier losses, breast and feces. Facing a conflict between libidinal desires towards his mother and narcissistic interest in his own body, narcissistic interest predominated.

The girl's castration complex was brought into play by the sight of the boy's penis, leaving her feeling inferior and for which she exhibited "penis envy." Rather than give up Oedipal desires as the boy does, she turned toward the father and attempted to replace the "missing" appendage with a child (child=penis). This postulate was crucial in understanding the female Oedipus complex. She turned away from her father only when her desire for him remained unfulfilled. Already castrated, she had nothing to fear.

At this point the development of superego became focal. For the boy the castration complex resulted in an introjection of paternal and parental authority, forming the basis of his superego. The boy formed an

identification with paternal prohibitions. The sight of female genitals, the basis of the castration complex, allowed destruction of the Oedipus complex, decathexis of the mother, creation of the superego, and according to Freud "...may be regarded as a victory of the race over the individual" (1925/1961, p. 257). Male devaluation of women was the residue of the castration complex.

Freud wished to acknowledge the formation of a superego in women, but he believed it occurred only with great difficulty because of her lack of castration fears. External factors had to be invoked for her in contrast to internal prohibitions forming the male's superego. Thus women's superego was seen as less strong than the male's. and "...never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men" (1925/1961, p.257).

In his landmark 1925 (1961) paper, Freud continued to articulate the themes of his 1924 (1961) paper. In a letter to Abraham (1965), however, he wrote:

I do not know anything about it. As I gladly admit, the female part of the problem is extraordinarily obscure to me...(p. 379).

A year following his definitive formulation (1925/1961), in which he reaffirmed in all subsequent writings, he stressed the limits of his understanding in this area.

We know less about the sexual life of girls than of boys. But we need not feel ashamed of this distinction; after all, the sexual life of adult women is a 'dark continent' for psychology....(1926/1959, p. 212).

The Oedipus complex posed difficult questions for the female development. How do girls give up their earliest attachment for mother and thereafter choose father? The discovery of a sexual organ superior to her own was considered the crucial point in her development. Unlike the boy who worried about this difference only after he established a link between castration and female genitals, the girl immediately "...sees it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" (1925/1961, p. 252).

For girls this process was the origin of both the castration and masculinity complex. She had alternatives: she could hope that she would acquire the desired organ or she could deny castration, persuading herself she really did have the organ. In either case, the narcissistic wound led her to feel inferior. Jealousy as a feminine trait emerged from penis envy. Masturbation, libido, and excitability were quintessentially masculine for Freud. Therefore, when the girl acknowledged the absence of a penis and the difference between the sexes, she gave up masculine pursuits (including masturbation) and turned to feminine ones. "Whereas in boys the Oedipus complex is destroyed by the castration complex, in girls it is made

possible and initiated by the castration complex" (1925/1961, p. 256). Anatomical differences are the determinants of the differential effects of the masculine and feminine castration complex.

His 1931 (1961) paper on Female Sexuality was a comprehensive restatement of his early position. In it he noted girls' strong attachment to their mothers, extending well beyond the phallic stage. He asserted that the preoedipal phase in women was more important than he initially assumed. He commented on the lack of parallelism between the male and female Oedipus complex, noting that the girl's attachment to her mother was difficult to understand analytically. Girls turned from their mother for several reasons: jealousy of those the mother was assumed to love; attachment to mother had no aim and therein could not be satisfied; mother forbade masturbation; the girl despised her mother's castration and femininity in general; and, she felt resentment at the mother for not having accorded the daughter a penis. In this formulation the mother-daughter relationship was of necessity ambivalent. Arising from this ambivalence, reformulations arose which helped to clarify not only the mother-daughter relationship but female psychology in general.

By 1933 (1964), Freud's final words reiterated his position: "We are now obliged to recognize that the little girl is a little man" (p. 118). He denied the girl any intrinsic difference; it was only insufficiency as a male which propelled the girl to develop compensatory femininity. These postulates have been reformulated, critized, and not infrequently discarded, Nonetheless, they were and are pivotal in the subsequent refinement of female development elaborated by those of the post-Freudian era. Unfortunately, Freud's inability to envision feminine counterparts to masculine development, left the female end of the polarity defined in negative terms.

Post-Freudian Perspectives

Observations made by Freud's students appeared to confirm his theories of sexual and gender development.

In the first years of her development...[the girl] behaves exactly like a boy not only in the matter of onanism but in other respects of her mental life: in her love aim and object choice she is actually a little man. When she has discovered and fully accepted the fact that castration has taken place, the little girl is forced once and for all to renounce her mother as love object and therewith to give up the active, conquering tendency of her love aim...(Lampl-de-Groot, 1927/1965, p. 185).

Although corroborating many of Freud's assumptions, Lampl-de-Groot, also, elaborated the girl's libidinal relationship with the mother, asserting that the earlier relationship was eventually replaced by identification

with the mother, and more significantly that "a child of her own acquired for the girl a value similar to that which the penis possesses for the boy; for only a woman, and never a man, can have children" (1927/1965, p. 8), which assertion became critical for contemporary revisions of analytic theory regarding motherhood.

Deutsch was, for the most part, as Chesler (1972) noted, a "dutiful daughter." Her theorizing posited three attributes which she considered fundamentally feminine: narcissism, passivity, and masochism. In brief, Deutsch claimed that as a resurgence of sexual urges appeared in adolescence, the feminine ego utilized narcissism as a defense against these threats. The adolescent girl became preoccupied with her body, her fantasies, and her identity. Her intense relationships with girl friends were narcissistic. Her identification with other females extended her ego, and she acquired confidence from sharing in their strength. Increasing self-confidence promoted a strengthening of the ego which in turn allowed a gradual integration of the personal self, and the emergence of her identity.

Passivity, another presumed aspect of femininity, had both constitutional origins and a physiological base (the absence of vaginal activity). It is not that women were not active but such activity was harmful if it came into

conflict with the feminine core in the form of a "masculine complex," i.e., a protest against acceptance of a feminine self.

Masochism was her third concern attributed to femininity. Her 1930/1948 paper on masochism provided support for Freud's thesis that masochism was analogous to activity directed inward. She affirmed that the vagina was unknown until coitus and claimed that it was discovered only through masochistic submission to the penis. It is through men's activity that women discover their interior. The desire to have a penis is transformed by the desire to be castrated by the father, fantasied as rape. The masochistic triad consists of castration=rape=parturition. The "orgy of masochistic pleasure" for the female is parturition itself.

Although often considered by femininists as a Freud's Freud, Deutsch enabled elaboration of feminine development in her discussion of the mother-daughter relationship. Heterosexuality occurred in the context of relationships (rather than a naturally occurring development), Heterosexuality occurred in the context of relationships (rather than a naturally occurring development), particularly dependent on the behavior of the father (Chodorow, 1978a, p. 138). The oedipal girl alternated between escape from her mother, attraction to her father,

and a reseeking of the mother as a safe refuge against the frightening and frustrating aspects of the father. Deutsch viewed mother's themselves as ambivalent in their attachment which in turn created anxiety in their daughters which provoked attempts at disengagement from the mother, leaving them each convinced that separation could prove catastrophic. This ambivalence elaborated both primary identification and attachment. Both of these became critical issues when later theorists challenged sexual monism and feminine attachment (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964/1970).

In this version, as contrasted with Freud, the oedipal girl does not turn completely from the mother. The girl's choice of the father is "not exclusive(ly)" (Deutsch, 1944, p. 32). She adds the father, defining herself in a relational triangle. The fact that girls do not resolve their oedipal complex to the degree that boys do means that girls develop more preoccupations with both internalized object relationships and external relationships which emerge from the early relationship with the mother. These preoccupations remain an ongoing, ambivalent struggle for a sense of separateness from the mother. Both the preoedipal mother-daughter relationship and the oedipal triangle last throughout a woman's development.

Brunswick's (1940/1948) observations confirmed Freud's as well as Deutsch's view that the girl's preoedipal mother attachment lasted longer in comparison to boys. In addition, she felt both sexes traversed a period of passive and active attachment to their mothers based upon the omnipotent character of the primitive, maternal imago. The mother's powerful image was concurrent with the child's primary helplessness. The exigency of socialization by the mother meant inevitable frustrations suffered at her hands; the good, omnipotent mother was also felt to be the terrifying, bad mother. Both sexes retained similar attachment to their first love object. Brunswick, Lampl-de-Groot, and Freud agreed that ambivalence of the mother-daughter relationship prefigured its doom. "Ambivalence and passivity characterize every primitive relation and ultimately destroy it" (Brunswick, 1940/1948, p. 247). Unstable ambivalence propelled the girl's turn to her father.

Although Deutsch and Brunswick diverged and added to the classic, analytic psychology of women, they were, by and large, well within the biologically, determined anthropocentrism of their time. Karen Horney (1924/1967, 1932/1967) also relied on Freudian assumptions. Her views, however, so diverged that it led to her defection

from Freud's circle and to the formation of her own school of psychoanalysis. She took issue with Freud's assumption

that females feel at a disadvantage because of their genital organs without this being regarded as constituting a problem itself possibly because to masculine narcissism this has seemed too self-evident to need explanation....an assertion that one half of the human race is discontent with the sex assigned to it....is decidedly unsatisfying, not only to feminine narcissism but...to biological science (1924/1967, p. 38).

Horney analyzed the primary and secondary forms of penis envy into their psychic components rather than taking them as self-evident reactions to the girl's factual, constitutional deficiency. The former, she claimed, was a step in the resolution of the oedipus complex as the girl attempted to identify with the father. Underlying this formulation was the assertion of innate femininity which would be supported by Jones (1935/1938). Concurrent with this view, she saw the equation of penis=baby a cumbersome explanation for what she termed the "mutual attraction" of the sexes. Innate femininity as well as mutual attraction relied on her own version of instincts which clinically could neither be tested nor supported.

In (1932/1967) Horney asserted that male's fear of women had roots considerably deeper than previously understood. Agreeing with Lampl-de-Groot that the mother is the first love object of both sexes, she, too, saw

that the role itself created frustration and aggression. Impulses which the boy experiences towards his mother were frustrated. He was humiliated by the impotence and weakness of his body compared to hers. The narcissistic wounds resulting from this comparison, lowered his self-esteem and raised his drive for revenge. Projecting his aggression onto his mother, it was her vagina that became frightening. The boy's dread is ambivalent, and he parried that dread by externalizing and objectifying women. "It is not,...that I dread her; it is that she herself is malignant, capable of any crime, a beast of prey, a vampire, a witch, insatiable in her desires....the very personification of what is sinister" (p. 135).

In compensation for his feelings of failure with regard to his mother, he attempts a variety of solutions to cope with both situation and object: 1) idealize the object, 2) depreciate the object, 3) dominate the object, and 4) avoid contact with or find disgust in the object. All these solutions resonate with contemporary views of gender development and the "battle of the sexes." Horney felt the girl's fears were similar to but took a slight twist from the boy's. The girl's fear of the father arose over the size of his penis and the corresponding smallness of her genitals. She could not reassure herself that her fears were unfounded because her genitals were not

visible. She was fearful of injury to and compromise of the integrity of her body.

Ernest Jones (1927/1938), supporting Horney, criticized Freud, claiming that the latter had a phallocentric view of women (p. 556). "Freud's phallic phase in girls is probably a secondary, defensive construction rather than a true developmental stage" (p. 569). Taking issue with the notion of penis envy as occupying a central role in female sexual development, he asserted that femininity did not represent thwarted masculinity. It was primary, predating the phallic phase and preoedipal in origin. The girl was not "un homme manque" (1935/1938, p. 616). He agreed with Horney concerning the girl's fear of internal destruction creating difficulties because they cannot confirm or deny that their internal genitalia is intact. Girls do not, he asserted, experience their genitals as inferior or castrated but only come to think of them that way defensively.

This view seems to me more in accord with the ascertainable facts, and also intrinsically more probable than one which would regard her femininity to be the result of an external experience (viewing the penis)....I do not see a woman...as a permanently disappointed creature struggling to console herself with secondary substitutes alien to her nature (pp. 615-616).

The girl's desire for a penis was necessary for libidinal satisfaction. Narcissistic penis envy was a

secondary, defensive flight from libidinal, oedipal drives and fear of the consequences, anaphansis (physical or psychic extinction) which was differentially manifest by sex. In males, anaphansis was conceived as an active form of castration, in females as separation. In this manner the girl was more dependent on her partner than he was on her. For physical reasons alone, therefore, this led to a greater dependence and moral approbation of the female than of the male. Morality became a male creation, and the moral ideals of women were copied from men which were, in turn, derived from the father.

Following Horney's defection from the Freudians, published criticism of Freud's theories of femininity all but disappeared in classical, analytic circles. The published literature, however, failed to represent the range of controversy surrounding Freud's formulations.

Many analysts convey the impression that what is written on the topic does not accurately reflect their current views. Thus, to take one example, not many analysts would now view masochism...as the inevitable concomitant of normal adult femininity...Similarly, few analysts would expect women to regard the acceptance of a generalized passivity and of feelings of inferiority as suitable therapeutic goals for themselves. Yet a reading of the standard literature on the subject could easily convey just such notions. We thus observe a curious phenomenon, namely,...a difference between contemporary attitudes and the standard literature. This split is...striking...(Fliegel, 1973, p. 385).

The ongoing reexamination of Freud's theory of femininity remains in the shadow of the historical

controversy in which it took shape. In general, there are two and possibly three currents: (1) continuing research, some of which confronts Freud's writings on women directly; (2) efforts to salvage Freud's formulations at the expense of internal logic; and (3) attempts to give his theory greater plausibility by construing it in metaphorical terms (Lacan, 1958/1977; Mitchell, 1974/1975). Recognition of the limitations (that theory is embedded in and not independent) of its cultural origins rather than preservation at all costs could be a way of focusing energy and resolution to those areas of Freud's work which have continuing salience to the understanding of both sexes (Fliegel, 1986).

Object Relational Considerations

Object relations theory attempted to bridge the gap between the importance of preoedipal attachment and classical, psychoanalytic thought. Object relations treats the pre-oedipal period as both an interpersonal field and stage through which the infant progresses. Relationships are internalized by the infant and configurative in adult personality (Fairbairn, 1952b; Mahler, 1975; Winnicott, 1971a). Women's social role (motherhood) demands that she defer to, articulate her needs in relation to, be connected to, and shape her life

in accordance with others. Object relations theory resonates with contemporary understandings of female development. "Observation suggests that object-relations theory is more primary than instinct theory in this regard" (Kleeman, 1976/1977, p. 18).

Melanie Klein (1928, 1932/1959, 1937/1964) served as a transitional figure between the Freudian drive/structure model and the relational/structure model of object relations' theorists. Regarding female psychology, Klein's most pertinent elaborations lie in the early object relationships of children. Since all infants organize their internal life around the person of the mother, all infants have good and bad experiences at the breast, and since all infants come to identify with the caregiver who is at once both loved and feared, all children raised by women take into themselves a picture of woman as both all good and powerful and all bad and withholding. It was this aspect of object relations theory that meshed so well with how contemporary thinkers saw the role and problems of women.

Mahler (1968) saw the newborn as a mass of undifferentiated needs which state she termed "normal autism." The next period, that of symbiosis, in which mother and infant merge was followed by a process of separation and individuation in which the ego developed

out of this mother-child matrix. Termed the "hatching" period, autonomous strivings by the child were contiguous with the perceptual, motor development enhancing locomotor activity. By alternatively leaving and returning to the mother, the child was "practicing" to become an autonomous and separate person. This concept of intrapsychic differentiation was implicit in the work of Stierlin (1974) and Boszormenyi-Nagy and Stark (1973). These studies pointed out the usefulness of the paradigm of separation-individuation not just through the initial stages of development but throughout the life cycle. Mahler commented on the appropriateness of the problem of separation-individuation during adulthood:

One could regard the entire life-cycle as constituting a more or less successful process of distancing from and introjection of the lost symbiotic mother, an eternal longing for the actual or fantasied "ideal state of self," with the latter standing for a symbiotic fusion with the "all good" symbiotic mother, who was at one time part of the self in a blissful state of well being (1972, p. 338)

Mahler's views were implicit in Fairbairn (1941/1952a, 1951/1952b) in his description of "mature dependence," in Balint (1965) and in A. Freud (1965) in a discussion of the developmental line of dependence/self-reliance.

For Winnicott (1965), the expression "good enough mothering" encompassed the mother's adaption to the needs of her infant. Mothers give themselves over to the infant's care so that it can continue "going on being"

with minimal interference. Mother gradually provide the infant with the basis of objectivity as she resumed her life in connection with the infant's developing abilities.

Object relations theorists regard this early, preoedipal period as crucial to the development of autonomous as well as other functioning. It is the intensity of the attachment and the increasing recognition that "I am apart" during this period that makes separation fraught with anxiety. The relationship between the mother and child was fundamental and left an indelible imprint throughout one's life. A failure in later development, the most serious of which was schizophrenia, was attributed to failures during this stage of total dependency.

The paradigm elaborated by Mahler and other object relations theorists assumed a developmental line beginning with autism, continuing through the child's gradual capacity to associate satisfaction in the course of the caretaker as other which, in turn, led to the development of object constancy and with the satisfaction of needs in an interpersonal context. Kohut (1977) proposed an alternative model in which the mother existed as a tension-regulating mechanism experienced by the child as indistinct from the child himself. In this paradigm the task became one of differentiating self from mother

rather than of making and then dissolving an attachment to mother.

Gender Identity

Gender identity appears to be a special case which fits into the development of identity in general. The sense of entity and identity is dependent on the integration of a self-body schemata with attendant formation of "a myself, a me, or an I." This primitive body schema is the core of self upon which gender and sexuality implant themselves. Greenacre (1958/1971) outlined the significant double edged face of self and identity, having both an inner and an outer aspect.

on one hand, a....person....whose component parts are sufficiently well integrated....that the affect is of a genuine oneness....On the other....identity (self) refers to the unique characteristics of an individual....whereby it can be distinguished from....similar persons....the emphasis is on likeness and....on specific differences...(p. 113).

Greenacre traced these developments to sometime after six months of age and extending into the second half of the second year. During this latter period there arises a gradual increase in genital feelings - clitoral and phallic -giving endogenous sensations and pressures from within which combine with the body image produced by visual and tactile appreciation of one's own genitals and those of others. She noted that some degree of fusion

(of the images of one's own organs and those of an individual of the opposite sex) is practically universal (1953, 1955).

Greenacre's approach was essentially a descriptive-phenomenological one. Lichtenstein (1983) noted that even Greenacre's description was only one aspect of a wider problem which can be seen as emphasizing the two faces of the term: one stressing likeness and the other difference. This dual orientation appears to be a special component of the fact that the concept of identity can be perceived only as it relates to its opposite, the idea of change. "We are thus reminded of time and change as universal phenomena that have often been interpreted by philosophers as the essence of being itself" (Lichtenstein, 1983, p. 58).

Eissler's (1958) view of identity or self is the experience of self-cognizance; "I am I." He deemphasized the relationship between body image and sense of self and adopted a view akin to Spitz's (1957) differentiation between I, ego, and self.

"I," like later in the self [is]...a product of the awareness of ego...the precursor of the "I," namely the infant's awareness of a "non-I"....The infant works out...an awareness of the "I" in virtue of actions performed in his relations with the "non-I" (Spitz, 1957. Cited in Lichtenstein, 1983, p. 62).

All three link the emergence of the experience of self to the early contact with the mother, conferring a close

correlation between primitive body contact (experienced by the child and its relation to its love object) and the sense of self.

Stoller (1968) arrived at a relatively new conception of the process of sexual differentiation in the use of the concept "core gender identity" which designated the conviction the child acquired early in life of belonging to one sex or the other. The terms gender, sex, gender identity, and sexual identity have often been used synonymously. Sex refers to the biology of maleness and femaleness, i.e., 46, XX karyotype, vagina or ovaries. Gender is a psychological construct referring to the basic sense of maleness or femaleness. Sexual identity is the acquisition of masculinity and femininity, eroticized into fantasies, attractions and object choices. Gender identity is the conviction that one is male or female and is an earlier and more fundamental acquisition which integrates anatomical givens and reproductive potentials into primitive self-representations.

Stoller's work provides a ground common to both current and past conceptualizations. He asserted that the conviction of belonging to one sex or the other preceded the phallic and oedipal phases, at which time a more clearly defined sexual identity and orientation emerged. It also preceded the child's awareness of actual

anatomical distinctions between the sexes. Core identity evolved with the child's emergence from the symbiotic phase. For girls, primary identification continued, while for boys, disidentification from the mother became a requirement. His view contrasted sharply with the earlier Freudian view of an identical masculine preoedipal phase for both sexes. The process of disidentification required that the boy not only separate intrapsychically from the mother but, in addition, come to accept the essential difference between them. The boy's gender identity was, in this version, more rather than less complex than girls. Feminine identity flowed more naturally out of the primary identification in the symbiotic phase. Because she need not differentiate as sharply as the boy, girls could afford softer ego boundaries. Again, this contrasted with the Freudian model which viewed feminine identity as more difficult, involving a change of both object and orientation.

Fast (1984) offered a "differentiation" model of identity into which gender identity fits as a special case. Aspects of Greenacre, Stoller and Piaget are clearly seen in her formulations. She traces identity development as originating in primary narcissism. In the initial experience of self, only experiencing is known; existence is perceived as a function of experience.

Implicit is the idea that the initial, narcissistic, identity experience is one in which the infant has no sense of anything occurring independently of its own experiencing. Experience is equated with reality. The infant is, therefore, subject to two illusions: omnipotence (the notion that one's own experiencing carries with it the relevant reality) and primary creativity (the notion that events exist only as they are being experienced).

The transition out of this particular narcissism is made possible by a gradual differentiation of self and non-self out of undifferentiated experience. The culmination of this differentiation occurs at about two years of age in the capacity for symbolic representation and in the concurrent recognition of a world independent of the self. Undifferentiated experience is seen as a narcissistic state of unlimited possibilities; that is, the child's sense of sex and gender potential is not limited by its actual sex. Postulating gender differentiation as analagous to that of other differentiations, the girl delimits herself as specifically feminine in relationship to those who are specifically masculine (the self and the non-self).

The girl's awareness of sex differences is concurrently accompanied by a sense of loss in response

to her understanding that she is not unlimited, i.e., that those things which are unequivocally male are lost to her forever. The sense of loss Fast described brings to mind Mahler's (1975) observations that many girls appear depressed during this stage. This contrasts with the little boy's enthusiasm and "love affair" with the world. The girl views the penis as the focus of her sense of loss with a concurrent wish for restitution. Unlike Freud's hypothesis, however, the desire for restitution is not a wish to be a male, but a wish for unlimited possibilities. The sense of loss is analogous to giving up the illusion of omnipotence. In the girl's continuing developmental differentiation, notions of masculinity and femininity become increasingly complex and more elaborately articulated.

This paradigm suggests that the girl's genital organization is female initially. Moreover, genital sensations contribute to her body image from birth, physiological developments contribute to gender-specific behavior, and social influences begin with sex ascription at birth. By two years of age she is able to attribute masculinity or femininity to her self and others.

Fast's bimodel model of identity is substantiated by Bach (1980), who asserted that identity involved

the double or complementary task of establishing a sense of self as a center for action and thought, and of viewing this self in the context of other selves as a thing amongst things. What is required is both a subjectification and an objectification; two different perspectives on the same self (p. 175).

Bach (1980) references Zazzo's (1975) study, which found

a phase of indecision, usually between 24 and 30 months, when the normal child can recognize himself in the mirror but apparently has not yet integrated this "objective" percept of himself with the "subjective" sense of himself. It was observed that for a period of about three months after recognition has been established, children called the mirror image by their own name, "Johnny, " while referring to themselves as "me" (Cited by Bach, 1980, p. 184).

Bach notes that psychoanalytic theory argues both for a tolerance for the conceptual ambiguity of self as both agent and representation, and for the acceptance of the paradox of self as both subject and object. He argues for a broader interpretation of psychoanalytic theory, integrating the objectifying perspective of classical psychoanalysis and ego psychology with the phenomenological approach of object relations and self psychology (1980, p. 186).

Self Psychology and Psychoanalytic Phenomenology

The capacity to accept the paradox to which Bach (1980) refers; that is, the ability to maintain two perspectives on one self, is similar to the characterization of transitional phenomena (Winnicott, 1951/1958). The inability to tolerate or resolve the

paradox to which Bach refers relates to difficulties narcissistic patients have in sustaining this dual perspective on themselves and their therapist concurrently. This relates to "the dichotomy between subjective awareness,....and objective self awareness..." (Bach, 1980, p. 178). Problems in integrating these perspectives relate to oscillations between unmodulated extremes. Patients who are unable to maintain this equilibrium and who cannot shift smoothly from one state of self awareness to another are described as self-disordered (Rinsley, 1982). Klein and Winnicott emphasized the attainment of the depressive position in the first years of life as prerequisite to the establishment of object constancy, the capacity for concern, and a stable sense of identity.

Coherence, cohesion, and integration is a contemporary focal point of psychoanalytic theory and has been elaborated by G. Klein (1976), Stolorow & Atwood (1979, 1983), and Stolorow & Lachmann (1980). Disagreement exists, however, regarding the meaning and nature of the self. Hartmann (1939) defined self as one's own person. Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein (1946/1964) noted id and ego as aspects of the self characterized both by libidinal needs and adaptation to external reality. Jacobson's (1964) "self" refers to the "whole person,"

including both body and psychic structures. Lichtenstein (1965) asserted that a lack of clarity existed as to how the "whole person" could be related to or distinguished from psychic structures. Lichtenstein (1965) felt that the "whole person" was simply not an object of observation.

Observation of the whole person confronts us with the infinite sequence of bodily and behavioral transformations during the whole life of the individual....The perception of the "whole person" means the process of abstracting an invariant from the multitude of transformations (Lichtenstein, 1965, p. 119).

Moreover, he questions the issues of time and situation within which the self is experienced either by others or by itself. Is the self the same self in its various phases of development? Is the self the same self across different situations? How do we understand sameness and differentness?

The self has been considered as an organizing principle independent of other psychic agencies, which provides a unifying frame of reference (Spiegel, 1959). "The self is an intrapsychic structure consisting of multiple self representations and their related affect dispositions" (Kernberg, 1975, p. 315). Gedo (1979) viewed "self" as synonymous with the personality as a whole saw it as "most fruitfully understood as a hierarchy of potentials for actions, i.e., of both organismic and subjective goals, as modified by a system of values"

(pp. 11-12). The self, in addition, has been considered as "a psychological structure through which self experience acquires cohesion and continuity and by virtue of which self experience assumes its characteristic shape and enduring organization" Stolorow and Atwood, 1983, p. 100).

Informed by these same defining characteristics, i.e., continuity in time, structural cohesiveness, and positive self-esteem, Kohut (1971, 1977) added the concept of self-object to define the function of a person who serves to sustain some or all of the self characteristics for someone else, who is subject to loss of self continuity, self fragmentation and oscillations in self esteem in the absence of a self-object relationship. From this perspective the self is the center of agency, impressions, and the locus of relationships. The representational world in this view occasions

the distinctive configurations of self and object that shape and organize a person's experiences....we conceptualize these structures as systems of ordering or organizing principles (Piaget, 1970)--cognitive-affective schemata (G. Klein, 1976) through which a person's experiences of self and other assume their characteristic forms and meanings (Stolorow, 1978)...."representational world" refers to the structure of that world as disclosed in the thematic patterning of his subjective life (Stolorow & Atwood, 1983, p. 99-100).

This particular patterning was not understood in terms of a linear causal explanation, but "a subjective

contextualism which brings to focus the nexus of personal meanings in which a person's experience and conduct are embedded" (Stolorow & Atwood, 1983, p. 101).

The world in which one lives and moves presents itself as though it were something independently and objectively real. The patterning and thematizing of events that uniquely characterize...personal reality are thus seen as if they were properties of those events rather than products of...subjective interpretations and constructions (Stolorow & Atwood, 1983, p. 103).

"A person's experiences are shaped by his representational configurations without this shaping becoming the focus of awareness and reflection" (Stolorow & Atwood, 1983, p. 102). In other words, the principles which give rise to these patterns of awareness are prereflective.

A Woman's Sense of Self

Anthrocentrism is ubiquitous in Freud's theory of personality. However one defines the self, the female sense of self, because it is not male, is flawed. Early theorists seemed unable to imagine that women could value their particularity or their similarity to an idealized mother. Theories which portray development as a progression from fusion, dependence to independence fails to address the oscillating states of merger and of separateness that characterizes human experience throughout the lifespan. This version of human development fails to recognize that even infant

experiences of oneness alternate with experiences of differentiation (Stern, 1983). Mahler, who in part, supported a linear version of development, was still able to see it as a lifelong process:

or the more or less normal adult, the experience of being both fully "in" and at the same time basically separate from the "world out there" is among the givens of life that are taken for granted. Consciousness of self and absorption without awareness of self are the two polarities between which we move, with varying ease and with varying degrees of alternation or simultaneity. This too is the result of a slowly unfolding process...in relation to (a) one's own body, and (b) the principal representative of the world, as the infant experiences it, namely the primary love object. As is the case with any intrapsychic process, this one reverberates throughout the life-cycle (1972, p. 333).

Although widely recognized as important, qualities associated with femaleness such as attachment, cooperation, and interdependence, have, until recently, found little acceptance in psychoanalytic circles. Depicting separateness and autonomy as reflective of normality and maturity describes masculine concerns but neglects feminine ones. If separateness is seen as the hallmark of mental health, then the affinity and ability to form attachments, to cooperate, and to enjoy reciprocal interdependence is bequeathed a lesser value. For example, Levinson (1978) and Vaillant (1977) found that their most successful male subjects were without intimate attachments or even friendships for the most

part; that is, their criteria for success and their definition of self did not include interdependence or attachment to their wives or families. It did not, for the most part, include intimate friendships with other men.

The refinement of object relations theory has made it possible to understand gender differences in terms of complex and subtle relational configurations. These configurations concern the nature of differentiation and identification patterns, rather than as biological destiny. Females are caught in a double bind. Societal expectations assign women as caretakers on one hand, although society respects autonomy as one of the most worthwhile goals to achieve on the other hand. Until recently autonomy had been adopted as an ego ideal in this society.

Conceptualized by Maslow (1970), autonomous persons like solitude, privacy, find it easy to be aloof, reserved, calm, and serene, exuding a quality of detachment. In the ordinary sense of the word, self-actualizers do not need others; they are self-starters, independent of the influence of others. In deference to Maslow, it is noted that he explicates the seeming paradox of self-actualizers and concepts of interdependence.

Menaker (1973), however, noted the drawbacks of this common viewpoint:

There is hidden in the exaggerated valuing of a seeming autonomy and purity of purpose, an omnipotent self-conception and a denial of the interdependence of people and their relationships (p. 139).

Recent research and theorizing, which studied girls and women from their own perspective, found female concerns qualitatively different from male concerns. Although separation-individuation issues remain crucial, superego conflicts and identity are also important for women. Various theorists (Balint, 1937/1965; Benjamin, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1986; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964/1970, 1976; Chodorow, 1971, 1978a, 1978b, 1980; de Beauvoir, 1949/1961; Dinnerstein, 1977; Farber, 1972/1976; Fast, 1984; Gilligan, 1980, 1982) have addressed issues of gender differences in mother-child relationship and mother-daughter relationship, motherhood, autonomy, morality, separateness, and embeddedness.

A. Balint (1937/1965) extended the idea of a reciprocal mother-child attachment. With regard to feminine psychology and particularly with regard to the girl's ambivalence toward her mother, mentioned briefly by Brunswick (1940/1948) and Lampl-de-Groot (1927/1948) -- she asserted, "It is the love for [rather than rivalry with] the mother that causes the gravest difficulty for the little girl" (1954, p. 85). What the girl comes to

realize is that her similarity to her mother is insufficient to make her mother care for her, and mother prefers father and son. The girl's desire for a penis arises out of a desire to win over her mother. Angry at her mother, feeling like a rejected lover, she turns to her father in defense, to provide the love she did not get from her mother. His penis allows her to get the love from the first object. In this rendition, the turn to the father gets the girl what she really wants: the love of both parents.

Chasseguet-Smirgel (1964/1970; 1976), looking at the opposite side (from that of A. Balint, 1937/1965) of the mother-daughter relationship, challenged Freud's critical dimensions of sexuality. Taking issue with the theory of sexual monism, penis envy and the correlative ignorance of the vagina shared by both sexes, she noted Freud's recognition yet denial of vaginal sensations in early childhood (Freud, 1931/1961, p. 228). Recognition of the existence of the vagina, even unconsciously, would totally upset the theory of female sexuality. She viewed the theory of phallic monism as essentially defensive in nature. Sharing this claim with Muller, Horney, Klein, and Jones, she placed the same phenomena in a new perspective.

The infant's dependency on his mother for absolute survival precipitates the formation of an omnipotent, maternal imago. Through psychological and physiological maturation, the infant gains a measure of freedom from this dependency, although both sexes' psyche remains marked by the primary helplessness of infancy. Helplessness is at the heart of the problem. In this context, renunciation of the oedipal object is tied to the child's recognition of smallness and of personal insufficiencies. "This is the tragedy of lost illusions" (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1976). A theory of sexual monism enables the child to maintain such illusions.

reality is not only founded in the difference between the sexes, but also in the absolute correlative, the difference between the generations. The reality is not that the mother has been castrated but that she possesses a vagina that the child is utterly unable to (ful)fill. The reality is that the father possesses a penis that the little boy does not have....and genital faculties the child does not possess. When the child is forced to heed the difference between the sexes and their complementarity, he simultaneously comes to realize the difference between the generations. This causes a narcissistic wound that the theory of sexual phallic monism tries to erase (p. 282).

There are two dimensions of the child's relationship to the mother which dictate the need for a phallic monism: the omnipotent mother on one hand and the oedipal mother on the other. It is the wish to break away from the powerful mother which creates the projection of her power on to the father and his penis and leads to the

decathection of maternal qualities. Penis envy supposedly arises because of the girl's need to arrest maternal omnipotence:

penis envy is not an end in itself, but rather the expression of a desire to triumph over the omnipotent, primal mother through the possession of the organ the mother lacks, i.e., the penis (p. 285).

All children desire both freedom from the mother's omnipotence and a sense of self in completeness. The boy, through his maleness and the possession of a penis, is easily able to do so. They compensate him for narcissistic injury and symbolize his difference, independence and separateness from his mother. According to this view, the girl possesses nothing with which to oppose the mother which the mother herself does not have. The girl's reaction to her attempts at liberating herself from her mother is the development of penis envy. Chasseguet-Smirgel (1964/1970) views this as both a narcissistic and libidinal issue. Unable to exhibit independence, the girl envies the boy and his symbol of difference "...not as a virility claim to something one wants for its own sake, but as a revolt against the person who caused the narcissistic wound: the omnipotent mother..." (pp. 115-116). The girl's desire for the penis is placed on a metaphoric level. The phallus becomes a symbol of power and/or omnipotence whether you have one,

as a male, or you have the sexual object (mother's possession of father).

Basically penis envy is the symbolic expression of another desire. Women do not wish to become men, but want to detach themselves from the mother and become complete, autonomous women (p. 118).

The girl's change of object in the oedipal phase has acquired considerable status in analytic theory. Casting the girl's change of object in a slightly different perspective, Chasseguet-Smirgel (1964/1970) views the girl's attachment to her father as growing out of and dependent on her attachment to her mother. The female oedipus complex is a change in the girl's relational stance toward the mother rather than a change from one object to another. The oedipus complex for her is only secondarily concerned with sexual orientation. Basically it is a defense against the girl's merger and oneness with the mother. Splitting is the primary dynamic in her turn to her father. Having internalized the pre-ambivalent, preoedipal mother, the girl splits her internal image into good and bad. To reject the mother so as to liberate herself and deal with the primitive, overwhelming images of mother, the girl projects all the qualities of the good, internalized mother as well as the girl's inner relationship to her, onto the father. She retains all of the bad aspects, internal and external, for the mother. She splits the father's image as well, transferring all

the bad aspects of him onto the mother. It is the bad aspects of the first object (mother) which serve as the basis for her change of object [to father]. Splitting allows the creation of boundaries between herself and her mother while retaining her primary identifications and symbiotic experiences. The girl's preoedipal experiences of self and self in relationship to mother lead her to look for a symbol of autonomy and separateness and a relationship which will enable her to get her independence.

In the mid-1970s, an analysis of female development was reexamined from various perspectives. Of the differences noted between the sexes, the one that appeared immutable was women's reproductive capacity. Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1961) had long before asserted that it was this particular difference that condemned women to an unfree existence. Until relatively recently, feminism and motherhood stood in opposition. This axion was challenged, however, and the questioning of mothering was reopened.

In 1977, Dorothy Dinnerstein undertook an analysis of motherhood and its effects (especially in the realm of sexuality) upon society. She attempted to clarify the reasons behind our consent to current gender arrangements. Gender arrangements referred "to the

division of responsibility, opportunity, and privilege" between men and women, to "the pattern of psychological interdependence....implicit in this division," and to the emotional symbiosis that resulted from these arrangements (p. 4).

The treacherous mermaid, seductive and impenetrable female representative of the dark and magic underwater world from which our life comes and in which we cannot live, lures voyagers to their doom. The fearsome minotaur, gigantic and eternally infantile offspring of a mother's unnatural lust, male representative of mindless, greedy power, insatiably devours live human flesh (p. 5).

Dinnerstein contends that the experience of human infancy shaped adult consciousness. Because the child experiences the mother as powerful, out of control, and unable to meet all of its needs, concurrent with its own helplessness, there arises, in men, an overwhelming need to control women. In both work and culture, the autonomy of women was threatening to them and for this reason, men sought to exclude women from large areas of life. Women, in turn, acquiesced to this arrangement because of their own experience of symbiosis with the mother and the subsequent separation from her which led to psychic conflicts. Dinnerstein asserted that although shared parenting would not abolish these conflicts, it might, in part, prevent them these conflicts from being projected by men onto women in the manner that they have to date. She

failed to take into account that even shared parenting does not abolish the relation of the child to the body of a woman and the asymmetry involved with the fact that women and not men give birth and nurse.

Structured upon the foundations of psychoanalytic and object relations theory as well as on empirical research, Chodorow (1978a) articulated her understanding of women's monopoly of mothering. Mothers remain a significant inner object throughout adult life for both sexes, but the interpersonal field for each sex is functionally different. Mothers see daughters as extensions of themselves and identify more strongly with them than with their sons. Seen as "like me," ego boundaries between mothers and daughters are more fluid and continuous with the self.

Girls emerge from this period with a basis for "empathy" built into their primary definitions of self in a way boys do not....From the retention of pre-Oedipal attachments to their mother, growing girls come to define themselves as continuous with others; their experience of self contains more flexible and permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiations. The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate....Masculine personality, then, comes to be defined in terms of the denial of relation and connection (and the denial of femininity) whereas feminine personality comes to include a fundamental definition of self in relationship. Thus relational abilities and preoccupations have been expanded in women's development and curtailed in men's (1978a, pp. 167-169).

Chodorow situates gender differences in the context of male loss of maternal identifications and parental capacities. In line with Stoller's work (1968), it is males who undergo a radical transformation to become "not like mother." Gender identity for males is more precarious because in order to disidentify with mother, it is necessary to repudiate much of the original relationship. Women enter relationships with their daughters based both on being female and on being raised by a female. Consequently, the female child is seen never to separate completely from the mother, but instead, to remain invested in her. In having a female child, the mother reconstructs the original oedipal triangle of which she, her mother, and her father were the original participants and which becomes paradigmatic for subsequent familial relationships.

Chodorow also noted the importance of fathers in feminine gender development. The omnipotent mother as discussed by Brunswick, Lampl-de-Groot, Horney, Jones and Chasseguet-Smirgel tends to perpetuate primary love and a primary sense of oneness in relation to their daughters. In a nuclear family, the father is likely to be seen as a symbol of freedom and autonomy from this symbiotic state. A girl child is likely to turn to him because he is the most available person to help her separate from her

mother. Girls deal with these issues in relation to persons in roles that are systematically gender linked because of family organizationn and not because of the inherent qualities of the persons of either gender.

The capacities and orientations....are not behavioral acquisitions. Women's capacities for mothering and abilities to get gratification from it are strongly internalized and psychologically enforced....Women are prepared psychologically for mothering through the developmental situation in which they grow up, and in which women have mothered them (Chodorow, 1978a, p. 39)

A woman's sense of self is organized around the ability to establish and maintain relationships. The significance of the feminine oedipus complex consists in the creation of a sense of self in relationships that underlie sexual orientation. Girls enter the oedipal phase later and in a different relational context than boys. Girls do not give up preoedipal relationships but build upon them. Girls retain the sense of self and self in relation to mother, and are preoccupied with issues of symbiosis and primary love without a sense of the other person's separateness.

Autonomy: A Relational Conflict

Most analytic theorists regard separation and individuation as decisive turning points in the child's endeavor to become a healthy and mature adult. The degree to which the child successfully separates is the mainstay

of healthy functioning in this model. By contrast, contemporary thinkers (Dinnerstein, 1977; Chodorow, 1978a; Gilligan, 1982), without denying the crucial aspects of separation and individuation, stress attachment and relationships as characteristic of, and essential to, women. Implicit in Chodorow's (1978a) argument is a critique of the normative concept of individuality. Theories of differentiation are based on male experience, emphasizing separation rather than attachment and autonomy rather than relationship. Each sex is assigned only one side of human experience.

As an outgrowth of mother-daughter relationship, girls compared have less need than boys to repress their identifications with their mothers. As a result, a distinctive kind of moral development occurs; women focus on care and concern with a greater understanding of responsibilities essential to relationships. Autonomy issues arise when women's nurturing image becomes conflictual as she departs from that image. In this vein, Gilligan (1982) sums up her perspective on gender differences in the following manner. "In their portrayal of relationships, women replace the bias of men toward separation with a representation of the interdependence of self and other..." (p. 170).

Gilligan (1982) noted that Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development implied moral deficiency for women. The sample population was composed of boys and the concerns which that population encountered were those of males. Gilligan (1982) contended that Kohlberg's conception of moral development was based on the unfolding of autonomous rights (male concerns) rather than on care, concern, and responsibility (female concerns). Because the latter rights are undervalued, women's morality was seen to be impaired. In contrast to men, care and concern are central issues in women's morality whereas justice and fairness are central for men.

Gilligan studied women's views as they considered real life moral dilemmas. Her data indicated that early in life women viewed themselves as evolving within a relationship to others. Women, in contrast to men, did not see themselves as independent agents who made autonomous decisions about self and others. Decisions were made with others in mind. From a women's view, moral failure and success, therefore, were based on avoiding hurt and providing care. From this view a moral problem involves a conflict of responsibilities rather than of rights. Women conceptualize moral problems in a contextual, narrative form rather than in a formal,

abstract form as did their male counterparts. Moral dilemmas exist between people rather than between ideas.

For both sexes, the catalyst for moral change is crisis. Intimate interaction is the crisis for men. For women, who are familiar and comfortable with the very relationships for which men are unprepared, such is not the case. Acknowledgement of their own needs and its potential conflict with the needs of others precipitated moral crisis and growth for women.

Critical of the split in connectedness and autonomy and what it portends for society as well as for female development, Benjamin (1978, 1980, 1981, 1986), has united ego psychology, object relations theory, Chodorow (1978a), Gilligan (1982), and de Beauvoir (1949/1961) as well as the psychoanalytically oriented criticism of the Frankfort school (articulated by Lasch, 1977, 1979). She noted (along with many other current theorists) that analysts seldom see the disturbances of Freud's day. Classical theory viewed the primary psychological task as differentiation and age-appropriate autonomy which the Oedipus complex insured by requiring the child to relinquish infantile omnipotence. The new disorders are seen as more primitive, i.e., as pre-oedipal. Benjamin questions whether the oedipal model is, in fact, the sine qua non of authority. She asks whether the

internalization of authority is necessary for differentiation, and questions what that says about gender domination or more precisely, female masochism.

Freud's superego was the internalization of two seemingly opposite injunctions. The father enjoins the boy to "not be me," meaning he forbids incestuous relations with mother. Father also enjoins his son to "be like me." These force a distinction between the boy and his object of love; mother, and his object of identification; father. Both commands deny fusion and dependency. The denial is also promise for future gratification: if the boy defers what he wants now (fusion and dependency with a female and if he becomes autonomous), one day he, too, is promised control over and possession of a woman. This foreshadows the structure of relationships between adults from which gender domination originates.

Concurring with Chasseguet-Smirgel (1964/1970), Dinnerstein (1977), Chodorow (1978a, 1978b), Gilligan (1980, 1982), and Benjamin (1981, 1986) note that this problem arises because of women's exclusive mothering. The representative of differentiation becomes male. This arrangement states: those who nurture do not free us and those who free us do not nurture us. This split occurs along gender lines.

Human nature, Benjamin asserts, strives for independence and differentiation as well as for connectedness and protection by loved ones. In the rapproachment phase, toddlers have a contradictory wish to be "separate, grand and omnipotent on the one hand, and to have mother magically fulfill their wishes, without their having to recognize that help was actually coming from the outside, on the other" (Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975, p. 95). The development of the awareness of self and the awareness of the other are aspects of the same process. This paradox provides the key to understanding how autonomy has become split from recognition and connection from differentiation.

True differentiation involves not only awareness of the separation between self and other but the appreciation of the other's independent existence as an equivalent center....True differentiation means accepting dependency not as dangerous regression but as enjoyable connection. It lies not in the splitting of autonomy and recognition but in accepting the tension of their paradoxical relationships (Benjamin, 1981, p. 207).

True differentiation is dependent upon the other's response. Autonomy is ambiguous because it is defined by its opposite, mutual recognition. Our need for recognition means that we are dependent upon another person to acknowledge our independence. Mother, the person on whom we are dependent, is the person whom we need to acknowledge our independence. The classical,

preoedipal model views differentiation through the lens of male experience, stressing separation and independence from rather than recognition and appreciation of mother's subjectivity. Man becomes subject, and woman the object.

The repudiation of identification with mother is not only a denial of dependency on her, but identification, as a model for relations, is repudiated. This capacity to identify with, becomes feminine. Identification with mother means a loss of the male's subjectivity. Girls are similarly denied identification with the father who stands for difference and separation, and they, therefore, are unable to achieve forms of autonomy. Each gender represents one aspect of self-other relationship. Neither can appreciate the other's aspect.

the child must be able to gradually experience this nurturing relationship as a relationship between persons,...that has limits. The mother sets a limit to one's own narcissism not only by loving another but by feeling and acting as a person who cannot be totally controlled by anyone. The mother who is not infantilized, shut out of the public world, dependent on her husband for her existence is more likely to experience herself as a person in her own right....To women as mother is assigned the Promethean task of raising individuals who can harmoniously balance what society pulls asunder (Benjamin, 1981, p. 212).

Existential Perspectives

Existential-Phenomenological theorists have also contributed to our understanding of the body. Marcel (1960) articulated the gestalt perspective of the body as

"mine." Being in the world means having a body which stands in relation to the world. The body is both familiar and unfamiliar to me. In being mine it is vulnerable like other objects in the world. Being mine it is also available or unavailable to me. Availability refers to both self and other.

According to Sartre (1966), there are three ontological dimensions of the body: 1)the body-for-itself; that is, when one is engaged in a project; 2)the body-for-others; that is, when my body is viewed by another; and 3) the body-known-by-others; that is the body surpassed by the gaze of another, and I in turn, become aware of the other's gaze which deprives me of body-for-itself, as I am transformed into an object for the other's use. This is the way in which de Beauvoir sees the role of woman as Other.

The body is central for Merleau-Ponty (1962). It forms one of the fundamental categories of human existence. The body is the only way in which we have a world at all; it exists prior to reflection. The world is in and through the body. In understanding the body, the goal for Merleau-Ponty was the explication of our relationship to each other and to ourselves. The body "for me" and at the same time "for-the-other" is taken up and emphasized by Laing (1965). For Becker (1971) the

dual aspect of the body originates in the conflict between identity and the world. The self comes into existence when the body is blocked from its projects. Habitation rather than location is the means by which one acquires a body. It is involvement in the world by which the body takes on both social and private selves.

The relationship of a woman to her body and to the world has been most clearly articulated by existential writers. The "otherness" of women arises from the fundamental human condition characterized by Fromm (1956) as

awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own short life span, of the fact that without his will he is born and against his will he dies, that he will die before those whom he loves, or they before him, the awareness of his aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and of society....The awareness of human separation, without reunion....is the source of....anxiety.

The deepest need of man, then, is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness (pp. 8-9).

In coming to terms with the nature of what is, each sex has the burden of freedom and responsibility for choosing and living authentically. All "givens" relate to separateness as explicated by Fromm. The body is both the medium through which authentic being is expressed as well as the source of alienation. It is our never ending reminder of vulnerability and death. As noted by Becker (1973) we are all involved in a problem of creating

meaning in the face of our animal bodily nature and the inevitability of our decay. For males, for whom separation is a defensive operation against merger with a powerful maternal imago, merger represents death of the self; women themselves become feared. This was obviously recognized by Horney (1932/1967) as the "dread of women," and relates to Farber's (1972/1976) statement that the contemporary Western male's greatest fear was the "dread that in his life with women he will be found wanting" (p. 173). Dread focuses on women. The devaluation of women by both sexes was noted by Chasseguet-Smirgel (1964/1970) who asserted its abnormality in that it revealed an uncertainty about one's own self-worth, and underlying such scorn one found the image of a powerful and terrifying imago.

Of the authors who have elaborated the theme of woman as "Other," none have done so as clearly as or powerfully as Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1961). She embedded the issue of otherness within the context of Sartre's existential philosophy. One seeks to find oneself through the world in some shape other than oneself which one takes as one's own. One finds oneself through projects, through attempts to master that which is other. de Beauvoir contends that, contrary to anthropological research, patriarchal societies predominate; men have always controlled the

world through force and through women's vulnerability to pregnancy. Women like men want to be existents with the possibility of transcendence, but they also want the easy way out. Women trade off motherhood and family in return for freedom. In this manner they remain immanent, stuck in changelessness because they fail to create their own meaning through projects.

Taking the easy way out is rewarded by parents for beauty, coquetry and appearance. In becoming a "doll" the girl's being takes on the character of a passive object rather than a human being. As a doll, one lives for others. The girl learns this is a man's world, and it is men who control the world. Success in such a world means attaching oneself to a man. To attach herself, she must be pretty and be regarded as a sexual object for men. Although it is through her sexuality she realizes her place in life, being made into an object is traumatic. By being noticed, she is continually made object.

There is from the beginning a conflict between her autonomous existence and her objective self...She is taught to please...She must make herself an object; she should therefore renounce her autonomy. She is treated like a live doll and is refused liberty. Thus a vicious circle is formed; for the less she exercises her freedom to understand, to grasp, to discover the world about her, the less resources she will find within herself as subject (p. 316).

Woman is forever a subject who behaves like an object. Man is the other through which woman comes to

define herself. This has overtones of Deutsch's theory of female masochism and Freud's theory of penis envy.

"...for the young woman, there is a contradiction between her status as a real human being and her vocation as a female" (p. 376). Becoming female is a process of self-alienation par excellence. Denied access to doing, the girls emphasize the one thing that does have power over males: sexuality. Contradiction arises. Power residing in sexual attractiveness, cannot be too open in erotic love. Forbidden the erotic love of another, she turns her love on herself and becomes narcissistic. Even this becomes ambiguous. If she loves herself, she cannot give herself to a man as an object. To do so denies her subjectivity and dooms her to being an object under his gaze. If she cannot escape that trap, her narcissism leads to a self-love which lacks true relationship with others. Each consciousness needs the consciousness of another to give it recognition; mirrors are insufficient.

de Beauvoir (1949/1961) is the starting point for most feminist reconstructions of female psychology, yet she falls under the belief that male reality is the only reality. The male model is seen as ideal. "The truth is that when a woman is engaged in an enterprise worthy of a human being, she is quite able to show herself as active, efficient, taciturn--and as ascetic--as a man" p. 568).

de Beauvoir (1949/1961) has also written on aging. She felt aging had greater import for women than for men. She felt there was a "dangerous age" marked by organic changes but their importance lies in their symbolic significance. That is, if women's stature is dependent upon procreativity, charm, and beauty, then the eventual "mutilation" of age must be seen as a horror. If women do not stake everything on their femininity, then their discomforts will come less from the body than from their concerns regarding it. de Beauvoir felt that self-sacrificing women encounter more difficulties with age. Devoted women who have not thought about nor anticipated change are shocked by sudden revelation. "I had only one life to live; think what my lot has been, and look at me now" (1949/1961, p. 543).

One of the outstanding traits of the aging woman is a feeling of depersonalization that makes her lose all objective bearings. Individuals also who have in full health come close to death say that they experienced a curious sense of doubling; when one feels oneself a conscious, active, free being, the passive object on which the fatality is operating seems necessarily as if it were another: this is not I (sic) being knocked down by an automobile; this cannot be I (sic), this old woman reflected in the mirror! The woman who "never felt so young in her life" and who has never seen herself so old does not succeed in reconciling these two aspects of herself; it is in a dream that time flies and duration makes its inroads upon her. Thus reality retreats and dwindles, and at the same time it is no longer clearly distinguished from illusion. The woman puts her trust in what is clear to her inner eye rather than in that strange world where time flows backward,

where her double no longer resembles her, where the outcome has betrayed her....So long as the inner feeling of youth remains alive, it is the objective truth of age that seems fallacious: one has the impression of having put on a borrowed mask (p. 546).

de Beauvoir felt that when children grow up and are old enough to get along without her, women experience freedom.

Unfortunately,....she finds this freedom at the very time when she can make no use of it....patriarchal society gave all the feminine functions the aspect of a service, and woman escapes slavery only at times when she loses all effectiveness. Toward fifty she is in full possession of her powers; she feels she is rich in experience; that is the age at which men attain the highest positions, the most important posts; as for her, she is put into retirement. She has been taught only to devote herself to someone, and nobody wants her devotion anymore. Useless, unjustified, she looks forward to the long, unpromising years she has yet to live, and she mutters: 'No one needs me!' (p. 550).

It is through others that one comes to recognize aging. "I don't feel at all old; sometimes I help the grannies, and then I say to myself, but you're a granny too" (1972, p. 294). Aging conjured up only negative images for de Beauvoir. "I have never come across one single woman, either in life or in books, who ever speaks of a beautiful old woman: the most one might say would be a charming old woman" (p. 297). She felt that

we are obliged to live this old age that we are incapable of realizing....we have to live it, to experience it, in our bodies. It is not our body that makes us aware of old age; but once we know that it inhabits our body, it worries us (p. 301).

She recognized that in the area of sexuality, at least, women received some consolation; sexuality for women is less affected by age than for men. Still and all, she saw women as having a less active sexual life than men. She felt this outcome is due to the fact of otherness. Whatever their age, men remained subject. A women's future was dependent on that of her husband. He more easily takes to younger women. Older women, she felt, had difficulty having extramarital affairs. The very fact of femininity and narcissism directed at her body created problems.

de Beauvoir took up the issue of the lack of women's desire, from which Benjamin (1986) initiated her perspective. Women experienced desire through being desirable. Her awareness came through her partner's caresses and gaze. If he continued to desire, she could put up with her body's aging.

Many of her criticisms reflect a specific historical context. Our present context seems to have changed significantly since the initial publication of her book in 1949. In addition, the themes she evoked are autobiographical and not infrequently read like a prefiguring of her memoirs. In Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter (1959) one can view personal influences which sometimes overshadowed her observations. At fifteen she

described the kind of relationship that needed to exist between her and a man.

I would feel a passionate admiration for him. In this respect, as in all others, necessity must govern the choice. My chosen one must...impose himself on me, prove he was right; otherwise I should almost be wondering: why he and not another? Such a doubt was incompatible with true love. I should be in love the day a man came along whose intelligence, culture, and authority could bring me into subjection (p. 153).

In her defense, however, she conveyed the texture of the world as experienced by a dutiful, Catholic, daughter of French, middle-class parents during the first part of this century. In this same manner she conveyed her belief that women do not have a nature, only a history. As is the case with Freud, within her cultural and historical context, she opened doors for women that nobody prior to her had done with such acumen.

Empirical Viewpoint

"The shock...of middle age is a threshold shock. A door is closing behind us and we turn sorrowfully to watch it close and do not discover, until we are wrenched away, the one opening ahead" (Fromm-Reichmann, 1959). Whether research and society portrays midlife for women as a time of satisfaction and opportunity or as a time of dissatisfaction and crisis is dependent upon the cohort sample and the context in which the data was collected. Rubin (1979), Glenn (1975a), Lowenthal, Thurnher, and

Chiroboga (1975) gave evidence that, contrary to previous research, women at midlife were more content, did not experience extreme depression at the empty-nest syndrome, had more options and were more hopeful than at any other period in their life. Yet, there are numerous self help books as well as an extensive accumulation of research evidence that the transition to midlife is at best a difficult one.

This seems to have come about because of the emphasis on negative images. The sources from which these images arose are twofold. First, most studies have been structured on men and their concerns. There is now a large body of work which questions the adequacy of understanding women's lives based on men's concerns (Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers, 1983). A second bias involves the attention given to women's experiences with menopause and the empty nest. This perspective is based on a one-dimensional view of womanhood, i.e., "that female is synonymous with motherhood which is her ineluctable destiny and her unique area of fulfillment" (Rubin, 1979, p. 24). The following review of empirical studies focuses on additional areas in which studies of midlife women have been conducted. Such areas include well-being, employment, marriage, motherhood, and parents.

Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem. The dictionary defines well-being as "a good or satisfactory condition of existence" which reflects both a subjective and an objective assessment. To understand whether or not a person experiences their life as "good," researchers measure indices like income, housing, marital status, etc. They have learned that persons with larger incomes and bigger homes are hospitalized less often, which is operationalized as satisfaction. The inferences made in this type of research, however, are the investigators'. To know whether a person experiences existence as satisfactory or not, one must ask that person. Until the late 1950's, most studies of psychological well-being focused on incidences of psychiatric symptoms, anxiety and depression (Srole, Langner, Michael, Opler, and Rennie, 1962). "Quality of life" studies were undertaken in the early 1960s. These studies added dimensions such as "positive mental health, happiness, and coping styles" (Gurin, Veroff, and Feld, 1960) to life satisfaction research.

Although there continues to be a lack of agreement on what constitutes well being, one thing is clear: it is not one-dimensional. Moreover, negative and positive feelings of well-being may be relatively independent (Bradburn and Caplowitz, 1965); that is, one could have

high self-esteem but feel tense and unhappy, as might be expected of a person who is caring for an acutely ill parent, spouse or child. A 1976 study (Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers), broke well-being into two components: happiness, defined as an affective, labile state, and satisfaction, defined as a cognitive, stable state. This latter, more cognitive component reflected an appraisal of how one's life was turning out relative to one's expectations and aspirations.

A 1981 study (Veroff, Douban and Kulka) questioned the psychological well-being of women as compared to men. Results indicated that it depended on how one defined well-being and upon which components were examined. Consistent with previous studies, women experienced far more psychiatric symptoms, especially depression. There is now agreement that this is not due to the greater willingness of women to report symptomatology (Radloff, 1975; Rosenfield, 1980). The Campbell et al. (1976) study found no significant sex differences in this area; that is, men were found to be as willing to report symptoms. Veroff et al. (1981) speculated that the reason for sex differences in symptomatology is that women's role as nurturers means living with a great deal of uncertainty and lack of control; conditions conducive to the development of

symptomatology. The fate of others is not only unpredictable but somewhat uncontrollable.

If one looks at the traditional concept of femininity, as an identity based on physical attractiveness and motherhood, then well-being decreases with obvious physiological changes in both reproductive functioning and appearance. One's core identity may be threatened by the loss of these possibilities. There is another way of viewing this, however, and this concerns how society views aging. This alternate view allows both positive and negative changes with age. Studies carried out in the 1950s and 1960s showed women in the middle years to be quite distressed. Weiss and Samuelson (1958) asked these women, "What are the things you do that make you feel useful or important?" A substantial portion answered, "nothing." Lowenthal, Thurnher, and Chiriboga (1975) studied four age groups of men and women and described post-parental women as low in well-being. These women described themselves as wanting to grow but seeing no way to do so.

In contrast, this study replicated in 1981 (Veroff et al.) found that a decline in women's esteem with age was no longer evident. The conclusion seemed to suggest that women in 1976 were better off than women in 1957. Relatively autonomous women seemed to experience a

decline in well-being in their 40s; the same women, seen ten years later, felt particularly high in well-being. With respect to these indices, women, like men, show an increase in levels of satisfaction, but a decline in happiness, with age. Campbell et al. (1976) suggest that one's life was an increasingly good fit as one grew older which resulted in greater satisfaction, but that the intensity of emotions associated with happiness tend to be rarer.

Marital Status. One of the most consistent empirical findings about women is that married women are happier and more satisfied than those who are not married, whether the latter were never married, divorced or widowed (Baruch et al., 1983; Depner, 1979; Campbell et al., 1976). In the Baruch et al. (1983) study, factor analysis indicated that the major reward for marriage was feeling emotionally supported and appreciated; the major concern was marital conflict. In non-married and divorced women, the central concern was lack of intimate relationship; the sense of mastery was not affected. A conclusion these researcher came to about marriage and well being was that when a married woman is free to choose employment status and end an unhappy marriage, being married is likely to enhance her happiness and satisfaction. As a source of self-esteem and protection against anxiety and depression,

marriage is of little help. A good job appears to be more crucial to the mid-life women.

In trying to understand these varying patterns, several considerations are important. Married women of today are not of the same cohort as in earlier history. Divorce is more accessible, and women are more likely to remove themselves from an unhappy marriage.

Mothers and Daughters. Demographic trends point to the fact that women outlive men; there are more aging mothers than fathers. Typically, daughters rather than sons care for aging parents when help is needed. Often overlooked in the empirical literature is children's experience of the long period of years during which their parents are old but not unhealthy. According to the 1975 National Center for Health Statistics, older people are in relatively good health. This is a fact frequently forgotten. Given the longevity of women, the years which daughters and their mothers spend together as adults is longer than at any time in history. Not infrequently, daughters affirm that it was the loss of their father which changed and intensified their relationship to their mother. The death of a parent provides a jarring reminder that these relationships do not last forever.

Baruch and Gunn (1984) undertook the Adult Daughter Study. In it they discussed the variability in timing

patterns between daughters and their parents; that is, with each year, individuals become increasingly more divergent in terms of their life experience and where they stand with respect to timetables. A woman of forty could be pregnant for the first time, preparing for the departure of her teenagers, launching her career, becoming a grandmother or some combination of these. Because of these differences in timing in both daughters and mothers, the experience of a parent's aging will also vary. What this means is that aging parents interlock with the rest of one's life which in turn relates to the timing and spacing of children.

It is true that catastrophic illnesses arise and daughters are more likely to care for ill parents. How available daughters are is dependent to a great extent on class status. Working class daughters are more likely to live with or near a parent and to have interdependency built into the relationship. Parent's needs are part of the fabric of their life; extended care is anticipated and expected. By contrast, middle-class daughters who have attended college are more likely to have delineated boundaries on their nuclear family and to have lives that are constructed separately from their parents. They typically visit less even when they live close. Aging parents who are affluent and who are accustomed to living

apart prefer to hire services when necessary or to engage in reciprocal exchanges with their own peers rather than to involve offspring. In addition, middle class daughters feel that their parents could be taken care of by people other than family members, and assume that their parents would hire a housekeeper or nurse as needed.

If both generations are used to maintaining boundaries between their respective households, they are obviously less likely to look to one another when, and if, help is needed. In addition, middle class daughters were more hesitant to disrupt their own households and preferred hired help for their elderly parents if it was within their financial ability. In situations like the death or serious illness of a parent, however, middle class daughters are also expected and acknowledge their availability to parents. These daughters tend to do what they feel is necessary to enable the parent to reestablish a life of their own; by contrast, working class daughters attempt to integrate their widowed or ill parent into their lives.

Baruch and Barnett (1983) describe the middle years of adulthood as an "era of good feelings" with regard to parent-child relationships. Recent research supports the notion that midlife women have very positive feelings about their mothers, the role of daughter was typically

gratifying, and a daughter's sense of well-being was tied to the quality of the relationship (Fischer, 1981). Fischer's (1981) study supports a notion of continuous negotiation between mothers and daughters on both symbolic and interactional dimensions. Both reevaluated each other at the same time that they became more involved with one another. The daughter's marriage was a means of demonstrating to their mothers a new adult status; becoming mothers themselves gave daughters an appreciation of their mother's parenting role. Married daughters with children had significantly more contact with their mothers than those without children.

Hagestad (1981) expanded the notion of "continuous negotiation" in a discussion of the historical changes in the life cycle. She pointed out that adults in a family "now confront each other in relationships for which there is no historical precedence and minimal cultural guidance, while they individually find themselves in life stages that also have few culturally shared expectations attached to them" (p. 25). Extended families which integrate step parents and ex-spouses and ex-grandparents have typically no historical precedent. Hagestad (1981) suggests that these new relationships have to be negotiated to "create the structure and meaning of their bonds."

Levinson (1978) points out the role of mentors in men's lives. One of the questions raised in the introduction to this study was whether women have mentors as well. Altman and Grossman (1977) found that mothers who worked enhanced their daughter's interest in and commitment to a career. Moreover, a mother's attitude toward work was an important antecedent of the daughter's motivation. Successful female students attributed their motivation to their mother's attitude compared to attributions made by sons (Poumadere, 1978). Grandmothers with high achievement had daughters and then granddaughters who were also achievement oriented (Troll, 1980). Hennig and Jardin (1976) reported that male mentors were necessary for both sexes for success. Goldstein (1979) found that the historic paucity of women mentors may account for the Hennig and Jardin (1976) findings. Moreover, Goldstein found that recent Ph.D.'s of both sexes were more productive if they had same-sex mentors.

Parental Status. In contrast to prior research, new studies consistently find no evidence that being a mother enhances a woman's well being (Baruch and Barnett, 1981; Campbell et al., 1976; Sears and Barbee, 1977). Even studying women over 50 with the anticipation that women might experience the benefits of having children later

on, no difference was found between mothers and childless women. "The best evidence now available indicates that the present young adult should not choose to have children on the basis of expectations that parenthood will lead to psychological rewards in the later stages of life" (Glenn and McLanahan, 1981). The prospects for such rewards seem dim at best. Even for older women, those in the 60-75 age bracket, having had children had only a very slight effect on life satisfaction and morale (Beckman and Houser, 1982).

These studies seem counterintuitive. Yet, familiar to all women is the common fact that children can and frequently do make one's life miserable as well as wonderful. Moreover, motherhood in our current culture seems especially difficult. There is a lack of agreement on standards. Yet women, the primary caretakers, are told they are responsible for the way in which their children develop.

In a study by Rossi (1980) on the influences on the quality of a woman's experience in her role as mother, she noted that having a large family and being older impaired a woman's sense of well-being: too much work and too little time. In the Baruch et al. (1983) the major concern of women was conflict with children. Research suggests that employed women are more likely to blame

themselves for problems with their children than are women who are at home.

Menopause and the Empty Nest. Because many investigations focused on women's role as mother, the loss of such an important part of one's identity has been viewed as the precipitant of depressive, psychiatric symptoms in middle age. Lowenthal et al. (1975) failed to find evidence of the empty nest syndrome, but concluded that women's anxiety must be "too deep to be tapped." Reinterviewed five years later, these same women confirmed the absence of traumatic effects. Obviously, if confined to one role, motherhood, women are likely to experience a greater negative impact from both menopause and the empty nest (Bart, 1971).

Employment. Troll (1980) noted the far reaching consequences of the number of women working. Women are discovering the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of paid work (Hongvivatana, 1976) and the frustrations of having skills that are undervalued, underutilized, and often underdeveloped. It appears that women embrace feminist principles after going to work; not before.

How employment status affects a woman's sense of well-being again depends on what aspect of well-being is being studied. Campbell et al. (1976) reported no differences in happiness or satisfaction associated with employment

status, with one exception: Among college-educated housewives, employed women had higher satisfaction. This suggests that when capable, able women are confined to the household, they may be more distressed than women not so confined. For most midlife women, employment enhances self-esteem. A 1983 study by Coleman and Antonucci reported that employment was the only significant predictor of self-esteem in midlife women. In the Baruch et al. (1983) study, all four groups of employed women (never married, married with children, married without children, and divorced) were higher in mastery scores than the two groups of non-employed women (married with children and married without children). One of the considerations deemed especially important by the investigators was how a woman experienced being paid; that is, did her socialization and values lead her to believe that good wives and mothers stay home.

Veroff et al. (1981) found that, in general, housewives were slightly happier, but women from 40 to 59 years of age in intact first marriages exhibited no differences between those employed and those not employed. Baruch et al. (1983) found there were two reward factors which accounted for employment being viewed either positively or negatively: challenge and social relationships. The major concern factor was whether the

job was dull or a dead end. Gratifying social relationship at work increased happiness and satisfaction but not self-esteem and sense of control.

Sources of stress for the homemaker are boredom, isolation, and not earning money. The rewards were satisfaction at being there for one's family, freedom from supervision, and opportunity to do tasks that fitted one's skills (Gove and Tudor, 1973; Lopata, 1971, Oakley, 1974).

Late Bloomers. Sex role reversals have been found among women of western culture as well as many others. Gutmann (1975) found a shift from nurturance to dominance, and Lowenthal, Thurnher, and Chiriboga (1975) found an increase in assertive independence. Although the data are cross sectional, and open to various interpretations, these studies suggest that the need for achievement in women increases with age (Vanzant, 1980) and becomes a more useful predictor as women grow older and their familial responsibilities decrease.

There are several factors to be considered with regard to women as late bloomers. Personal misfortune appears to be a catalyst to achievement. Divorced or deserted women are disproportionately represented among the ranks of adult students and are noticeably more committed. Those most disillusioned by the Cinderella

myth are those who may find themselves self-supporting which in itself may have motivated them, which in turn enabled them to overcome earlier inhibitions and hesitancy.

Crisis and/or Transition. Although many theorists hold an optimistic view of midlife as continuous with growth and development, theories of midlife exude a certain amount of gloom. The focus has been on the sense of mortality (Neugarten, 1968) and the emerging awareness of the limited possibilities for achieving one's goals. Levinson's (1978) research conceived of midlife as a series of age-linked, invariant, sequential stages. He gave special attention to the depression and anxiety that accompany the age of 40. Pearlin (1975) has been critical of Levinson's age-linked crisis, noting that the evidence for a crisis cannot be based on middle-aged subjects only. It may be just as likely that at 21 or 65 years, these same people would have experienced a crisis. Baruch, et al. (1983) found no differences in well-being associated with age among women 35 to 55. When these women were specifically asked about crises and turning points, no age-related patterns emerged. To the extent that age and stage views of adult development are flawed, so too is the concept of midlife crisis.

Typically ignored in studies of midlife is the differential in age expectancy between the sexes. A man of 40 expects 30 or so years to live. A women at 40 has approximately 38 more years. According to Baruch (1980), women are concerned about living too long; that is, women forsee loneliness with no relationship in widowhood.

Glenn (1975b) noted that men born in the 20s and 30s were socialized to be achievers. At 40 they questioned the price of that achievement. Women of the same era were typically married, had children early, and found themselves increasingly free of child-rearing responsibilities which was followed by achievement activites.

Not fulfilling one's dream, according to Levinson (1978) is a problem for mid-life men. Most current middle age women never had expectations of astounding accomplishments in the world of work; thus few would find their accomplishments falling short of their expectations. In occupations similar to the men in Levinson's male study, women in midlife are amazed and delighted with achieving more than they ever anticipated. With the absence of imminent mortality and a sense of achievement less than one's dream, midlife crisis loses its substance.

Being Forty. Of the aspects of identity which engage attention, aside from sex, age is one in which our consciousness of transformations has never seemed greater. We have been more interested than ever in demarcating that period between birth and death into discrete segments. Whether or not there are definable life stages can be and has been debated (Kertzer and Keith, 1984; Riegel, 1975). When one considers schools of child development, e.g., Freudian, Piagetian, Eriksonian, it is not surprising that a like view would be adopted in the field of adulthood. According to Levinson (1978) adulthood divides the lifespan into more or less discrete stages. Within each stage equilibrium prevails with unstable transitions or crisis between stages.

Within this model, the age of forty is pivotal. It is characterized as that quintessential period during which men and women experience a midlife crisis in terms of emotional, bodily and professional instability. There is a shared understanding that there is a specialness at forty in much the same way we come to an expectation of instability at adolescence. Even though the range is variable, forty is seen as marking middle age. Supposed symptoms include dissatisfaction, depression, as well as diffuse feelings of restlessness and narcissism. "There seems to be no aging quite so devastating in this country

as entering the forties" (Davitz, 1976, p. xv). Many people believe that at forty one ceases being young. The image of decline dominates western cultures.

Occupational crisis is also associated with this age. The media remind us that people reassess their careers, and both men and women feel trapped in jobs no longer satisfying yet limited by the reduction in opportunities that confront them. Statistics indicate that the greatest period of creativity exists prior to age forty, yet the age at which talent is manifest is debatable. So many different criteria are applied to include creativity and productivity that vastly conflicting results emerge. Researchers such as Riley (1979) and Baltes and Willis (1979) are more impressed by the plasticity of abilities over the entire lifespan.

One argument often taken for the salience of age forty is that it represented midlife chronologically. To do so a lifespan of eighty must be postulated. No evidence exists which confirms such a statistiscal mean. Lifespan varies with populations, i.e., women, men, black, white, urban and rural, cultural context. Historical demography is the best reason to dismiss the age forty as a chronological midpoint. Life tables exhibit tremendous variation in the mean length of life with a steady trend toward increased longevity.

A second account for the relevance of age forty is the supposed physical changes associated with it. Research has, in fact, observed and recorded, "a sense of bodily....a sense of aging - the feeling of being old rather than young" (Targ, 1979, p. 377). Jacobs (1979) reported that for woman forty is physiologically significant. Athletes who reach forty and continue in their respective roles are newsworthy. These are reflections of folk wisdom rather than of scientific knowledge. There is no solid evidence that reaching the age of forty in and of itself produces any dramatic alterations in physical or intellectual prowess except, and then only sometimes, in those persons who believe that this age marks a dramatic physiological turning point. In a summary of research on aging and cognition, Howard Gardner (1982) stated:

The picture one obtains of cognitive power in aging individuals depends on a variety of factors, with some research documenting declines...other investigations suggesting a steady course, particularly in individuals who remain healthy and active...Some authorities have in fact tried to identify tasks at which older individuals actually excel. For instance, mature adults may be better able than adolescents to identify new problems in a domain of knowledge (such as science), rather than merely to solve problems posed by others...The heights of creative invention, and the ability to force powerful intellectual syntheses, often are not realized until mid-life (p. 581).

Regarding conceptions about diminishing sexual energy, male sexual drive does decrease, but it is

gradual except in the case of organic illness, and it would be difficult if not impossible to link it to any particular age, much less to that of forty (Rogers, 1982, pp. 145-146). As it effects women, the physical aging event par excellence is menopause. On the average, however, the age of 47 (Rogers, 1982, p. 144) is when menopause comes about, and there is increasing evidence that it does not necessarily produce dysfunctional psychological states (Brown, 1982).

In professional life, men and women over forty have suffered from discriminatory employment practices.

only a handful of highly educated men will continue to move up the ladder after forty, while the majority will merely hold onto whatever rung they have already reached. And some, usually the least educated, will start to slip down....What this means for most men is no more pay increases or promotions after forty (Mayer, 1978, p. 54).

There is another way of looking at the phenomena cited above, and that is in the reverse. The age of forty has been perceived as transitional, and this perception involves both subjective feelings of physiological change, career patterns and opportunities. In our society, the age of forty presages a time of trouble. The number itself provides us with a means of interpreting our feelings and behavior and those of others. In turn our culture and economic circumstances reinforce the significance of the age. The experience may even seem

biological, but our cultural context helps to define and produce our experience. An historian Winthrop Jordan (1978) stated:

Adults don't stay put the way they used to. Everywhere you look, people are moving around, changing jobs, going back to school, getting divorced. Starting over, in short. At age 30, 40, 50, 60 - there's no end to it (p. 197).

If one asks people their opinions upon turning forty, a variety of responses can be expected. For some it is very significant and for others the ages of 30, 50 or 70 assume salience. For most, however, the age of forty evokes memories of some association whether of self or other. Everyone at least knows somebody for whom forty was a watershed. In psychological terms, the age forty seems to be overdetermined. Popularized by pop psychology literature, the peculiarities of forty have become a part of a tenacious folk wisdom much in the manner as has the period of adolescence. Common views of the age of forty are similar to those relating to adolescence. Both are marked by emotional upheaval and are noted as significant turning points. The expectation of change at certain times in the lifespan, especially if such expectation is endorsed, transmitted and shared in a culture, is likely to produce a change that may not otherwise occur. "I suppose in society's terms turning forty is symbolic" (Mayer, 1978. Cited in Brandes, 1985, p. 32).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The goal of the present research is to describe experiences of aging in midlife women. It becomes de rigueur to find a methodology appropriate to achieve that purpose. Traditionally, psychology has insisted that its method dictate what its content should be (Giorgi, 1970). To remain as true as possible to the experience, a dialogic approach was used as a way both of collecting and of analyzing information from participants. The dialogic method attempts to capture the process of disclosure by participants. It does not attempt to reduce the whole to its elements or does it seek to add or to subtract something. Rather than narrowing results, the dialogic methods opens up more of the context. This is not a convergent procedure which yields a "correct" answer. The method seeks only to reveal the meaning of what is at hand. Through description meaning is revealed while retaining fidelity to the original dialogue remains.

Participants

"Experience with the investigated topic and articulateness suffice as criteria for selecting

subjects" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 58). The dialogic approach required the ardent and undivided participation of my research participant. The participant's primary task was to engage in a discussion with the interviewer for the purpose of describing her experience of aging. As applied to traditional methods of psychological research, participants were not subjects in the ordinary sense of the word; that is, participants were not selected to represent a larger pool of subjects whom they served to exemplify; instead they were selected on the basis of their ability to enter into an active dialogue. As observed by MacGillivray (1985) and Lang (1986) appropriate participants for interview research demonstrate articulateness, introspectiveness, and are sensitive when speaking about the nuances of their experience. Participants in the present study were relatively well-functioning, mature individuals who had attained developmental characteristics of their age cohorts as reflected in an acknowledged gratifying history of work and/or relationships.

Thirteen women initially interviewed were selected from the community. Ten of the women were known by the investigator from previous contact through their place of business or had been spoken with on prior occasions for purposes unrelated to this study. They were

solicited for this study because they met the criteria noted above. Three of the participants were recommended by colleagues of the investigator. One of these did not meet the criteria of a gratifying history of work or of relationships, and she was deleted from this study. The ten participants already known by the investigator were contacted in person. The remaining three participants were contacted by telephone. All were provided explanation of the purpose of the research and then solicited for the project.

The majority of participants in this study were college educated, and all had been married. Of those divorced, four were involved in long term, live-in relationships, and one was in the process of divorce proceedings. All but one had at least one child. Eleven of the twelve participants were employed outside the home, and all came from a middle class socioeconomic background. Demographic data are summarized in Table 1.

Participants ranged in age from 38 to 52 years, with a mean (and median) age of 42. Although the designation of midlife ranges from 35 to 65 according to the sources cited, 40 is, by many researchers, as well as the general public, considered to be the beginning of middle age. The reasons for this are numerous, not the least of which is symbolic. The symbolic aspects of age 40 make it

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
<u>Age Interval</u>	
35-40	4
41-45	6
46-52	2
<u>Educational Level</u>	
Vocational, Technical, 2 years of College	4
Bachelor's Degree	1
Master's Degree	5
Doctoral Degree	2
<u>Marital Status</u>	
Married	5
Divorced	7
Involved in a relationship	4
<u>Number of Children</u>	
Zero	1
One	8
Two	1
Three	2
<u>Occupation</u>	
Homemaker	1
Student	3
Teacher	2
Administration & Business	6
<u>Status of Parents</u>	
Mother Living	9
Father Living	8

particularly relevant to phenomenological-existential studies such as this, in which meaning is crucial in understanding a participant's experience.

Procedure

All participants took part in an open-ended interview, concerning their personal experience of aging, using two questions as a guide: When are you aware of aging? What are you aware of? Tell me about your experience. In initial interviews, the first question asked was: Are you aware of aging? This question was then followed by the two questions above. The interviewer quickly discovered that almost everybody was aware of aging, and, moreover, all participants had at least a few weeks from the initial request to participate to the actual interview. All participants, therefore, had time to reflect on the subject, and many initiated dialogue about their experience without any lead question from the interviewer. These questions were restated or altered as necessary to accommodate individual participants. Guidelines for these questions were adopted from MacGillivray (1985) and subsequent discussions with the University of Tennessee Phenomenological Research Group. These questions were appropriate to phenomenological research (Valle and King, 1978) by remaining

methodologically close to the topic under investigation. Designed to be as neutral as possible, these questions also were expected to engage participants in exploring their experiences.

To remain close to the topic being investigated, one must bracket preconceived notions of what the experience may be; especially those of the investigator. To understand what the present (midlife) researcher's preconceived notions were of her own experience of aging, she requested a colleague to interview her using the format she intended to use in her study. This interview was conducted prior to completing the literature review in order to understand those a priori notions held on the basis of experiences in her life, acquired from the culture, and from friends and relatives. These personal beliefs were felt to be long-standing and to approximate the participants' experience in the dialogue. The present investigator listened to an audiotape of her own interview, making notes of content areas and situations brought forth. Following analysis of this interview, a concerted effort was made to follow the participant's spontaneous associations. Only topics brought forth by the participants were elaborated in the dialogue. In this manner the participant rather than the investigator structured the interview.

The present researcher helped to clarify the experience by restating participant's responses, summarizing responses or further engaging the participant until there was consensual agreement that each understood the other. The degree of rephrasing and summarizing varied considerably, depending on the participant's style of responding. Complete, vivid descriptions with little need for elaboration were given by most respondents; a few offered terse responses, requiring more active inquiry on the part of the interviewer. One woman's response to the initial questions was "Never;" that is, she was never aware of aging. Upon further inquiry, such as one might undertake in a clinical interview, she was able to bring forth situations in which she was aware of aging, her subsequent feelings about her awareness, as well as an understanding of her initial absence of an experience of aging. Participants were free to reveal as little or as much as they chose, but all were encouraged to provide a comprehensive description. This type of interview is consistent with the aim of phenomenological research which is to understand a phenomenon by eliciting descriptions of how it is lived and experienced (Giorgi, 1967).

Data Collection

Participants were interviewed at a time and place of their convenience. Every effort was made to allow each participant control over the setting for the interview so as to be at ease. One participant, however, asked that the interview be conducted at the investigator's home. The investigator felt that this would not be comfortable nor would she feel at ease with such arrangements and requested that another site be chosen for the interview. Subsequent to that interview, the participant came to the investigator's home for tea. That arrangement suited the participant and was carried out. Of the remaining participants, four chose to be interviewed at their place of work, three chose to be interviewed in their home, and four chose to be interviewed at the researcher's office.

Before the interview began, each participant was asked to read and sign the Information and Consent Form, appearing in Appendix A. All interviews were audiotaped with the full knowledge and consent of the participants. The interviews ranged in length from 45 to 90 minutes. Following each interview, the participant was asked if she had any questions or comments not covered prior to or during the interview.

Following the taped portion of the interview, each participant was asked for demographic information

(Appendix B). The demographics were requested following the interview rather than preceding it to minimize participant's expectations of particular content areas to be discussed during the interview. In addition, participants were reminded that prior to complete data analysis, they would be contacted again for a brief, follow-up interview (also to be audiotaped) in order to solicit further comments on their experience and the analysis to date.

To protect confidentiality a number was assigned to each participant. This number was the only means of identification and was used both on the cassette tapes and transcripts. Consent forms, demographic information forms, and cassette tapes were kept in a secure place by the investigator.

Protocol Analysis

When experience is conveyed by dialogue in a relatively, unstructured interview situation, the most salient problem is attempting to discern key issues and themes. The structure of the experience must be made visible as it is conveyed in the immediacy of the dialogue. This section presents the manner in which the structure of the experience of aging was captured. It is a lengthy process, requiring tenacity and diligence.

Enough detail of the original dialogue must be retained so that the thematic structure is intelligible, yet it must be represented in such form as to make it easily seen. Condensation must maintain as much of the original language as possible. The loss of detail, however, must be juxtaposed against the need to see larger elements of content so that tentative conclusions about the structure can be checked and rechecked against the full text.

The method of analysis is a laborious process. Only the transcribing and condensing of the initial interviews were anticipated. The procedures following the condensation of the text arose out of the necessity and intent of making sense of the participant experiences. The following steps were involved in the process:

- Step 1: Transcribing a verbatim audiotape of the dialogue.
- Step 2: Clearing and condensing the transcripts and deriving significant statements.
- Step 3: Formulating meanings.
- Step 4: Organizing formulated meanings into clusters of themes.
- Step 5: Formulating an exhaustive description of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon.
- Step 6: Referring clusters of themes back to the original protocols.

The actual performance of each step was not the discrete, linear process this description makes it appear to be; rather use was made of a process whereby each subsequent step was checked and rechecked against and with preceding ones. Even during the interview process the investigator came to tentative themes, categories, and ideas which were subsequently refuted, confirmed or found to be irrelevant in succeeding interviews. Distinctions among steps are necessary in order to represent the process; in fact, several steps went on simultaneously.

The overall process is circular: The investigator went over the same material again and again, hoping each time to arrive at a more precise grasp of the way in which themes related to one another as well as to the whole. Beyond representing the process, however, these steps had the additional function of slowing it down to avoid making and imposing expeditious but hasty theoretical constructions on the text. Proceeding step by step allowed the structure within the dialogue to emerge from the protocol. This procedure also served to avoid a priori categories propounded by one theory or another.

Step 1: Transcribing a verbatim audiotape of the dialogue. Audio tapes obtained during the data collection were transcribed as they were collected. In the 252 pages of transcript only two words were inaudible. Nonetheless,

the resulting transcripts were checked at least twice against original audiotapes for accuracy. Not infrequently a particular passage or phrase had to be heard again and again to produce a precise record. Accuracy and faithfulness to the participants' words was a guiding principle throughout the present research. Names, places, or other types of identifying information, however, were changed to protect confidentiality. Although not critical to this project particularly, the transcription stage eliminates an important component of the dialogue which cannot be reproduced in written form, i.e., timbre, accents, gestures, etc.) but which might be a critical loss of data in other interview transcriptions, such as therapy sessions, and must be taken into consideration (See Shell, 1986).

In order to view the complexity and richness of the interviews and to clarify the procedures outlined, an excerpt of the verbatim record of one interview follows.

P: What do you want to know? You want me to talk or you want to ask me questions?

I: I don't have an agenda. I am just interested in your experience of aging. Your awareness of it...what you are aware of and when.

P: Ah, this is interesting because the last couple of weeks since we talked about doing this, I've been trying to identify feelings. Aging does not bother me as much as I thought it would in some respects, but bothers me in other areas more than I anticipated it would. It was sort of unique. I think a lot of it has to do with my attitude about myself. I don't ever really conceive of myself as

being my age which is almost 42, except on rare occasions where I draw on those background years for either experience or something of that nature. I think that my perception of aging in regards to myself has a lot to do with my mental attitude about it. I have been told on numerous occasions - I may not look this way today...I'm completely wrecked - The women in my family do not age quickly and they are very long lived. My grandmothers are both in their late 80s, and I knew both my great grandmothers. Everybody in my family lives for eons, at least the women do. They have all been pretty active. I have always been active. I think that has a lot to do with it. My mind is very active, very alert. It is better today than it was 20 years ago which is nice. My body, on the other hand, is another story. By in large, as far as my physical demeanor, I am not displeased. I do not have quite the staying power as I used to have. That bothers me. That irritates me. I was always athletic. While I am still in better shape than a lot of women who I know who are considerably younger, I do not have the capacity to continue for as long as I used to. In the last year or so, I have noticed that I have deferred more to people who want to help me pick things up and stuff. I say, "fine, fine, help me." By in large I have always been real healthy. I'm starting to have some problems with my teeth. That is from wearing braces when I was young. I was over orthodontured. So now I am going to have a partial bridge. I'm not real thrilled about that, but it is better than having your teeth fall out. I like...I would say that in almost every way I like being my age. Number one, I have a good mind, and I have a lot of experience to draw on. Number two, I realize I have not quit learning. One thing I discovered in the last year was that it was possible for me to make a total change in what I had been doing which was having been a university professor and a painter to doing an administrative job and finding out that I was very very good at it. It surprised me. I'm a quick learner, and I'm also somewhat of an overachiever and a perfectionist. So I drive myself very hard. I was pleased to see that I had not lost my capacity for change in that regard or my ability to learn new things or adapt to situations. I have always been kind of...sort of a black sheep type. I was very heavy into the hippie movement, in the peace movement. I went to Woodstock and did all these

things. I find myself now in an establishment, and I say that in quotes. In an establishment sort of position where I am being required to do things sometimes and say things that are not natural to my normal demeanor, but I still have not gone beyond the point where I feel like I can't do this ethically or morally. But I find that I am wearing different kinds of clothes and that I am smiling at people when I'd really rather give them a shot in the chops or something. And it is nice to know that the job I am in is one that your age does not hinder you. In other words, the older you are in the profession I am in now, which is an arts administrator, up to a certain point, and I'm not sure what the cut off is, people don't tend to make a judgment on you regarding your age. The older you are the better you are in this job which is one of the reasons I have moved up so rapidly. I think that if I had been 10 or 15 years younger, I would not have gone as quickly up this ladder. However, I find that I would very much like to go back to teaching, but it is much harder to do that. While I have got some 15 or 16 years of experience and was a very, very good teacher when I was teaching at the university level, that they would rather have younger people, right out of grad school. And even though I have experience that...in that respect it is not as important as wanting somebody who is younger, more youth, fresh ideas. This sort of thing. Not to take away from older faculty that they don't have fresh ideas especially since it would be new to me coming in here if I taught here rather than where I have taught in the past. That kind of thing sort of ticks me off. That is a reality of our lives, and I have learned to adjust to that. Our culture is primarily very youth oriented. Youth oriented in physical attributes. If people do not know how old you are, they assume you are a certain age, and they treat you a certain way. Once they find out that you are older than they thought, I find that occasionally their attitudes change. I think that is kind of funny. That is because I am on the other side looking back now. By in large I think I have a pretty healthy attitude. I'm more particular about my appearance now than I used to be. When I am tired, I can really tell I am tired now. I get dark circles under my eyes, and I look kind of drawn and stuff, and I don't have quite the spring back that I said I had physically that I used to. I can't go out and drink two nights in a

row and get up the third morning and go tearing off. I just can't do that anymore. I mean I could do it, but I would feel like death. So those are just some of the things you learn to adjust to. But there are compensations. I may not be able to do that, but there are things that I can do now or that I can mentally do or that I have a much better sense of myself as a human being which means that I can command a certain amount of attention or respect in situations that I couldn't years ago cause I didn't know enough to know how to do this. It is not like beating somebody in the head. It is just sort of having a sense about you that people assume you know what you are doing even if you don't know what you are doing. I think sometimes that comes with age. Participant #8)

Step 2: Clearing and condensing the transcripts;
deriving significant statements. Step 2 actually involves four operations (condensing, dividing, grouping and combining) performed in phases. This analysis, however, differed somewhat from the process described by Colaizzi (1978) in that participant's actual words and phrases were retained, similar to the approach of MacGillivray (1985) and Lang (1986). The initial phase of Step 2 was designed to remove extraneous phrases (including the interviewer's questions, clarifications, and paraphrasing), false starts, incomplete sentences, and obvious redundancies. Interjections made by the interviewer were incorporated in brackets into the paragraphs to maintain unity and interviewer's questions incorporated into statements (e.g., What are you aware of..., became "I am aware of..."). Given the dictum of faith and accuracy to the data, and that what would be important was not clear,

nothing of potential substance was deleted. Even this step, however, eliminates another important part of the dialogue, notably the participant's verbal style, i.e., hesitancy, loquacity, etc.

The resulting statments were numbered consecutively, reflecting natural breaks in the interview process, such as the introduction of a new topic. This demarcating or dividing process is initially somewhat arbitrary. As analysis progressed, however, it became easier to note breaks in the interview, which appeared to express a coherent meaning, and which were loosely based on the introduction of new topics.

After all 12 protocols were condensed in this manner, the investigator went back to the original protocols and took notes on what were felt to be important areas of consideration. These notes were compared with the initially numbered statements to see if anything was inadvertently added or deleted. This procedure provided a check of analysis to this point.

During the processes of condensing and note taking, the investigator became more conversant with each transcript. Therefore, a second pass at Step 2 was attempted, further paring redundancies and excess verbiage while attempting a more succinct organization of the dialogue. Grammatical sentences were formed out of

non-grammatical ones and reduced to their most economical form, while retaining the participant's words. Combining, dividing, demarcating, and grouping were interdependent processes. Redundancies from different portions of the interview were collapsed into single paragraphs which varied in length and appeared to form "chunks of meaning." Since the goal of the research was to obtain statements of all possible experiences of aging, these "chunks of meaning" reflect possible experiences.

By this phase entire passages of dialogue were memorized, and in addition, the investigator found that in her own conversation she was using verbatim quotes from the protocols. In many ways the reiterative steps provided an intimacy with the dialogue. Content areas and extraneous material came to be defined so that a continual sifting of possible areas of importance emerged.

Numbering the paragraphs enabled the investigator to return to the original protocol easily which allowed further refinement of what was seen to be important. With this type of condensation, the analysis follows the dialogue from step to step. As an example, when the participant described feelings about her body or self, these could be checked and compared. The step highlighted significant statements both within and across participants. This, in turn, enabled the investigator

constantly to keep in mind areas of import. The third and final pass at the text produced the following text of the same passage:

(1) I am in better shape than women considerably younger. I do not have the capacity to continue as long nor the spring back. My body does not have the energy to really be able to push myself that extra mile. Your body gets older and parts get older and don't work quite as well. You ache longer after working. I defer to people who want to help me pick things up. I'm having a partial bridge.

(2) I like being my age. I have a good mind, experience to draw on. I have not quit learning. I discovered it was possible for me to make a total change in what I had been, a university professor and a sculpturer to doing an administrative job and finding I was very good at it. I'm a quick learner, an overachiever, and a perfectionist. I drive myself. I have not lost my capacity for change, to learn to new things or adapt to new situations.

(3) In my job, age does not hinder you. The older you are to a certain point, the better you are. If I had been 10 to 15 years younger I would not have gone as quickly up the ladder. I would like to teach. I have 16 years experience at the university level and was good. They would rather have younger people out of grad school. My experience is not as important as somebody younger, youthful, fresh ideas. Not that older faculty don't have fresh ideas. It ticks me off. That is a reality. I have adjusted. Culture is youth oriented.

(4) There are compensations. I look older but I have my shit together better than people who look 15 times better. That is a consolation. I have a better sense of myself as a human being meaning I command attention or respect that I couldn't years ago cause I didn't know enough. It is a sense about you that people assume you know what you are doing even if you don't. People treat you differently. People say, "yes, ma'am." The first time somebody says that you look at them and wonder who they are talking about. People come and ask you for your opinion instead of foisting theirs on you. Everybody

comes into my office and wants me to solve their problems. I have the capacity to do a lot more than a lot of people in the office do. People endow me with abilities I don't think I have. It is thrilling to know I can outdo. The power of persuasion changes as you grow older. Things to back up your argument with other than the fact that you are little and cute. I can convince my boss to change her mind. I could present an argument that she'll finally say okay. I would never have had the confidence to do that if I were younger than her. Not because I am older, but in having experience with this I have found what works better, "would you like to reconsider?" I work with somebody 25. I can run circles around her. She asks me my opinion. I play a mother figure to her, but I am also one of her superiors at work. She defers to my experience and recognizes I have lived longer so I might have a solution. She is respectful but not like I was to somebody who I never met and older that I need to be respectful to. I don't think she thinks of me as being the age I am. My mother still treats me like I'm 12 and always will but other people. People tend to listen when I say something. They look at me and say she has been around; she must know what she is talking about.

From this stage of the protocols, particular content areas were easily seen, and the substance of that content was highlighted by deleting less important verbiage. The original protocols were reduced to one-third or one-fourth of their original length. Further condensation of the text was not undertaken. This was deemed a compromise between a condensed overview and a mass of details. There must be enough detail to appreciate the relationships among the themes but not so much that it obscures the emerging structure. Working with the data, required both the condensed version and the verbatim transcript. The final product of this step

(significant statements) was a data source from which meanings and themes were formulated.

Step 3: Formulating meanings. Each significant statement was re-read and notes made in the margins of key words and phrases which appeared to capture the fundamental subject matter of each statement. This, in turn led to a list of key words which were inclusive of a variety of interrelated experiences. Although each protocol was thematized independently, it soon became evident that most of the participants used similar key words in describing their experiences. This was simply an enumeration, and there was no attempt made to interpret. This step -- formulating meanings -- is described by Colaizzi (1978) as a "precarious leap...moving beyond the protocol statements...[yet] never sever [ing] all connection with the original protocols" (p. 59). Unlike Colaizzi (1978), however, this step did not go beyond or leap from what the participants said to what they meant. The following notes were made for the same excerpt cited above:

- (1) Body gets older; parts get older and don't work as well.
- (2) Discovered I have not lost capacity for change, to adapt, to learn.
- (3) Experience; who one is is relative to the culture - fitting into society.
- (4) Compensations, consolation, respect, look older, but have my shit together; capacity to do more than others; I can outdo; confidence; experience.

At this stage, every significant statement was reread. Situations in which aging became apparent to the participants, that is, the "when of experience," were noted and formed into a "Situations List." The Situations List answers the question, "When are you aware of aging?" This list was produced by noting all events reported by the participants. The list was refined by combining similar events until a comprehensive set could be described. The final Situations List was developed to present, in summary form, the kinds of events reported by participants as typically giving rise to an awareness of aging. Three categories were developed to summarize the data. The categories, derived from the dialogue of all twelve participants, are the situations under which awareness of aging became conscious:

- 1) Body
- 2) Others
- 3) Time

In the situation of Body, participants noted experiences of aging which became conscious when they were aware of their body. For example, running, trying on clothes, and experiencing symptoms of menopause. In the situation of Others, participants noted experiences of aging when they compared themselves to others or when they went to weddings of children or funerals of parents. In

the situation of Time, participants reported historical events which reminded them of time passing which served as a cue that so many years had gone by and they were that many years older.

Step 5: Organizing formulated meanings into clusters of themes. Salient areas of concern to participants were visible as previous steps cleared away less important parts of the text. In this step key words and phrases capturing themes and situations were grouped in terms of commonalities. Participants' experience appeared to coalesce around certain cue words, which were more or less inclusive of a range of interrelated experiences. These words were grouped into a emergent thematic focus, to which individual experiences were subsumed. Those critical words and phrases occurring across a number of interviews became major themes, with individual descriptions organized under that rubric.

The purpose of this study was to generate a coherent system, within which each aspect of the aging experience could be described and interrelated, not merely to create a comprehensive list of possible themes. To this end, an original list of tentative themes was progressively refined. Themes were organized into clusters on the basis of shared and related meanings. These themes had contrasting aspects and similarity to one another.

Participants frequently spoke of the positive aspects of aging while admitting to the restrictions and losses inherent in their experience. They mentioned recognition of aging as a series of changes in the self and others concomittent with a recognition of continuity of the self and other. At other times, participants were explicit in describing only negative aspects of aging. Consequently, the list of tentative themes was organized into clusters which seemed to imply a counterpoint to one another. Sometimes, but not often, this counterpoint was implied but not stated.

In this process one source of arbitrariness concerns descriptions subsumed under a given theme that could have been considered a major theme itself. For example, an early thematic area considered was Loss, which was enumerated as salient by a number of participants. One aspect of aging is an awareness of the loss of others (e.g. parents), of roles which had been a major source of identity (e.g., child care), and of bodily functions (e.g., menopause), all of which had been or could be a major component of identity. The experience of loss might have been considered a major theme on its own. In the process of analyzing the transcripts, however, it appeared that this thematic component frequently was incorporated and subsumed in other aspects.

Certain sub-themes were common to more than one theme and cut across them. The final step involved in clustering themes required integrating subordinate themes into a meaningful description of the major thematic content, the goal of which is to capture the entire range of experience described by participants.

Thematic aspects relate to one another; one's anticipations or lack of expectations determine to some extent what one discovers. In addition, what one discovers or fails to discover leads to what one becomes; likewise, what one becomes is in part determined by one's anticipations and discoveries. Participants experienced their aging by contrasting the currently known self with the remembered past self, with others both present and past, and over time. In addition, they expressed their current experience with similar experiences in the past.

Thematic aspects also overlap with one another; that is, each to some extent contains all the others. In other words, particular themes become figural, while others remain the everpresent ground; that is, at any particular time they may be figural or latent. Statements were grouped in terms of best fit; many significant statements exemplified more than one theme.

Step 6: Referring clusters of themes back to the original protocols. Following thematization of all

significant statements, themes were referred back to the original verbatim interviews as a validating step. As noted by Colaizzi (1978), the purpose of this step is to ask "...whether there is anything contained in the original protocols that isn't accounted for in the clusters of themes, and whether the clusters of themes propose anything which isn't implied in the original protocols" (p. 59). When enough categories were present to capture the full range of meaning contained in interviews, thematizing ceased. A compromise is reached at this point between conceptual manageability and conceptual cumbersomeness. Too few themes simplify findings at the expense of conceptual richness; too many themes add complexity at the expense of specificity and clarity. Analysis ceases at the point of optimum generality wherein statements from all participants can be scored while continuing to provide a manageable and organized overall system of themes. Referring themes back to the original verbatim transcript is a way of insuring that content was not lost and that each statement was understood in the context in which it emerged.

At this stage validation was asked from participants. A tentative summary of findings was presented to each participant and her transcript of significant statements was shown to her. Each participant

was asked to read over the transcript, and to respond with any comments, additions, or changes she would make, with reference to her own aging experience as well as with reference to the total interview, including the tentative summary of findings. In addition, participants were asked if any developments with regard to their experience of aging had occurred. Participants also were asked for their to use their statements in whole or in part in the study (See Appendix B.). These interviews were audiotaped and provided a way of validating the tentative thematic structure described to this point.

Step 6: Formulating an exhaustive description of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. The themes list was refined until all protocols were able to be scored. This description was accepted as the final structure of the experience of aging. The major themes were broadly inclusive and interrelated to one another. Moreover, they were found to encompass both similarities between themes and contrasts within themes. The final structure scrupulously fulfilled the requirements of completeness and coherence. The structure was comprehensive in that it enabled the investigator to account for all specific examples of the experiences of aging described by participants. It was understandable by virtue of

utilizing the language and experience that participants themselves used.

Scoring the Interviews

After the final system was developed and all themes defined, significant statements were scored for the presence of a theme. Since there are three themes, any statement could be scored as reflecting from one to three of them, e.g., anticipating, discovering, and/or becoming. Each statement was scored only once for any theme that may have been present, regardless of how many times it was mentioned in the statement. Each statement could be scored for more than one theme if it was judged that more than one theme was present.

Reliability Check

The purpose of the reliability check is to determine if themes derived by the researcher can be reliably seen by others trained and proficient in the rating system. As stated by Giorgi (1975) a consensus among researchers over the conclusions made about given data is not an intrinsic demand of the phenomenological method. The claim he does assert, however, is that "if any other researcher assumes the attitude described by the researcher, then he should be able to perceive and understand the same meaning..."

(p. 78). Within this method, reliability becomes meaningful if the perspective of the investigator can be made explicit and shared by others. To this end a Scoring Manual was developed to define the category system and to provide examples of how that system maps onto the protocol data. A copy of the manual is included as Appendix C.

Initially, two raters were given the scoring manual and ten statements selected as practice items which were then scored and reviewed by the investigator. When it appeared that raters understood the category system and the purpose of the research, they were provided with a random selection of 30 significant statements were to be scored, independent of one another. These statements represented all thematic aspects. Percentage agreement was calculated between raters, and between each rater and the investigator.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Analysis of interview data revealed the experience of aging as a multifaceted phenomenon. A thematic system was derived from the protocols which elucidates and describes aspects of the experience of aging in midlife women. A scoring manual was produced to evaluate the accuracy of coding statements into the various themes of the system.

When people converse, even when they are relatively focused on a particular subject, they shift from one topic to another. They tangentially mention something they found interesting or relevant; not all of what is discussed relates to the topic at hand. In phenomenological research, the investigator sifts through the material, continually focusing and refocusing on salient issues. Because different themes may have similar aspects, only in the context of the dialogue is one or the other made figural, and it is only by virtue of context that themes are explicated at all. Unlike the interviewer, participants do not have the luxury of spending hours checking and rechecking the material in progress. For participants, the dialogue unfolds in

time. None of them knew what would occur next, nor what themes would emerge, nor how they would evolve.

Aging is an ongoing experience of life. There is no beginning, middle, and end. Thus there is relatively little narrative. Aging is not an experience one resolves because it does not have an ending until death. Moreover, the experience of aging is ambiguous. As one participant expressed it, she was unsure whether she was speaking about aging or about her life. This ambiguity relates to an awareness of a conceptual difference between the two but to an uncertainty as to how one understands that difference. There are social, biological, and personal issues, all of which interact to give one clues as to what is going on at any particular time. The cues themselves are ambiguous, and each participant must make her own meaning. For example, a participant described the diminishing functioning of her body and its inability to perform. She was unsure whether that decline was due to aging, pregnancy, illness, or the inaccuracy of her memories.

Emotionally, I hope there is maturity. Physically, I feel it in my bones. My fingers don't work quite as well. I can't sit in one position for a long time because my knees lock up. It is difficult to force myself to exercise. I don't have the energy. The varicose veins in my legs are getting worse. I'm confused whether I would have gone through this at the rate I have, had I not gotten pregnant. I felt healthy, strong, and young until the pregnancy.

After two years I am beginning to feel like my old self. I tire easily. I don't have the energy I used to. For the first time we went on a vacation designed to be a sitting vacation. I don't know if it is related to being a mother. But generally both of us are slowing down. (Participant #12)

Participants varied only slightly with regard to their professed awareness of aging. All but one claimed that they were very aware and had been thinking about it for sometime prior to the interview, but these reflections were episodic. The oscillation of thoughts and reflections are based on the uncertain nature of aging and the way one becomes aware of it. Participants described an initial preoccupation in their awareness of growing older which precluded and narrowed their focus as what to expect. Typically, participants related at least some initial confusion, discomfort, or frustration in not knowing where they were in the life cycle or indeed who they were.

For many participants, although not all, their experience was synthesized for the first time in the dialogue. The interview itself served to cue an awareness of aging. The nature of the experience often seemed to be something that emerged as participants talked about their lives and their expectations for the future.

It happened so gradually. It has become part of me. I can't fight it. Like your weight, you get big and you keep on growing and growing and growing. Nothing came rushing in; everything was very subtle to the

point that I didn't even know it was happening until you sat here and talked to me about it. (Participant #1)

I see time coming to a close or end when I experience my parents. We took a walk the last time mom came to see me. That might be the last walk I take with her. No those thoughts don't come to me; it has right now. (Participant #5)

Participants were asked to describe the when and what of their experience. All data were divided into: (1) situations giving rise to the experience of aging, and (2) descriptions of the experience of aging in that situation. Although there is considerable overlap between the two, there is no one to one correspondence and situations as well as themes can be differentiated. The total description reflects both the what and the when. There is no what without a when. The what and when is the experience. For example, being ill is both an example of a situation and part of a person's experience in that situation. Further distinction emerged through the elaboration of the person's experience of the illness for her. The experience might be awareness of the contrast between being ill at 20 and being ill at 40.

I had to take the chemo, and it is very, very difficult. I realized if I was a younger person, you can cope with it more because you are stronger. As you grow older, it is harder and harder to cope with it. (Participant #7)

The category system for explicating significant events was derived from the Situations List. The system

for developing themes or thematic aspects was extracted from the Theme Clusters List. Since the major goal of this study was the description of themes in the experience of aging, the Scoring Manual and the reliability tasks were used only to assess the adequacy of the thematic structure.

Situations

The Situations List accounts for what Colaizzi (1978) described as the "contextual horizon" of the person's experience. This list was produced by noting every event reported by participants. The list was gradually refined by combining similar events until a finite set could be described. The final Situations List (Table 2) was developed, in its current form, so that the kinds of events reported by participants, as typically giving rise to an awareness of aging, could be represented. Similar to themes, events on the Situations List could be coded into more than one situation. For example, going to a baby shower conceivably could be coded into Body, Others or Time, depending upon the experience to which it gave rise. When a woman went to a baby shower, she might be aware, at different times, of different experiences. At any particular time, a participant might describe her awareness that she would no longer be having babies

Table 2

Situations Giving Rise to Awareness of Aging

	P a r t i c i p a n t N u m b e r												
<u>Situation</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	x
	Frequency of Occurrence												
Body * Sensing the Body	3	4	2	1	4	1	7	2	2	2	7	4	3.25
Using the Body	4	2	3	2	4	4	3	6	4	2	2	4	3.33
Identity /Self	8	4	14	10	12	11	7	22	10	3	14	7	10.17
<u>Others</u> Significant Others	8	2	5	2	17	9	7	9	4	6	9	7	7.08
Anonymous Others	7	2	10	4	4	5	9	8	4	2	4	3	5.17
<u>Time **</u> Tempo	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	.67
Change and Continuity	2	0	2	4	5	6	4	3	1	7	2	1	3.08
Limits and Choices	1	1	8	2	9	4	6	5	3	2	5	3	4.08
Body Frequency	15	10	19	13	20	16	17	30	16	7	23	15	15.42
Others Frequency	1	4	15	6	21	14	16	17	8	8	13	10	12.25
Time Frequency	4	1	11	6	18	10	10	8	5	9	8	4	8.50
Total Frequency	4	15	45	25	59	40	43	55	29	24	44	29	442.00

* Categories derived from MacGillivray, 1985.

** Categories derived from Dapkus, 1982

because she was in menopause which gave rise to her experience of aging in that her childbearing years had come to an end. This event could be coded into the experience of time. In the same situations, she might compare her body with those who were still having babies, realizing again by contrast, that her body looked older and the situation would be coded in body or others.

As seen in Table 2, the most frequently occurring category is Body with a mean of 15.42, the second most frequently occurring is Others with a mean of 12.25, and the third category Time with a mean of 8.50. Within each of these categories can be seen the most contributory aspect within the category. For example, in the category of body, identity/self accounts for most of the categories mentioned. In the category of Others, significant others accounts for the majority of items. In the Time category, limits and choices accounts for the majority of items with change and continuity following a close second. As noted in the thematic aspects of this chapter, identity and self statements which have to do with a sense of mastery, competency, and sense of self are the major concerns of midlife women. As such, one sees the overlap between situations and experiences.

Body.

Using the Body. This category refers to an awareness of the body in a variety of situations. For example, when the body is active, being "used." Such use might be specific or general, such as jogging or everyday experiences such as lifting items or taking a shower. With some exceptions, participants frequently spoke about diminished functioning of various organ systems. That is, the body is perceived as being not as strong, not as fast, not as enduring.

You can't go up and down stairs, your bones creak, you have to wear glasses and false teeth. Your muscles are not as strong. Your back gets tired more and you can't lift as you get older. Your hair is getting grey and dry. (Participant #1)

Using the body had its positive dimensions as well, as exemplified by this participant.

If I am running on the boulevard sometimes I feel much older than the kids that are passing me at a great rate. On the other hand, not having been athletic as a kid everything that I do now I think is wonderful. I resent slightly that I wasn't encouraged to be more active when I was in my late teens and early twenties. But I can do it now. Seeing somebody run past me I have a sigh of regret. That would have been nice. I wish I could do that. I don't beat myself up over it. You realize as you get older you keep going into upper age groups so there is some advantage. I keep finding my role models even older. (Participant #9)

Sensing the Body. Other situations include sensing the body which is frequently felt as impinging or intruding. Illness with its attendant aches and pains is

a typical example. Sensing the body need not be negative, however, and sensing can be pleasureable. For example, participants spoke of their appreciation of their body as it feels now compared to how it felt when they were considerably younger. "Sensing refers to the body as apprehended in its physicalness" (MacGillivray, 1985, p. 97).

Sensing the body may overlap with using the body, but not necessarily so. Participants spoke about a change in their menstrual cycle which they experienced physically and which also gave rise to their perceived limited child bearing years with its attendant feelings of differentness and possible loss. Sexuality could be coded under Sensing the Body or Using the Body, depending on the circumstance. A variety of experiences can be subsumed under the same situation or conversely a variety of situations can give rise to similar experiences, depending on the focus at any particular time.

Not too long ago something strange happened. It felt like a cattle prod or an electric current was going through me. I felt high like I was on drugs. It was frightening, weird. I couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. I was talking to a friend on the phone and she started to tell me about going through menopause and all the difficulty she had had. I didn't say anything, but when I finished speaking with her, I thought over my explanation to myself. Like it couldn't have been a drug reaction. I wasn't on drugs. But I thought she is only a year older than me. I'm too young. Last week I had my first hot flash. There is something odd about your body

being or doing something over which you have no control and over which you look at it objectively and ask what is happening, because I don't feel this way. Like physiologically my body was acting as if it was frightened. I couldn't find anything that I should feel tense and frightened about. (Participant #3)

Identity. Identity includes an awareness of both change and continuity in self over time. That is, participants compared previous feelings of awkwardness and unacceptability as well as of admiration, with feelings of acceptance or dislike of their body/self. Another aspect of identity refers to what participants describe in terms of its meaning for the self. For example, some women felt that menopause meant a change in how they identified the self; that is, this new self could no longer entertain notions of pregnancy as it had for most of their remembered life.

I have always thought of myself as someone who could have babies. I don't know how to define how this effects who I am. It makes me different than I was. I'll need some time. It is sort of exciting. It may be a loss, but I'm not sure. (Participant #3)

Another example might be a participant's awareness of illness, like arthritis or high blood pressure, in which certain physical activities were precluded and replaced by others which were seen as less desirable and "not me" experiences.

You don't feel quite as good all the time as you did before. Until 38 I was never sick. High blood pressure. I started taking medication. It changes

your metabolism. Consequently, I started gaining weight. I started having back problems, arthritis. I had to slow down. It restricts me. It was health. It is still up here (points to her head). I would still like to party, stay up all night. I can't. I control going to bed at 11 or on the weekends 12. I don't like that. I started sleeping eight hours a night. The doctor said I had to. I think how ridiculous. My body doesn't work. When I get up in the morning, I don't move until I take certain exercises. It is a nuisance. (Participant #2)

Other dimensions of this category include a sense of patience, toleration of difference, mastery, knowing oneself, or not knowing oneself, and discovering or failing to discover an unknown identity.

I'm more aware in the past year than ever before. An awareness of stepping into new roles where people see me as maternal. That has been nice. That would have bothered me immensely years ago. (Participant #6)

Others. An aspect of this category is the presentation of the body; that is, when the participant is aware of her body as it appears to others. Typical examples cited were weight gain, grey hair, and wrinkles. This refers to the body on display either to others, or to oneself in the role of the other. For instance, looking in the mirror or looking at photograph albums requires one to take the role of the "other." This category was divided between significant and anonymous others.

Significant Others. Significant Others refers to situations in which children, mothers, fathers, parents, husbands, boyfriends, lovers, friends and

relatives are figural others. For example, children becoming taller, mothers and fathers becoming older, ill or dying, and seeing old friends with whom one grew up who now have children of their own.

My family is getting up in years. One of my parents nearly died last year. My mother started to call me with little things that she couldn't seem to do, leaning on me. I started feeling this responsibility. I was more responsible than I had been before and that made me feel older. My parents forget things more. They are in their late 60s and 70s. They are showing signs of aging. Realizing my parents are going to die. Really being aware of it now in a way I was never aware before. They look old. Their health isn't as good. A lot of their friends are dying. I start to identify with them. Five or six years ago, I couldn't get into how it must feel to have all the people around you, who you grew up with, die. Now it feels different because a number of people close to me have died or whom I was close to when I was a kid. I see my parents have shrunken in stature. That is going to happen to me. (Participant #3)

The excerpt above reveals how the situations overlap into experience, since the same situation gives rise to experiences of limited time as well as one's comparison and identification with those who are older than oneself.

Anonymous Others. This category refers to all other persons, e.g., waiters who bring you the check, people who call you ma'am, being recognized and appreciated by older rather than younger men, not being noticed by those who were once attentive or realizing that what was once a possibility with others has been curtailed due to aging.

People always thought I was younger than I was. It doesn't come up very much now. (Participant #3)

There was a flirtatious younger guy I worked with who was also cute. I realized for the first time he was simply too young for me; like 12 years too young. (Participant #3)

Time. Although the least frequently cited situation, all participants were aware of their experience of time. Again, this was not experienced as a single dimension but multifaceted. For example, many participants experienced anxiety regarding the fact that they felt they had less time and as a corollary, tempo was felt to increase. Thus anxiety increased as limited time seemed to move faster; that is, less time until death. Aspects of time were tempo, change and continuity, and limits and choices.

Tempo. Participant spoke of tempo in the context of restrictions and choices. That is, when participants acknowledged a change in tempo, it was within its contextual horizon of change and continuity and/or limits and choices. Tempo was described as going too fast, too slow or just right, depending on context. For example, one woman, who had recently recovered from, or was at least in remission from, cancer expressed her realization that she was aware of having less time. Along with having less time in which to experience living, came an urgency to get on with life. Another participant, perceiving that she was reaching the upper end of her

child bearing years, described the decision not to have children and her concomitant urgency to get on with her life. Now that there was less time left (limits), there were choices to make. The experience of tempo changed with the recognition of change and limits.

At 36 I was acutely aware of a sense of panic. Not about physical aging although there was some when the grey hairs and wrinkles started. Panic because I hadn't had any children. I was divorced. A sense of having marked time and of not having done what I wanted to do. At 35 now what. Life is going on and there is more than this. Am I going to do it. It being the work that matters to me or get married and have children. A sense of having wasted time, lost time, and the urgency to get on with it.
(Participant #9)

Change and Continuity. In terms of time, change and continuity were themselves confusing, referring to the fact that participants experience themselves and others as being different, changing, yet having continuity in time. In existential terms this category is "becoming in time" (Dapkus, 1982).

Accepting aging for me has been coming to realize that there is a change. It seems like you would always have known that things change, but I don't think I have always known that things really change.
(Participant #6)

The difficulty in understanding the experience of change and continuity was especially noticeable when people felt there was too much change, and felt out of synchrony with their contemporaries.

There have been so many different stages, so many changes in my life. It has been changing repeatedly

and being in a completely different place. It is one of the reasons I didn't notice aging. You think of aging in terms of where you are in your life. If you have been working for 20 years and have a home this makes you middle age. If you are 40 in graduate school, dealing with student loans, then you're not sure what kind of person this makes you. The markers are missing. When I am out of school I wonder if I'll start feeling a lot more matronly. God forbid! (Participant #6)

Limits and Choices. Participants are aware of limits, restrictions, liabilities, vulnerabilities, and losses which aging imposes, yet choices, options, and possibilities also emerged for them. This category is essentially "doing in time" (Dapkus, 1982). Participants noted differences in time remaining. This awareness was brought about in a variety of events. Most often it became salient through the death or perceived aging of a parent. It was also brought forth by participants who had begun their career late and were concerned about accomplishments in time.

Time passing and not having accomplished what I want to do. In my 20s I had things set out to finish by this time. I go home and see these people and think I'm only twenty years behind my guideposts. When I think about it there is a sense of disappointment that I haven't done more careerwise. I don't feel good about my age in relation to career goals. This much time left to do all that I want to do. (Participant #5)

Concurrent with the experience of having limited time was the awareness of vulnerabilities. Participants were more aware of the contingencies of living.

A year before my mother died I quit smoking. I know that was a conscious confrontation with my own mortality. I needed to make a will. That was another acknowledgement of mortality. The sense I too am going to die. This is all going to end was just a sense of panic that started five or six years ago. I remember thinking as a sequence of thoughts I am going to die so I had better get my work done. To throw myself into meaningful work. It was a sense you think you have all the time in the world but you do not. (Participant #9)

In addition, and depending on the situation, some felt more cautious while others felt they could take more risks.

The past three years when my husband travels--four months at a time. I am used to living alone. I never thought or worried whether the door was locked. Now, I don't like strange noises at night; I don't sleep well when he is gone. It never used to bother me. I drive slower. I'm not the dare devil I used to be. I haven't been skiing in years. I'm more cautious. I don't climb to the top of stepladders. I worry about things happening to my daughter. Things that you never thought about, you just didn't worry about, and now I do. We had an obscene phone caller and a rape threat, but with four dogs nobody in his right mind is going to come into my house. I know that, but it doesn't prevent me from double checking all the locks. My husband and I were free in terms of coming and going. Now when he goes away traveling I want to know where he is. (Participant #12)

Having less time implied a choice and coming to grips with what one was going to do with the time remaining. It meant looking back and evaluating the past as well as planning and looking forward to the future.

There is that person in me saying you don't enjoy that, why do it. You're not going to live that much longer. You only go one time around so do what you want to. (Participant #1)

One aspect of "Change and Continuity" and "Limits and Choices" was highlighted by participants' experiences of becoming and doing. Participants had a highly developed sense of doing. Many of their responses had to do with issues of mastery. Most of these women were highly productive, involved in work outside of home. Many began working after fulfilling the traditional roles of mother and wife. Most were delighted that they could "outdo" younger people, something few had anticipated.

Thematic Aspects of Aging

All of the situations related to an awareness of aging can be subsumed under the three overall categories. These are exhaustive but not mutually exclusive categories accounting for all possible experiences. These categories are qualitative dimensions involving all three possibilities. In our lived experience, these situational categories are not distinct from one another, but flow together. Moreover, not all specific situations are categorizable without reference to transcripts, and sometimes not even then because people tend to speak in degrees along a continuum of specificity and vagueness. It can be said that if the participant provided sufficient detail, specific occasions of the awareness of

aging can be assured of belonging within these three categories.

Much of the thematic content of the study was derived from descriptions of situations which give rise to awareness. Deriving the various aspects of aging in terms of themes was the primary intention of this study to which we now turn attention.

While participants varied only slightly with regard to their recognition of aging, it is clear that a transition occurred. The form of that resolution within the different arenas of awareness varied considerably. Much of what appears to influence whether growing older leads to going on being or to atrophy relates to the relative balance of various aspects of aging. Individuals became aware of aging through contrast and similarity. Initially, this was considered a theme in its own right. In reviewing the protocols, however, it was noted that contrast and similarity provided the condition(s) under which aging was experienced. Contrasts and similarities were made between self and peers, between the current self and the self remembered, including body, abilities, and feelings about the self.

The Theme Clusters List (Table 3) was derived from key words found in the significant statements which summarized the unique aspects of participants' experiences

Table 3Theme Clusters List

Positive Aspects

Negative Aspects

ANTICIPATING

Hoping
Gains

Fearing
Losses

DISCOVERING

Being Surprised
Feeling Noticed &
Appreciated
Discovering Oneself
Adapting to Change
Recognized as Mature
Sharing Memories
Less Self-conscious
Growing

Not Being Surprised
Feeling Unnoticed &
& Unappreciated
Losing Oneself
Not Wanting to Change
Being Seen as Old
Having No Shared Memories
More Self-conscious
Atrophy, conflict,
discontent, agitation,
depressed, annoyed, bored,

Discovering Opportunities

Restricted Possibilities

BECOMING

Becoming, Evolving
Evaluating
Being Able to Say No
Involvement, Vitality
Having more Energy
Competency, mastery,
self-validation,
confidence
Accepting, tolerating,
enduring, responding
Knowing where I belong
Valuing Friendships
Choosing Responsibility
Respecting Process of Time

Deteriorating
Resigning, Wanting the Past
Doing What Others Want
Noninvolvement, Lethargy
Having Less Energy
Incompetency, validation
by Others, less self-
confident
Less Accepting, failing to
respond
Out of synch, not fitting in
Avoiding Friendships
Avoiding Responsibility
Fighting Time

of aging. In turn, the themes were derived from key words and phrases in the Theme Clusters List. In Table 3 each theme is defined in terms of a pooling of statements from all interviews. Each participant tended to emphasize some, but not necessarily all, of the perspectives grouped in each theme. Table 3 provides a comprehensive list of themes, which cluster together into the three principle themes, and subsume contrasts. Each list of words in Table 3 identifies a cluster of sub-themes that relate closely together. On the left hand side of Table 3, the first column concerns aspects of anticipating which have a positive valence. On the right hand column are the corresponding negative theme polarities. Positive and negative contrasts are listed for all three thematic categories.

Three fundamental areas of thematic focus emerged and were identified, each of which has implicit or explicit contrasting aspects. In addition to contrasts within themes, there are similarities between themes. While describing their experiences of aging, participants articulated aspects of each theme. For example, participants spoke of the deterioration of their body, yet often described their pleasure at finding it more acceptable. Since aging itself is figural in awareness at certain times, and is the ground of awareness at other

times, it is not surprising that these contrasting dimensions, which are contextually situated, are noted at different times. Most participants felt that their awareness of aging occurred at almost any time and under one or more of the situations noted above. Virtually all participants described their experiences as fundamentally related to the manner in which they lived their lives.

Additionally, it is clear that the thematic aspects are in a figure/ground relation to one another. One of the problems in describing various themes is the impossibility of making the themes independent. One finds they are highly interrelated, reciprocally interacting, and always present. The themes form a unity. That is, it is not possible to anticipate without concurrently assuming one's own becoming. In trying to describe themes to others, however, there is a tendency to attempt to clarify them such that they are mutually exclusive, and therein lies the frustration of presenting results. One is attempting to clarify aspects of a phenomena in language that is more congenial to discrete analysis than to a wholistic rendering of the experience. Moreover, themes are on a non-linear continua. Prose, unlike poetry, is a linear description of a state or event. This fact of language makes it difficult to capture the non-discreteness of experience. Themes ebb and flow into one

another, and all must always be held in mind simultaneously. Only by doing so is the interrelationship between themes revealed. However reciprocally dependent on each other, it is possible to conceptually distinguish the themes from one other.

In Gestalt terms the interconnectedness between categories can be seen as figure/ground relationships. All themes form the ground of the experience of aging. It is the aspect of the experience that one is attending to at any given time, however, that defines which of them is figural. Whether one is attending to one theme or another does not imply that the other aspects are not present; they are simply not currently figural.

Anticipating. Anticipation refers to a prior recognition, realization or opinion, occurring before all the facts are known or observed or before the normal or expected time of occurrence. Sometimes it has to do with participants looking forward to a particular event in order to prevent its occurrence. Although it can be a preconception formed before all the facts were in, for most participants that was not the case. Anticipating derived from imagining, fantasizing, and reminiscing as well as from reminders, memories, and expectations in which fears and hopes, gains and losses become fused.

I am going to be sorry to give some things up. What is happening has been reassuring about death and made

it less fearsome. You give things up as you go. I was talking to a friend who is dying. I can see how somebody in this position can find death a release. My callouses are worse, and there is no assurance that surgery is going to make them better. If I have to give up things as I age, if life gets to be less fun, death gets to be less terrifying. I have never been confronted with the immediate prospect or possibility of death. (Participant #11)

One has hopes that certain things will or will not come to pass. On the other hand, one has fears that the same or different things will or will not occur. These fears and hopes include body deterioration, restrictions on doing, limits on being, vulnerabilities to losses, and changes that undermine the stability of self, the sense of limitlessness and the fantasy of continuousness. As well as anticipated losses, there are expected gains.

I grew up in a household of women. My grandmother was beautiful. I have positive images of older women even old women. When my grandmother was 75, she was devastating, very beautiful, not a classic. She was homely when younger and until she was 50. Then she started to accept and work with it and became more herself after her husband had died. She was a charming, funny and bold lady who spoke her mind. I had a mother, grandmother and two dear aunts telling me that getting older was getting better and who by no means sort of rolled over and played dead when they turned 45. I felt life did begin at 40. I didn't ever dread that. I didn't grow up in a family that worshipped youth. (Participant #9)

In terms of body, anticipation of decline and/or loss involved most aspects of body. All participants expected a steady decrease in efficiency and functioning. The specific aspects attended included grey hair, wrinkles, lack of muscle tone, enlarged, sagging breasts, less

energy, menopausal symptoms or a change in their cycle, diseases that appear in middle age such as fibrocystic disease and fibroid tumors, diminishing eyesight, relative loss of bladder control, varicose veins, change in skin tone and suppleness, lack of physical flexibility, and common to all but two participants, weight gain. These are detailed both as merely change and as possible loss. Many felt these changes might or, in fact, did change who they are and how they think of themselves now and in the future.

Of those participants reporting experiences of weight gain, being overweight was experienced as an expression of self and an aspect of their appearance to others. One participant focused on her weight throughout the interview, realizing it was an expression of her desire at midlife to do what she wanted in spite of being self-destructive to her health. She linked it to having limited time remaining, to having done those things which she and others valued, i.e., taking care of others, and to feeling unable to express her need to do what she wanted other than overeat. Yet, by the end of the interview, she realized her dissatisfaction had far more depth than weight alone. Her body was an expression of her desire to do more in her life than just sit around waiting to resign herself to contentment.

You go up the hill and now you're going down - coasting. I want to be important to myself. Why am I not content? Am I going to settle back calmly and accept what I have. I am not sure that time will come. I want to be content. I feel guilty that these feelings are emerging in me. I just might grow to accept it and not worry about it anymore as I grow older. When am I going to say I'm happy with myself. There has to be something else. Everything I had is gone. Why can't I enjoy the food. I have done what I've wanted to do as far as my weight. I wanted to eat so I ate. My body is huge. You try to get close and can't, and people are always looking at your belly sticking out and you want to pull it in and you can't. I don't have the compulsion to do anything about it. I don't think of it in terms of how my husband might feel about it. I should. I wouldn't feel ashamed of my body if everybody else would quit worrying about it, but I am bugged about what everybody else feels about me. I don't know who I am. It is painful. I want to be vital. I want to get all I can get. People just kind of accept you as if you didn't need compliments or rewards.
(Participant #1)

MacGillivray (1985) discusses this aspect of weight as self which reflects a common issue in the wider culture. The pursuit of thinness, especially for women, has little to do with "corporeality, but is seen as a quest for the "ideal self."

Typically participants looked to older women, most frequently mothers, in terms of what it was they expected. Anticipations are frequently derived from memories which in turn bring to awareness women's identifications with their mothers. Many women had vivid memories of their mothers at the age they were at the time of the interview.

Going from one group to another group, into the middle age category had such a terrible sound to it. I said 35 to 40 because I had that number fixed in my mind. Probably because I was seeing my mother at 30 or 35 as a teenager, seeing her getting heavier, wanting to sit on the sidelines watching and not participating, saying you go ahead, you take the car, you go, not having the same desires to be out there with the younger people running around. I got over that in about a year. That was the number I had in my head. My marker. You're on this steep hill going up and you're up and you're up and you're up and all of a sudden you are going to go down the other side. It was kind of an imaginary thing but it was at that particular age. (Participant #4)

As far as "Others" were concerned, appearance was no doubt the most frequent issue as far as anticipating loss. Participants expected that others would not notice them as much. A few described themselves as expecting to feel or feeling asexualized. Many described fears for the future. That is, a few felt that losses were not salient to them at the time of the interview, but their expectation was that it would become so in the ensuing years.

Cultural values also affected women's expectations of deterioration in appearance as well as functioning. Fears included continual and unrelenting physical decline, requiring dependency on others for their care. On the other hand, a few saw gains in aging as expressed by these participants.

I'd like to travel when I get older. I'd like to be a senior citizen. Go on bus tours. Those people have a great time. The only thing that would bother me later is if I wanted to travel, and I couldn't because of my health. (Participant #2)

I used to look forward to getting old so I could be crotchety and nobody could say anything. I could be in a wheelchair and snap people with a cane. They figure you are going to do this and how great that would be because nobody could call you on it. You are just an old lady. How neat. (Participant #8)

Anticipating and time also relate to one another: all participants anticipated less time. Having less time propelled participants to accomplish goals and to meet personal standards in the time remaining. Only one participant initially denied feeling she had less time, but as the interview progressed, she mentioned it on several occasions. Having less time meant being less involved and possibly losing a sense of vitality.

Time left till death; time left until I can't actively involve myself anymore. I look to my parents. They retired early. They were concerned about their health. They have put themselves in a community where people are not so stimulating and everybody is talking about their health. They have lost some of their vitality because they are no longer in the mainstream. When I say time left I guess I mean time left to be vitally involved in my career, more career than physical and family or any other sort of involvement. (Participant #5)

Discovering. Discovering is a complex theme, involving a process of finding, understanding or perceiving something which one had not expected, understood or perceived in the past. It refers both to

surprise and to a dawning awareness. Discovering like anticipating has both positive and negative aspects. What one discovers is oneself, who one can or cannot or may or may not become. What one anticipates to some extent expands or narrows the focus of what one discovers. In turn, what or whom one becomes is dependent upon what one discovers. Herein, arises the similarity and overlap of themes.

Discovering has a surprise quality, which arises from a violation of expectations. Participants expressed feelings of betrayal on one hand and of delight on the other. They felt their expectations had been challenged both on a personal and intellectual level which had a great deal to do with their experience of both their mother's aging and cultural expectations. Surprise comes about through recognizable changes in body, comparisons with significant and anonymous others, and the suddenness with which one recognizes there is less time. In addition, surprise related to the gradualness (as well as to the suddenness) with which the experience came into awareness. It appears as if it is experienced in both ways; that is, the experience is both gradual and sudden.

Many women expressed feelings of surprise in terms of the felt discrepancy between their chronological age and

their experience of what they felt their age to be. For most it was approximately a ten year difference.

My perception of myself is younger than I am, ten years younger. I don't look a lot different. Somedays I look considerably younger and some considerably older, depending on how tired I am. I don't think of myself as old. Older than I was. I don't conceive of myself as almost 42 except on occasions where I draw on background experience. You realize even if you have deluded yourself, that someday you are going to cross something that is going to bring home to you the fact that you may think you look like this and you may operate on the assumption but in reality this is what you really look like. I'll be 42 in three weeks. It didn't strike me until about a year ago. I went, "God, I'm going to be 41." Thirty-nine sounds so youthful compared to 41. (Participant #8)

I am not quite caught up on the inside with what I look like in the mirror. (Participant #10)

As one women aptly stated, "everything comes at once," and it is not until that happens that most participants sensed they were aware of aging or discovered they were growing older. Their children were becoming taller and therefore older; at the same time their parents were getting shorter and therefore older. There were obligations to be reckoned with which were unanticipated and unexpected; i.e., friends dying, children's weddings, inability to fit oneself into clothes that formerly fit, etc. In turn, these events appear to set in motion a readiness for thinking of oneself as aging.

As these participants search themselves as well as their circumstances, they are caught up in the ambiguities

of growing older. When one looks in the mirror, it is not a static body that one views. What one sees in the mirror depends on one's day to day living experience, on one's health, and on one's mood.

Depending upon my state there are times when I feel good about myself. I look in the mirror, and there is acceptance. This looks like a 40 year old woman's face and body. It's okay to look nice and attractive, but not real pretty or to be someone who anyone else would turn and look at. Other times and it is connected with my mother. When she hit middle age, she gave up. (Participant #6)

The process of aging is not something I worry about constantly, but in quiet moments or if I get up early in the morning and my hair is a mess, and I think, "oh, God," or I look at myself in clothes, and I see that the figure is not there. (Participant #7)

As far as body issues are concerned, many women expressed their discovery in terms of its difference as they compared it to their remembered body in which it was frequently seen as a loss, yet just as many participants expressed liking their body better. So although it was seen as not as good as it once was and would never take on the characteristics of Cinderella as wished for, it was accepted and appreciated as perceived in the present.

One aspect of discovering is realizing aspects of being different which initially may take one by surprise. Everyone is aware of them, but how that is experienced may come as a shock. Change and continuity have a great deal to do with the stableness of the sense of self. Who one

is as well as what one becomes has to do with change and continuity. The body often became the vehicle by which participants recognized this change and concomitantly betrayal. What they once thought they were, no longer is.

I don't want to see myself in the mirror the way I am now. I don't like looking at what I see. The weight gain, the lassitude. The fatigue is going away. The hormones help. Two years ago I gained 15 pounds suddenly. Part of what makes me know I am aging is I know things about myself, and they are just not true anymore. I don't care about chocolate, but I crave it. My clothes didn't fit. It got worse. I better tell the whole story. We moved; I hated the place; I gained seven more pounds. I looked horrible. It lumped on. I have dropped 11 pounds, but at what cost...chocolate pies. The immediate gain had to do with hormone shifts. It was immediate, and so complete. Suddenly it was me except that it wasn't me. That had never happened in my life. I was the skinny kid. I go on food binges which never used to be a problem. I was underweight. Now at normal weight I feel fat. The doctors say this is normal weight. It is wrong and the doctors are wrong. The whole different perception of self that has to do with thinking I am one thing and then finding I am behaving very differently. Saying I don't care about chocolate as I am reaching in the candy dish. I feel batty. (Participant #11)

All participants noted diminishing functions of the body with the possibility of continuing deterioration. Many hoped to counter that or at least move in a direction which allowed them a sense of becoming rather than deteriorating. One participant spoke directly to the issue of a change in perspective in both relationship and body.

Relationships in the past were not very good. There was always a sense that somehow we would always be young together. By contrast, the relationship I am now in is a knowledge that we will age together. One or both of us will have health problems, have to take care of each other, have to face illnesses together, that we will get dumpier, and we will love each other's dumpiness, and that dumpiness is okay. It is a nice feeling that dumpy bodies can be sexy and loveable. All good things aren't attached to the fantasy body I wanted of a 20 year old. (Participant #6)

As far as others were concerned some participants were aware that their criteria for attractiveness in the opposite or same sex had not changed, but their attractiveness for others; that is, how they were seen by others, had.

I'm older but my notion of what is good looking is not. When looking it dawns on me that this person is considerably younger. I know I am not young enough to have them actually want to turn and look at me. It doesn't devastate me; I laugh. I don't think of myself as being as sexually attractive as I was. I am to older men. (Participant #8)

Four participants noted issues of sex as it related to aging. Two of whom mentioned it in terms of menopause, and both of whom felt it had little or no impact on the sexual experience itself. One participant mentioned in terms of sex being more pleasurable because she and her husband had more time alone now that their children were out of the house. In most cases, it was noted as it related to appearance rather than to the physical act. Many participants experienced themselves as less sexually attractive. But by and large, sex in the sense of a

physical act seemed not to have been experienced as declining due to aging.

Surprise is subsumed under discovery and forms a temporal relationship within the process of discovering. Surprise reflects the moment of recognition, the suddenness of awareness, the amazement and awakening to reality. Most women were rather explicit in referring to it as an, "Oh, My God" reaction. Initially realization can be characterized by the Ah! Ha! experience. Recognition sets in by which consciousness is directed to a dawning awareness of change in self, others and world which may or may not have been present for sometime, but which is only just realized. What one discovers is that which has changed. It is not yet integrated into becoming. It is not a moment of awareness but a knowing that change has occurred. Discovering does not necessarily involve feeling like a different person, but some variation on the self known. Yet this person is still in the process of becoming.

Discovering implies a sense of openness to possibilities and a willingness to be surprised. It is related to feeling important and appreciated, since openness and willingness entail taking a stand with respect to oneself and another and responding to various unknowns. Participants described a sense of desire to

know, to learn, to grow. Their understanding appears to be based on a dawning awareness of the process of becoming in time and is related to an openness to learning about oneself. It relates to adaptability and discovered opportunities in that one must feel good enough to risk uncovering potentially unpleasant truths about oneself. It relates to feeling less self-conscious since it involves the capacity to play and maintain a sense of humor when appropriate as well as seriousness when necessary.

Needless to say one can never know completely about oneself or one's situation. The extent to which ignorance propels a sense of interest in discovery is a salient factor which contributes to becoming. If one is bored, conflicted, and agitated, and demands that status or that one becomes only what one wishes to be, one feels loss, and stagnation becomes figural. Recognizing signs of maturity, feeling less self-conscious, and noticing possible opportunities are likely to result in future growth and becoming.

The failure to expand and respond to one's change, leads to constriction, depression and stagnation.

I always said I was going to stay young in mind and body. Approaching 50 I felt my age: mentally and then physically. My purpose in life was marriage and family. I became agitated at people saying I should have more in my life. After my daughter married, I

became aware life was passing me by. I was not prepared for later life. What I prepared for is gone. I'm still a wife and mother, but it is not as important a role now as it was. I have a beautiful relationship with my daughter. I have grandchildren, but it is not a responsibility. She does for them like I did for her. I don't feel needed. I was always doing something for my daughter. It isn't enough anymore because she is gone and he works all day. I'm here by myself. I read and watch soap operas. It is not meaningful. There is no one to talk to. I atropied all over. I want to do something different than I have been doing. Something that when you get through with what you perceive your life to be, you can go on with something else and be more satisfied with yourself. I thought things would continue. I always said I can't understand women talking about getting old. I expected it to happen in the 60s and 70s. It came in my late 40s. Very slowly, gradually. Nothing hit me with force. It has been going down or changing. Things are not as fun as they used to be. I want a meaningful job that I would get satisfaction from. I want my own money. To feel somebody needed me. People are looking for younger people. You are fighting against youth. I resent that youth has it all. I want to work when they need me and be there if I have to work nights or weekends. But also I want to have supper on the table when my husband gets home; it pleases him. I resent it. It hasn't anything to do with my feelings for him. I don't resent him. I want to be what he wants me to be. It is important to him so it is important to me. Inside I'm screaming to get out. If he didn't care for me, I'd go out. When he is home, he wants me. I am pleased I can please him, but it is not enough. Out there is another me, vaguely inside and wanting to get out. There is not a gate for me to open. I am like those women I used to get aggravated at wanting to find themselves all the time. I am lost and trying to find myself. I have lost my place in life. I camouflage my feelings about getting out, away from home and doing things differently because I don't want him to know I'm unhappy. It is either/or. I am locked into being here for pappy. It is sad because probably I could be more important to him if I could be independent of him. Love is keeping the other person happy. I live for him. That is what I am programmed to do. I want my cake

and eat it to. I used to have my cake and eat it. Now I just have my cake. Is there such a thing as having it all. I'm hurting for me. I want to concentrate on me. I can't cause it hurts others. I have a pull towards them and a pull towards myself. I want to do what I want to do. I want something for me, but I don't know how to do it without hurting them. I can't say leave me alone, it is none of your business. It is. They love me. We have more time, go places, no problems financially. We don't want for anything. He treats me like a pet coon. All he wants is for me to be here for him when he comes home from work. During the day, whatever makes me happy. I should be thankful for what I have and take everything as it goes. You go up the hill and now you're going down - coasting. I want to be important to myself. Why am I not content? Am I going to settle back calmly and accept what I have. I am not sure that time will come. I want to be content. I feel guilty that these feelings are emerging in me. I just might grow to accept it and not worry about it anymore as I grow older. When am I going to say I'm happy with myself. There has to be something else. Because of the restrictions put on me, I don't know how to find it. Restrictions like pappy saying I want you to be home at night and on weekends. I'm in a conflict. My husband is so good to me I want to please him and forget what I want to do but I can't. I never thought I would feel this way. There is nothing I can do. I get agitated and depressed. (Participant #1)

In this example, one senses restriction and a resentful dependency within the relationship. There is both a sense of avoiding change for either her own situation or for opening communication with her spouse. She suggests that she masquerades, feeling that somehow it is safer to appear to be what others want her to be, and there is something wrong with her in wanting to evolve into something more.

Feeling there are few choices to make is related to an experience of atrophy. One experiences only limitations, feeling that one's options are lost or closed. One might feel that all there is left is superficial, and, therefore, participants experience a feeling of loss of control, and an inability to function satisfactorily. As one participant stated, "This is all I have and all I will ever have." Her experience appears to reflect an ending rather than a becoming. Another describes "having no door to open," being stuck," with "too much time and nothing to do with it." In general these participants feel there is nothing more for them to achieve. They are going downhill with no possibilities yet conceived to expand their horizons.

Two participants sensed discovery as only an unending series of losses with little hope of continuing. One of these women was a housewife with no obligations outside of her home and was confronted with a change in her roles of mother and wife with its diminishing obligations. The other had just come through a serious illness in which she was as yet unsure of continuing at all.

As to the issue of time, participants realized for the first time that time really did come to an end. Some participants saw it as a time to make choices; for others it denoted an end with no options left nor possibilities

discoverable. Time's unseen presence was viewed ominously. Interestingly, no one mentioned religious beliefs as to one's ultimate end. The end of time was seen as an end to doing, being, creating, and spelled the end of their control over possible becoming.

Becoming. Becoming is a constantly evolving process in the context of realizing one's potential. Becoming refers to an emergence of change that leads either to a distinct condition or to the realization that it is the beginning of other stages or conditions. At each transition there appears to be a reevaluation of what change means for one's sense of self. What one anticipates and what one becomes may be the same since expectation determines perception. On the other hand, even as one may feel that her life has narrowed and become constricted, there appears to be a widening of perspectives after the transition is passed. The transition frequently takes place in the discovering dimension. One discovers why one's aging was a surprise at all, considering it happens to everyone. One woman expressed why she even felt it was a discovery, and she felt "out of synch" with her contemporaries. The markers were missing. The markers being the normal sequential experiences of one's life, i.e., high school reunions. Or, for example, if by twenty, one has a child, by forty

that child is leaving and one has other obligations with which to attend. If, however, one has children late in one's thirties, being forty does not mean the same thing as most of one's contemporaries view it. One realizes that not only is there ambiguity in aging, but what one is, is ambiguous. One thought of themselves one way, only to discover, one is something else.

There have been bench marks in the past months. I saw people I went to high school with at the 20th reunion. I compared how I looked or how I felt with other classmates. My life is younger; I'm not as settled. I don't have teenage kids which makes our life different. I don't look to me or my husband retiring in 15 or 20 years. The mind set is different in terms of where people are in their lives and what they are expecting. They seem to be saying they are at their peak; I haven't peaked yet. Having a child late in life means I am going to be in my late 50s when she is a teen. There is much I haven't done, and want to do. (Participant #12)

Realizing one's potential may mean changing one's expectations and one's image of self, all the while maintaining a sense of continuity with one's past identity. The inability to maintain connections with one's past and conversely failing to expand one's future, leads to a sense of deterioration rather than becoming. One's becoming involves all three situational dimensions: body, others, and time. It implicitly or explicitly involves the positive and negative perceptions of who one feels oneself to be.

In my 20s I needed validation that I existed in the way you did if you grew up in the south. To have value was to be pretty. To be appreciated I spend a lot of time, effort, and money trying to be good. Now not needing that, not going any place, thinking, "oh do people think I look pretty?" Not being aware of that at all is nice. It is a tremendous feeling. When I walk in some place it never occurs to me how I look to someone else. I think about how I look at home before I leave. I look in the mirror. On the good days I look acceptable. On the bad days like shit and I shouldn't go out. Once I leave the door, it is gone. I never think about it again. I wouldn't trade that feeling not even for that body I wanted and never got. Given what I grew up believing was valued in women, you lose as you age. All you had to offer was appearance and entertainment value. It had nothing to do with being a real person. You go downhill. You could become more entertainment. But as far as an object for a man, you don't work as well. It doesn't seem to be required anymore. That is based on my own change. I am different, and people respond to me differently. Finding out that that's not true for everybody has made age a completely different thing. It has taken out the loss part of it except for babies and Cinderella's body. People respond to a woman as a real person more easily when she is older. I found it amazing to be valued as a real person. I can have value to a man based on me. It was a tremendous revelation. I didn't think it possible. That is a change.
(Participant #6)

There are also the negative aspects of becoming as exemplified by this participant.

I have lost my importance to people, my ability to do things, to talk to people, to have a meaningful conversation. I worry about how people see me, therefore it is hard for me to talk. I want what I had or something better. Excitement. Something out there that my mind will grow with so I can feel good about myself that I can feel important. Mother says you have so much more than I had at your age, more money, home, better car. Mama is saying that but there has to be something else. I had everything at 29: my child at home, doing things for her, showing her off. I looked good for my husband; he was

proud. I could talk to everybody. What I said was interesting. I knew about current things. I was young enough to get a job. I got paid and contributed to the household. I could get out and drive my car. I felt comfortable with myself. I didn't worry how people thought about me because I knew I looked my best. Maybe they saw me differently, but I felt comfortable with myself. I look back and see this woman I admire. I'd like to be that woman. I would like to turn the clock back when my daughter was little and needed me. Growing up with your child. I'm not growing anymore. I'm at a standstill. I crave something. I have reached the age where society doesn't want what I have to offer. (Participant #1)

This woman expresses the anxiety and deterioration she experiences in having lost continuity with the past and perceiving no current possibility of becoming. She has placed her situation in an either/or conflict. She either loses connection with her past and important figures in her life which threatens her, or she thwarts her own potential which is equally ominous for her sense of self.

Becoming involves accepting the process of continual change in the light of being the same. It involves the process of remaining open to change and the belief that one can deal with it. It is not necessarily a change in identity, but adding on dimensions of self that one did not experience before. It involves reevaluation, choosing, and an awareness that one has survived and will continue to do so in light of the knowledge that one will not survive forever. One lives as if one were to go on

indefinitely, all the while knowing one will not.

Many participants spoke about relaxing, feeling liberated, competent, self-confident, feeling respect for both self and others, having patience and tolerance and endurance to get through the hard times. These were identity issues that most felt were acquired through living. Most felt calmer. There were fewer crises in their lives. The ability to cope realistically gave most women their first sense of mastery and substance.

Although all participants expressed reservations about declining physical attraction, many expressed relief that they no longer felt the need to dedicate themselves to appearance and to the attraction of males. They had come to some resolution and stability with how they looked and a relative perspective in being "out of the running."

Things I used to get nervous about don't bother me anymore. There was a time when I couldn't have enjoyed gorgeous young men the way I enjoy them now. I would worry about what they were thinking of me. Now I don't care. I just love to look. I don't want to do anything, but looking and thinking is fine. I am out of the running. That sounds negative, but it is liberating. Doris Lessing influenced me. Her fiction is divided into two halves. The first half is woman trying to attract man; the second is woman not giving a shit. The second is more attractive to me. (Participant #11)

In addition to feeling relief at being out of the running, participants seldom mentioned husbands, lovers,

or boyfriends as crucial significant others when they were aware of being seen and experienced being older. Mothers were the single most important significant other with regard to aging. It is interesting that as women experience themselves as more autonomous and less reliance on others to maintain self-esteem, but remain concerned about their body appearance, the significance of male perception of body diminishes. Women now feel in charge of their appearance and feel adequate in judging their body rather than relying on the judgment of others which they lament having taken place in their youth.

Women cited the ability to finally say "no" which relates to feeling more self-confident and self-validating as compared to needing validation by others. These women speak about the struggle to carry on their activities in light of somebody else's perceived needs, and finally being able to inject their own needs into the equation. Prior to midlife, the needs of others almost always came first or the needs of the self were given less salience than those of the "other."

I have always had trouble saying I want to do so and so when I know that somebody else wants me to do something else. I resolved that for many years by living alone, taking the phone off the hook, and telling lies about not being available. I don't do that anymore. I say I'm sorry. I want to work; I'm not going to do that. The sense of feeling competent is the gain of self. The self of self-containment; of self-importance that I have control of my life. I

have been fighting imaginary battles for a lot of years. (Participant #9)

Related to the ability to say "no" is the sense of taking responsibility for one's life; that is, blame was no longer an issue and that even if one's decisions had undesirable consequences, participants now felt they could live with those decisions. This was obviously related to having fewer crises. It was not that bad decisions were considered valuable but accepting and tolerating one's deficits and incompetencies as well as competencies were integrated.

I stopped being guilty about not consuming every moment doing something worthwhile even though I still do that a lot. I go home in the afternoon and take the phone off the hook, take a nap. I was an adult. That is what it is. Until you believe you are a relatively rational, mature individual..it was at that point I felt like an adult. I didn't have to answer to somebody else for my actions. It is none of their business. I am the master of my own life so to speak. Getting older you realize you are the person that runs your own life with the exception of having to pay taxes and get up and go to work and you are required to do certain things. It is this wonderful sense of relief that you can actually do things. You don't realize the value of that until you get to the point where you really don't have a choice. (Participant #8)

The acceptance of self as contrasted with the acceptance by others was mentioned by nearly all women. The pressures they felt themselves to be under when they were younger was unburdened and a feeling of coming into oneself was often expressed.

I was raised where impressions, what people thought of you was really important. Always trying to please other people. Now I don't feel that way. I do what I know is best for me. It doesn't bother me to tell somebody no and have my own opinion. That is a good point in aging because now I am able to realize that I can have an opinion and it doesn't have to agree with somebody else's. I am still affected by other people. I want them to have good thoughts, to see me as I am, as an individual. You become more comfortable with yourself. You don't have this burning desire to please everybody that walks by. When other people view me I am most aware of physical attractiveness, but I already have my standards for myself. They don't change. It doesn't really affect me like it used to. (Participant #4)

As far as Others are concerned, becoming involves the discovery and ongoing understanding that there was a change in the nature of their relationships not only with their children but for many a new era of understanding with their mothers and the importance of relationships.

I get on better with my mother. It all has to do with aging. She has less power. We are franker, less bullshit. I like that. At the same time I found myself horrified by her body. I began to adjust to the way she is and to enjoy her as she is now and to tease her. She came to stay with us and it was wonderful. We took her to the airport and put her in a wheelchair. She was mad as hell but I said, "get in. It is the only way you are going to get there." She couldn't say no. I was fixing her bags and my daughter started wheeling her about and when I looked up was doing wheelies. Ten years ago that would have been cause for me to feel bad and to worry I had done something to my mother. It was funny. I laughed and other people laughed. Had I gone on the old way and felt bad and let her have that power saying you're doing things to me, it would have been a bad scene. (Participant #11)

Two participants exemplified the difficulties many women had in counteridentifying with their mothers. In

the process of becoming, there was a recognition of a desire to come to some resolution about their feelings regarding their mothers.

There is a deep fear in many of us especially when we are younger that we are suddenly going to wake up, and we will have turned into our mothers without having noticed that the process was taking place. I looked in the mirror and there she was. I thought, "my lord it has happened." I turned into my mother which isn't bad because she was great. I relaxed into a different image of myself physically, wearing my hair differently, wearing colors that I hadn't worn before but that she used to wear. I'm not my mother, and I don't look that much like her. It was an acceptance of that process, and that was exactly the same month or so that all those changes occurred. When someone dies there is a period of grief and mourning and there is a later period in which you take them back into your life. I got her pictures out. I was welcoming her back. I aged but also became younger because I was no longer fighting in my appearance the encroachment of aging. I was able to say, "so my hair is grey." Let's wear it off the face so all the grey shows. Let's wear colors that bring out the grey like mother used to do.
(Participant #9)

In this latter example, the feeling of loss is accompanied by a feeling of continuity with mother. The process of internalization following the death of her mother enabled this participant to take in aspects of her unwanted, aging mother and allow her to accept her own aging. The feeling of continuity with mother was expressed by nearly all participants whether they felt their relationship was good or bad. Those for whom the relationship was fraught with difficulties had made distinct changes which enabled them to accept mother and find a new and viable relationship

with her which most had felt was not possible when they were younger.

I have grown out of an image of myself that I never felt comfortable with. I am emerging into something that seems more. I had trouble recognizing myself in the mirror in my 20s. I didn't quite have a clear sense of who I was. I was trying to control who I was by what I looked like. I don't do that anymore. I feel settled in. Settled into my persona, my being in the world. It is not, "oh my God, look how old I have gotten." I don't have any of that yet. It has to do with my mother. Five years ago if I had looked in the mirror and caught signs of aging and saw the resemblance to her it would have been kind of an, "oh no." Now, it is "oh good." (Participant #9)

In addition to mothers, friendships in general, and with women in particular, provided expressions of the desire for more contact with mother as well as with an expanded circle of relationships that was not possible earlier in life.

Friendships are very valuable now. I find myself going back to the old ones. Narrowing down. In my neighborhood there is somebody I'm going to like, but not many. Old friends I see every couple years, I'm going to hang onto. We go shopping and yammer like we had never been apart. I used to let friends slide. (Participant #11)

An aspect of becoming which at least half of the participants addressed was loss. Losses included body, others and time, some of which could obviously not be turned into gains but had to be accepted and integrated into future becoming. Losses were experienced either as irrevocable or frequently as compensations which although not wanted were accepted as part of the process of

becoming. Those who had a sense of deterioration, feeling they had no purpose and were living a meaningless life lacked a sense of vitality and involvement and were those participants who failed to integrate loss as part of living. One of the participants who are recently come through a life threatening illness experienced loss as the only possibility.

You suffer losses, and there are no options to replace them as far as your physical appearance is concerned, your health, your status in life, how you are perceived by other people. The things that were available to you before are no longer there. There is no way of recapturing them. It pervades my whole thinking on aging...the loss of options.
(Participant #7)

A few participants spoke about time as a process which they had come to respect both for themselves and in life. They felt less impatient and as a result the need to have everything happen at once resulted in fewer crises. Conversely, participants were able to express a wistfulness that they couldn't have everything happen at once.

I am more tolerant of some things and less tolerant of others. Certain things cannot change to a degree but there is not going to be some cataclysmic, overwhelming development overnight. I am more inclined to work within the system in the sense that I appear to agree with what they are saying and doing, and on my own I implement changes. I don't have to have everything happen instantly. Sometimes things feel like they are going much faster.
(Participant #8)

The regret is that we can't have everything at one time. I can't have the good parts about getting older and how much better this feels along with the fantasy body that I wanted to have. (Participant #6)

Many participants expressed their sense of becoming and continuing in terms of allowing themselves to be whomever they were rather than fighting their life. They had a sense of purpose, competency, and acceptance of whatever direction their life moved.

I feel less pressure to be quote unquote mature. You get this freedom in your 20s where you are not quite one or the other. Peter Pan Land. At 30 I made myself conform to expectations about what maturity meant with crippling effects. I was emotionally less resilient in my 30s than now. I am capable now of admitting pain and fear, insecurity, sensitivities. It doesn't seem there is any point in hiding it or in lying about it or trying to have a stiff upper lip. It slows you down. I feel more honest and tolerant at the same time. Fewer games and fewer rigidities. I accept that there are other points of view on things even that I feel strongly that I am right about. The world as it looks to me isn't necessarily the only world; is something of a shock. I can live with it. The process of aging has been of relaxing, accepting, growing, forgiving and assimilating. In the 30s I was all hunkered down, very serious, very fighting. I feel a lot nicer now. (Participant #9)

Summary

The three basic themes are listed below along with the fundamental attributes subsumed within each theme.

I. Anticipating: Anticipating contains sub-themes of expectations based on memories, reminiscences, fantasies, and imaginings which fuse hope and fear, and gain and loss.

II. Discovering: Contains sub-themes of surprise, sense of change, learning, growing, sharing memories, and feeling less self-conscious. It also includes aspects of self-consciousness, feeling old, stasis and stagnation.

III. Becoming: Contains sub-themes of evolving, accepting, tolerating, self and the changing nature of relationships, feeling competent and confident. One can also become resigned, lethargic and less competent, feeling only what one once was, was worthwhile.

There are many aspects of aging, only a few of which may be figural at any particular time. Aging involves integration of all with a sense of balance between each.

The Scoring Manual

The scoring manual provides an outline of the three themes, highlighting both similarities among themes and contrasting aspects within themes. Included also are interview statements exemplifying aspects of each theme. The scoring manual was used by two raters in a reliability task and was the primary means by which the thematic system was taught to raters. Basically, it provides a condensation of the foregoing thematic descriptions in the results section of this study. The scoring manual is presented in Appendix D.

The scoring manual breaks each major theme down into its components and sub-themes. As elaborated above, themes have no definitive boundaries. For example, discovering and becoming are different from anticipating, and raters for the most part agreed as to the discreteness of these aspects at the level of the major themes. In reading over the significant statements without the transcripts, the lack of context, makes for difficulty in scoring them. Moreover, anticipating and discovering were for many participants retrospective observations rather than prospective so that the tense of the structure of the content was sometimes confused with becoming. Again, this speaks to the overlap between themes and their interdependence upon one another.

Reliability Check

The purpose of the reliability task was to determine whether individuals other than the investigator could use the themes and apply the scoring to a set of statements derived from interview protocols. Could raters be taught to see what the investigator saw in the interviews?

The task involved reading over the scoring manual and then using it to score a series of practice statements. Subsequent to practice statements, raters each engaged in discussions with the investigator. Discussion sessions

were held with each rater individually. Each rater was asked to assign specific coding to a list of 30 statements. A comprehensive list of all statements containing the investigator's score in each theme was constructed. Most statements were listed under more than one theme. From the result list, ten statements were randomly selected for each theme. No statement was allowed to appear twice in the final set. Percentage agreement was calculated between the investigator and both raters, as well as between raters. Results of this procedure are presented in Table 4.

Agreement was calculated for each theme based on whether a statement did or did not receive a scoring for that theme. If two raters each scored a given theme for a statement, agreement was tabulated. If either rater scored a theme that the other did not, or failed to score a theme that the other did, then disagreement was tabulated. The total number of agreements versus disagreements was also computed between raters and between each rater and the investigator.

Percentage agreement between the investigator and each rater were .85 and .89, respectively; between raters the value was .71. These result indicate that other individuals were able to understand the rules of thematic coding. Instances of disagreement indicate that not all

Table 4 Reliability Rating of Level of Agreement

<u>Category</u>	<u>Investigator and Rater 1</u>	<u>Investigator and Rater 2</u>	<u>Rater 1 and Rater 2</u>	<u>Average</u>
Anticipating	.72	.92	.71	.78
Discovering	.92	.91	.68	.83
Becoming	.91	.84	.75	.83
Average	.85	.89	.71	.82

statements are equally clear with respect to the presence or absence of a given theme. At times, a theme is suggested in a statement, however, not necessarily in a completely clear manner. In addition, raters may tend to be more or less conservative in scoring items that are implied but not explicit. A second source of disagreement between raters involved the fact that the themes overlap. Such areas of overlap result in the scoring of one theme by one rater and the overlapping theme by the other rater. It is not that one rater is right and the other wrong. Both may be right. Not infrequently, unanimous agreement would be present for one theme in a statement, while areas of disagreement tended to emerge with respect to subordinate themes. The degree of articulation of themes also varied from statement to statement.

Validity Check

Validity can be assessed in more than one way. First, it must be assessed in terms of whether results can be understood and accepted by others. While there can be no validity without some degree of reliability, the capacity of raters to agree with the investigator's scoring is not in itself a guarantee of validity. Readers must judge for themselves whether the process of obtaining

results from these interviews yielded sensible and valid data.

Since the goals of this study were not to generate predictions, concurrent measures were not obtained. Construct validity often depends on expert ratings in psychological experiments. Who then qualifies as an expert in terms of women's experience of growing older? While others would debate my contention, it is my belief and understanding that the primary qualifications entail the personal history and aging of the readers of this manuscript. To the extent that an individual can look at these findings and relate them to her (his) own experience, an acceptable level of construct validity is present.

A related question concerns whether the results are valid for those who were interviewed and from whom the information yielding these findings were derived. All participants were given an opportunity to respond to preesent findings, and to provide feedback to the investgator both with respect to their own interviews and with respect to the overall pattern of results. All but one participant responded to the inquiry as to the interpretation of their interviews. A few provided some changes in the manuscript, mostly in terms of clarification of ideas. None offered substantive changes

or challenges to any interpretation of the interviews. Some were surprised at their reaction to their own transcript. Many requested the verbatim transcript to keep for their own personal interest. All participants requested to know when the completed study would be available so that they could gain of additional information related to their own aging.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study's primary goal was to describe the thematic structure of the experience of aging in midlife women as reflected in the dialogue between participant and interviewer. Three major themes emerged, each of which had positive and negative aspects. The category system was found to be complete since no additional categories were required to describe the experience of aging. Although interdependent and reciprocal, each category provided its own perspective on that experience.

This chapter will attempt to relate present findings to the prior reviewed literature on the development of women, their experiences of aging, therapeutic concerns, and relevant clinical implications for research. In addition, it will address the implications of the non-traditional choice of methodology. This latter topic will be addressed first.

Methodology

Although the dialogic approach has been employed only recently in the investigation of a variety of topics, i.e., body (MacGillivray, 1985), time (Dapkus, 1982), love

(Lang, 1986), emotional pain (Parks, 1987), and special possessions (Myers, 1985), it has not been used in an investigation of aging. Rubin (1979) and Russell (1981) employed methodologies with phenomenological roots, although the former structured her interview with specific questions while the latter investigated only the very aged in Australia. This study relied on open-ended inquiry, allowing participants to structure the dialogue. Moreover, unlike Colaizzi (1978) and Kruger (1981), who have written extensively on the phenomenological method, the present study relied on the actual words of participants rather than on derived categories from which meanings are "inferred." This method was determined to be a productive means of understanding and developing an essential structure for discussing the experience of aging as lived by these participants.

As a mid-life, female, clinical psychologist, having a penchant for phenomenological data, I initially felt I had seized upon the perfect methodology by which to study my particular area of interest. Reading the literature and speaking to colleagues, I was struck by the adjectives used to define female psychology: relationship oriented, contextualized experience and behavior, interdependence, nurturance, and attachment. The dialogic method seemed

ideally suited not only to the topic but to the investigator as well.

Experience, however, redefines experience. Whether participants would have anything interesting or relevant to say about their experience or if those experiences would fall into a meaningful pattern, was unknown. Even following the basic outline adapted from Colaizzi (Valle and King, 1978) as well as from members of the Tennessee Phenomenological Research Group, still gave remarkable latitude to the investigator. As noted in the methodology section, the success of this project is, in part, dependent upon the type of question(s) asked, the type of participants interviewed and the method of organizing the data. Questions were chosen for their ability to elicit information while avoiding directing content to be discussed. Participants were chosen for sensitivity and ability to articulate experience. Derivation of themes were chosen for their fit to content and participants.

The investigator, however, is still left with concerns as to the "feasibility" of such a project. These hesitations derive both from doubts about one's own ability and from the philosophy of science itself. As to the former, one can only try to evaluate success. As to the latter, however, there is a lengthy history preceding this study which implicitly (and explicitly) inhibits

aspects of phenomenological research in psychology. Traditional psychological research relies almost exclusively on methods derived from the physical sciences in which "natural" laws are assumed to operate in a cause-effect relationship. Assuming determinism as fundamental, it is the explication of these relationships which defines the scientific endeavor in science. Advancing the most parsimonious construct to explain, psychology seeks explanations, predictions, and the control of behavior. One begins to ask "what am I doing defying this very powerful method which has proven its utility over and over again?" Even knowing how powerful "objective" methods are, one realizes that limiting psychology to traditional methodology, denies the validity of psychotherapy as a viable enterprise. If self-report and interpersonal dialogue are considered a questionable means of understanding people, then therapy cannot be a significant modality by, and through, which people come to understand themselves and thereby become productive members of their society. Obviously, this is, in part, the same issue addressed to clinicians in "outcome" studies.

Undertaking a project such as this inevitably leads one to rethink one's philosophy and to question its tenets. Some immediate and interrelated problems emerged in such reflection. Emphasizing a cause-effect

explanation requires that the phenomena be reduced to a manageable level of complexity. The investigator's presence is, however, of necessity, part of the event even when phenomena are simplified. In experimental models, these problems are managed through control groups which supposedly allow one to hone in on independent variable, thereby permitting assessment of an effect while enabling the researcher to be objective. Both Polanyi (1962) and Heisenberg's (1958) "uncertainty" principle note that the very effort to observe and/or control phenomena changes that nature of that which is observed. This resulted in the revolutionary changes in quantum physics and new currents in psychology.

Another problem regarding "objective" research concerns the assumptions of determinism and objectivity. This is pragmatically and technically an effective means of understanding a multitude of phenomena. Does that mean, however, that it is the best or only approach to studying people? Freedom and determinism are a priori; in and of themselves they can neither be proven nor disproven. They serve as the ground of interpretation. One is forced to question them or appropriate methods of investigation for complex phenomena like people.

There is probably no one method that is appropriate for psychology. One needs to find a method which will

represent the phenomena best and that will allow it to find clearest expression. Choosing a methodology that is contextual and unfolds within a relationship meets the demands not only of the philosophical tenets of phenomenology, but is congruent with the experience of women. To cite one participant

There is no concept of aging me. There is a concept of me aging in relation to the children, in relation to my parents. My body will age in relation to running. It will age in relation to walking up and down steps, and that is a fact. I know that will happen, but it is very difficult for me to think that as I go through my activities during the day. I never think about that. It is difficult for me to think in terms of aging apart from relationships. I can't even think of it apart from activities. It is related to doing and being with someone. There is just no sense of me sitting in this room getting older. (Participant #5)

The participant-investigator method selected, makes the relationship between the parties as explicit as possible. It assumes no prior causality nor does it remove the investigator from her study in a search for objectivity. The very source of protection from the threat of coercing the data is the absence of a priori assumptions and the absence of a naive belief in objectivity. Making the presence and knowledge of the investigator explicit and understanding the finite, perspective of another human is the safeguard against theoretical assumptions, warranted or not. Bracketing the investigator's assumptions, and describing exactly what

she did in conducting this study, enables the reader to decide whether conclusions are sensible and valid. If this approach has any a priori assumptions, it is that human experience emerges most clearly and most articulated within the context of a human relationship; it does not emerge from an attempt to depersonalize and isolate the of data from the people whose lives it attempts to describe.

With no desire to predict or control the experience of midlife women, this investigator wanted to describe how aging was experienced by articulate, reasonably mature women who were capable and willing to talk about their lives. Aging was never considered within the domain of controllable variables but was viewed as interwoven and inseparable from the life of each participant. One can consider this a reaction to the bifurcation of human experience into so-called personal reality and objective reality.

Logical positivism...takes as its central fact what is undoubtedly the central fact distinguishing our civilization from all others--science; but it goes on from this to take science as the ultimate ruler of human life, which it never has been and psychologically never can be. Positivist man is a curious creature who dwells in the tiny island of light composed of what he finds scientifically "meaningful," while the whole surrounding area in which ordinary men live from day to day and have their dealings with other men is consigned to the outer darkness of the "meaningless." Positivism has simply accepted the fractured being of modern man and erected a philosophy to intensify it. Existentialism, whether successfully or not, has

attempted instead to gather all the elements of human reality into a total picture of man. Positivist man and Existentialist man are no doubt offspring of the same parent epoch, but, somewhat as Cain and Abel were, the brothers are divided unalterably by temperament and the initial choice they make of their own being (Barrett, 1958, p. 21).

To a large extent, these are clinical interviews, except that the investigator refrains from comments which have as their goal, a change in the participant. One soon comes to realize that both participant and investigator are changed through the dialogue (as in therapy) due to the depth and authenticity of speaking with one another. I found myself, even after a year's time, continuing to use verbatim quotes of the participants. There is a fine line between therapy and phenomenological dialogue. This problem was brought out clearly in the feedback interview with two participants in particular. In the first, the participant felt that the investigator did not understand nor pursue the depth of her depression following her mother's death. Moreover, she felt that there was a lack of clarity between her choice of teaching and childbearing. The former took the place of the latter, and she no longer felt the need to bear children. It took a number of feedback interviews to arrive at a consensual and mutually satisfactory understanding. The interviewer-research did not, in fact, pursue the nature of the participant's depression in the manner which would have

occurred had this been a clinical interview. The problems this presents needs consideration when undertaking this a dialogic methodology. A second participant was so overcome in speaking about her aging and felt so depressed following the interview, she wondered if she had serious psychiatric problems. This participant wrote a letter to the investigator, outlining her concerns and her feelings in the following months. She noted that a week after the interview, she felt quite depressed, but following which she felt better than she had for years. She was reluctant to end the relationship, expressing surprise not only that she was understood but that she had so much to say, felt so strongly about the dialogue, and furthermore, that it enabled her to focus on her problems with aging with greater clarity.

I thought it is how you look at 52, your physical appearance. It was really a bad thing. It was really deep within me, but it is not. I realize I am 52, and I am going to look at least close to that age no matter what I do. It is a fact. But then other things that maybe you can do something about. I didn't know I could tell somebody about them. You really understood. That's what I can't get over. You understood what I was saying. Maybe now I can gloss over the things that are not so important to me and just work on the things that really hurt.
(Participant #1)

Similar to the woman cited above, most participants expressed surprise that they had so much to say and that they also learned something about themselves. Thus, concluding the dialogues with most participants appeared

to give both participant and investigator a sense of satisfaction. The extent to which concerns were shared and to which participants were interested in the investigator's experience was indicated by the questions participants asked of the investigator (her age, her feelings about her career accomplishments, her plans for the future) and their expressed desire to keep in touch with the investigator following the concluding feedback interview.

The Participant Population

One must question what effects the characteristics of the participant population chosen had on the results obtained. Would the same category system have been seen had the population been significantly different in terms of education, occupation or socioeconomic status? The majority of participants were college-educated and approximately one-third had advanced degrees. Participants with lesser educational credentials might not have been as articulate about their experience. As noted, these women were specifically chosen because of their ability to describe fluently their experience. Perhaps participants with less education would be less career-oriented, placing a lesser emphasis on becoming and certainly on discovering. People who have not learned to

view their lives in terms of potential discovery might not have been as aware of the possibilities for becoming. Further research on various populations could attend to this issue.

All participants could be characterized as being successful in terms of relationships and/or work. As such, they may be particularly attuned to anticipations and discovering aspects of their lives since it is through the ability to reflect upon one's past (a becoming issue), anticipate one's future, and involve oneself in process (discovering) that one can reach the level of success exhibited.

All participants were married at least once and all but one had children. The experience of having been married and of having had children broadens one's life and one's perspective. Certainly marriage encompasses aspects of anticipation, involves a willingness to discover the relationship (Lang, 1986) and to become a partner in the relationship as well as a person in her own right. The changing responsibilities in one's life through various stages of marriage and parenthood make one very aware of the becoming aspect of living.

Relevance to Previous Phenomenological Research

The Situations List, in part, reaffirmed the research of MacGillivray (1985) and Dapkus (1982) in their studies of body and time, respectively. In both cases, aspects of body and time mapped directly onto their descriptive categories. Although unexpected, it certainly makes sense. Body and time are essential components in the experience of aging. The body changes over time. That is, one can be caught up by the experience of time passing, and realize one is older. For example, having a child ask, "Do you know anything about the Vietnam War?" For the child, it is an historical fact, read about in a history book. For the midlife adult it is a personal confrontation with recollections of events and feelings that may have little to do with written history. The very fact that it is written history, however, makes one aware that 20 or so years have passed and one is 20 years older. Conversely, one views one's body, sees wrinkles and greying hair and realizes time has passed.

Thematic Concerns

We learn a great about aging from the media, from culture, from reading, and most saliently from the generation just preceding us, yet our direct experience with aging, first in others and then in ourselves creates

a meaning in us in addition to what it seems to mean to those who were influential or to people in general. Aging is a positive experience, a negative experience, or both, depending on the aspects to which we are attending. Moreover, our understanding changes over time. Some people experience a variety of limitations, yet retain a hopeful outlook. Others seem to be defeated by apparently inconsequential changes. Some seem not to have noticed that aging changes them at all. Aging can be used as an excuse for total disengagement when little in the way of physical, mental or social decrements have occurred (Atchley, 1982). Neugarten, et al. (1964) found that following middle age, adaptation patterns evidenced no significant change with age. Role changes (health, finances, marital status) were more important in personal adaptation than age per se. Livson (1976) found evidence that "traditional" women exhibited a steady growth pattern from adolescent to middle age while "independent" women found traditional roles constricted in their forties but by their fifties were in tune with their personal values and aspirations. By the time of midlife, we have a reservoir of experience about what we are like or should be, and how we fluctuate from time to time. At this stage we try to separate self from role. It is not merely what aging does to us, but what we do with aging, i.e., its meaning.

Basically, this study's goal was to describe that meaning.

Aging is a relational event, flowing out of one's personal life for which history itself is the backdrop. One's personal history emerges against the life world which allows for multiple experiences which ebb and flow. Three, interrelated, thematic concerns are figural in this relational unfolding: anticipating, discovering, and becoming. Time, others, and body form the ground of this relational event. The categories derived as essential to the structure of the experience of aging. These are not fixed categories, but they are figural. The categories are reciprocal, interdependent; none occupies a rank over another.

Anticipating. Aside from biological determinants, female development seems to be based primarily on identifications with one's mother. Freud noted the girl's primary object relationship with her mother. Interpretation, not observation, led him astray. Because of a masculine perspective as well as a focus on instinctual and sexual matters, he understood this as a hindrance toward solidifying feminine identity. His disciples, however, reinterpreted the same data. The current study accords well with the theoretical observations of contemporary analytic writers

(Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964/1970, 1976; Jessica Benjamin, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1986) as well as of earlier analytic theorists (Lampl-de-Groot, 1927/1965; Brunswick, 1940/1948; Deutsch, 1930/1948, 1944, 1945; Horney, 1924/1967, 1926/1967, 1932/1967, 1933/1967, 1935/1967, Jones, 1927/1938, 1933/1938, 1935/1938; Klein, 1928, 1932/1959, 1937/1964).

Deutsch's interest in narcissism and masochism has been taken up by current writers in debating whether it is a "woman's problem." Freud understood narcissism as a particularly female difficulty, although not exclusively so. Narcissistic personalities are the "personality of our time" in the same way that the hysterical personalities were associated with the Victorian period.

As an aside, there is sense to an hysteric rearing a narcissist; in fact, one might question if there was any other possibility. Narcissists lack self-esteem, exhibit an inability to experience love or to engage in mutually caring relationships, and experience primitive, terrifying loneliness, all of which are defended against by displays of grandiosity and extreme self-centeredness. Faulty empathy by the primary caretaker (mother) is seen as at the heart of the difficulty in narcissistic personalities. The theories of narcissism, like other theories, discuss origins in early childhood sometimes

without reference to gender. Assumed gender neutrality obfuscates the differential relationship between mothers and sons and mothers and daughters. Mothers treat their children in a gender specific fashion (Chodorow, 1978a; Fast, 1984). In this study's view, as well as in the analytic literature, daughters view themselves as continuous with mothers. Narcissism denotes a way of being in the world that could be understood as experienced almost exclusively by men. Chodorow (1978a) stated, "...sons react to their mothers' feelings and wishes as if they were the objects of their mothers' fantasies rather than the subjects" (p. 103).

Faulty empathy may have different meanings for each sex. The experience of "otherness" may be used by males to defend against what is perceived as mother's unempathic and erratic behavior. Girls, with their fluid ego boundaries, may fail to develop psychological autonomy. It is the disparate developmental situation vis-a-vis the mother which may denote the way in which children repair the soothing functions required to sustain self-esteem. Women may gain self-esteem through acting as extensions of mother, choosing love objects whom she and others view as omnipotent and acquiring self-esteem through identification or fusion with such persons. Male partners

as well as children may become part of herself and replace the insufficiency of mother.

Men have a different problem. Female love partners are admired and used to maintain the defensively autonomous and tenuously maintained self. Men are more likely to display feelings of grandiosity and self-centeredness and to need the admiration of the other. The need for external admiration implies separateness. In this way men reenact the experience of being an other to mother. It is not that the incidence of narcissism is higher in males than females but it may be founded on the developmental experience of gender specificity (Philipson, 1985). This is certainly an area in which further research needs to be conducted.

While only a few participants in this study failed to come to terms with the perceived insufficiencies of their mother, none exhibited the narcissistic, defensive displays of grandiosity. In fact, more participants exhibited "moral masochism" as defined by Freud; that is, where the concerns and needs of others were placed above the desires of self. Freud viewed this trait of women as self-sacrificing because of unconscious guilt: pathology was seen where there was merely difference. This difference is no doubt what Kohlberg (1981) viewed but interpreted the data such that women came out on the

negative end of superego development. Participants in this study upheld both traditional and contemporary views of narcissism, masochism, and morality (Gilligan, 1982) in that their relationship with others as of primary importance. One could interpret the participants' statements as exemplifying either position. In the context of the dialogue the meaning of these positions comes forward. Guilt was not unknown to participants. It was understood within the context of the needs of others.

Benjamin (1986) has also reflected on the issue of feminine masochism. She notes the reality of women's sacrifice and subordination. The point in masochism from her viewpoint is not pain but submission. Centering masochism on submission places the focus on the self, an ego issue. In this study, women expressed the experience of feeling asexualized by others, and also experienced their sexuality as tied up with their desirability to others. Culturally women's sexuality is as object and not as subject; desire is known only as a function of desirability. de Beauvoir (1949/1961) is emphatic about this aspect of women's socialization. Not having agency, women enter into relationships to acquire agency vicariously. In fact, as Benjamin (1986) notes, they often avoid intense relationships with men to protect their autonomy and their choice and agency.

Both imply the same difficulty: a woman's desire conflicts with her sense of agency and is bound up with fantasies of submission to an ideal male figure. This may have to do with the split in parenting wherein women represent connectedness and dependence, and men separation and independence. Benjamin stresses the importance of ideal love in female masochism. The girl's desire for the ideal male represents her desire for elements of selfhood associated with masculinity: independence, self-esteem, excitement, and agency. Integration of feminine and masculine components fosters these desires. It is the withdrawal from autonomy and agency which fosters masochism.

This is why one notes evidence of increased self-esteem, competency, and mastery in midlife women. No longer feeling they command male attention, they no longer try to gain it and, therefore, they can get on with their own lives. Perhaps this is one reason women responded with enthusiasm to being "out of the running."

Increased self-esteem relates to Gilligan's (1982) understanding of moral conflict in women. Rather than being created by a conflict of ideas, as it is for men, moral conflict arises within the context of relationships. Women report difficulty when their own needs are in conflict with the needs of others. It is at

midlife, when the needs of others are not so pressing, that women can consider their needs as relevant as those of whom they nurture.

All participants noted the importance of their mothers in their experience of aging. It was not just memories of their mother's bodies, but of her doing and being. Those whose mothers were active and not infrequently career oriented significantly influenced their daughter's perception of their experience at midlife. As the empirical literature suggests, how influential and important mothers were frequently failed to be understood by daughters until midlife (Goldstein, 1979; Altman and Grossman, 1977; Poumadere, 1978; Troll, 1980).

For a long time mother and I didn't get along well. As I aged that has changed. I love my father, but I haven't anything to say to him. The last ten years I have switched to mother. We have a lot in common in terms of work. She tells me her problems; I tell her mine. We give each other advice. Although she is not a talker in terms of bearing one's soul or getting into nitty gritty conversations, we have talked more in the past five years than we have ever before. At times I felt I was her therapist which was okay as long as it is not all the time. The rebelliousness in me comes from her. In family discussions when we were growing up, she would pick the opposite point of view from my father. I don't know whether she believed it, but she would advocate the opposite. I always liked that. (Participant #12)

It appears that this study, in conjunction with both the empirical and analytic literatures, reflects the

special relationship that exists between mothers and daughters. It must be kept in mind, that the question asked by the interviewer was not about the participant's mother but about aging. One could not be experienced without the other. Previous studies have addressed the importance of mother-daughter relationships but none, has until now, addressed the importance of this relationship throughout the life cycle. Stretched to its logical conclusion, how one's mother dies will be influential in how the daughter dies. This has less to do with genetics than with identifications.

Anticipations also relate to identity issues as above. These identity issues were outlined by Lichtenstein (1983) and Greenacre (1953, 1955). Each stressed that identity encompasses both likeness and difference, in this case with mother. We define ourselves with relation to and comparison with others.

Discovering. Discovering seems to be the view par excellence of the popularized version of the midlife crisis. To the extent that discovering was retrospective for these participants, the degree of their discomfort was not well captured. One participant, however, noted the following:

I have hit a plateau. Things seem pretty good now. I could have said more about being older years ago when things were not so good. Things seem better and so I am not so aware of it. (Participant #9)

The crisis, in fact, appears to be the dawning awareness of change. Change, however, takes on meaning in terms of one's anticipations based on significant others. If a woman has had difficulty identifying with her mother or has had a problematic relationship with her, discovering oneself becoming like her takes on a significance of being that mother whom one did not like. People seem to notice only the decrements in aging initially. It appears to take time and reflection before other aspects of the self are also realized.

Although not specifically discussed in the review, Erikson's stage theory of development corresponds to this second thematic concern. Erikson's (1963) seventh stage of development, i.e., generativity vs. stagnation takes into account both the positive and negative dimensions of this theme. Generativity takes into account productivity and creativity, although the former does not replace the latter. Productivity as well as creativity appears to be vital aspects of aging if one is to continue to experience oneself as an active and desirable member of society.

de Beauvoir's (1972) understanding of the way in which one's own aging is discovered, i.e., through others, finds support in the results of this study. Moreover, her view that one finds oneself through projects, was mentioned by all women in this study. Prior to midlife,

women are busy doing for others. And, again, it is not until others are on their way, that women experience the opportunity to take on projects of their own. In the discovery phase, women find they can take on projects and find satisfaction and increased self-esteem. Because of de Beauvoir's cultural and psychological milieu, she failed to see that women in midlife may have more rather than less opportunity to take on projects. Campbell et al. (1976) observation that one's life was an increasingly good fit as one grew older is born out by this study. Baruch et al. (1983) and Depner (1979) analyses confirm the present results in that a satisfactory job appears to be more salient to midlife women as a source of self-esteem than is marriage and children.

Becoming. Having been acculturated to nurture others without respect to one's own desires, the ability to say "no" was for many an expression of personal change. The development of identity in childhood has often been correlated with the ability of the toddler to say "no," and thus begin to define himself. The conflict these women experience in denying the needs of others addresses the moral masochism Freud observed. What appears to be most difficult is when women insert their own needs (Gilligan, 1982) along with the needs of others. Then they frequently see it as an either/or choice: something

has to give. For males, this seems to be less of a problem. Males grow up being socialized to understand that being successful in the "world" means making choices that may deny the success or concerns of others. Men's ability to make these choices may be made easier to deal with by mother's push for separation from her; being the "other" gives him a decided advantage in this arena. What women grow into, is separateness; they already live connectedness.

Given the developmental considerations between being raised female or male, being "late bloomers" as many researchers have termed it, is the norm for women. Gutmann (1975) and Thurnher and Chiriboga (1975) have found what they term sex role reversals among women in western culture. Sex role reversal is easily related to late blooming. That is, women become more dominant and assertive as they grow older. This simply makes sense in terms of what women are doing until midlife. They are caring for others; others who require their attention, nurturance, and cooperation. It is not just their children but their men who require this support for success. What is of further interest, is that men appear to undergo a transformation as well. Already successful, men at midlife have time to think about the costs of such success. Their children leave home and their wives,

having more time of their own, may also be out of the house. He wants and becomes what he never had time for before because of his need to "succeed" in the wider world. Thus the "invariant" sequence of midlife to which Levinson (1978) refers may be gender linked.

Sex role reversal also relates to the time honored role of the midlife crisis. There was no evidence in these participants to indicate problems of crisis proportions, other than in those participants who experienced what Rubin (1969) termed the one-dimension view of womanhood, i.e., "that female is synonymous with motherhood which is her ineluctable destiny and her unique area of fulfillment" (p. 21). This also meshes well with observations by theorists of self-psychology and the continuing need for self-objects (Kohut, 1977) which will be elaborated below.

There are, however, significant changes both in role and in perceived changes in the body which, in turn, initiates a change in the experience of self. One participant was an aerobics instructor who discussed her struggle to maintain her weight and skills. She noted a change in her capacity to perform at the level to which she was accustomed, and in her ability to keep her weight relatively stable in lieu of the change in metabolism as she grew older. Her emphasis on body in the interview

reflected an attempt to maintain her experience and expression of self in the absence of the availability of the instrumentality of a youthful, supple body. This same expression was found by MacGillivray (1985) in his study of the body. Yet, even this participant saw it as time limited. She adjusted, and came, to value experiences in becoming which were not seen within the crisis and reevaluation phase.

This theme also relates to Dapkus' (1982) phenomenological study of time. Change and continuity is understood as one's becoming in time which, in turn, involves the notion of identity. Erikson (1956) discussed the development of identity in terms of changing relationships and the resolution of issues in relation to oneself and others. Certainly, aspects of this theme involved the continual redefinition of self in relation to the "past self" and to other people. The formation of identity can be seen as an evolving process of maintaining and redefining connectedness with other people. The nature of this connectedness changes, yet the ability to maintain a connectedness remains the same. Realizing one's potential means changing one's expectations and image of oneself all the while keeping a sense of continuity with one's past self. Participants were aware of these difficulties when their connectedness was

threatened or with a realization that their potential was felt to be obstructed.

This problem was well articulated by participants who experienced serious illness in midlife. Their basic sense of self in doing and being was thwarted by limitations of illness and by the changes it created in their perception of self and in their experience of others. For the one participant who had been seriously ill, there was such a lack of continuity with her past, that she experienced only deterioration and loss in becoming. She felt her "options closed off" with little possibilities foreseen.

Existential writers respond saliently to issues of becoming. Both Maslow (1970) and Bugental (1981) have written about the formation of identity in terms of phenomena such as self-actualization and the realization of one's authenticity. "Existential anxiety" noted by Bugental (1981) arises in response to our finiteness and the givenness of the human condition. Acceptance of the realities of living, both its declines and opportunities, allows an integration of tragedy as well as of joy. Most participants were able to integrate these various aspects of living. Perhaps the integration of loss and unforetold possibilities enables one's becoming.

Of the positive aspects of becoming, none was more salient in this study than the issue of self-esteem.

Given the pejorative views of aging women in our society and the extent to which such views contribute to women's negative feelings about themselves, it was somewhat surprising to find that for most of these women, self-esteem increased with age (Bradburn and Caplowitz, 1965; Veroff et al, (1981).

Melanie Klein (1963) noted that in order for satisfactory adjustment in adulthood to take place, feelings of destructiveness within oneself must be resolved. The participant cited below speaks not only to Klein's contention but also to an issue raised by Jacques (1970) that one must face the inevitability of death.

I tell people it is better when you are forty. Things in my life now when they are good they are really really good. Occasionally they are really bad, but mostly I say, "well, that happens." It is horrible but it happens. It is part of getting older. People die. It makes you aware of your mortality. Things are transient. Human beings, careers, buildings, relationships have a lifespan. When things are gone, it doesn't mean you lose them. I have memories which are better than what a lot of people are doing with their lives. Shitty things have happened to me but I have had a good life. I have done a lot of it because I wanted to. Sometimes I have been lucky and have been in the right place. It would be great if I were 24 and looked really terrific. I opt for what I have now over that because this is soul satisfying. It is not surface. Things that used to be important to you are replaced with something else that are more enduring in value. I have a sense of my values. I am as headstrong today as I used to be. I am also more liberal minded about some things and not as liberal minded about others. It doesn't take as much to give me pleasure. I'm less demanding of life and more demanding of myself on one level and less on another. You become

more accepting. You also accept your own weak points. That doesn't mean you shouldn't try to change. I am particular about the way I do things. I'm more accepting in one way and less tolerant in another. I am more tolerant that some people are lazier and sloppier and I am too. This is the way we are. So what. (Participant #8)

Kernberg (1980), integrating some of Erikson and Klein, lists some of the tasks of middle age, "to accept the inherent conflicts in love and marriage and to contain them in a stable object relation" (p. 128).

Aging hit me about a year and one half ago when a major breakup in my relationship occurred. I turned 40 right before that breakup occurred. I took stock. I had to contend with the depression. I was devastated for a time. There are advantages to reaching this point in life. Intrinsically, I know I will get over this. Not that I couldn't survive, but I am not the kind of person that prefers to be alone. It ought to be interesting to see what happens. What if there is nobody out there to go out with. I was wrong. It had nothing to do with my age; it had to do with me as an individual. I can rely on myself. I cannot be great at everything. There are no perfect lovers. It is not what my ideal is but what I am willing to live with. This person has this quality that I adore and this quality that makes me nutty. Is it something I can live with because I'm no treat to live with myself occasionally. Is it something I morally or ethically cannot abide. I have the option to make that decision. (Participant #8)

Moreover, one needs to come to terms with internal as well as external aggression, corruption and envy and to accept one's final responsibility to oneself and to the limits of one's creativity and to the experience of loss.

The losses. I will never be able to go back and redo things or I have passed a point where I could launch into something like medical school. Not that I

couldn't but I would wonder why I would want to at this point. You lose friends. I regret not having done things or said things and wished you hadn't done something. You cannot go back. The loss of that time. It is gone. I regret I did not listen to somebody. It is a stage we must go through and nobody can ever tell you. It is bittersweet. Something that you miss and at the same time you smile. I have a comfortableness now with myself that I never had when I was younger. I can truly laugh at myself, be honest enough to know when I am pulling something I shouldn't be. I know when I am being nasty, deliberately hateful. I don't try and delude myself that I don't know. I also don't mind apologizing. I used to hate that. I would eventually. Now I have no qualms saying I'm sorry I was being selfish. I wanted to spend that time with you that is why I don't want you to go do this and why I was angry. That may not be a good way to feel, but this is the way I feel. People love you because they love you and you can get angry at them. You just grow up in the sense of the word. (Participant #8)

Self psychology organizes the needs of the child around the necessity for selfobjects (Kohut, 1971, 1977). With satisfactory developmental phases, the need for selfobjects can be satisfied by those other than the primary caretaker. With advancing age, these needs can be met by peers, and the dependency on any one selfobject is decreased. In fact the intensity of this need may be in part replaceable by symbols. The ability to take on projects and master them may become the symbolic representation of self-objects.

Considerations of expanded role development as cited in the empirical literature take on meaning with regard to self-objects (Wolf, 1980). To the extent that one relies

on very focused self-objects and structures, and these are no longer available or are lost in advancing age, one's self-esteem is only tenuously held. To the extent that one's experience of positive aspects of the self are based on several dimensions of people as well as symbols, the loss of any one symbol will have less impact. Certainly the two participants who experienced aging as a rapid decline without compensation led lives that were less diverse than the remaining ten participants. It appears that this study reaffirms the empirical literature in noting that being a wife and a mother, although rewarding, is not enough to sustain well-being in midlife (Baruch et al., 1983; Depner, 1979; Campbell et al., 1976).

Gender Differences

Women have been socialized to do whatever is necessary to attract and please men. Men offer women a traditional identity. Appearance may be more than skin deep; it may reflect a solution to the problem of identity rather than devotion to the body for its own sake. Male identity has been, at least in this society, predicated on doing and mastering. Getting older for males means more experience, more responsibility, and generally is thought of as getting better. As Sontag (1972) notes there continues to be a disparity between aging men and aging

women. For both sexes, however, the strategies for dealing with advancing age must change. The illusions of the body, the brevity of the lifespan, the lack of personal stamina intrude upon us and force us to deal with the meaning of growing older.

For midlife women, changes in self-representation must occur to temper the obvious physical changes and relational connections lost with advancing age. With age, our parents die, our children as well as our friends move away, and the idols and heroines of our youth fade. Women, already attuned to intimate relationships are probably more capable than men in looking outside the immediate family to establish connectedness. Certainly, participants in this study cited the importance of friends in maintaining their sense of self.

My first awareness of getting older happened in my early thirties. I couldn't stay up all night anymore and go through a normal day, not with any ease or finesse. I started getting grey hair, gaining weight, realizing I had to start exercising to stay in shape. I did start. I was fortunate to have four close female friends my age. We share a lot of the same values and concerns. These women have been crucial like sisters. We laugh about aging or about our bodies and push each other to go out and run. There was the sense of not doing it by myself. It would be difficult to be a woman and feel oneself aging without woman friends. They gave me affirmation and validation of my perceptions of my experience. Somebody to share it with and take it more lightly than I was able to at one point. It helped to have somebody to talk to about that stuff especially after my mother died. These women sort of did for me some of the same things that she had been

able to do. Give me another female set of perceptions which helped me solidfy my own.
(Participant #9)

Men, however, who have not maintained intimate relationships (Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977) throughout the years and who have neglected friendships, now face a change in status and may find the transition to midlife as well as to old age more difficult. Their network is reduced.

Research Implications

Traditional research on gender asks if women and men different and responds affirmatively. The question is how are they different? Traditional hypothesis testing procedures often lead to superficial observations about that difference or to the observation that there are more differences within sex than between sex. The latter may be true in specific areas but may gloss important distinctions.

An obvious area of future study is similar research on midlife men. Interviewing midlife men would enable comparisons based both on gender as well as on socialization. The present study found clarification in women's identifications with their mothers as providing a means by which they experienced aging. Whether that would be the case for males or whether father's perform a like

role is unknown as this time. A priori, one would cite fathers. Developmentally, however, mothers seem the more likely candidates given that females are the predominant caretaker. Obviously research also is needed in this area. Women in this study cited numerous body functions and parts as significant in their recognition of growing older. Whether men would notice and be as aware of their body is unknown.

Based on the literature and on confirmation of such literature in this study, the practice of psychotherapy as it impacts upon gender needs articulation. Since female development emphasizes empathic attachment and male development emphasizes separation, it behooves therapists to understand such differences in terms of its impact on male and female therapists with clients of both sex. For example, female therapists might find difficulties in person/role boundary; that is, to the extent that a female has more permeable boundaries, how she relates to her clients may be different than male therapists. Male socialization leads to a greater emphasis on role and less on person; the converse may be true for females. Female gender identity authorizes nurturance and empathy. A female therapist in a nonnurturant role is consistent with her role but not gender. The converse may be true for males (Schachtel, 1986). Since women are trained to

respond to the needs of others by "doing," how does the female therapist monitor her gender role to carry on her therapeutic role? Abstinence as a role attribute opposes her primary gender identification. A related concern is that "training" for women to be someone for others, raises issues of being "bad" or "good."

In studies of analysis, Goldberg (1979) notes that the nonresponsive style of psychoanalytic treatment is consonant with traditional male roles but dissonant with female ones. In our culture, it is acceptable and expected that males observe and closely attend to women. As noted by Stoller (1975), "In our time and culture, looking is more more intricate and stylized for males....and being looked at is more so for females" (p. 98). Certainly, de Beauvoir (1949/1961), Dinnerstein (1977), and Benjamin (1986) would concur that observing and scrutinizing females is one way in which males control female power. Further research is needed to delineate the therapeutic implications of sexuality, power and their inter-relationships.

As noted in both the literature review and results, sexuality for women is equated with being the object of desire; usually of a man (de Beauvoir, 1949/1961, 1972; Benjamin, 1981, 1986). Being powerful may entail

rejection of a receptive position and refusal to be regarded as a sexual object. What does this mean for the erotic transference? If males fear women on the basis of the possibility of merger, erotic transference for a male analysand is a means of demeaning not only the analyst but of making reparations for being shamed by a powerful women. Erotic transference between male therapists and female patients can be understood as the "natural" order of sex and power within this culture. When this "natural" order is disturbed, one must question how such a state of affairs affects the process of therapy. A related question concerns the meaning it has for a male to have hostile feelings toward a female analyst, given the developmental push toward separation vis-a-vis mother?

In spite of the extensive literature on lifespan development, graduate schools, for the most part, have failed to attend to this area. A need to understand the developmental salience of adulthood is as important as those developmental considerations to which most graduate schools attend, e.g., childhood and sometimes adolescents. Graduate education hides behind Freudian theory and therapy which accords relevancy to infancy and childhood but fails to acknowledge the importance of adulthood and beyond. This gives credence to a tacit assumption that nothing of therapeutic concern occurs

after adolescence or that therapeutic change is unlikely to occur unless preoedipal issues are addressed.

Underlying some of these assumptions is that the true character of a person is determined during the first five years of life. People are constantly in the process of change. Those changes are real and not merely the product of unresolved infantile issues. Moreover, failing to give credence to adulthood vitiates the concept of change in the majority of patients, adults.

The concerns of midlife female therapists may skew the agenda to which male and female patients attend. Assuming an invariant sequence between genders (Levinson, 1978) fails to address the possibility of variant sequences noted in this study. If the concerns of midlife female therapists are mastery, competency, and "finding one's own voice," these therapists must attend to the change of midlife male patients who are turning from "success" in the social world to success in their interpersonal relationships.

Another problem which may confront female therapists is that the structure of therapy generally maximizes transference. Preoedipal experiences and fantasies are fostered by the therapist. Women therapist are more likely to foster preoedipal conflicts and, if so, how is that understood and dealt with? A pregnant female

therapist appears bound to stir up preoedipal as well as oedipal concerns precluded by male therapists.

Conversely, countertransference issues for female therapists may not be the same for male therapists. Since both sexes have dependency issues relating to mothering, how are these understood as they relate to the gender of the therapist?

An issue that needs further explication given the "neutrality" of analysis, is whether female therapists should be the exclusive gender working with women. Certainly, this issue has been raised most cogently by the feminists of the 60s and early 70s. Given the results of this study and the rather formidable influence that women play throughout the lifespan in women's lives, might the age of a patient and the concerns dictate the sex of the therapist? There are no hard and fast answers to these questions; certainly, a reexamination is called for which understands and values those characteristics which women come by in having a mother who is herself female.

Lastly, with reference to the themes themselves, many of the participants viewed their aging retrospectively. This in turn gave a different cast to anticipating and discovering. A longitudinal study of both men and women could help clarify anticipating and discovering. It appears that discovering is the phase

which so many popular psychology books refer to as the midlife crisis. Whether or not it is a crisis has yet to be discerned. Certainly, it is a moment of pause and a time to reflect and, possibly, to reevaluate one's expectations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

At present I am conducting research for my doctoral degree in clinical psychology. It is toward that end that I am collecting data and requesting your co-participation in this study. We will be talking about how you experience and have experienced aging and how you have understood your experiences. I believe this is a significant field of study in the psychology of women and aging, and I think you will find the interview interesting.

Methods: I will be conducting an open-ended interview, discussing your experiences of aging. This interview will be tape-recorded. The interview will last approximately one hour. During a follow-up session, I will discuss with you the results obtained from your interview. This session, too, will be tape-recorded and will last approximately 15 minutes.

Confidentiality: All identifying information will be deleted and the tapes will be coded. I will be the only person able to identify the participants. The tapes will remain in my possession and will be destroyed following completion of the study.

Risks and Benefits: Should you agree to participate in this project, please understand that you are free to withdraw your consent at any time, without question or penalty. If you have any questions at this time or at any point later on in the study, please do not hesitate to ask.

Informed Consent: You will be given a copy of this Information and Consent Form to keep should you wish to contact me about this research project.

Abi Sills
Psychology Department
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37916
Telephone: 974-2531

I have read and understand the above Information and Consent Form, and I agree to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I would like to request your consent to use some examples of statements that you made in our interview on the experience of aging. I would like to use various statements from the enclosed transcript in the dissertation.

Please read over the enclosed transcript (2nd reduction). All identifying information has been deleted, and no identifying information will be included in any examples used. However, if there are sections of the transcript that you would prefer not to be used, please circle them and return the transcript to me at the time of our feedback interview. If you have any other comments or concerns that you feel require elaboration, please write them down on the enclosed response form, and also return that to me.

If you consent to the inclusion of examples from the transcript, please sign this form in the space provided below, and return it along with the response form. If after looking over your transcript, you do not wish to grant consent, this is fully and freely your choice. Please let me know, whatever your decision.

Finally, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at the listed address or telephone number. Once again, thank you for participating in this project.

Abi Sills
Doctoral Student in Psychology
2329 Robinson Road
Knoxville, TN 37923
Phone: 691-4068

I have read the above information and consent form, and agree to inclusion of examples from my interview transcript in Ms. Sills' dissertation.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

As I discussed with you, I am interested in including a verbatim transcript from one of my research interviews as an appendix of my dissertation on aging in midlife women. I feel that such a transcript would convey, as would no other kind of presentation, the richness and complexity of an individual's experience.

I have included a typed transcript of our interview, with potential identifying information deleted. Please read over the manuscript. If you see any words or sections that you would prefer were omitted, please indicate on the transcript with the a pen. If you have any other comments that you feel need more elaboration, please feel free to write them down, and I will get back in touch with you about them.

If after reading the transcript of our interview you consent to its publication as an appendix, please sign this form in the space provided below. Any reproduction is strictly subject to your personal approval and will be reproduced only in the approved form. Please enclose the corrected manuscript and signed consent form in the self-addressed envelope provided. If after looking over the transcript you decide for any reason that you do not wish to give approval for reproduction, that is fully and freely your choice.

Finally, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address or phone number listed below. I wish to thank you for your help during this phase of my research.

Abi Sills
Doctoral Student in Psychology
2329 Robinson Road
Knoxville, TN 37923
Phone: 691-4068

I have read the above information and consent form and agree to production of the verbatim transcript in Ms. Sills' dissertation on aging in midlife women.

Signature

Date

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I would like to request your consent to use some examples of statements that you made in our interview on your experience of aging. I would like to use various statements from the enclosed transcript in the dissertation. I feel that examples will convey the nature of the aging experience clearly and directly, and are consequently important.

Please read over the enclosed transcript. All identifying information has been deleted, and no identifying information will be included in any examples used. However, if there are sections of the transcript that you would prefer not to be used, please circle them and return the transcript to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. If you have any other comments or concerns that you feel require elaboration, please write them down on the enclosed response form, and also return that to me.

If you consent to the inclusion of examples from the transcript, please sign this form in the space provided below, and return it along with the response form in the envelope. If, after looking over your transcript, you do not wish to grant consent, this is fully and freely your choice. Please let me know, whatever your decision.

Finally, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at the address or telephone number. Once again, thank you for participating in this project.

Abi Sills
Doctoral Student in Psychology
2329 Robinson Road
Knoxville, TN 37923
Phone: 691-4068

I have read the above information and consent form, and agree to inclusion of examples from my interview transcript in Ms. Sills' dissertation.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

FEEDBACK COVER LETTER AND RESPONSE FORM

Abi Sills
2329 Robinson Road
Knoxville, TN 37923
Phone: 691-4068

March 8, 1987

Dear :

As I mentioned at the time of the interview on the experience of aging, one part of this research project is to obtain feedback from each participant regarding my findings. The purpose of seeking this feedback from you is to insure that I have accurately understood your experience, and have represented it in an essentially clear form. I will be contacting you in order to give you some preliminary findings and to solicit your comments and questions. This second interview will again be audiotaped. It should take approximately 15 minutes.

Enclosed you will find a list of statements you made in our interview (the second reduced transcript) and a response form. I would be most appreciative if you would read over these statements, and write any additions, changes, or comments on the response form.

Additionally, you will find enclosed a consent form. I'd like to request permission to use your interview, either in part or as a whole, in the dissertation. I feel that examples will convey the nature of the aging experience clearly and directly, and are consequently very important. Naturally all identifying information has been deleted from the interview transcripts. However, if there are sections of the transcript that you would prefer not to be used, please circle them and return the transcript to me at the time of our interview. If you are willing to grant me permission to use your interview, please sign the consent form.

I thank you again for taking the time to participate in my study.

Very truly,

Abi Sills
Doctoral Student in Psychology

Instructions: Please write any additions, changes, or comments here. Attach additional sheets if necessary. Please return this form to me, whether or not you have anything to add. Thank you.

[illegible]

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Participant Identification Number: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Age: _____

Marital Status: _____ For How Long: _____

Age at Marriage: _____

Age at Birth of First Child: _____

Number of Children: _____ M: _____ F: _____

Number of Children Living at Home: _____

Number of Grandchildren: _____

Mother Living: _____ Age of Mother: _____

Father Living: _____ Age of Father: _____

If Parent Not Living, Age at Death: _____

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Occupation: _____

Education: _____

APPENDIX D

SCORING MANUAL

Introduction

The purpose of this scoring manual is both to provide a description of themes which emerged from the protocol analysis of the interview transcripts and to illustrate the thematic components in such a manner as to enable others to apply the scoring system. In order to clarify themes, examples will be given. This manual is to be used by two raters to determine whether or not the thematic aspects can be communicated and taught to others who can then reliably and with confidence assign scores from the thematic aspects to their appropriate statements.

Directions

This task requires each rater to score 30, selected statements which were taken from the protocols. These statements are paragraphs which range from a sentence to a page in length. Your task, as a rater, is to read over each statement and assign theme scores in the space provided after each statement. There are three themes overall, each of which subsumes positive and negative

aspects. Keep in mind that any statement can and may represent more than one thematic aspect. The themes are not mutually exclusive. Score any theme that you feel is explicitly present in each statement, whether or not other themes are also present.

You may take as much time as you wish to score each statement and feel free to go back over your decisions and review or change scores as you wish. In addition, you may refer to this manual and the examples contained herein as often as you like. Try and assign at least one score to each statement. If you are unable to assign any of the above categories to a statement, score it as "?". If you have difficulties with any statement, whether or not you score it as "?," please attempt to explain the nature of the difficulties in the space provided under the statements. This will enable me in making the final revisions in these categories.

The remainder of this manual outlines the themes and illustrates the diverse aspects of the themes with examples of significant statements from the protocols. These are described and examples are presented to illustrate the various qualities of the themes. Please read through the entire manual before proceeding with the scoring task. The themes are as follows:

- 1) Anticipating (Scored A)
- 2) Discovering (Scored D)
- 3) Becoming (Scored B)

Two category (A and D, A and B, or D and B) and three category combinations (A, D, and B) are possible. There are seven ways in which each paragraph can possibly be scored.

A	:	Anticipating
D	:	Discovering
B	:	Becoming
AD	:	Anticipating; Discovering
AB	:	Anticipating; Becoming
DB	:	Discovering; Becoming
ADB	:	Anticipating, Discovering; Becoming

Major Themes

Anticipating. Anticipating refers to a prior recognition, realization or opinion, occurring before all the facts are known or observed or before the normal or expected time of occurrence. Sometimes it has to do with participants looking forward to a particular event in order to prevent its occurrence. Although it can be an intuitive preconception formed before all the facts were in, for most participants that was not the case. The gains and losses, hopes and fears contained within this category are frequently derived from memories, reminiscences, and identifications with mothers. Friends,

relatives, and the culture also play a significant part in informing us about our expectations.

One has hopes that certain things will or will not come to pass. On the other hand, one has fears that the same or different things will or will not occur. These fears include body deterioration, restrictions on doing, limits on being, vulnerabilities to changes that undermine the stability of self. Participants relate anticipations with respect to body, others, and time. They expect a decline in body functions, a change in their relationship with others, and a restriction in time left in which to be physically and intellectually active.

A. Hoping versus Fearing

1. Dependency upon others.
2. Concern over accomplishing goals due to physical and intellectual deterioration.
3. Identification with the aging of others.

I also think I am losing brain cells. I worried about Alzheimers with the forgetting. I think Oh God is this it and run down to see if I could take a test.

B. Gains versus Losses

1. Expectation of continuing like other relatives.
2. Losing family and friends at particular ages.
3. Less stamina to perform.
4. Expecting to be like mother and infrequently father.

I grew up in a household of women. My grandmother was beautiful. I have positive images of older woman even old women. When my grandmother was 75, she was devastating, very beautiful, not a classic. She was homely when younger and until she was 50. Then she started to accept and work with it and became more herself after her husband had died. She was a charming, funny and

bold lady who spoke her mind. I had a mother, grandmother and two dear aunts telling me that getting older was getting better and who by no means sort of rolled over and played dead when they turned 45. I felt life did begin at 40. I didn't ever dread that.

As you grow older, your family dies off. I have no mother or father living. I have two brothers and a sister. Both in their 50s. They won't be alive much longer. It makes you very aware of where you are. I have this thing about middle age 50 that is frightening to me. That represents a point when I have lost so many family and friends.

Discovering. Discovering is a complex theme, involving a process of finding, understanding or perceiving something which one had not expected, understood or perceived in the past. It refers both to surprise and to a dawning awareness obtained for the first time. Discovering like anticipating has both positive and negative aspects. This theme frequently refers to the popularized version of the midlife crisis in its negative aspects. What one discovers is oneself, who one can or cannot be or may or may not become. What one anticipates to some extent expands or narrows the focus of what one discovers. In turn, what or whom one becomes is dependent upon what one discovers. This makes for the overlapping, non-exclusive quality of the themes.

Discovery involves a recognition or awareness which is like an "Ah Ha" experience. At other times, however, that awareness is felt as a jolt; one is taken by surprise. Surprise has a dramatic quality whereas

recognition or awareness is more subtle. In the latter case, one perceives something that was not seen or not sensed in the past. Recognition is merely a sense that something was expected but until a readiness came about, it was unnoticed. Surprise occurs when one's anticipations, whether positive or negative, are contradicted; that is, one anticipates that something will occur and when that fails to occur, we are surprised. For example, if one fears certain aspects of aging and those aspects fail to come about, one is pleasantly surprised. If one hopes that certain things will happen because of prior history, the media, etc., and it fails to happen, we are equally surprised, perhaps unpleasantly. Expectations are violated.

A. Being Surprised versus Not Being Surprised

1. Remembering mother and recognizing likenesses.
2. Body decline expected or unexpected.
3. Ability to do is more or less than anticipated.
4. Failing to prepare for changes.
5. At a particular age, difference was recognized.

It was gradual, yet everthing started at 40. Maybe because you're 40. I started feeling a lot older. It is funny how all those things start happening at once.

The second aspect of this theme is realization. Realization or recognition is in a temporal relationship with surprise. One is taken by surprise, perhaps, and that propels a discovery. What one discovers can be

positive or negative, depending in part on one's anticipation, although not exclusively. Participants discovered and recognized changes in their body, in their relationship with others, and in their realization of limited time.

B. Feeling Noticed and Appreciated versus Feeling Unnoticed and Unappreciated.

1. Feeling asexualized and/or appreciated.
2. Others who recognize your maturity.

I'll go somewhere to eat with a group of people and they bring me the check. A lot of friends are younger. I wonder why did they give it to me. I don't have any money.

C. Discovering Oneself versus Losing Oneself.

My purpose in life was marriage and family. I became agitated at people saying I should have more in my life. After my daughter married, I became aware life was passing me by. I was not prepared for later life. What I prepared for is gone. I'm still a wife and mother, but it is not as important as it was.

The sense of becoming more solid, more stable, even physically. Less manic, less entertaining, less delightful. I started moving differently. I used to move like a little girl, dashing here and there, and dancing around. It is okay to be still, calm, reflective and not entertaining. Physically, that's how I feel aging.

D. Adapting to Change versus Inability to Change

Time did not stop. People had been working for fifteen years and biology did not stop because I left it. I assumed it would be there intact, and it wasn't. It was this realization that I had a hell of a lot of catching up to do. But again, the time. Did I have the time left to do it?

I want to do something different than I have been doing. Something that when you get through with what you perceive your life to be, you can go on with something else and be more satisfied with yourself. I thought

things would continue. Out there is another me, vaguely inside and wanting to get out. I am like those women I used to get aggravated at wanting to find themselves all the time. I am lost and trying to find myself.

E. Recognized as Mature versus Being Seen as Old

At 48 I felt I was losing the ability to entertain them. I don't feel right being center stage anymore. I was always pleasing to look at and because I'm getting older, people just think I'm trying to put on an act. When younger, I never wondered what they thought about.

F. Sharing Memories versus No Shared Memories

1. Time has passed and people have died with whom one shared one's world.
2. Remembering events, historical and personal, which younger people do not.
3. Nostalgia and reminiscences of one's past.

The children getting older. My daughter is taller than I am. They can carry on a conversation and talk. They do interesting things in school. We can share information and books. I get nostalgic about when I was in sixth grade and read Little Women, and how I responded to it and now see how my daughter responds.

I remember Kennedy's funeral with great clarity and a lot of people don't. My children have no idea what it was like before the Civil Rights Act was passed. I remember what it was like. I took my oldest son, and he was just a baby on a memorial march for Martin Luther King. There is no shared bank of memories for lots of events.

G. Less Self-conscious versus Feeling More So

I dress for comfort now. When you are younger you don't. You'll withstand a lot of pain for fashion. I remember my mother talking about that, "when you get older you'll understand why I wear these awful looking shoes because they are comfortable." I would say, "but they look so terrible," but she would say, "but I like them." I can see that in myself now.

H. Growing versus Atrophy

I like being my age. I have a good mind, experience to draw on. I made a total change in what I had been, a university professor and a painter to doing an

administrative job and finding I was very good at it. I'm a quick learner, an overachiever, and a perfectionist. I drive myself. I have not lost my capacity for change, to learn new things or adapt to new situations.

I. Discovering Opportunities versus Restricted Possibilities

I was 35 and unprepared for the job market. I had not furthered my career, staying home, taking care of my child. I did not have the earning power. I went to work as a secretary what I had done when I was younger. It is like saying you are really not what you want to be and you don't have what you want to have. I looked older at 35 when I went back to work. One person told me they did not hire women over 40 as secretaries. They liked the young girls in the office because they looked much more attractive. He said, "I'm not saying you're not attractive. You are, but you are older attractive." I wasn't sure how to take that "older attractive." The world perceives an older person as less worthy and less capable even though you have more experience to draw on. You don't fill this young vibrant role. There is a loss. It is important to women in particular that they be attractive to other people, not only to men but to women also. They want everyone to perceive them as attractive. As one ages, you're not as attractive.

Becoming. Becoming is a constantly evolving process in the context of realizing one's potential. Becoming refers to a process (change) that evolves either into a distinct condition or the realization that it is the beginning and continuation of other stages or conditions. At each transition there appears to be a reevaluation of what change means for the sense of self. What one anticipates and what one becomes may be the same in that expectation determines perception. On the other hand, even as one may feel that their life has narrowed and

become constricted, there appears to be a widening of perspectives after a transition is resolved. The transition frequently takes place in the discovering dimension. Realizing one's potential may mean changing one's expectations and one's image of self, all the while maintaining a sense of continuity with one's past identity. The inability both to maintain connections with one's past and to fail to expand one's future, leads to a sense of deterioration. One's becoming involves all three situation dimensions: body, others, and time. Moreover, it involves both positive and negative perceptions of who one feels themselves to be. Becoming is an integrative process whereby negative anticipations and discoveries are interwoven with those that are positive, consolidating losses and gains or failing to consolidate them which leads to deterioration.

A. Becoming, Evolving versus Deteriorating

I have lost my importance to people, my ability to do things, to talk to people, to have a meaningful conversation. I worry about how people see me, therefore it is hard for me to talk. I want what I had or something better. Excitement. Something out there that my mind will grow with so I can feel good about myself that I can feel important. Mother says you have so much more than I had at your age, more money, home, better car. Mama is saying that but there has to be something else. I had everything at 29: my child at home, doing things for her, showing her off. I looked good for my husband; he was proud. I could talk to everybody. What I said was interesting. I knew about current things. I was young enough to get a job. I got paid and contributed to the household. I could get out and drive my car. I felt comfortable with myself. I

didn't worry how people thought about me because I knew I looked my best. Maybe they saw me differently, but I felt comfortable with myself. I look back and see this woman I admire. I'd like to be that woman. I would like to turn the clock back when my daughter was little and needed me. Growing up with your child. I'm not growing anymore. I'm at a standstill. I crave something. I have reached the age where society doesn't want what I have to offer.

B. Reevaluating versus Resigning, Wanting the Past

I am understanding mother more now, seeing things like she does or did. Not exactly the same. I always loved mother. I never wanted to change her. I accepted her for what she was. She was satisfied with staying home, keeping house, never wanted to work even after my brother and I married and moved out. She is different than me. I have reevaluated.

Why am I not content to settle back calmly and accept what I have. I am not sure that time will come. I want to be content. I feel guilty that these feelings are emerging in me. I just might grow to accept it and not worry about it anymore as I grow older. Am I going to say I'm happy with myself. There's something else. I'm in conflict. My husband is good to me; I want to please him and forget what I want but I can't. I never thought I would feel this way. There is nothing to do. I get agitated and depressed.

C. Saying No versus Doing What Others Want

I have always had trouble saying I want to do so and so when I know that somebody else wants me to do something else. I resolved that for many years by living alone, taking the phone off the hook, and telling lies about not being available. I don't do that anymore. I say I'm sorry I want to work; I'm not going to do that. The sense of feeling competent is the gain of self. The sense of self containment of self importance that I have control of my life. I have been fighting imaginary battles for a lot of years.

D. Involvement, Vitality versus Noninvolvement, Lethargy

You can't run up and downstairs as quickly. Your muscles get tired.

I'm working on the other half of my life which is going to be even more productive because I know so much more. I am able to apply what I know a lot better. I am not affected by fads. you get to a point where you are happy with your life and you're happy with what you are doing and you see good production coming out of it.

E. Competency, Self-validation versus Incompetency and Validation by Others

In my 20s I needed validation that I existed in the way you did if you grew up in the south, to have value was to be pretty. To be appreciated I spend a lot of time, effort, and money trying to be good. Now not needing that, not going any place, thinking, "oh do people think I look pretty. Not being aware of that at all is nice. It is a tremendous feeling. When I walk in some place it never occurs to me how I look to someone else. I think about how I look at home before I leave. I look in the mirror. On the good days I look acceptable. On the bad days like shit and I shouldn't go out. Once I leave the door, it is gone. I never think about it again. I wouldn't trade that feeling not even for that body I wanted and never got. Given what I grew up believing was valued in women you lose as you age. All you had to offer was appearance and entertainment value. It had nothing to do with being a real person. You go downhill. You could become more entertainment. But as far as an object for a man, you don't work as well. It doesn't seem to be required anymore. That is based on my own change. I am different, and people respond to me differently. Finding out that that's not true for everybody has made age a completely different thing. It has taken out the loss part of it except for babies and cinderella's body. People respond to a woman as a real person more easily when she is older. I found it amazing to be valued as a real person. I can have value to a man based on me. It was a tremendous revelation. I didn't think it possible. My feelings were based on my family and the culture. That is a change.

F. Accepting, Tolerating, Enduring, Responding versus Less Accepting, Failing to Respond

1. More or less realistic and accepting of the world as it is.
2. Accepting competencies and limitations in self and others.

I am more tolerant of some things and less tolerant of others. Certain things cannot change, to a degree but there is not going to be some cataclysmic, overwhelming development, overnight. I am more inclined to work within the system in the sense that I appear to agree with what they are saying and doing, and on my own I implement changes. I don't have to have everything happen instantly. Sometimes things feel like they are going much faster.

G. Knowing Where I am versus Feeling Out of Synchrony

1. Having children late or going back to school in midlife.
2. Doing things in a different sequence than most peers.

My life is younger. I'm not as settled. I don't have teenage kids which makes our life different. I don't look to me or my husband retiring in 15 or 20 years. The mind set is different in terms of where people are in their lives and what they are expecting. They seem to be saying they are at their peak. I haven't peaked yet. Having a child late in life means I am going to be in my late 50s when she is a teen.

H. Valuing Friendships versus Avoiding Friendship

Friendships are very valuable now. I find myself going back to the old ones. Narrowing down. In my neighborhood there is somebody I'm going to like, but not many. Old friends I see every couple years, I'm going to hang onto;. We go shopping and yammer like we have never been apart. I used to let friends slide.

I. Choosing versus Avoiding Responsibility

Another thing that comes is responsibility for yourself. You make a bad decision, you say I made this decision, and it was bad, and I have to live with it. Earlier you try and blame other people for what was going on. We are not always in control of what happens, but you steer through as best you can.

J. Respecting versus Fighting the Process of Time

1. Time as a process which adds to one's life.
2. Time as an intruder, cutting one off from experience.

In my 30s I needed to slow down. In a lifetime scale time was going fast. On a daily scale time was going too slow. Months were going by too fast, but days were going by too slow. Now, I feel that my lifetime is going at about the right rate of speed. It has slowed down. My lifetime has slowed down, gotten downright leisurely lately. I feel much more in tune with the flow of a normal day. My lifetime doesn't seem to be hurdling along either. I kind of enjoy the passage of seasons and the maturing of other people's children and the sort of graceful aging of my stepfather and his companion and my aunts and uncles.

Summary

The three themes are listed below, along with the essential attributes that are subsumed within the theme. Keep in the mind that positive and negative aspects of themes relate to one another. For example, loss and gain are salient in all themes even though they may not be mentioned explicitly.

Theme Clusters List

<u>Positive Aspects</u>	<u>Negative Aspects</u>
 I. <u>ANTICIPATING</u>	
Hoping Gains	Fearing Losses
 II. <u>DISCOVERING</u>	
Being Surprised Feeling Noticed & Appreciated Discovering Oneself Adapting to Change Recognized as Mature Sharing Memories Less Self-conscious Growing	Not Being Surprised Feeling Unnoticed & & Unappreciated Losing Oneself Not Wanting to Change Being Seen as Old Having No Shared Memories More Self-conscious Atrophy, conflict, discontent, agitation, depressed, annoyed, bored,
Discovering Opportunities	Restricted Possibilities
 III. <u>BECOMING</u>	
Becoming, Evolving Evaluating Being Able to Say No Involvement, Vitality Having more Energy Competency, mastery, self-validation, confidence Accepting, tolerating, enduring, responding Knowing where I belong Valuing Friendships Choosing Responsibility Respecting Process of Time	Deteriorating Resigning, Wanting the Past Doing What Others Want Noninvolvement, Lethargy Having Less Energy Incompetency, validation by Others, less self- confident Less Accepting, failing to respond Out of synch, not fitting in Avoiding Friendships Avoiding Responsibility Fighting Time

APPENDIX E

Significant Statement Practice List

1) Things make me nervous going through menopause. you have different feelings because of your nerves. I had a hysterectomy. Doctor put me on hormones so no problems. I had a few hot flashes and nerves, but it was nothing to make an impression.

1)

2) I feel young, but other people see me as older. I see me as younger than my mother was at my age. My grandmother died at 52, the same age I am now. When I was eleven, I saw her as old. Now I see she wasn't. But she wasn't as young as I am.

2)

3) I want to be beautiful, young. I can't do anything about my face. Not beautiful, more presentable, more pleasing for my husband. It was always important to me to look good. In the larger sense it was looking good for him. It made me feel good. Now looking good for me is not as important as looking good for him.

3)

4) On myself I have no grey. I know what I want. I don't know what the future holds. I'm changeable on the way I want to live, open-minded. I'm not set. I'm subject to a different lifestyle.

4)

5) I am aware of changing, especially my body. I make comparisons with younger women, comparing parts of me with parts of them. Sometimes I just have an image in my head, and I'll compare parts. The skin is not as smooth, supple, and there are wrinkles, my breasts hanging down more, the lines on the outside of my legs. I can't say it is a loss. I notice the difference. Sometimes there is a wistful feeling when I look at a newer body. Is interesting to me. What is there about their body that isn't about my body that is nice to look at. I notice the skin and things. I don't wish to be like them. It is a curiosity more. When I think of my body I think of my neck. Clothes that used to leave my neck plain were all right. Now I feel there should be something there to cover it up, especially when I lose weight. You notice the thinning. Sometimes there is a wistful feeling when I look at a newer body. Is interesting to me. What is there about their body that isn't about my body that is nice to look at. I notice the skin and things. I don't wish to be like them. It is a curiosity more. I'm not as flexible as I was. Somethings I don't do as well or they are harder to do. In spite of being in shape I still lost. I get hurt or I hurt myself easier than I did. Minor stuff.

5)

6) I'd like to travel when I get older. I'd like to be a senior citizen. Go on bus tours. Those people have a great time. The only thing that would bother me later is if I wanted to travel, and I couldn't because of my health.

6)

7) When I used to walk down the street, men whistled. I was raised in an era when you weren't suppose to like that. It was nice. I still command a certain amount of attention but now from somebody who is a bit older like in their 40s and 50s.

7)

8) I have some grey hair. I think only two years ago. At first I tried to pull them out. I said this is an age mark. I thought I don't want those. I felt like it couldn't possibly be coming out of my head. I felt that wasn't me. I didn't see myself like that. I saw other people with grey hair, but I never associated that with myself. I hadn't thought too much about it or planned for it. I must color them. That was my first approach to aging where someone else sees age on you. It is still there however many years you are and you can't cover it up. I have recently read that grey hair is a sign of wisdom. I don't know.

8)

9) When I look at my children. They are growing up and more independent, then I feel really good about it. I feel more competent as a mother as I grow older. I feel good about my age in relationship to them. In terms of the children it is like time left.

9)

10) Aging is adverse. I like where I am now better than any other point in my life. It is the sense of not wanting to get any older though. Older means not being able to stay up until 12:00 p.m. reading and get up at 6:00 a.m. It means cutting back. That is what I would hate most about getting older, having to cut back. I may not have to. As the kids get older I have filled in instead. Someday when I'm 110 I may have to cut back. When I have grandchildren I'll be old or great grandchildren. When I think about getting older it would be a restriction of activities, of learning, of involvement, of participation. I will hate that. It is painful to me not being able to do what I want to do. Less energy, less ambition, not being able to walk and go up steps up and down. Physical and mental restrictions. I used to think those restrictions would come in my sixties, but then I watched mom and dad. They are alert in their late 60s. Now I think about those restrictions happening in my 70s. I use them as guides in what I think I will be able to do when I get older. I also like to pick out people like Margaret Mead and Erik Erikson, people who have been productive into their older years.

10)

APPENDIX F

RELIABILITY ITEMS

Significant Statement List

Read each of the following significant statements and in the space following each statement assign as many scores from the scoring key as applicable. There are a total of 30 statements, of varying length. If for any reason you are unable to assign a score from the key, please make a note of the reasons for your difficulty in the space provided. Feel free to refer to the scoring manual as often as you like.

Scoring Key

- 1) Anticipating: Score as A.
- 2) Discovering: Score as D.
- 3) Becoming: Score as B.

(1) More accepting of other people. When younger everything was fair. There was one right way to do things. Over the last few years I accepted that life is not fair and sometimes it deals me a pretty good hand. It has been good to me. When I go home I still hear how bad it is to be weak, how unfair it is that I have so much, and I will be punished for being too strong, but I can do it now. I can go home and be who I am and not be threatened that nobody will like me.

(2) Each thing is poignant. Not that I feel oh god is this how the end is going to be a sort of withering deterioration. It is hard for me to think of myself as wizened. I have this image of myself at 80, a little old wizened lady wearing those polyester, print dresses that old ladies wear with a shawl draped around me, out in the garden with a sunbonnet someplace in Maine, surrounded by students. I see myself as active.

(3) In my twenties, I looked like I was in my teens. I always looked younger than my age. Suddenly I started looking older. Friends would make remarks. Before they said how young you are. Then they said you're starting to show your age. "Sweet things."

(4) Things I used to get nervous about don't bother me anymore. There was a time when I couldn't have enjoyed gorgeous young men the way I enjoy them now. I would worry about what they were thinking of me. Now, I don't care. I just love to look. I don't want to do anything, but looking and thinking is fine. I am out of the running. That sounds negative, but it is liberating. Doris Lessing influenced me. Her fiction is divided into two halves. The first half is woman trying to attract man, the second is woman not giving a shit. The second is more attractive to me.

(5) There was a flirtatious younger guy I worked with who was also cute. I realized for the first time he was simply too young for me like 12 years too young. I had never been in that position before where I had to make a very clear distinction that he was too young. When this kid is in his late 30s I'll be in my 50s. I start thinking of the future. My body is in fairly good shape now, but when I'm 60 or 70 I don't know. I wonder if he'll look at me the way I looked at this older man when I dated him and wondered if someone is going to look at my body the same way.

(6) I feel whole, more intergrated, less scattered, more efficient, productive, and competent. I know how to command respect. I know what I'll take and what I won't take. I don't worry so much about hurting other people's feelings. I know the politics and I know how to get around in the world. I'm more aware of my deficits and competencies. I can accept them more than I used to. When I was younger, I couldn't accept limitations.

(7) My mother is 66. She looks older and tires quicker. We were walking. She said let's take a taxi. I was in my early 30s. That was the first time my mother had ever said I am tired. It makes you cognizant as your parents get older. She has high blood pressure. She plays tennis, swims and is very active, alert and bright. Daddy is the same way. I anticipate I will go on.

(8) Looking at photographs people took and all of a sudden you say, "God, is that what I look like."

(9) I was raised where impressions and what people thought of you was really important. Always trying to please other people. Now I don't feel that way. I do what I know is best for me whether someone else suggests you should wear purple. Now I say I hate purple. It doesn't bother me to tell somebody no and have my own opinion. That is a good point in aging for me because now I am able to realize that I can have an opinion and it doesn't have to agree with somebody else's. I am still affected by other people. I want them to have good thoughts. I want them to see me as I am, as an individual. I'm not as influenced by suggestions. You become more comfortable with yourself. You don't have this burning desire to please everybody that walks by. When other people view me I am most aware of physical attractiveness, but I already have my standards for myself. They don't change. It doesn't really affect me like it used to.

(10) People always thought I was younger than I was. It doesn't come up very much now.

(11) My parents are getting older. My father is beginning to feel his age. He went to his 50th high school reunion. It puts all those kinds of things in perspective. When you think about your father's 50th reunion, I think about what will I be like, what will I be doing and thinking 20 or 30 years from now.

(12) The losses. I will never be able to go back and redo things or I have past a point where I could launch into something like medical school. Not that I couldn't but I would wonder why I would want to at this point. You lose friends. I regret not having done things or said things and wished you hadn't done something. You cannot go back. The loss of that time. It is gone. I regret I did not listen to somebody. It is stage we must go through and nobody can ever tell you. It is bittersweet. Something that you miss and at the same time you smile. I have a comfortableness now with myself that I never had when I was younger. I can truly laugh at myself, be honest enough to know when I am pulling something I shouldn't be. I know when I am being nasty, deliberately hateful. I don't try and delude myself that I don't know. I also don't mind apologizing. I used to hate that. I would eventually. Now I have no qualms saying I'm sorry I was being selfish. I wanted to spend that time with you that is why I don't want you to go do this and why I was angry. That may not be a good way to feel, but this is the way I feel. People love you because they love you and you can get angry at them. You just grow up in the sense of the word.

(13) When I used to go into a room with a group of people, I commanded some attention, especially from men, and women, too. That is not happening much anymore. You become asexualized because of your age. I'm not sure if the other person is doing it or it is my personal perception.

(14) I worry that my mind is going to go. I can't get concepts as well as I did a couple of years ago. I notice trying to write my dissertation.

(15) I stopped being guilty about not consuming every moment doing something worthwhile even though I still do that a lot. I go home in the afternoon and take the phone off the hook, take a nap. I was an adult. That is what it is. Until you believe you are a relatively rational, mature individual..it was at that point I felt like an adult. I didn't have to answer to somebody else for my actions. It is none of their business. I am the master of my own life so to speak. Getting older you realize you are the person that runs your own life with the exception of having to pay taxes and get up and go to work and you are required to do certain things. It is this wonderful sense of relief that you can actually do things. You don't realize the value of that until you get to the point where you really don't have a choice.

(16) I worry my husband will not find me attractive, but he got through the fat phase pretty well. He made very few digs and managed to find something attractive there. I am willing to let that rest at this stage and say that as we age we are going to find something attractive. It may not happen, but it would be nice if it did.

(17) In my body I noticed a difference in the past ten years: skin tone, more of a drying. Not just my face but elbows, knees, all over. Stamina, I need a little more recuperative time than I used to to let my body rest and recuperate. It is more difficult to maintain the same weight. I have to be conscious of what I eat.

(18) I like myself better. I like my body better. There is this sense now when I look in the mirror this is who I am and this is who I am always going to be, and five to six years ago I wouldn't like myself and I wouldn't like my body. Now I look and think that's okay. It is like acceptance. There was always something wrong with my body. If I wore the right color, did the right exercise, I would be acceptable. Acceptable not just to me, acceptable to all these other people, husband. I have sort of settled in and know this is who I am. My body looks and feels to me better now than it did ten years ago. Why did it take me all these years to figure out that it was okay. It is like aging and maturity and experience just living in it and giving myself the permission to decide if I like it or not has come with maturity. There was a sense that always someone had the final say whether it was good or bad. Why should anybody else judge. I get disappointed in myself for letting all those other people judge all those years. Now I don't need that. Not all others; others who became significant to me.

(19) I'm afraid of not being able to do in the lifetime I have left the things I want to do and haven't done yet. I have gotten to do a lot that most people don't. I'm worried what if I get to old to really enjoy them. I want to travel around the countryside and enjoy the people and not go first class. What if I was with somebody who was aging and couldn't do this or some disease hits me.

(20) People and places removed from my immediate circumstances cause me to think about aging. People I haven't seen in four to five years and see their children. They look older. Looking at your kids, you don't have that sense because it is so gradual. Other people say she can't be fourteen look at her. Then I think I am the mother of a fourteen year old.

(21) I am more diplomatic and less of a wimp. I don't feel badly that I have preferences about certain things. I used to go out to eat and the service would be crummy, the food wouldn't be cooked right. I could get tomatine poisoning. Would I say anything, no. Not anymore. My dad would call the maitre'd and I used to be mortified. It took a long time before I could do that. I call the phone company and say look your computer bill is wrong. I am nice about it. But at least I don't try to get somebody else to call for me.

(22) I got a shock the other day. I was looking at pictures of the Royal Wedding and realized that given timespans I would probably not be alive when William was crowned King. This is funny. This little kid running around and one day he will be King of England, and I will be dead. In our 20s we think there is no real hurry. Suddenly you are in your late 30s and there is less time. You don't have time.

(23) I am a more responsible, more tolerant human being than I ever was. More inclined to let things flow than I was, but I am far more intolerant of things like irresponsibility and bounced checks. Being aware of growing older is having more responsibilities. It would be great to say the hell with these things they don't matter and walk out the door and move to Mexico. But you just do it. If somebody doesn't show up for work I just go ahead and work and I don't really think about it. If I was 30 I would have raised holy hell and said I'm leaving. I don't give a damn whether the store runs or not.

(24) I worried about strokes because my mother has had several and I am like her. She had early menopause. She had a hysterectomy, but she was on the way out then. She had terrible depression, and I was afraid I was going to do that...depressions and outrages. I had it easier than she; I am not as subject to strokes, but I have no doubts that the stroke was related to menopausal tension.

(25) I had always been thin, never dieted. I was athletic. All of a sudden I could not eat as much. My activity slowed gradually. I weighed exactly the same for 15 years before but a pound here and there, wrinkles on my face, hair showing grey. It was a natural part of aging but they seem to come all at once.

(26) The older I get the better I like myself. I wasn't happy in my 20s. I am much nicer to myself now and more forgiving. The person I have to please is me, and that is easy to do now. I see my faults, but I see good qualities, and I have learned not to beat myself because I am not doing what somebody else thinks I should do.

(27) When I turned 38 I was driving home and realized I was going to have a birthday. I was horrified. I had forgotten how old I was. Thirty-eight was different from all others previously, and I developed this belief it was going to make this tremendous difference to this man that I was with. I didn't want to talk about it. All of the things I thought were attached with a woman being older I attached to 38. It hit me then. I would have less value. I would be a woman who was aging, and therefore he would look for someone younger. It lasted six months. Then it went away. Other birthdays have been okay. That was a bad one. I didn't want to hear the numbers, that you have less value for men if you are older, and you are always having a birthday so the whole issue is right there. Aging is easier now that I am convinced that it has nothing to do with it. If it is true with this man and this relationship, then he can't be the only one in the world so people are not like my father and my mother.

(28) The only thing about growing older is if I were going to get where I was senile and hopelessly babbling, I don't want to live. As long as you are a functioning human being you can be a hundred. I don't have any fear of it being otherwise.

(29) At 36 I was acutely aware of a sense of panic. Not about physical aging although there was some when the grey hairs and wrinkles started. Panic because I hadn't had any children. I was divorced. A sense of having marked time and of not having done what I wanted to do. The first half of my thirties was spent putting myself back together from a traumatic marriage. I came out with no sense of who I was at all. At 35 now what. Life is going on and there is more than this. Am I going to do it. It being the work that matters to me or get married and have children. A sense of having wasted time, lost time, and the urgency to get on with it. Panic that I might never accomplish anything. I saw everything up to that point in preparation. My experience of aging includes a terrible period. I seemed to be out of it. I finished somethings that I needed to finish and work through some things that are worked through.

(30) I would like to grow old gracefully, looking attractive. You are going to have wrinkles, but physically your body tone, your hair looks decent, you dress nice, wear your clothes well. Those things mean you are growing old gracefully, learning intellectually, are creative, and that you are doing something worthwhile as far as your life is concerned.

VITA

Abigail Sills Lang was born March 29, 1944, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Following a brief stay in New York City, her family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where she attended elementary, junior high, and high school. She graduated June, 1961, from Anna Head School, Berkeley, California. The following September she began studies at California State University at San Francisco where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology in June, 1966.

After graduation she worked in publications at the Insitute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Berkeley, California. In 1970 she moved to Sacramento, California, where she worked as a legal secretary until the birth of her son, Erik, in 1973. In 1974 she enrolled in a graduate program in psychology at California State University, Sacramento, California. She entered the doctoral program in experimental psychology at the University of Tennessee in September, 1977. Following two years of research and teaching, she entered the clinical psychology doctoral program at the University of Tennessee, completing her predoctoral internship at Topeka State Hospital with advanced diagnostic work taken at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, in 1985. Since

completing her internship, she has been employed as a Clinical Psychology Associate at Ridgeview Psychiatric Hospital and Center in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, as a Psychotherapist at the Center for Mental Health in Montrose, Colorado, and as a clinical consultant for School District RE-1J in Montrose, Colorado.