THE STUDY OF A WOMAN'S COLLEGE CLASS

THIRTY YEARS LATER:

MATURITY IN MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN

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ELISE SILVERMAN BLUMENFELD

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By

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We hereby approve the dissertation


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Maturity in Middle-Aged Women


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ABSTRACT

This study describes a group of women in their early fifties who attended a small, conservative, southern, women's college. It focuses on how the women perceive their lives and themselves at the time of their thirtieth college reunion.

Questionnaires were sent to 101 alumnae; 69 were returned. Analysis of the questionnaires provided demographic data which paints a broad picture of the women's lives. It also revealed issues and themes important to the women at this point in their lives: such as, the importance of attachment to children and other family members, a belief in their maturity, and a preponderance of apparently self-confident, content women.

A semi-structured interview guide, based in part on these results, was used in interviewing six women at the reunion. Content analysis of the interviews substantiated and expanded the themes suggested in the questionnaire responses. The concept of maturity, first raised by the women in the questionnaires, was defined and developed into the umbrella concept for the women's current perception and experience of themselves. the importance of the interplay of attachment and separation is discussed as an aspect of maturation for middle-aged women.

The study is linked, both theoretically and practically, with the most recent findings on the growth and development of women. Some implications for clinical social work are illustrated.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend the deepest gratitude to the women who participated in this study and to Verneice Thompson, Mervin Freedman, Sylvia Sussman, Judith Williams and Neal Blumenfeld who advised and supported me in it.

From the beginning Verneice Thompson, chairperson of my dissertation committee, supplied encouragement for this study of the adult development of women. In the early stages of planning and data collection, Mervin Freedman gave me the benefit of his extensive knowledge and experience as a researcher and as an adviser to doctoral students. Judith Williams, the outside member of my committee, lent an objective view to the work as it unfolded.

Sylvia Sussman shepherded me through the whole dissertation process, providing intellectual challenge and practical advice and assistance. Most importantly, she facilitated the bringing forth of a piece of work that reflects my personal way of thinking.

Neal Blumenfeld, my friend and intellectual companion, was consistently present and available for the duration of the dissertation.

Finally, I want to thank the members of the Institute for Clinical Social Work community who have been true friends and colleagues during these difficult months of anticipating the loss of my mother and of writing my dissertation.

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In memory of my mother, Hermina Ochs Silverman
March 23, 1899 – November 28, 1983

INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION OF

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Among the most pressing items on the agenda for research

on adult development are studies that would delineate in

women's own terms the experiences of their adult life"

(Gilligan, 1982, p. 122).


My curiosity about my college class, along with my interest in

adult female development and my wish to attend my thirtieth class

reunion in May 1982, together served as the impetus for this study.

The reunion provided a research opportunity, a time and a place to

explore the lives of women then fifty to fifty-two years old.  Their

eager and generous participation indicated that they too believe middle

age is a time of growth worthy of understanding.

Asked to reflect, the women explored with me how they see them-

selves now and what they view as important in their lives.  The picture

that emerged is one of contented women who have survived with dignity

the tempestuous years since they were born in the early 1930s.  By

and large they have lived orderly lives, experiencing fulfillment

primarily through personal relationships.

Through attending to their spoken and written words, I learned

that the women had a strong sense of themselves as mature.  I selected

this concept of maturity, which evolved from the way the women looked

1

at themselves, as an umbrella idea for many of my findings. Defining
the concept both practically and theoretically, I use it to understand
the current development of the women interviewed.

More formally, this study addresses the psychosocial growth and
development of middle-aged women. Its focus is the lives of a specific
group of women, a cohort of middle-aged alumnae of a specific class
in a specific college. Of the seventy participants, sixty-nine
responded to a pre-reunion questionnaire and six took part in reunion
interviews.

The study grew out of long-standing concerns I have felt as a
clinician and as a woman. They include: dissatisfaction with across-
the-board application of the same psychological theory to women as
to men; disappointment with the tendency in psychology and sociology
to generalize to the total population from studies limited to males;
and an awareness of the lack of real-life data on women, particularly
those in midlife.

It was thus with varied motives and interests that I embarked
on this research in the winter of 1982. I began by distributing a
questionnaire aimed at gathering demographic information, probing
the women's perceptions of themselves and their lives, and revealing
how interested and responsive they were to the notion of researching
their lives. The quantity and quality of the replies quickly made
apparent their positive interest in the study.

As I examined the returned questionnaires, I developed certain
ideas about these women. By and large, the group appeared remarkably
homogeneous, conservative and traditional, and well satisfied with

their conventional lives. Certain issues arose repeatedly, such as the unquestioning importance of people, especially children. I was torn between a priori assessment of the subjects' psychological adjustment and development according to various traditional theories and my inclination to use their own views, expressed in their own words, to discover what was and is important in their lives. I chose to take a fresh look first; then to examine the findings for themes that could clarify what the women viewed as significant; and only later to corroborate, expand upon, or refute the theories.

I based the semi-structured interview guide on the questionnaire responses, my theoretical knowledge, and the information I desired. Using this guide, I conducted six interviews at the reunion.

Throughout this period of data collection, my knowledge of the literature on development was limited to early, basic developmental work (Freud, Jung, Sullivan and Erikson) and current theories in which adult development continues to be seen as linear and progressive (Vaillant, Levinson, and Kernberg).

This body of theoretical understanding did little to help me integrate or elaborate my findings. Not until beginning to analyze the reunion interviews did I discover what I see as two parts of another category, developmental literature on women. One part evolved spiral or crossover ideas about tasks that are tackled over one's entire lifetime (White, Giele), and the second represented women as indeed having some different developmental lines than men (Miller, Bardwick, and Gilligan). For example, attachment, relationship, and caring are identified as aspects of a major developmental line for women.

Discovery of this body of work, especially the theory and research oriented to the development of women, provided me with an acceptable and useful theoretical framework for analysis of the interviews.

Analysis of the interview data produced themes I came to designate as "descriptive categories," presented here in a sequence that mirrors the process of my thinking during the analysis.

The sequence follows a logical progression. I began the research and the analysis of the data wanting to know each woman at this particular point in her life. Through hearing her say who she was, attending to her account of her life experiences, I gathered the demographic and descriptive information that comprise the first category, "Description of the Women." Next, I noted that early in the interview each woman introduced an individual theme that recurred throughout the interview. This theme, which provided a unity within each interview, furnished the basis of the second category, "The Personal Theme."

After recounting the individual themes, I moved to one of central importance for all the women, "Attachment and Caring." Attachment, which first surfaced in this study in the questionnaire responses, is, as noted earlier, a major concept in current thinking about the adult development of women.

Following the explication of the centrality of attachment in the women's lives, I concentrated on the women's views of themselves at this time in their lives. In the category "Change and the Sense of Changing," I report on how the women saw themselves as having changed since college, and how they experienced this feeling of change. A

key concept in this study, maturity and its meaning at middle age, is prominent here.

While I focused on the present in the two previous categories, I shifted attention toward the future in the next two. Acknowledging first the experiences of aging already encountered, ("Experiences of Growing Older"), I then addressed fantasies and plans for the future. This discussion led to thoughts and feelings about dying, the subject of the following category, "Thoughts of Death."

A summary statement of certain overall impressions and observations about the participants and the researcher serves as the final descriptive category in the analysis of the interviews ("Reactions to the Interviews").

Only after establishing, exploring, and writing up the descriptive categories was I able to proceed to the next level of analysis and examine the descriptive categories with attention to theory. In other words, once I had delineated the themes, I had to abstract and conceptualize from the specific to the more general meaning. I had to wrestle with the application of my findings to my understanding of the adult development of women. After beginning with reflections on the use of theoretical models in understanding human growth and change, I continue with an explanation of the cross-sectional approach of this study.

An important aspect of this second level of analysis is the discussion of my choice of the concept of maturity as a matrix for observations. I discuss it as viewed by the participants and present four themes of maturity gleaned from the interview data. I discuss other

related issues, such as the women's style or manner, the importance of daily life to the women, and a two-fold phenomenon I call "no blame/no credit."

I reflect on the psychological and social implications of these themes and issues with attention to depth psychology and recent work on women, both psychological and sociological.

Finally, I place my conceptual thinking within the larger theoretical framework of attachment theory. I propose that the interplay of attachment and separation is a special experience for middle-aged women which, if successful, is a mark of maturity.

The dissertation will be presented as follows:

I will proceed to a survey of the literature divided into the three categories already mentioned. This review will be followed by a discussion of the method of investigation.

A description of the sociohistorical background of the participants introduces the presentation of the data. Next, the questionnaire results are given and analyzed according to the two types of questions, multiple-choice and open-ended, and then the interviews are discussed and analyzed. The descriptive themes which emerged are categorized and analyzed with attention to theoretical considerations. I describe the selection and significance of the concept of maturity as an issue in the adult development of women in this study. The final chapter discusses the implications of the findings for clinical social work, both practice and research.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The field of adult development is not new, but has become popular

with researchers and the public in recent years (Sheehy, 1976).  Smelser

writes that "what is novel about the movement is a preoccupation not

with adult behavior as such but rather with adulthood.  By that is

implied the study of the processes of adaptation and change in the

life situation over the span of the adult years" (1980, p. 6).

I have selected for inclusion only those theorists and works

on adult development that are of major importance for this study.  The

literature considered falls into three principal sections.

1.  Early developmental theory:  Because of the interrelatedness

of current and past literature, it is instructive to review the history

of theories of adult personality development, beginning with Freud's

writing in the early part of this century and continuing with Jung,

Sullivan, and Erikson.

2.  Current theories of adult development:  Included here are

current age-and-stage models where development is still perceived

as linear and progressive by theorists such as Levinson and Vaillant.

The countertrend, represented by nonstage theorists such as Fiske,

is also discussed.

3.  Current studies and theories on the development of women

and middle-aged women:  This section begins with the crossover model,

in which Giele attempts to synthesize the stage and nonstage views, providing a broader framework for understanding the wide variety of life patterns and activities that women actually experience. Then follows a review of recent literature in which women are seen as different from men in some aspects of development (Gilligan's work is highlighted). Studies specifically on middle-aged women in the present are described, and last are brief considerations of health issues and of alumnae/i studies.

## A. Early Literature

Freud exerted the greatest influence on contemporary understanding of child development and its implication for adult life. In 1905 he outlined the psychosexual, age-related phases from infancy to puberty. Within each phase he delineated particular unconscious dynamic development. He perceived the primary aim in adulthood to be the reworking of childhood difficulties and held that no one phase is ever fully worked through and discarded. He wrote late in his life (1932):

> We used formerly to emphasize the way in which one phase gives
> place to the next; nowadays, we direct our attention more to
> the facts which indicate how much of each earlier phase per-
> sists side by side with, and behind, later organizations, and
> obtains permanent representation in the economy of the libido
> and in the character of the individual (p. 848).

Carl Jung (1933/1971), often considered the founder of the study of adult development, was the first theorist to propose a model of personality development for middle life, which begins "between the thirty-fifth and fortieth year" (p. 8). While Jung accepted the main outlines of Freud's theory of personality development in the preadoles-cent years, he maintained that it does not end there. He observed

a process of "midlife individuation" that begins at about forty, "the noon of life," and may continue throughout the remaining years. Jung saw the individual as struggling toward maximal realization of one's potentialities, toward "self-actualization." He believed this process of self-fulfillment to come about through the differentiation of the various aspects of personality and their integration within the self. Jung's own creative work after forty was devoted primarily to understanding the individuation process in midlife and old age.

Like Freud's, Harry Stack Sullivan's theory of personality development identifies different stages that must be more or less successfully negotiated for a healthy personality to emerge. Though Sullivan extended his scheme through adulthood, placing importance on preadolescent years, his greatest contribution is the idea that personality evolves out of interpersonal relations, beginning with the "infant's experience with the mothering one" and continuing on to

> adulthood . . . relationships of love for some other person,
> in which relationship the other person is as significant, or
> nearly as significant, as one's self . . . the principal source
> of satisfactions in life; and one goes on developing in depth
> of interest or in scope of interest, or in both depth and scope,
> from that time until unhappy retrogressive changes in the organism
> lead to old age (1953, p. 34).

Going further, Sullivan believed all of life's experiences determine development. He explained, "We see the person as a nexus of processes in communal existence with a physiochemical, a social, and a cultural world" (Mullahy, 1973, p. 127).

The next major figure, the foremost living theorist in adult development, is Erik Erikson. He examined the life cycle of the individual, bringing together psychoanalytic understanding, the interpersonal process, and the interplay between personality development

and the societal and cultural environment. He wrote, "It is, in fact, the purpose of this presentation to bridge the theory of infantile sexuality, and our knowledge of the child's physical and social growth within his family and the social structure" (1959, p. 53).

In her excellent exposition of Erikson's contributions, Serkin (1980) writes that he sees the whole of an individual's life as a "life cycle." He means two things: that each person's life forms a link in a chain of generations and that there is in each life a tendency to completion or coherence. The life cycle is articulated by a series of eight stages that follow the epigenetic principle of succession. Erikson explains:

> The sequence of stages thus represents a successive development of the component parts of the psychosocial personality. Each part exists in some form (verticals) before the time when it becomes "phase-specific," i.e., when "its" psychosocial crisis is precipitated both by the individual's readiness and by society's pressure. But each component comes to ascendence and finds its more or less lasting solution at the conclusion of "its" stage. It is thus systematically related to all the others, and all depend on the proper development at the proper time of each; although individual make-up and the nature of society determine the rate of development of each of them, and thus the ratio of all of them (1959, p. 119, his emphasis).

The stages are not as discrete as they may appear. Erikson (1976) says later: "All persons can be seen to oscillate between at least two stages and move more definitely into a higher one only when an even higher one begins to determine the interplay" (p. 25).

A crisis is a time of both heightened potentiality and heightened vulnerability, when a new integration of preceding stages and the development of a new kind of strength is possible. The issues of each stage present themselves in terms of opposing psychosocial potentials (Erikson, 1963). They are resolved through a back-and-forth

process whereby opposites are integrated and a stage-specific strength

is forged. Social institutions safeguard the person's resolution

of the issues of each stage. For example, the first stage poses the

dilemma of trust versus mistrust and its resolution results in a sense

of hope. Hope is represented in society by the institution of religion.

Erikson assigns the last four stages of his Eight Stages of Man

to the adult period. Youth, a period of transition to young adulthood,

is a time of search for identity versus identity (role) confusion. The

resultant strength is fidelity, which is represented in society by

ideologies.

The next stage, the first stage of adulthood proper, is a period

when young adults grapple with intimacy versus isolation. Commitments

in work, friendship, and especially marriage are the concerns. The

strength that evolves from this stage is love.

The middle-aged person in the next stage is preoccupied with

generativity versus stagnation. Resolution of this issue results

in the capacity for caring. Erikson emphasized parenthood, although

he intends to refer more generally to the guidance of the next genera-

tion. All social institutions serve to safeguard generativity.

In old age, the final stage of life, the issue is integrity versus

despair, when one is faced with the imminence of death and the conse-

quent need to affirm one's life cycle as the only one possible for

oneself. Wisdom grows out of the resolution of this issue.

### B.  Some Current Studies and Theoretical Models

In recent years the study of the postadolescent, pre-aged years

of the life cycle has become a vigorous intellectual movement among

sociologists, psychologists, social psychologists, psychoanalysts,
and to some extent, historians and anthropologists, even spreading
to the popular press. In some cases the expansion of interest in
the adult years has developed as a facet of increased attention to
the life course as a whole, and in others specific phases or problems
(for example, life events like the "empty nest") have been singled
out for study. "A theoretical synthesis or a general stocktaking
of empirical findings would likely be impossible, given the diversity
and noncomparability of many of the intellectual frameworks that inform
the study of the adult years, and the second would likely be a failure
since the corpus of definitively established empirical findings is
so limited" (Smelser, 1980, p. 4).

Because of the simplicity of her delineation and her concern
with women in the middle years, Giele's approach to research on the
life course and adult development is central to this review. Giele
makes an overall distinction between stage theorists and their critics
or challengers. She points out, "All stage models share two distinc-
tive features. First, they imagine the life span as divided into
discrete phases associated with specific developmental tasks. Second,
they suppose a time order in the sequence of tasks that is roughly
asociated with age" (1980a, p. 155).

Well-known stage theorist Daniel Levinson is acclaimed for his
book, The Seasons of a Man's Life (1978), in which he reports his
intensive examination of a small group of men in their middle years.
Despite his tendency to find themes typical of a particular period,
he recognizes the many-faceted and interconnecting nature of development
along many dimensions. Thus he uses the lifespan perspective, which

"views human development, socialization, and adaptations as lifelong
processes within an interage framework" (Elder, 1975, p. 167). Regard-
ing dimensions, he agrees with Neugarten, an early observer of middle
age and aging, who wrote in 1968, "If psychologists are to discover
order in the events of adulthood, and if they are to discover order
in the personality changes that occur in all individuals as they age,
we should look to the social as well as to the biological clock, and
certainly social definitions of age and age-appropriate behavior"
(1968, p. 146).

While adhering to his position that there are a series of stages
which succeed each other in invariant order, Levinson sees the temporal
phasing of life as influenced by social and cultural determinants.
He discusses the interrelatedness and importance of the sociological
perspective (adult socialization) and the adaptation perspective.
He writes "that adaptation (response, coping, adjustment) to a given
event is conjointly determined by the specific stimulus, by the broader
social context in which the event is situated, and by characteristics
of the individual (such as values, skills and motives)" 1980, p. 273).
According to Levinson, life events can be viewed simply from an adapta-
tion perspective, as single, discrete occurrences, or, from a larger
lifespan perspective, as markers of a broader, more extended sequence
"on the segment of the life course of which it is a part" (1980, p. 276).
Levinson's goal is to elucidate the evolution of the "individual life
structure," defined as the pattern of a man's participation in the
world, and the patterning of his personality as it exists within a
sociocultural context.

Levinson divides adulthood into three eras: early, middle, and late adulthood (roughly ages twenty to forty, forty to sixty, and sixty to eighty). Within these eras are a series of stages in which sequences occur in predictable order. Like Jung, Levinson found individuation to be the primary task of midlife. With individuation accomplished, a person is freed to enjoy external and internal freedom to develop polarities within his own personality (for example, the old and the young, the masculine and the feminine).

Another study on men at midlife is Vaillant's engagingly written Adaptation to Life. Vaillant (1977) followed up a sample of Harvard students from the classes 1939-1944 who were originally chosen for a study of psychological well-being. Vaillant analyzed changes in this group of alumni, identifying adaptive and maladaptive defense mechanisms. He describes a developmental sequence in the lives of the men in which latency-like industriousness was supplanted by adolescent-like expansiveness. That is, the men were strongly oriented toward achievement from ages twenty-five to thirty-five; around forty they began to reassess their lives and to explore new avenues of self-expression and adventurousness.

In contrast to the search for stages as evidenced in the above works, Giele points to the countertrend among a number of psychologists and sociologists who are observers of midlife. They are skeptical that any such clear and orderly patterns exist. Many imply that developmental issues at any time are fundamentally the same. Giele, who calls their work "timing models" (1982a, p. 6) comments that they claim "the case for stages is tenuous at best and that it is more likely

that change occurs in one of several dimensions of the life course

triggered by specific personal or environmental events. The person

either copes and adapts or fails to do so, and development occurs

in the affected area. Transformations of a more general sort that

are associated with a particular age however are rare" (1982, p. 7).

This view is at clear variance with stage theories, which depend for

their validity on observable "changes in the overall character of

living" (Levinson, 1978, p. 40).

One of the theorists Giele discusses in the countertrend is Fiske,

who in her article "Changing Hierarchies of Commitment" (1980) outlines

her own view of the principal frameworks which have evolved to describe

psychosocial change in adults. She delineates stage theory, closely

related theories of self-articulation or self-realization, a third para-

digm she describes as dialectic, and a fourth she calls eclectic.

The dialectic seeks to integrate personal and sociohistorical

change without the premise of progressive growth in society or the

individual, and the eclectic group includes various paradigms of many

newcomers to the field. They "have fewer a priori assumptions about

the nature and direction of psychosocial change in adulthood, except

for the conviction that it exists" (1980, p. 247). Rather than dia-

lectic or eclectic, perhaps a better way to describe many recent studies

is Fiske's statement:

> . . . in a field half a century younger than child development
> investigators believe that it is advisable to keep all options
> open and to involve the approaches of as many disciplines as
> possible. The adoption of self-actualizing, developmental,
> personality or normative crises theories may be premature (Fiske,
> 1980, pp. 243-44).

As is apparent from the above quotations, to distinguish frameworks one from another and to categorize them is difficult, if not impossible. Fiske submits that her evolving theoretical framework came about after she realized that little of what she and her colleagues were learning in their longitudinal studies of adult transitions fit into existing frameworks. Using a variety of methods of inquiry, they came up with clusters of selected characteristics which they named "interpersonal," "altruistic," "competency/mastery," and "self-protective." These define different aspects of commitments to life and can conflict or shift or alternate. The commitments can be brought into play in any or all of the changing areas of the adult life course. For example, the work setting may provide the arena for interpersonal, altruistic, or self-protective intentions, as well as those relating to mastery/competence. Fiske believes the commitment framework transcends dichotomies which oversimplify issues, such as the common polarizing of work and leisure. In essence, Fiske is studying activities, events, and transitions within a framework of meanings and satisfactions that people attach to them. A notable aspect of Fiske's findings is that in observing a wide range of lower-middle-class men and women she has not found the clear patterns Levinson and Vaillant found in a male upper-middle-class and professional elite. Instead, over five-year periods she found that people's hierarchies of commitment vary widely and in no particular order. The shifts appear occasioned by changes in everyday circumstances at home and at work. This finding suggests that some people are more apt to experience discrete stages than others.

The final theory included with the nonstage models is based on a longitudinal study of Mills College students by Helson, described in the article "Personality Patterns of Adherence and Non-adherence to the Social Clock in Changing Times" (1983). The content relevant to the present study will be discussed in the body of this work. Mention is made here to call attention to the model of the social clock, where the focus is on "how people are doing for their age," where they are in the age-related scheduling of life events. Helson believes that this concept of adherence or nonadherence to social clock patterns overcomes the split between personality and social concerns in developmental studies.

### C.  Current Studies and Theories on Women and
### Middle-Aged Women

In the current literature exploring women's life course a major, recurring theme is the striking complexity of their adult lives, in which love and work interweave in intricate sequences and patterns. McGuigan writes in Women's Lives, "A number of writers observe and report the intertwining of multiple roles across women's life span. If male development . . . can be charted by clearly distinguished blocks of time, perhaps women's development can better be envisioned as a braid of threads in which colors appear, disappear and reappear" (1980, p. xii).

If synthesizing and stocktaking in the field of adult development in general is impossible, as Smelser suggests, clarifying content and direction in the area of women's adult development is hopeless at this time. The proliferation of work, the contradictory findings,

and the myriad of unintegrated perspectives produce an exciting, dynamic, and confusing picture. The varying points of view and subtle shifts of emphasis between internal and external forces pose a dilemma for the reader that is not clearly addressed in the literature. The centrality of certain psychological issues, predominant in the earlier work written largely by and about men, is being questioned, and concepts more relevant to the development of women are being advanced.

Theorists suggest that the experiences of separation and attachment have different meanings for women and men--that female identity arises through attachment, through identification with the mother, whereas male identity is contingent on separation from the mother (Chodorow, 1978). At the same time, they stress the importance of socialization and social roles in the life patterns that women experience. It is not clear how or if writers concern themselves with the integration of the psychological tasks and the social/structural aspects of experience. Certainly it is imperative to consider social roles in the family and workplace and the characteristics of the larger economic and cultural context as well as the physical and psychological changes in the individual.

At the same time that we are inundated from these varying directions, we must question the writers of the new literature, the women writing on women, just as they questioned men writing on men. How much of their emphasis on changing roles reflects historical change, how much reflects the writers' stated interest in public policy-making, and in what way will the findings be applicable to men as well as women?

The crossover model is Giele's attempt to synthesize the pre-
viously discussed age-and-stage and nonstage models. Her framework
has significant pertinence for the understanding of women in our times,
as it addresses what is happening today to age and sex roles.

Giele writes that in the mid-1970s she was puzzled by what seemed
to be two opposing themes in analyses of the midlife period. On the
one hand was the emphasis on ever more refined stages in the life
cycle and on the other was skepticism about stages. She notes that
throughout all the new material there "lies a pervasive theme of change,
adaptability, flexibility, going back in order to go forward, and go
on" (1980b, p. 11). What are we to make of these opposing motifs--
distinct stages of development versus ambiguity and no clear pattern?
Giele responds that these two themes possibly represent "two universal
processes that occur in any living system:  differentiation and inte-
gration" (1980a, p. 156). While there is increasing differentiation
(specialization) occurring within society and within the individual,
there is also integration (consolidation), "a persistence of difference
that, no matter how hard we try to erase it, seems ineradicable and
may perhaps serve some useful purpose" (1980b, p. 5).

Giele believes stage theorists and their critics are witnessing
and describing diverse parts of the same differentiation/integration
process. She thinks it is possible to bring the two aspects together
by what she calls the crossover motif or theme, and thereby explain
better both the history and future of social systems and of personal
life experiences. She submits that crossover is the integrative device
that permits social systems to specialize and consolidate at the same

time. And at the personal level "crossover is the mechanism that enables individuals to exchange roles, either through time in the course of their own life cycle, or at any given time with others by bridging the boundaries of functional specialization" (1980b, p. 6, her emphasis).

A key aspect of Giele's concept is that crossover is a process that bridges unlike entities, or territories--males and females, old and young--and their roles. While there is a two-way exchange, merging of the two realms does not necessarily result. For this reason Giele prefers the term crossover to the term equality, which so often is thought of as sameness. Giele writes of increased differentiation and specialization in recent years, suggesting that this phenomenon may have been a prerequisite to flexibility or to interchangeability of tasks that permits easier crossover. For example, anyone of almost any age can cook a frozen dinner in a microwave oven.

Giele stresses that crossover can operate on various levels. In writing of age crossover, she suggests that it occurs not just between older and younger strata of the society, but between the age-coded elements of a person's own psyche (1980a, p. 160). Changes in sex roles she regards as a shorthand formula for reconciliation and balance of many necessary and opposing forces in society. Equality between the sexes can stand for the "integration of the instrumental and the expressive, the reconciliation of external and internal, figure and the ground, growth and limits of growth, transcendence, and immi-nence, culture and nature" (1980b, p. 11). Little is to be gained by making one polarity do away with or merge into another.

The crossover model has enormous implications for understanding contemporary age and sex roles of women. It throws light on the emerging realization that following a male model to success may be a dead end, that women have a different vision of reality, an alternative pattern which has meaning for them and for all of society. In addition, the crossover idea predicts and explains a new kind of feminism that has only surfaced in the last few years. Found in the women's studies moement, for example, this new approach celebrates women's special qualities and different construction of reality.

In 1976 Miller, a practicing psychotherapist, addressed women in the general population through a book titled Toward a New Psychology of Women. In this slim, simply written volume, she raised the theme that women are different from men in their orientation to power, that male society, by depriving women of the right to its major "bounty"-- that is, development according to the male model--overlooks the fact that women's development is proceeding on another basis. She calls for a "new psychology of women" that would recognize the different starting point for women's development. She observes "that women stay with, build on and develop in a context of attachment and affilia- tion with others . . . [that], women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affilia- tion and relationships . . . [and that] eventually, for many women the threat of a disruption of an affiliaton is perceived not as just a loss of relationship, but as something closer to a total loss of self" (1976, p. 83).

Gilligan's work, most recently presented to the public in a book titled In a Different Voice:  Psychological Theory and Women's Development (1982b), is a sophisticated, scholarly treatment of some of the issues raised by Miller.  She submits that issues of separation and independence, seen as primary paths to maturity, identity, and mental health in present theory, may not be applicable to women. She identifies attachment as a major theme for women and traces another line of development, that of relationship and care.  Gilligan's findings and theoretical speculations are of particular significance in elucidating the present study of traditional, middle-aged women.

The dominance of relationship and of caring in women's values and in women's decision making is apparent in the examples Gilligan gives from her studies on young people's moral development.  Originally working with Kohlberg, Gilligan realized that women could not be judged according to Kohlberg's theory (derived from a study of eighty-four boys followed for twenty years) of six stages that describe the development of moral judgment from childhood to adulthood.  "Prominent among those who . . . appear to be deficient in moral development when measured by Kohlberg's scale are women, whose judgments seem to exemplify the third stage. . . . At this stage morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing others" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 18).  The implication is that this stage is functional only if women remain in the home, that if they enter the traditional area of male activities they will recognize the inadequacy of this moral perspective and progress like men toward higher stages where relationships are subordinated to rules, and rules to universal principles of justice.

Kohlberg's theory was based on the experiences of males. Gilligan suggests that this penchant for projecting a male image, frightening to women, goes back at least to Freud (1905), who constructed his theory of psychosexual development that culminates in the Oedipus complex. After trying to fit women into his masculine conception, seeing them as envying what they missed, Freud came instead to acknowledge, in the strength and persistence of women's pre-Oedipal attachments to their mother, a developmental difference. Freud, a shrewd observer, accurately perceived this difference. The problem was that he considered this difference to be responsible for what he saw as women's developmental failure.

The superego--the heir to the Oedipus complex--was compromised in women because there could be no clear-cut resolution of the Oedipus complex. Freud concluded that women show less sense of justice than men, that they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility. According to Gilligan, Piaget also faults women's sense of justice, seeing it compromised by feelings in its refusal of "bland impartiality" (1982b, p. 6).

In her study comparing the differing sequences of young men's and young women's moral development, Gilligan notes that women continue to be concerned first with issues of responsibility and care and only later with integrity and individuation. In all of the women's descriptions, identity is defined in a context of relationship. Similarly, morality is seen by these women as arising from the experience of connection and being a problem of inclusion rather than one of balancing claims (1982a).

Studies on adult development have emphasized self and work because men have provided the subjects and the norms. Characteristics of maturity strongly address concerns of achievement and reputation as in Levinson and Vaillant. Gilligan suggests that

> By changing the lens of developmental observation from self and work to relationships of care, women depict ongoing attachment as the path that leads to maturity. The parameters of development correspondingly shift toward the progress of affiliative relationships, charting dissolution of dominance and subordination through the development of relationships toward interdependence (1982a, p. 110).

Gilligan's view of women's personality and work in the middle years grows out of the foregoing concepts and theory. She turns away from the traditional construction of midlife in adolescent terms, as a similar crisis of identity and separation. This view, she thinks, ignores the reality of what has happened in the years between and tears up the history of love and work. For generativity to begin at midlife (as Vaillant's data on men suggests, or as Erikson has proposed) seems from a woman's perspective too late for both sexes, given that the bearing and raising of children take place primarily in the preceding years. Similarly, the image of women arriving at midlife childlike and dependent on others is belied by their activities of nurturing and sustaining family relationships.

Rather, given the evidence that women's sense of integrity is entwined with an ethic of care, the important transitions that engage experiences of attachment and separation in women's lives would seem to involve changes in the understanding and activities of care. The events of midlife--the menopause and changes in family and work--can alter the woman's activities of care in ways that affect her sense of

herself. If midlife brings an end to relationships, to the sense
of connection, to the activities of care, then mourning that accompanies
all life transitions can give way to depression and self-deprecation.

Gilligan stresses the difference between the reluctance to choose,
often a problem for women in adolescence, and the reality of having/
not having a choice in midlife. What is crucial is not simply the mid-
life events per se, but the contextual meaning of the events--the mean-
ing arising through the interaction between the "structures of her
thought and the realities of her life" (1982a, p. 111). Thus when
women reach middle life the reality of connection is a given, not
something one freely contracts. They arrive at a different understand-
ing of possibilities that inhere in relationships both for oppression
and growth. Gilligan affirms the existence of cooperation in women's
lives, and the possibility of less violence in a world where a path
to maturity is realized through interdependence and taking care, rather
than individual achievement and independence (1982, p. 113).

Two recent studies coming out of women's centers for research
are relevant to development in middle-aged women. Both set in juxta-
position to Levinson's work, they are "The Seasons of a Woman's Life"
by Bardwick (1980) and "If the Study of Midlife Had Begun with Women"
by Baruch and Barnett (1979). Of particular interest are the authors'
efforts to address the influence on middle-aged women of the social
changes of recent years, most readily subsumed under the phrase "the
women's movement." Bardwick maps the seasons of women's lives, point-
ing not only to significant gender difference in the stages of men's
and women's lives, and to the relational character of women's adolescent

dream, but also to changes brought by the women's movement within

various age cohorts. In addressing women age fifty and older Bardwick

thinks many of them who were at least in their forties when new options

for participation in the world opened up felt it was too late for

them to reap the benefits of societal change. For some, becoming care-

takers for elderly parents provides a mechanism for perpetuating the

lifestyle of homemaker. At the same time Bardwick believes many of

these women may be truly interdependent, as opposed to egocentric

or dependent, because their traditional lives reflect their values,

and were both fulfilling and complex even without paid, out-of-home

employment.

While the implication of Bardwick's study is that middle-aged

women were not much affected by the women's movement, Baruch and Barnett

present a different picture. They studied women thirty-five to fifty-

five. Skeptical about whether chronological age was a core variable,

as Levinson perceived it for men, they organized their study around such

major variations in the lives of women of similar ages as whether they

were married, had paid jobs, or had children. They believed these dif-

ferences in family and work status would result in profound variations

in how the women interviewed experienced their lives in general and

their middle years in particular. Several of their findings are inter-

esting in relation to the data from the present study. In retrospec-

tive reports regarding late adolescence, responses revealed "dysfunc-

tional or maladaptive" modes of thinking about the future; that is,

few of the women had a life plan, they depended on someone else to

provide for them economically, little thought was given to occupational

or economic futures, dreams were limited to love and marriage. These

responses parallel my own findings.

The principal current theme in all the subgroups studied, regard-

less of family or work status (except those in high prestige jobs),

was a newly experienced sense of value and worth of the self, and

of the importance of attending to one's needs. The researchers ask

why this theme of increased self-esteem emerged so strongly across

the whole age range. Perhaps, they reason, the answer lies in the

common socialization history almost all women share--that of putting

others first. The writers say,

> Such attitudes die hard--and one can hear echoes of guilt,
> uncertainty. . . . But these women also share a particular
> current social climate, summed up most quickly by the phrase
> 'the women's movement,' and it is our working hypothesis that
> this social context may be the sine qua non, the necessary if
> not sufficient cause for the positive changes they report
> (Baruch & Barnett, 1979, p. 8).

As fascinating as is this speculation, is the fact that it received

little support from the women themselves, who attributed the positive

changes to chronological age. Both aspects of the finding raise ques-

tions about similar responses in my study.

Well-being, physical as well as emotional, is obviously pertinent

to a study of middle-aged women since middle age and the biological

transition, the climacteric marked by menopause, are almost synonymous

in everyday thinking. There is an enormous current literature on

menopause written from various perspectives. An article in Signs:

Journal of Women in Culture and Society, "Toward a Biology of Menopause,"

states that menopause cannot be understood even biologically without

"combining the intellectual resources of biochemistry, physiology,

endocrinology, medicine, biostatistics, psychology, and the social

sciences" (Goodman, 1980, p. 753). In a chapter in Women over Forty: Visions and Realities entitled "Menopause and Sexuality," the authors write, "The physiological changes wrought by the aging process in women and the psychological adjustments required by menopause and a changing view of sexuality are areas that are little understood, and will require close scrutiny in the years ahead" (Bloch, Davidson, Grambs, 1981, p. 38). Still another view is expressed in an article in the Menninger Bulletin, "The Expectable Climacteric Reaction," in which the author states that "depression is to be regarded as a phase-specific affect, indicating that the necessary mourning process is occurring. The capacity to contain and tolerate such a depression is a prerequisite for the healthy resolution of the climacteric process" (Lax, 1982, p. 165).

There is also a large literature on the social dimensions of biomedical data on women and numerous studies attempting to understand the influences of such issues as employment versus homemaking, multiple roles, and marital and other family status on the physical and psychological well-being of middle-aged women. Although these issues have bearing on this study, I will use the literature only as it relates specifically to the findings.

Although I have also reviewed literature on college alumnae/i, I will use it only with specific reference to findings, because most of it focuses on the effects of college education on later development, an area not explored in the present work.

CHAPTER II

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

A. Introduction and Methodological Considerations

This is a cross-sectional study of a cohort of women at a partic-
ular time in their lives. Findings are based on data collected from
seventy women immediately before and during their thirtieth college
reunion in May, 1982. Questionnaire and interview techniques were used
for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. In essence, it
is a qualitative study, adhering to the tradition and spirit of the
clinical method of research.

In his discussion of research methods in social science, Ralph
(1976) notes that if one reduces differences among them to a minimum,
there are really only two basic methods, the clinical and the experi-
mental. The clinical methods include naturalistic interview techniques,
participant observations, and other field methods that emphasize the
observer as the primary recording instrument. These methods examine
empirical reality not with a preexisting set of instruments or theoreti-
cal categories, but rather with an openness that allows categories
to emerge from the observation of the natural system under study
(Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The clinical method of investigation derives largely from case
study techniques prevalent in psychoanalysis, but also from participant

observation methods used in disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. It is used by psychoanalysts (e.g., Erikson, 1959; Freud, 1900/1938; Jung, 1916/1945, psychologists (e.g., Bettelheim, 1969; R. White, 1966), sociologists (e.g., L. Rubin, 1979), social anthropologists (e.g., Bateson, 1975; Lifton, 1937; Mead, 1949), symbolic interactionists in sociology (e.g., Blumer, 1969; G. H. Mead, 1934), and psychologists in cognitive development (e.g., Piaget, 1959). (A thorough exposition of this method is available in Ralph's volume, The Clinical Method: A Naturalistic Phenomenological Technique for Psychology [1976].)

Theoretical formulations that identify relationships of central importance in human experience most often draw from descriptive accounts, direct observations, life histories, and field studies (Blumer, 1969). These form a body of relevant observations about how people understand their world and their actions and relationships within it. The value of such accounts lies in their ability to remain sensitive to the process by which people organize and give meaning to their perceptions.

The subjective experiences of fifty-year-old women were what I sought to explore through questionnaire and interviews. I wanted the women to speak for themselves. In the questionnaire, I did not precategorize the questions from the point of view of any specific developmental theories. I invited additional comments, but in no way anticipated how the respondents would use the questionnaire. I expected that questions would be left unanswered, but not that they would be answered so fully or expanded upon. The richness was most

apparent in those replies that included additional personal reflections
on the past and the present. These comments were often embedded in
a note or letter directed to me as an old classmate or friend. In
the context of this broader spectrum of response, developmental themes,
personality traits and dynamics, and affectual states were more clearly
revealed than expected.

The semi-structured interviews, constructed in part from the
data of the returned questionnaires, created an opportunity for six
subjects to detail and elaborate at the reunion their experiences
of being a woman at midlife in a world much different from that of
their girlhood and early womanhood.

John Madge writes of the interview in The Tools of Social Science
(1965):

> We now come to the principal application of the interview in
> social science, that is, its use for the purpose of making
> people talk about themselves.
> The interview--and its half-brother, the questionnaire--
> is popularly regarded as the method "par excellence" of social
> science. After all, it is argued, what social scientists are
> interested in are people, and if you want to find out something
> about a person, surely the best way is to ask him or one of
> his friends.

Madge goes on to discuss the range of the practical uses of the
interview and the questionnaire:

> As will be shown, there is no clear line of demarcation between
> the course of psycho-therapeutic sessions and the completion
> of a census form, between eliciting a deeply felt opinion and
> collecting a simple fact like the informant's age, between an
> interview which leads to confidence and insight and one which
> provides yet another batch of data to be marked up in the
> appropriate columns. But although dividing lines are arbitrary,
> the distinctions between one extreme use of the interview tech-
> nique and another are in practice perfectly clear and of radical
> importance.

In the present study, data ranging from "simple facts of age" to "deeply felt" feelings about the imminence of old age and death were generated by the questionnaire and the interviews. On the whole, people spoke and wrote freely of themselves. An unusually large percentage of questionnaires was returned, 68 percent as compared to 36 percent for the 1947 class at Radcliffe (Hartman, 1982). Many more than the usual number of alumnae (25 percent) attended the thirtieth reunion. (The Class of 1951 had 10 percent attendance at its thirtieth reunion.) The class president attributed the high turn-out to the questionnaire and ensuing curiosity about the results. Those interviewed, except for one, were cooperative, involving themselves intensely and affectively in the interview process.

The brief report I gave at the reunion on the results of the questionnaire was met with enthusiasm and good-humored participation. In informal discussion a number of alumnae expressed pleasure at my interest in them and our class. There were requests for printed results. At least a dozen times I was taken aside and asked about specific people, had I heard from them, how and where were they. Several alumnae said that they felt that the questionnaire and report promoted group esprit and pride. I did not foresee these secondary effects, but by themselves they speak to an "action" aspect of the study. They also raise possibilities for future efforts on the part of the college alumnae association.

In the tradition and spirit of clinical method, I, as "the primary recording instrument" (Ralph, p. 4), did concern myself from the beginning with my potential influence on the research, as well as what

the experience might mean for me and might say about me. I assumed there were pros and cons to my being a member of the cohort under study. Some of what appear to be the pluses have already been mentioned: the high percentage of questionnaire responses and the quality of the questionnaire and reunion responses. I assume this reaction was related to my being an insider, a classmate, and consequently more trustworthy.

For my part, there were certain benefits to being part of the group and knowing personally, though not well, all the subjects. As Barber (1981) commented in her study of Wright Institute students, familiarity with the context from which subjects are speaking gives one an enormous advantage over the outside investigator who would not know "the code." A simple example of my knowing and resonating to the group norms was expressed in my serious and successful efforts to shop for and wear suitable clothes to the reunion. The appropriateness of my choice symbolized for me some special understanding of my subjects.

While I was prepared, at least intellectually, for negative reactions, particularly in the form of envy, since few of the entire sample had attempted doctoral work, I did not detect any overt negativity or hostility toward me. I think the cooperative, pleased reactions of the alumnae related in part to their positive feelings about this project, the friendly atmosphere of a reunion, and the high degree of socialization of these women. While familiarity sensitized me to some cues and certain aspects of the subjects' lives, that same closeness may have blinded me to others. The most serious drawback

to my being part of the cohort lies in the danger of subjective bias influencing the research unduly.

During the reunion and for several weeks following, I was keenly aware of my reactions and feelings. I felt both elated and exhausted, drained by the interviews where I had relinquished some of my usual neutrality and role to participate, not only as an interviewer asking questions and giving feedback, but also as an old friend who is suddenly considered "wise." Reading the questionnaire responses, preparing the guide, giving the report, and most especially conducting the interviews, I felt enormous gratitude and responsibility toward the subjects. The degree of the feeling of responsibility and the wish to give something in return seemed inordinate, until I discovered through analyzing the questionnaires and interviews that responsibility and relationship play a major, powerful part in the lives of my cohort. This fascinating discovery was a replica of clinical work, where often the most important long-term insights are not verbalized by the client but are first felt by the clinician to be her own response. My use of these intense feelings, along with informal observations made during that period, provide another dimension to the study. These experiences enrich the more formal data gathering, and provide a gestalt or context. My observations of the behavior of the women in natural social activity at the reunion also become a "check and balance" to other findings.

<u>B. Procedures</u>

<u>1. Questionnaire</u>

Sixty-nine of the seventy women in this study are those who responded to the questionnaire I sent to one hundred one alumnae of the class of 1952 in March 1982, shortly before the thirtieth reunion. I obtained the roster of the class, with the names, addresses, and graduation status, from the Alumnae Office of the college. Using this limited information, I discerned one major, if expected, difference between the responders and nonresponders: two-thirds of the responders had graduated from the college, while only one-third of the nonresponders had. This finding indicates that graduates are more likely to remain involved with their school and thus more interested in completing and returning a long questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire was modeled on the one Mervin Freedman designed and implemented in the 1973 follow-up study of the Vassar College class of 1958 (at the time of the fifteenth reunion of that class). In consultation with Dr. Freedman and Dr. Sylvia Sussman I expanded the questionnaire to include a greater number of open-ended questions aimed at learning more about the women's current lives and subjective experiences. I also focused more on issues that seemed relevant for older respondents. For example, I inquired about health, plans for retirement, and reactions to children leaving the home.

In the cover letter which accompanied the questionnaire the context was set for self-reflection, for viewing the past and thinking about the future from the vantage point of a new stage in the life cycle. Copies of the questionnaire and the cover letter are included in Appendix A.

The questionnaire is composed of 82 questions: 69 multiple choice of which 16 are demographic; the remaining are open-ended.

The multiple-choice questions yielded both actuarial data and a range of information which, when collated, paint a broad, general picture of the lives of the women. Included are: demographic description; information about work; rates of satisfactions with roles, tasks, personal endeavors, relationships; political and religious affiliations and involvements; and physical well-being and activities.

Multiple-choice questions were analyzed by looking at the summary of the responses. The following question provides an example: "Please indicate the extent to which the following contribute to your sense of satisfaction: children, husband, work outside the home, hobbies and personal interests, friends and social activities, and other." In this case the disparity between the number of "highs" for children and husbands and the much smaller number for all the other categories revealed that children and husbands have much more meaning for the women than work, hobbies, etc.

The thirteen open-ended questions concern seven areas: intellectual interests and activities, old and new; prominent events and people since college; relationship with parents; changes and desired changes; positive qualities of self; concerns for future generations and wishes for daughters; and hopes for future accomplishments.

Analysis of open-ended questions was a lengthy and sometimes difficult process, because the answers cannot be precategorized. Consequently each response had to be carefully examined and recorded so

that trends, themes, and idiosyncracies could be retained. An example
of an open-ended question that produced unexpected and important results
of the study is one that was fairly simple to assess, at least in a
preliminary fashion. The question was, "What and who have been the
most significant influences on your life since college?" Responses
overwhelmingly focused on "who," not "what." This finding led me to
speculate that these women saw people as most important in their devel-
opment since college. Further, the people were close family members
rather than outsiders.

Tentative findings of this sort influenced the construction of
the interview guide. In this case the data led me to inquire in depth
in the interviews about relationships with husbands and children in
the past and in the present.

## 2. Interviews

There were six semi-structured interviews conducted at the reunion.
Each lasted approximately one and one-half hours and was tape recorded.

The interview sample was chosen ultimately on the basis of the
subjects' availability and willingness to participate. However, before
going to the reunion, I postulated several categories of potential
participants and considered strategies for selection.

According to my understanding of the returned questionnaires,
the majority of the women appeared to be high-functioning, in long-
term marriages, with grown children. They might or might not have
paid work outside the home. They expressed general satisfaction with
their lives, were physically active and responded to the questionnaire
in a straight-forward way with little apparent defensiveness or

depression. I was able to interview a particular woman in this group whose questionnaire caught my attention. She came across as articulate, humorous, and extraordinarily religious, both in spirit and in institutional involvement. Another woman in this majority group volunteered.

The second category that emerged from my reading of the questionnaires was similar to the first, but the women either seemed overly Pollyanna-ish or somewhat depressed. A woman from this group volunteered to be interviewed.

The third broad category included deviants from the general population. They were the divorced, whether remarried or not; those intensely involved in work and career; and the very ill, physically or psychologically (from my impression of their responses). I was able to interview a woman in this group whom I selected from the questionnaire because she was one of the few career women and one of the few who married late and did not have children. I also was able to interview one of the divorced women, a member of the largest deviant subgroup.

At the reunion a fourth category emerged. Three women who had not responded to the questionnaire attended. One of this group agreed to be interviewed.

In sum, the number of interviews was dictated by time and my available energy. The six people in the sample include, in terms of the foregoing discussion: two of the high-functioning group; one of the second category, functional, but evidencing some depression or defensiveness in the questionnaire; two of the deviants, one divorced and one career woman; and one of the nonresponders.

The interview guide which I constructed and which can be found in Appendix B, was derived from the preliminary analysis of the question-naire responses, ideas gleaned from personal and clinical experience, understanding of theories of adult development, and three pretests run on women friends of mine of approximately the same age and educational background as the sample.

In preparing the guide, I did not precategorize according to any theoretical model, but asked questions and raised issues that madesense to me and at the same time interested me. I left room open for the women to bring up their own special areas of concern and interest.

The guide focused on the following areas: the general notion of adult development; college; marriage; ambitions; good and bad life experiences and coping mechanisms; impact of children leaving; health; curent home and out-of-home situation; finances and retirement; "sense of belonging"; and thoughts about growing older and death.

Pretesting the guide alerted me to the nature of the interview process. I learned the important ways in which it resembles the clini-cal process and the ways it is different, especially if one is limited to a single interview.

As in a clinical interview, the subjects and I became engaged intellectually and emotionally; transference and countertransference feelings arose, setting off my intuitive, clinical sense. The purpose of the research interview is, of course, different from the purpose of the clinical process, thereby calling for a modified stance and different kind of intervention by the interviewer. I discuss details

of my personal experiences of these interviews both in an earlier part of this chapter and in the section "Reactions to the Interview" in the chapter, "Analysis of the Reunion Interviews."

Analysis of the interviews was a protracted process that involved some trial and error. After having one of the taped interviews transcribed, I discovered that listening to the tapes and taking notes was more productive. After some immersion in the tapes and my notes, I recognized the emergence of certain patterns and themes. The first theme that came to my attention was totally unexpected. It developed into what I designated the "personal life theme," whereby each woman established in the early moments of the interview a motif which wove in and out of the entire conversation.

My work with the data yielded both findings that were unique to the individuals and findings that were shared, characterizing a part or the whole of the group. An important task in the analysis was to establish issues which could be examined in the light of various theories and theoretical frameworks. Issues of attachment, noted first in the questionnaire, were of enormous importance for all the women. The concept of maturity, as initiated by the women, and elaborated and abstracted by me, also centers in many ways on the meaning of attachment and separation for women.

Analysis of the interviews was a twofold endeavor. First, it was essential to delineate and establish descriptive categories from the responses given by the women in their own words. Next, it was necessary to understand, analyze, and synthesize the categories, and to explore relevant theoretical issues and considerations. The idea of

using maturity as the umbrella concept or matrix for the findings

arose from this final process.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

OF SUBJECTS AND SETTING

The subjects of this study are seventy women, alumnae of a small
southern college which they attended for one or more years between
1948 and 1952. At this private, liberal arts institution for women,
pristine Georgian buildings still sit in manicured elegance in the
shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Listed in the historical registry
of the state, the old buildings of the Quadrangle remain the center
of the school, reflecting the tradition and spirit of the college
amidst the radical changes in the student body, the faculty, the curri-
culum, and even the architecture. In May of 1982, while young women
of all races and nations cavorted about in running shorts and shoes
and the latest cacophonous music poured out of the dormitories, alumnae
were greeted in the elegant Green Drawing Room, with its somber por-
traits of the early college presidents, ancient silver tea sets, and
lovely spring flowers.

Founded in 1842, the school in 1948 was still under the influence
of its beginnings as a southern female seminary. It was religious,
provincial, upper-middle-class, racially segregated, and devoted to
the education of women.

In a 1982-83 publication of the college the original goal of
the institution is reasserted:

> For 140 years [the college] has encouraged young women to excel
> in many fields. The college was founded in 1842 to give young
> women 'the same thorough and rigid mental training as that
> afforded to young men.' More than a century later we reaffirmed
> our determination to remain a college for women and strengthened
> our commitment to providing excellent education for women in
> today's world.

At the time of this publication, the student body and faculty

of this college in the heart of the South had, without ado, become

racially integrated. This smooth transition speaks to the stability

and consequent adaptive ability of the institution.

In 1948, the college, like most others for women, stood firm in

its position of serving "in loco parentis." There were strict and

conservative dress and behavior codes. Students were expected to

conduct themselves like ladies, wear gloves to town and stockings

and a dress to dinner, and attend chapel three times a week. It was

clear that one was to date approved young men from surrounding colleges

or "back home" on the weekends, to study hard during the week, and,

most importantly, to be honorable. A self-reporting honor code per-

tained to social and academic activities. While a fair number of

students disregarded some social rules either out of simple adolescent

rebellion or rebellion coupled with the belief that the rules were

foolish and anachronistic, academic cheating was a far more serious

matter. Infractions were intolerable to students and faculty and

were met with severe disciplinary action including expulsion. The

Student Government Honor Court played an important role in decisions

about social and academic infringements.

In 1982, the freshmen of 1948 are women of fifty to fifty-two

who can be described generally as educated, long-married, and mothers

of several children, most of whom are young adults. They are predom-
inantly upper-middle-class and Protestant, the great majority were
born and raised and continue to live in the eastern United States.
Some work, mostly as teachers, but few value their work nearly as
much as their families or even their church or volunteer activities.
All are Caucasian.

Before presenting the data I collected on these women through
the questionnaire and the interviews, I think a look at the times
in which these women were born, raised, and have lived as adults will
be helpful.

This cohort of women has lived through a period of remarkable
change. Born in the Great Depression, their childhood and early adoles-
cence took place during World War II and they became college women
in the suddenly prosperous early postwar years. They were young adults,
for the most part wives and mothers, in the quiescent, conservative
1950s and adult women during the 1960s and 1970s, years of ferment
and enormous social, political, and cultural change.

Though they were children of the Depression, and many came from
the impoverished South, the families of these women were financially
secure enough by 1948 to afford a private college. Of the years between
1930 and 1948, we know that the women were ten or eleven years old
on Pearl Harbor Day and fifteen or sixteen on V-J Day. Likely, many
had fathers, uncles, and brothers who were away in the armed services
during those years. Some must have had mothers, aunts and sisters
who went to work in the war effort. Everyone knew someone who had
been wounded or killed, and children realized, however dimly, that

there was a horror going on in the world, that there were starving
and homeless children, firebombs in England, and prisoners being tor-
tured. Americans too were frightened and darkened their windows at
night. Not even upper-middle-class, Protestant children in small
towns could have been completely protected from the terror of those
years. While it is not possible to measure or fully understand the
impact of the war and the accompanying social and economic changes,
we do know they were part of the sociohistorical context in which
the women lived their early and mid-adolescence.

The standing joke of the late 1940s was that "girls" went to
college to get an Mrs. degree. The implication, of course, was that
young women went to college to find husbands and to become suitable
wives and mothers, not to prepare for careers or independent lives.
And, indeed, the members of the class of '52 married early and quickly
produced children. They probably took direct physical care of their
children more than their mothers had, for household servants had
responded to employment opportunities brought about by World War II.

And for different reasons, these women gave more direct care
than their daughters do now in the 1980s. The women were part of
the Spock generation of mothers, suburban housewives whose husbands
were gone for long days, leaving them to children and volunteer work.
The social-political-cultural upheaval of the 1960s had its beginning
in the civil rights movement, with much of its drama in the southern
states. It was followed by the student movement, hippies, drugs,
and assassinations of national leaders, cresting finally in the dissat-
isfaction and disillusionment caused by the Vietnam War. After that

came the women's movement of the 1970s. One cannot fail to wonder about
the meaning and influence of these years of vast change. How did these
mothers of the precious, protected, Spock-raised, suburban children feel
about their young teenagers during the time of the flower children?
What did they think about the possibility of their sons going to war in
Southeast Asia and the rise of a powerful antiwar movement? What did
the women's movement mean for them?

It is interesting to note here a major finding: the women feel
remarkably satisfied with their lives despite having faced historical
changes described, as well as the personal times of desperation and joy
inevitable in fifty years of living. With this finding in mind, we turn
first to the analysis of the pre-reunion questionnaire and then to the
analysis of the reunion interviews.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

In March of 1982, two months before the thirtieth reunion of
the class of 1952, I sent questionnaires to the 101 alumnae whose
names and addresses I received from the Alumnae Office of the college.
Sixty-nine questionnaires were completed and returned. From the resul-
tant large data pool, I selected for presentation information pertinent
to the focus of this study. I excluded less relevant material such
as questions about college experiences.

The questionnaire schedule is composed of both multiple-choice,
and open-ended questions. First I will discuss the multiple choice
questions, which are categorized as follows: (1) demographic informa-
tion, including age, education, residence, marital status, and children;
(2) work; (3) life satisfactions; (4) political and religious affilia-
tions; and (5) health and physical activities.

A. Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Demographic Information

a. Age and Education

The age range of the women at the time of the questionnaire comple-
tion was fifty to fifty-two years. The average age was fifty-one years.

The table below reveals that most of the women have a bachelor's degree (86 percent) and one-third have a master's degree or a professional credential. One woman has a Ph.D.

TABLE 1

Education

| Bachelor's Degree | | Professional Credential | Graduate Degree | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | No | | Master's | Ph.D. |
| 59 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 1 |

It is interesting to compare the women's educational level both with national statistics for women of the same age group and with the educational accomplishments of their husbands.

When comparing the above table with Table 2, Social Characteristics of American Women, it is clear that the women in this study are among the 23 percent of American women born between 1930 and 1935 who attended college for one or more years and among the 11 percent who graduated from college. This high college attendance likely reflects their middle and upper-middle class backgrounds.

Since the women married within class, gender rather than socioeconomic difference accounts for the discrepancy between the educational level of the women and that of their spouses. Only four of the spouses are not college graduates, as compared to 9 of the married women. Furthur, 7 of the husbands have law degrees, 7 have medical degrees, 6 have Ph.D.'s and one has a dental degree. Hence, as might be expected of this age and class cohort, the men tend to have more schooling, much

TABLE 2

Social Characteristics of American Women Born 1930-1935

Compared with College Group[a]

|  | American Women | College Group |
|---|---|---|
| Education |  |  |
| % 1 or more years of college | 23 |  |
| % graduated from college | 11 |  |
| Labor force participation |  |  |
| % in labor force at present | 57 | 57 |
| Marriage and family |  |  |
| % first married by age 20 | 50 | 12 |
| % first marriage ended in divorce | 26 | 21 |
| For married women |  |  |
| total number of births per woman | 3.2 | 2.9 |

[a]Table taken in part from Women in Midlife--Security and Fulfillment (Part I), p. 35.

of it oriented to economic and social success, as well as personal
satisfaction.

b.  Residence

Examination of past and current residence of the group reveals a
stable pattern.  Fifty-five percent of the women were born in the
southeastern United States, 26 percent in the Northeast with a sprink-
ling in the Southwest, Midwest and overseas.  Currently almost identi-
cal figures exist, with only a slight shift from the East to other
sections of the country.

The women have made relatively few major moves.  Only 15 percent
have moved more than three times.  Presently 20 of the 69 live in
the town where they were born, 30 live in the same state, and 40 live
in the same section.  Most of the major moves were made at an earlier
period of life and were most often related to the husband's education
or work.  A number of women commented that they and their families
have relocated, or plan in the near future to relocate, to their orig-
inal home towns or home states.

c.  Marital Status

Fifty-two of the women have been married only once and are still
married.  The great majority of these marriages are long term, as
47 of the women were married by the time they were 23 and 61 by the
age of 26.  One can see by looking at Table 2 that the women in this
study married later than their age cohort.  One assumes that the differ-
ence had to do with the larger percentage who attended college, which
in turn relates to socioeconomic status.

Current marital status is as follows:

TABLE 3

Current Marital Status

| | |
|---|---|
| Still in first marriage | 52 |
| Remarried | 4 |
| Remarried more than once | 1 |
| Separated | 2 |
| Single, divorced | 8 |
| Widowed | 1 |
| Single, never married | 1 |
| Total number of women | 69 |

It is difficult to compare divorce rates because the comparative statistics cited in Table 2 end in 1975, while the national divorce rate has risen noticeably since then. For the period until 1975, however, the national divorce average for women of this age was 26 percent, as compared to 21 percent for this group. Although not a great difference, the direction substantiates certain of my impressions and speculations raised at the end of this section.

d. Children

Of the 69 women, 65 had children. The average number of children, 2.9 for the biological mothers in this sample, is noticeably lower than the national average of 3.2 for all married women (Table 2). An interesting finding, but one for which I have no comparative figures, is the

number of relatively late-life children born to the women studied. One-fourth still have a child sixteen or under. Approximately the same percentage (20 percent) has grandchildren as has a young teenage child.

## 2. Work

Work history for these women, as for most, is variable and complicated, a "braiding," as McGuigan has described it. Because of the in-and-out, off-and-on, part-time and full-time, paid and volunteer aspects of women's occupational history, it is impossible to form an accurate picture from a check-off question such as I used. It would be better, I believe, to ask women to describe their own work history in written detail.

Reported information indicates that before marriage 36 of the 69 worked full-time, 9 part-time, 18 did not work, and 10 said they did volunteer work. There was little change in the number who worked after marriage, before children were born. After children were born there was a decided drop in paid work and increase in volunteer work. It was not possible to determine from the answers when women worked in relation to age of children and when the occupation was paid and when volunter. Work life is easier to assess accurately at present. Thirty-nine out of the 69 are working in defined paid jobs and 28 report working as volunteers. The variety of current jobs is interesting. Twelve of the women are teachers, 7 are in business and real estate, 4 are administrative assistants and secretaries, 3 are librarians, 2 are crafts people, 2 are social workers, and the other 9 are working variously as a psychologist, a medican technician, convention hostess, and blood donor recruiter. While several people mentioned art work and

exhibits and music and performances, these were not usually listed as occupations. As might be anticipated, the spouses hold many more and varied positions, ordinarily of far greater status and earning ability. For example, only one woman of the teachers is a college professor, while almost all of the men teach at the college and university level.

Asked about future occupational plans, only 4 women are considering a change. Thirty-five intend to continue working for the next five to 10 years. In all, there were few women who seemed deeply invested in or enthusiastic about their work.

## 3. Life Satisfactions

Life satisfaction questions were asked in relation to satisfaction derived from specific social roles and that attributed to designated people and activities.

The women were asked to rate their satisfactions with the specific roles of wife and mother. Each role was rated separately.

TABLE 4

Role Satisfaction

| Specific Role | Ratings | | | | |
| | High | Moderate | Low | Not applicable or not answered | Total no. of women |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wife | 41 | 19 | 2 | 8 | 69 |
| Mother | 52 | 12 | 0 | 5 | 69 |

The women were asked to rate the extent to which specific people and activities contribute to their sense of life satisfaction. Each was rated separately.

TABLE 5

Contribution to Life Satisfactions

| Activity or Person | High | Moderate | Low | Total responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Children | 52 | 12 | 0 | 64[a] |
| Husband | 47 | 10 | 2[b] | 59[c] |
| Work outside the home | 33 | 26 | 3 | 62 |
| Hobbies, personal interests | 44 | 23 | 2 | 69 |
| Friends and social activities | 37 | 27 | 2 | 66 |
| Other | 13 | 2 | 0 | 15 |

[a] Four women have no children and one no-response.

[b] The 2 women who rated this item low are both currently separated.

[c] The 10 women who did not answer or wrote "not applicable" are all currently single.

The ratings in Tables 4 and 5 cannot be easily summarized, but some inferences can be made. Most notable is the degree or generality of satisfaction with children. In fact, the significance of, and the pride and pleasure in, children permeates the questionnaire responses. Life satisfaction next seems most connected with the marital relationship, then hobbies, then friends, and lastly work. Hence, the degree of satisfaction or lack of it in work is notable and deserves more consideration than was given in the questionnaire or follow-up interviews. Another area of interest is friends, for while 37 women deemed that friends contribute highly to their life satisfaction,

27 saw them as only a moderate contribution.  Overall the women find closeness with others, rather than activities, more gratifying.

## 4.  Political and Religious Affiliations

Responses to political questions mark the group of women as conservative and mildly active.  Thirty-one of the women report that they are Republicans, 21 Democrats, 15 Independent, and two have no affiliations.  Thirty-one approve of the current political climate (conservative Republican administration), 23 disapprove, and 13 are neutral or mixed.  The approval/disapproval proportion reflects party membership.  Thirty-five of the women assess their political participation as occasionally active, 18 seldom, 10 never, and 5 very active.  Husbands' political beliefs are usually, though not always, the same.

In response to the question about the women's movement, 36 of the women said it had affected them hardly at all, 21 said a little, and only 10 said they had been affected a great deal.  In retrospect, I wonder if the question was framed badly.  It might have been preferable, since the women's movement has been such a pervasive influence, to ask in what ways or how it had been felt.  However, I believe that the responses given reflect the political and social conservatism of the majority of the women.

In religion, the group is strikingly homogeneous.  Sixty-two are Protestants, 2 Unitarians, 1 Catholic, 1 Jewish, and 2 profess no religious beliefs or affiliation.  Thirty-five of the women attend religious services regularly, 20 occasionally, 9 seldom and 5 never.  This unusual involvement in religious activity and faith is demonstrated further by the spontaneous mention by 30 women of church, church activities, God,

and religious beliefs in the open-ended questions unrelated to the subject of religion.

## 5. Health and Physical Activity

Two-thirds reported being in excellent health, while one-third responded that they had suffered a serious illness or surgery in the last ten years.

I did not ask them to specify the problem. Five of the respondents indicated that they currently have a serious illness, but all of them were remarkably accepting and hopeful about their health and their futures.

In response to questions about physical activity the majority of the women indicated that they are quite active now, that they had not lessened their activities in the last ten years, and do not anticipate much change in the next ten years.

In response to the question asking about counselling or therapy, one-third of the women said "yes." A number of women stipulated that the treatment was for the family or related to children.

All in all the women in this study sound healthy and physically active. Athletics, especially tennis, play an important part in the lives of many. Several commented that for the first time in years they have the time to concentrate on their tennis or golf games.

## 6. Summary

The demographic information presented here portrays a group of women who, relative to the general population, are highly educated, married slightly later, had fewer children and have had fewer divorces.

Though unsupported by statistical measurements, it is my impression
that a far larger than generally expected percentage of these women
live in the towns and areas of their childhoods.  All of these factors,
combined with the class and status assumed from their and their hus-
bands' educational levels, leads me to see the women as a stable,
sturdy, conservative cohort--middle-class, middle-aged southern and
northeastern women who know and abide by the rules and forms of their
society.  This perspective is substantiated by the data that describe
briefly their work lives, their life satisfactions, their political and
religious affiliations, and their health.  The resultant view of the
women and their lives is enriched and informed by the women's own words
used in the more subjective, reflective open-ended questions which
follow in the next section.

## B.  Open-Ended Questions

Eleven open-ended questions covered the following areas:  (1) intel-
lectual interests and activities, old and new; (2) prominent events and
people since college; (3) relationships with parents; (4) changes and
desired changes; (5) positive qualities of self; (6) concerns for future
generations and wishes for daughters; (7) future accomplishments; and
(8) comments.

The questions, asked separately in the questionnaire, will be
grouped appropriately and presented verbatim in the following subsec-
tion.

## 1. Intellectual Interests and Activities, Old and New

What activities do you rely on for intellectual or creative stimulation? What new or old activities or interests would you want to cultivate further in the next ten years?

While the responses to the first question above varied, there were clusters of activities. Twenty-three of the women noted reading as their first choice for intellectual stimulation. Seven chose musical activities, while other first choices ran the gamut from travel, discussion, work, needlework, bridge, television, to art, gardening, sports, volunteer work, and museums. Second choices clustered around music, travel, lectures, theater, discussions with others, and volunteer, civic, and church work. Only 7 women mentioned their work, 2 as first choices and 5 as second choices.

As to the second issue of future activities and interests, the women's selections centered first on arts, crafts, music, theater, antiques, and writing, together representing 28 of the group. The next largest choice was study, formal and informal, chosen by 20 of the women. Sixteen women elected travel. Eight mentioned activities involved in helping others, 6 more specified religious activities, and 7 community endeavors, with 3 more referring to aging and retirement. Ten women said they wanted to work on their tennis games, while 4 mentioned hobbies, and 3 selected bridge and gardening. Two wanted to keep the same, 6 wanted to upgrade their current interests, and 3 hedged about planning or the future.

These results are not surprising given the class, age, and geographical location of the respondents. The choices reveal intellectual

and artistic interests and feelings of responsibility towards others.
Possibly, they also suggest a relatively narrow view of the world.
There are few issues or interests of national or international concern
expressed in these questions, but some of the others acknowledge world
dilemmas.

## 2. Prominent Events and People Since College

What event(s) have been most prominent in your life since
college? What and who have been the most significant influences
on your life since college?

Forty-two of the women stated that marriage was the most signifi-
cant event since college. Nine more selected marriage as the second
most important event. Ten women chose children as first and 39 selected
children as the second most important event, while 2 selected family as
first. The next largest group of significant events centered around
losses; deaths of children, parents and others; divorces; illnesses;
personal tragedies such as fires; severe depression, and disappointment
in children. The other set of events mentioned included work and educa-
tion.

When answering the next question regarding significant influences
since college, the women responded initially and most often to the "who"
aspect of the question even though "what" was asked first. The people
judged most influential by far were husbands, with children, family,
parents, friends, colleagues, teachers, and ministers running far
behind. While most of the women stated the person who was most influ-
ential, far fewer included specific events. Marriage, work, church and
faith, deaths, therapy, and illness were listed several times by those

who did mention events. Raising children, divorce, moving often, and
place of residence were cited by others.

Clearly, the women are more oriented to people than to events or
activities. Further, significant people are close family members, hus-
band and children, and major events are linked to these significant
relationships.

## 3. Relationship with Parents

Has your relationship with your mother/father changed since
leaving college? How would you describe your relationship with
your parents now?

Forty-one of the women's mothers are living and twelve fathers.
Responses to the question of whether the relationship to the mother had
changed were equally divided between "a great deal," "a little," and
"hardly at all." Regarding the fathers, a few said "a great deal,"
but the great majority said "hardly at all." From this, I infer that
a daughter's relationship (or awareness of her relationship) with her
mother is more likely to change during adulthood than her relationship
with her father.

The women's descriptions of their current relationships with their
parents are categorized in Table 6 on the following page.

In sum, 30 of the 55 women described positive relationships to
their parents, 15 expressed "O.K.," while only 10 spoke of predominantly
negative feelings. Assuming that these findings pertain primarily to
the mother-daughter relationship (the proportion of mothers living is
far greater than that of fathers), it appears that most of the women

TABLE 6

Current Relationship with Parents

| Current Relationship | Number of Women |
| --- | --- |
| 1. "Good, close, secure" | 26 |
| 2. "Distant," or disapproval from parents | 7 |
| 3. Role reversal with | |
| "Good feelings" | 4 |
| "Bad feelings" | 3 |
| "O.K., but mixed feelings" | 6 |
| 4. "Pleasant," but strain exhibited through apparent lack of affect or unacknowledged ambivalence | 9 |

have satisfactory or good relationships with their mothers at the present time. Coupling this finding with the "great deal" of change in the mother-daughter relationship noted earlier, one can speculate that conflictual issues of adolescence and young adulthood have been satisfactorily resolved for these daughters.

There is no way to ascertain whether these women have an awareness of a moment or time of "reckoning" with their mothers, or connect their becoming adult with such an event, as Hancock suggests (1982). Nevertheless, there is the interesting evidence of positive change since young adulthood in this group of women who on the whole consider themselves "grown-up" or adult.

4. Changes and Desired Changes

In what ways do you think you have changed since college?
What characteristics and circumstances of your life situation
would you most like to change?

In response to the query about change since college, the single
most repeated reply was "matured." The frequency of this response
(20) prompted me to ask the meaning of the word in the later face-to-
face interviews. Discussion of the concept of maturity as it grew out
of this study is an important part of the following chapter on the
analysis of the interviews.

Another 22 replies can be grouped under the category I call
"specific self changes," which includes answers of "more independent,"
"assertive," "honest," "practical," "tolerant," "patient," "wiser,"
"less idealistic" and "less self-centered." The next category, "more
understanding of self," incorporates responses of 7 women.

The next largest group, categorized as "learning about externals,"
includes the five women who mentioned such things as learning about the
world, about money, others, etc. Other changes mentioned were dif-
ferent sense of direction, priorities, and values. Several people said
they had changed in every way, while 2 said they had changed little and
4 claimed it was too difficult a question.

Grouping the three largest categories, maturity, changes in
self, and self-awareness, provides a picture of women who are capable of
self-reflection and who, in the process of reflection and retrospec-
tion, can delineate changes both within themselves and in relation to
others.

The question regarding characteristics or circumstances one would like to change elicited responses classified into six categories:

TABLE 7

Change Desired

| Change desired | Number of women |
|---|---|
| 1. "Time, money, travel, geographical move" | 15 |
| 2. "Personal changes" | 14 |
| 3. "Relationship changes" | 13 |
| 4. "No change desired" | 13 |
| 5. Question left blank | 11 |
| 6. Health and career | 3 |
| Total | 69 |

The first category includes 15 women, 7 of whom wrote of their financial concerns. Four said they would like to have more time to do what they wished rather than being limited by work or family obligations. Another 4 stated that they wanted to travel or move from their current residence.

The second category, "personal changes," includes 14 women who mentioned a variety of individual characteristics they would want to change. Examples are "improve self image," "temper," "lose weight," "I'd like to be more aggressive, more outgoing, accomplish something myself rather than arranging for my children to do things!"

The third category, "relationship changes," includes 13 women who stipulated that they desired improved relationships with husbands, parents, children (3 specified daughters), and friends.

The fourth category "no change desired," includes 13 women who reported that their lives were much as they would want them to be and they expressed no particular wish for change. The fifth category includes 11 women who simply left the question blank, making it the one most unanswered in the questionnaire. The sixth category encompasses the two women who wished to change their health and the one who wanted to change her career.

In brief, 40 percent of the responders would most like to change personal characteristics or something about their relationship(s) with others, in contrast to the 20 percent who would like to change certain external circumstances. This finding substantiates the notion reported in the previous question that the women tend to focus on internal and relationship aspects of their lives rather than on external circumstances or events. Further, the wish to change gives evidence that, although the women are generally satisfied with their lives, they are not complacent or unaware of themselves and their relationships. The wish to change, I believe, implies continuing interest in and ability for personal and interpersonal growth and development.

Conversely, it must be noted that 16 percent of the women left this question blank. Explanation might lie in its position at the end of a very long questionnaire schedule and/or in the content. Contemplation of possible alteration of one's life could be disturbing and might be avoided if one is settled in life and if that has involved "settling" or compromising in too conflictual ways or areas. These comments, derived by implication, are speculative and would have to be followed up by further study.

## 5. Positive Qualities of Self

What qualities do you like most about yourself?

The responses to this question fall into two major categories: qualities to do with one's self and qualities to do with one's self in relation to others. Only three responses were too vague or defensive to be classified in this manner.

Slightly more than half of the responses pertain to qualities in relation to others. Twelve women mentioned enjoying life and others; 11 spoke of being easygoing, patient, and accepting with others; while 8 liked their ability to listen and to be concerned with others. Six listed qualities of honesty, faithfulness, and fairness, and 6 cited their dependability.

In the self category, 12 women mentioned their intelligence, including such attributes as curiosity and creativity. Eleven selected humor as a favorite characteristic, while others selected perseverance, independence, calmness, discipline, etc.

My impression is that the qualities most valued by the women are those deemed appropriately feminine by the standards of the times of their upbringing. There is the emphasis on qualities involving others. While the self qualities are not necessarily passive--for instance, humor and perseverance--they are certainly not aggressive. Not one woman suggested that she liked her drive to excel, her competitiveness, her self-assertiveness, but many commented on prizing their acceptance, patience and calmness. It would be interesting to see if the daughters of these women would choose similar attributes.

6.  Concerns for Future Generations
and Wishes for Daughters

When you contemplate the future of your children (or other

people's children), what are your main concerns?  If you had

(or have) a daughter how would you want her life to be like

yours, and how would you want it to be different?

These questions were directed at eliciting the women's general con-

erns for the future and their thoughts and hopes for women in the future,

in juxtaposition to their own life experiences.

Concerns for the future fall into four discrete categories:

concerns of a personal nature, societal values, jobs and economy, and

world situation.

Personal concerns having to do with children's character, personal-

ity, or attributes were listed by 24 women.  One wrote, "All my children

are girls.  I want them all to be their own woman, strong and cour-

ageous, so they can handle the rough spots that are bound to come."

Another wrote, "That they be able to love and be loved in return; that

they find some direction in their lives which is satisfying to them;

that they be the kinds of human beings who can hold their own in a

given situation and not be undone by it.  (I think that you possibly

meant for us to name outside things such as no job, no food, etc., but

what I have named are the real concerns for me)."

Societal values, suggested by sixteen women, include concerns

about the "me generation," "parochialism, materialism, and moral gray-

ness," "weakening of the importance of the family," "climate of crime,"

"lack of cultural (societal) support for living in a pluralistic

society," "changing mores," and education.

Jobs and economic problems were major concerns for 14 of the women. They wrote of their worries about their children's future employment and economic status. Some focused on hopes that their children would find appropriate and satisfying careers, some concentrated on the plight of our economy, the inflation and unemployment, and some remarked on the effects of the economy on their children's ability to support themselves and enjoy a comfortable standard of living.

The world situation was of primary concern to 12 women. Peace, war, survival, and the environment were major issues. One woman wrote, "Right at this point, March 1982, I pray that there will be a world for them to live in and pass along. I fear nuclear war and continued pollution of our environment."

In response to the second question of wishes for a daughter's life to be like/different than one's own, responses can be classified into three almost equal categories: composite of small groupings, "good life, want the same for daughter"; and "good life, but want some things to be different."

The composite category includes 21 women in four subcategories. Two women said their daughters already surpassed them. Four stated flatly that they did not want their daughters to have lives like theirs. Six emphasized the importance of career and work skills for their daughters. Nine women deflected the question, responding impersonally. This diversion was particularly noticeable since in general responses to this question were quite personal.

Twenty of the women feel they have had a good life and would want the same or similar for their daughters. "I hope their lives will be

as rewarding as mine has been. As far as being different--I don't

know." "We've had a marvelous life in academia. Financial rewards are

not great--that's not everything!" "I am satisfied with my life; how-

ever, I think both my daughters will pursue a career, which is fine."

"To have a wide variety of experiences as I have had. Perhaps to be

more goal oriented." "They could do worse!"

Twenty-three of the women had more mixed responses; that is, they

hoped their daughters would have the same positive life experiences,

but knew of certain ways they wanted their daughters' lives to be dif-

ferent from theirs. "I would want her to have a husband and children,

but also a career, be more independent." "I would like her to live and

study abroad for more than I have. I would like her to believe that any

career was open to her. I did not understand that at twenty or twenty-

one. I would hope she had good friends as I have had and as happy a

marriage as I." "I do not have a daughter. However, I have a grand-

daughter and I hope she will always be surrounded by a loving supportive

family--as I have been. Different--more of a motivating force in her

life, i.e., a life plan."

While these women have enjoyed and appreciated their life exper-

iences, especially in relation to family, they wish for their daughters

greater investment in career and the independence they assume will

accrue from that investment. And, in fact, many of their daughters are

embarked on this different life path.

7. Future Accomplishments

What would you most like to accomplish in the coming year?

in five years? in twenty years?

In the coming year, 14 of the women spoke of a variety of personal accomplishments ranging from the specifics of completing a divorce to general goals of "finishing what I've started," "Come to grips with myself and set goals" and "Enjoy life more."

Nine of the women focused on community interests--civic, church, and political--and 8 hoped to improve their relationships with family members, students, and friends. Eight stipulated completing projects spanning a daughter's wedding, tennis, arts, crafts, and jobs. Six hoped for job changes, and 3 were concerned with their health and survival.

Accomplishments in the next five years were essentially similar to those named above for the coming year. For twenty years, one-third of the women combined the answer with those for the coming year and five years. Twelve left the twenty-year question blank and 5 wrote "Who knows?!," "Can't project," etc., suggesting perhaps that it is harder to think of oneself so far in the future, or at such an advanced age.

An equal number, 18 of the women, referred to maintaining health; continuing to be active, contributing members of society; and enjoying retirement, travel, and life.

Another 8 women itemized hoped-for accomplishments that cover a spectrum of interests and viewpoints: "write a book with my husband," "develop a new career," "have a retrospective of my paintings," "work with geriatrics," "work with the handicapped," "study," "take courses in religion," "come to terms with the end of my life," and "continue loving, and do some writing."

quality of the messages was predicated in part on my being "one of

them." (The impact of this issue of being "one of them," of the

researcher who is part of the group studied, is discussed more fully

in Section G of Chapter V.) I believe, however, that the extent of

the comments was dictated also by the essence of the women's characters

and by the circumstances of their lives. This idea is developed more

fully in the following section, which addresses the questionnaires

as a whole.

### C. Impressions of the Questionnaire as a Whole

The unusually good return of 69 out of 101 lengthy questionnaires

can be attributed in part to the combined effects of the women's con-

tinuing interest in their college, the timing immediately before the

thirtieth reunion, and the researcher's status as part of the group.

Participation was also encouraged by the content of the cover letter,

set in an historical context, and designed to pique interest and curi-

osity about the class and the generation of women of which it is a

part.

The degree of completion of the questionnaire is even more notable

than the number returned. Forty-seven came back with all questions

answered, including 15 which could be described as fulsome. Another

11 are almost finished, leaving out a few of the open-ended questions.

The remaining 11 are incomplete or sketchy with approximately half

of the open-ended questions blank. (The 3 unsigned responses are

in this final group.)

While the high return of questionnaires possibly is explained

by interests, timing, and school ties, understanding the superior

quality of the replies seems more complicated and speculative. One speculation is that the questionnaire appealed to the women in a very personal way, perhaps allowing them an unusual opportunity and providing them with a framework for thinking and writing about themselves and issues in their lives that may often be left unarticulated. Further, the flow from past to present may have "hooked" the participants at this particular time in their lives. Clearly capable of retrospection and self-reflection, as indicated by their responses, the women may have been approached at a good point in the life cycle for this process. As noted elsewhere, most of the women seem at a stable period which could mean they would feel more comfortable about self-revelation.

In reading the questionnaires as they came in, I was especially impressed with the sense that each woman, through her responses, revealed herself as a unique individual. This impression was validated later at the reunion through the face-to-face interviews and in general conversations. I wonder if this disclosure results from the women's seeming acceptance of who they are and their place in the world. I suspect that it is true that some certainty about one's self allows for openness.

Another general impression gleaned from the questionnaires was the vitality and interest in others displayed by most of the women. This characteristic would seem to have played a part in participation also. Certainly the lively interest and curiosity was demonstrated by the unusually large number of alumnae who attended the reunion, eager to hear the results of the survey.

Practically, one of the significant outcomes of the questionnaire was that I was able to build the interview guide from the completed ones. Of equal, or perhaps greater importance, was my realization that this group of women could and would speak of matters of increasing interest to social scientists and clinicians who endeavor to understand further the course of the lives of ordinary women.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS:   DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES

A.   Description of the Women Interviewed

1. Actuarial Data Compared to
the Whole Sample

The six women who participated in this part of the study attended

their thirtieth college reunion in May 1982.   Each was a well-function-

ing middle-aged woman, ranging in age from fifty to fifty-two years.

Demographically, the six resemble the sample of sixty-nine respondents

to the questionnaire.   Following is a brief summary of the actuarial

data describing these women, with relevant reference to the overall

sample.

Five of the women graduated from the college, the sixth trans-

ferred her junior year and graduated from her homestate university.

All have had some further education.   Two have master's degrees and

teacher's certificates, one has a medical technician's certificate,

and one has a real estate license.   Of the total sample of sixty-nine

only ten did not complete a BA degree and only fifteen mentioned no

further education.

Like 75 percent of the larger sample, five have been married only

once and are still married.   One of the six is divorced and single,

as are a total of only eight women in the larger sample.   Like 88 percent

of the class, five were married by age twenty-six. Only one of the six married late, at forty-four, and has had no children. Sixty-four out of sixty-nine women had (biologically or by adoption) an average of 2.9 children. Similar to the larger sample, the six had 2.7 children. Also like the bigger sample, but even more striking, is the number of relatively late-life children. Three of the six women have one early teenaged child still in the home.

Work history reveals that only one of the six women has worked continuously, since college. The only "career woman," she married late and had no children. The others all worked full-time before marriage, part-time until the birth of the first child, one to three years after marriage. During their late twenties and thirties all the women participated in volunteer work, including civic endeavors and art, music, and church activities. During their forties three of the women undertook some further education and currently two are working at part-time, paid employment.

Stability in place of residence in recent years is evident in the six. While one lives in her hometown and has made no major moves, the other five have made between one and four in the Northeast and Southeast of the United States. The moves, however, were during an earlier period in their lives, and four have lived more than twenty years in their current area. The fifth, the only divorced woman, has lived in her small town for twelve years. Two of the women live in a southeastern metropolitan area, two live in the deep South, and one in the mid-South. From the standpoint of geography the small group is not as representative of the larger sample as in other aspects, since 40

percent of the sixty-nine were not from the Southeast and presently close to 40 percent live outside of the southeastern region.

Religious affiliation of all six of the women is Protestant. Two attend religious services regularly, and one who attends occasionally considers herself very religious, but not a church goer. Two others who attend services seldom were raised in the church and express thoughts of returning. The sixth is an explorer of various beliefs and houses of worship. All acknowledge continuing concern with their spiritual life and religious faith.

Politically, three women admit to being "conservative," disillusioned with liberalism. One woman, very active in local (city) politics, refused to comment on national affiliation. Another, historically an Independent who voted as a Democrat, finds herself a dissident from both parties. The other woman defined herself as a Roosevelt Democrat, adding that she was out of "sync" with her old college friends. Her observation is accurate according to the larger sample where the great majority stated that they were Republicans and support the current (1982) administration.

Of the six women, only the divorced one thought the women's movement had had a great impact on her life. She saw it as smoothing the way for her to buy a house on her own and live an unconventional life. The career woman felt her professional choice would have been different if the women's movement had existed thirty years ago. The others tended to focus on the sexual and social aspects, saying they thought women should have equal jobs and pay, "especially if they were raising

children alone," but they thought "things have gone too far" in terms
of sexual freedom, lesbian activities, etc.

These women, like most of the larger sample, indicated when asked
that they were in quite good health. Four had finished menopause or
were menopausal, while two were still having regular menses. Not one
had had a hysterectomy. All made light of any midlife symptoms, though
several acknowledged less energy. On the other hand two women said
they were more active and stronger physically than ever in their lives.
Two were not very active, one because of a hip replacement, and the
other said singing was her only exercise.

Three women do not have a living parent. None has a father liv-
ing. Two whose fathers died many years ago lost their mothers in recent
years. Three women have mothers whom they described as still quite
active and independent. Three of the women also mentioned mothers-in-
law who either need caretaking now or likely will in the future. Only
twelve of the sample of sixty-nine have a father living, while forty-
five have a mother living. On the whole, both in the questionnaire and
in the interviews, less mention was made of the quandary of the middle-
aged child and ill or needy elderly parents than might have been antici-
pated. Perhaps this can be explained in part by the financial security
of the women, and presumably of their parents. Nothing was asked about
finances in the questionnaire, but all those interviewed revealed they
were very comfortably off, except for one who said that was her choice.
Even she had a small trust fund she could count on "to pay the rent."
Conceivably in families where there are few financial worries older
people are more apt to remain in their own living quarters and in gen-
eral maintain more independence.

TABLE 8

Identifying Data for Women Interviewed

| Name | Age | Marital status | Children | Residence | Work | Distinguishing interest, activity or characteristic |
|------|-----|----------------|----------|-----------|------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Alice | 50 | Married once; 29 years | 3; one teen still in home | Small town of childhood | No paid work | Church, art; outgoing, vital |
| Barbara | 51 | Married once; 27 years | 4; one teen still in home | Medium SE seaboard city | 1 year before marriage & 1 year before children | Husband, children, home; laconic |
| Cynthia | 51 | Married once; 28 years | 3; none in home | Suburban SE metropolis | Works part-time | Varied interests; introspective, vivacious |
| Diane | 50 | Single; divorced 12 years ago | 3; one teen still in home | NE village | Teaches part-time | Artist, self-searching |
| Ellen | 51 | Married once; 8 years | None | SE metropolis | Full-time career | Intellectual, social; pleasant but distant |
| Fay | 52 | Married once; 27 years | 2; young adult child at home | Medium So. city | Worked before marriage only | Public service volunteer; history of real & psychological losses |

## 2. The Six Women

By and large, the person who emerged from the questionnaire was validated by the interview. People usually said much the same things they had said in the questionnaires or that one might have inferred from them. More importantly, the "gestalt" of the particular individual gleaned from the questionnaire was brought to life in the interview process. This observation seemed to hold true also in conversation with other class members whom I did not interview. While it could have been my wishful thinking, I do not think it was: the experience was too vivid and surprising.

Alice is a small, plump woman with huge, sparkling eyes, and a forthright, energetic manner of speaking and moving. She lives in the small southern town where she and her husband were born and raised. She has a teenager at home, two grown children and three grandchildren. She expresses pleasure in her life, especially in her religious faith and her family. She has not had a life without struggle, and is aware of difficulties, but she is basically a vital woman, with great inter-personal skills. She is happy in her life-style, which, although traditional and conservative, allows her an active role in statewide church education.

Barbara, a tall thin woman married to a professional man, is the mother of four children, three in college and one young teenager, she lives in a medium-sized, southern city, where society is open to the frequent comings and goings of outsiders. Laconic and somewhat reserved, Barbara centers her life and interests on her husband and children. She has friends and a social life, but little affectual

involvement in activities outside her home. She expresses complete
satisfaction and happiness with her husband and children and her role
as a housewife. A sense of humor, a sense of the ridiculous, provides
a spark to an otherwise bland demeanor.

Cynthia, an attractive, vivacious woman, who speaks with charm and
humor, demonstrates a lively curiosity about people and the world. She
and her husband live in a suburban town outside a large southeastern
metropolitan area. Their three children are grown, only one is still
in college. She has worked part-time recently and been quite success-
ful. Cynthia enjoys various activities and the many people associated
with those activities, but her only intimate relationship is with her
husband. She is aware of and reflects thoughtfully on herself as a
sensitive, inward person within a "cheerleader" exterior.

Diane is a pretty, dreamy-looking woman, with large expressive eyes
and a beatific smile. She speaks slowly and quietly. Divorced for
some years, she has one teenaged child at home and two grown children.
She lives modestly in a small town leading a busy life: teaching part-
time, dancing in a small women's performance group, volunteering at the
local historical society, and recently turning serious attention again
to her painting. She has good friends of all ages, has had a serious
relationship since her divorce, but is currently content to be on her
own exploring her many interests. She is self-aware and introspective.

Ellen, a sophisticated-looking woman with a professional career,
lives in a metropolitan city with her husband of only eight years. She
is the only one of the women who has not had children. She and her
husband, who is in her field of work, have a busy social life. It is

The women's hopes for the future seem congruent with the rest of the questionnaire. There are only a few indications of hopes for radical changes (e.g., divorce) in the next year or next twenty years. The focus on personal and interpersonal aspects of life, rather than on external events or achievements in the larger world, provides a continuity from the past to the present and on into the future.

## 8. Comments

The final section of the questionnaire stated simply "comments."

Nearly two-thirds of the women used this portion of the questionnaire. Twenty-one wrote a few words such as "Good luck," "Good idea," or "Thanks." While most of these comments were positive, their were some mild or veiled complaints, as "I'm only responding to this thing because you are a friend!"

Another 13 of the women wrote personal comments about themselves or their families. Seven more indicated that the questionnaire had made them sit down and think about themselves and their lives in a way they did not usually do. Three complained directly that the questionnaire was too long.

Altogether, 18 women enclosed additional notes or letters. Some of the women had been close friends, including a long-lost roommate, but some I knew only casually. The content of the letters ranged from reminiscences of college days to fairly complete biographies or amusing vignettes, past and present.

The comments and letters reflect the women themselves as well as their manner of relating to a former classmate. The quantity and

important to Ellen that they see different people from various sectors of the arts, government, and business. They travel widely and have close friends in other cities and countries. Ellen, an intellectual, concerned with larger issues of education, economy, and politics, works hard in her field and enjoys the "good life" without family responsibilities. She is not self-analytical, not much interested in motives or reasons for why she is as she is.

Fay is a plain, though pleasant-looking woman, who seems tense and constricted, though eager to reach out. She lives with her husband and recently-returned young adult child in a medium-sized, southern city, unusually blessed economically and educationally. She has another child in college. Committed to public service, Fay works behind the scenes to bring about "positive change." Her recreation is in music in her church. She has daytime friends, but she and her husband, from whom she is quite distant, have little life together. She has suffered severe depression in the past, but feels good now, at the height of her ability to serve her community. She is an unceasing worker who wants to live one day at a time and not think of the past or the future.

## B.   The Personal Life Theme

In analyzing the data from the interviews, it struck me after repeated listening, categorizing, and annotating that each subject introduced a personal life theme very early in the interview. This was in response to the question: How do you remember yourself at college? Do you have a visual image? What were you like then? This was the first reflective question implicitly directing people to look back and remember and talk about what they remembered.

The importance of retrospective data is raised by the use of this kind of question. In this case I was not interested in finding out what the women really were like at eighteen or twenty, but wondered more how they remembered themselves now, at the time of their thirtieth reunion. One could say that the answer more nearly reflects the fifty-year-old woman sitting across from me than the twenty-year-old she was. Since my interest is in the women and their current lives, the issue of the significance of retrospective data becomes irrelevant. What is intriguing is that there is a theme or thread introduced in response to this question by each person in her own way. That theme is brought up over and over. It weaves in and out of each story, telling us about each woman's present inner world, and how she now gives meaning to her life.

It is through this recurrent personal theme that I shall discuss briefly each of the participants. I will be using quotes from different parts of the interview to paint a partial picture of each woman-- or a picture from the point of view of one personal life theme. The degree of awareness of their own theme ranges from Diane, who spoke directly of a "life theme," to Barbara, where I can only surmise, from her comment and subsequent behavior with me, that she inadvertently expressed a theme with her responses. The others fall somewhere between Diane and Barbara.

In response to the query, Diane said that she had no visual image of herself, that she could characterize herself through the internal feelings she remembers. She was quiet, very shy; there was apparent then the "thread through my life, my difficulty in speaking and express-ing myself." It was, she added, "the work of a lifetime to leave some

of that off." Diana says she is "sympathetic to the pain of that young
girl, trying to be in touch with people . . . specifically to do with
speaking, expressing myself in words." She goes on to explain about
her father who had the same difficulty. She suspects, "We were both
needy."

When asked how she saw herself as changed since college, Diane
said, "I am still not articulate, but not shattered, and I can teach.
I wanted to, but I was fearful of it." In speaking of her ambitions
she said she had always wanted to teach, since she had played school
with her sister and her friends, all four years older; they were the
students and she pretended to be the teacher. Talking was so difficult
for her that she never "properly finished" a teaching program that she
entered right after college. She was unable to do the practice teach-
ing and said that it took years of "being married, raising children,
doing different things, to get the confidence to do the talking and
teaching."

Of all the women, Diane, who views herself as inarticulate, speaks
most clearly of themes in her life. The interview with her took the
longest time, for she answered slowly and thoughtfully, struggling to
put into words her thoughts and feelings so that I could understand.
She began the interview by thanking me for giving the class the oppor-
tunity to talk about themselves as a group. She told me that her life
and history were complex, therefore it was hard to "answer with an
answer that is in some way a true history." With this introduction to
her life, and the response concerning her memory of herself, Diane
describes a person who has worked and continues to work on revealing
herself to the world in words.

When I inquired of Cynthia how she remembered herself at college,

asked if she had a visual image of herself, she laughed and said, "I'm

afraid I do.  Well, yes, I have a visual image of myself.  I think I

always had a nice face, but I was too fat, and I was immature. . . .

Well, I was awfully shallow, let's face it.  What was important was

just getting through and getting home to vacations where we had such a

great time."

Cynthia introduces her view of herself at that time as shallow, as

just wanting a good time.  At points throughout the rest of the inter-

view she addresses this issue of apparent shallowness in contrast to

what she was like as a child, to what she remembers really feeling at

the time, and to what she has struggled with internally and interper-

sonally for the past thirty years.  There are two parts to this theme.

One aspect relates to the contrast between Cynthia's external, inter-

personal self and her innermost feelings.  The other aspect reflects

the internal battle she has waged in determining who she really is.

Of her childhood Cynthia recalls, "I was by myself a lot so con-

sequently, I read a lot or listened to the radio, and I think I probably

lived in something of a dream world.  Now, not entirely, because our

homelife had the problems . . . I think I put myself into a sort of

dreamworld alot, alot of the time, and I think I probably did that at

[college] too.  Because I really didn't like it that much, and so I

would daydream alot when I should have been studying, and things like

that.  That has gotten me alot through life. . . . Yes, I don't mean

that a Prince Charming will come get you, but just sort of thinking of

nice things.  Now, I'm interested in architecture and decorating and

politics, and all these things, and when I want to forget, I can put myself into orbit by thinking about these things. I love to plan; we planned both of our houses. I can sit now and draw house plans in my mind. I can . . . I don't know what you call it . . . but I can . . . it has always been a safety valve for me."

I noted that it was interesting to hear that Cynthia lived in her head because it didn't seem obvious. She acknowledged that saying, "Everybody thinks I'm a dead game extrovert. I think I overcompensated, as I look back on it, by trying to be terribly vivacious and outgoing and all of that, and I am. I do like people and I do like a certain amount of social life, but I'm also something of an extroverted introvert . . . but, I . . . really . . . [husband] could back me up on that."

I commented that the extroverted introvert must have existed back in college too and Cynthia laughs and says, "Yes, it [dates] bored me . . . And as I look back now I see . . . I think . . . I thought I had to . . . everyone from my hometown talks alot and wants to be popular and cheerleader and all that kind of stuff, and I thought I had to be that. And it has taken me all these years to realize what you really have to be is yourself."

In talking about how she has matured, Cynthia returns to the theme of the inner-outer contrast, and the struggle with what she calls the "realization of yourself." She offers, "I think a realization of yourself is terribly important. And, believe it or not when I was growing up I did not have a good . . . I didn't dislike myself, but you know, I was plump. Nobody had more dates than I did, and I was very popular at [college], but, I really, you know, I never liked being fat. I

had pimples, my teeth were bad, I . . . but I think you learn to live
with these things. You learn to make the best of them, cosmetically
and every other way. I also think you come to the realization that
you cannot go through life thinking that you are going to get your
happiness through your husband, your children, your parents, or your
nice home. I realize everybody else figured this out a long time
ago, but it took me a long time and I was late--a late bloomer. But,
you realize that you really have to get it through yourself, and I
know that's an old cliche, but you've got to depend on yourself for
your happiness and your pleasure and your sense of accomplishment.
And you can't put it off onto somebody else. I used to get mad at
[husband] because he wouldn't make me a happy life . . . then you realize
that's terrible, he can contribute to your happiness. Now I shouldn't
depend on my job to make me [happy]."

Ellen, too, had a visual image of herself, "seven pounds heavier,
with fly-away hair." She sees in herself now some of what she remem-
bers then, both attributes and limitations. It is especially, but
not only, the limitations she mentions at different times in the inter-
view. She remembers herself as a stereotype of the 1950s, "interested
in cashmere sweaters and pearls, but with a little intellectual streak."
She comments that she was closed to others who were unlike herself,
but that she got along well and made friends. After a pause and with
a sigh she said, "I was not introspective, and I still am not."

The themes of intellectual interest, of being closed off to those
who were different and of lack of introspection weave into the inter-
view in several important ways. In talking of her life, Ellen says

one high point was her year of special study where she relished the
intellectual stimulation of her fellow students. She says of her
career that she has been fortunate "to earn my living in an area that
matched my interests in reading, talking about ideas, and writing."
The issue of being closed to others who were different she illustrated
with a story of a famous politician who was an up-and-coming young man
on campus at her university. She never thought of meeting him although
she had comparable political interests, because he was too dissimilar
in background. She concluded after some discussion that her closed-
ness might have been one reason that she did not marry earlier. She
put herself in a situation where the men who liked her and were her sort
socially "seemed intellectually below" her. She could not imagine
having contact with others who were "different," though perhaps intel-
lectually more exciting. In talking of maturing she said she felt she
was "nicer now . . . more appreciative of people who are different ...
more curious about people and things. I was always curious about
ideas." She asked, "Isn't that what adulthood means? Concern for
others." In brief, then, Ellen's change lay in becoming more open to
others, especially those whom she saw as unlike herself.

Ellen raises her lack of introspection in connection with high
points and low points in her life. She states that she is an "emotion-
ally level person," that there have been low points, but no crises.
Then she divulges that perhaps she is simply not aware of severe ups
and downs. She has a bad back, insomnia, and "maybe that's how it comes
out." She reports that [husband] says she is unaware of her body,
that she will go about her usual activities with a high fever,

oblivious to her state of health. She wonders if this is all connected. Near the end of the interview when we were talking about her losing her mother and her elderly aunts being ill, she says again that she is not introspective, "and I am sorry about that. I don't analyze, think about life, about motivation, or how I feel." She talks of a kind of "mindlessness, thoughtlessness, impatience" that bothers her, that she wishes were different.

In response to remembering herself, Fay remembered being more "insecure than secure, especially about academics." She recalls that she had a purpose when she was in college. That purpose was "to contribute to society, to be unselfish." That goal still provides the driving force for Fay's life. She is a full-time "public service volunteer" whose major life concern is in "creating positive change" in her community. Life has dealt Fay some hard blows, starting with the early loss of her mother, the care and loss of her father and other elderly relatives, the heartbreak of a self-destructive child, the loneliness of an empty marriage. When discussing any of these personal sadnesses Fay can pull herself together to focus on the social and economic dilemmas of her city and its citizens. It is when telling of these matters that she is most enthusiastic and optimistic, most alive. Fay's purpose, mentioned early in the interview, remains prominent throughout the process. About death she first said, "It means I have less time to do all the things I want to do." Only afterwards was she able to make a more self-revelatory comment regarding her frantic filling-up of time with good deeds.

For Alice the question of remembering herself at college did not introduce a life theme in quite the same way that I have been using it,

but ushered in her view of life, her state of mind or personality. She

laughed heartily and recalled, "I was a mousey, real happy, secure

little person, but a pale copy of my older sister." She added that

not until they were separated did her personality develop. While no

more mention or evidence of mousiness was apparent in the interview,

Alice's happiness and security resonated throughout it, as in her

questionnaire response. As she was cognizant of imitating her older

sister, she has been aware of other less-than-desirable aspects of her

behavior, her personality, and her life. Conservative and traditional

in her views and lifestyle, she demonstrates a high degree of integra-

tion and function. There is a sense of completeness about Alice.

Barbara told me that she remembered herself as "very, very shy,"

as "following along," doing what she was supposed to, doing what she

was told. Barbara explained that she was no longer shy, and in another

place she reported that she liked being older because she could do what

she wanted to do and did not have to belong to clubs which bored her,

or take part in activities she did not like, and so on. Although these

issues came up again and again in the material, it occurred to me that

the meaning of Barbara's comments could be seen in another light. For

the other women, I could identify themes that existed for them in the

interviews and in their lives. While I suspect this might be possible

in Barbara's case, I do not have sufficient data. What I do wonder is

whether her comments were primarily evidence of the "here and now

transference." I use the term as Merton Gill (1983) does to understand

the communication as referring to the experience of the moment, the

remarks in the interview as a repetition of past, and current, life

experiences. In listening to the tape of the interview I was repeat-
edly impressed by her hesitation, or guardedness, her inability to par-
ticipate with any spontaneity. It seemed to me that Barbara was just
going along, doing what she thought she was supposed to do. It was as
though she were simply going through the motions of the interview with
me.

### C. The Power of Attachment and Care

As the exhilaration experienced at the reunion diminished and I
thought about the content of the interviews, I felt an uneasiness that
I had first encountered when analyzing the completed questionnaires.
In both situations the discomfort related to my understanding of what
the participants had told me and my worry that I did not have an ade-
quate theoretical framework for the data. The women at middle age were
not reexamining their lives in the manner described by Kernberg (1980).
They did not seem to be living out stages of their lives in an orderly
fashion like Levinson's men in Seasons of a Man's Life. There was no
way that I could trace their adaptation to life as Vaillant had done.
The theories that center on such concepts as "disengagement" versus
involvement seemed irrelevant. Even writing which focused on women did
not seem particularly pertinent. Though most of these women are pri-
marily housewives, none of them seemed to feel trapped like Rubin's
women, searching for new meaning as in Women of a Certain Age. They
expressed sadness over events, deaths of parents, disappointments with
children, even lost opportunities for themselves, but I saw little of
the depression Maggie Scarf describes in Unfinished Business.

On the other hand, I heard consistently about the importance of
close family people, the active caring and involvement with husbands,
children, and friends, the pleasure and devotion to numerous and varied
activities. They seemed pleased that the children were leaving home,
many already establishing their own families and lives. They liked being
free of the daily demands of a household of several children. On the
whole, my sense was that these women knew who they were, where they
belonged in life. They evidenced a "joie de vivre" coupled with a
matter-of-fact acceptance of life.

I do not mean to imply that individuals in this group of women did
not have problems in living or psychological problems. However, beyond
such personal issues it seemed to me that they raised certain aspects
central to their lives which I had not seen adequately described or
addressed in the literature on adult development. It was, therefore,
with great relief that I discovered the volume Women in the Middle
Years: Current Knowledge and Directions for Research and Policy,
edited by Giele. This book of essays, stimulated by an interdiscipli-
nary seminar which met from 1977 to 1978 (a Study Group on Women under
the sponsorship of the Social Science Research Council), was published
in 1982.

Giele writes in her introductory chapter, "Basic Assumptions,"
that there are logical reasons to believe that women would be psycho-
logically different from men in certain respects (1982, p. 11).
"First, since women alone have the biological capacity for pregnancy
and lactation, it is likely that their hormonal responses and instinc-
tive reactions to the newborn and very young child have through 40,000

years of human evolution been peculiarly adapted to care for the human
infant (Rossi, 1977). Second, the social process is symmetrical
between mothers and daughters but asymmetrical between mothers and
sons. This simple formal difference of a child's being the same or
opposite sex as the major caretaker has a major impact on his or her
capacity for empathy or independence (Chodorow, 1978). Third, women's
and men's social roles are quite different with respect to family and
employment responsibility. Where a man may expect greater continuity,
women are likely to experience an immense variety of timing patterns--
starting a family, finishing school, going back to work, stopping
briefly, and so on (McGuigan, 1980)."

Using recent findings, Giele addresses the psychological differ-
ences between men and women, pointing out the significance of the
female experience of mothering, of being "mothered" by the same-sex
caretaker, and the influence of women's social roles in our culture.
She continues in her discussion of women as different, noting that
Miller (1976) was one of the first authorities to recognize women's
peculiar sensitivity to others, and hence their vulnerability to loss.
Unlike her predecessors, who had called these characteristics weakness,
Miller deemed them special strengths, Giele goes on to report on her
own work (1978), where she challenged "male" (her quotes) value systems
that put mastery and achievement ahead of what she called "female" con-
cerns: for interdependence and relationship.

Investigation into the literature referred to by Giele yielded
research findings and theoretical speculations that suggested that what
I had heard from the women in my study did indeed "fit" into a larger
body of research and evolving theory. The essay in Giele's volume

which most informed my study was "Adult Development and Women's
Development: Arrangements for a Marriage," by Carol Gilligan. Gilligan
writes of the central concepts of attachment and separation that inform
the psychology of human development and describe the cycle of human
life. These concepts, growing out of the study of infancy, "resurface
in adolescence as identity and intimacy and then in adulthood as love
and work" (1982a, p. 89). She posits that the line of development of
attachment and care has not been clearly understood. There is a "fail-
ure to describe the progression of relationships toward a maturity of
interdependence or to trace the evolution of the capacity for responsi-
ble care. The truth of separation is recognized in most developmental
texts, but the reality of continuing connection is lost or relegated to
the shadowy background where the figures of women appear" (1982a,
p. 90).

Gilligan submits that there is a developmental line of attachment
and care (interdependence), as well as a line of separation and indi-
viduation (independence) for women and for men. Her work is directed
toward tracing the developmental line of attachment through the rela-
tionships of care, delineating a progression that occurs in the under-
standing of responsibility and in the experience of connection.

Gilligan asserts that development is not necessarily best under-
stood from the point of view of childhood, but rather can be comprehended
from the study of maturity. She writes that "the study of women must
begin with a descriptive or ethnographic approach in order to admit new
constructs to the understanding of what constitutes maturity (1982a,
p. 89).

Discovering Gilligan's work, as well as other work viewing attachment as a central issue for women, was both gratifying and stimulating for me. However, any discussion of attachment as it occurs for women or men is incomplete without acknowledgement of Bowlby's seminal writings spanning the last twenty-five years. Convinced of the primary nature of attachment in the development of the human being, Bowlby described attachment behavior, most simply and originally, as behavior that maintains close physical proximity of a weaker to a stronger member of a social grouping. The basic unit is mother-child. However, this behavior is never outgrown but is the prototype for all further human connection, as it becomes increasingly complex and diversified to include more attachment figures, extending symbolically to the world of things and ideas. It is behavior that is accompanied by the deepest feeling. That which we consider most "human" within us, our capacity to develop deep personal ties, is a consequence of our early attachment experience and the subsequent mental maps, or predictions about further attachments (Cottle, 1983, p. 5).

Study of Bowlby and Gilligan clarifies not only the existence of attachment, but also its power and far-reaching consequences. Reading through the responses to the questionnaire highlighted the central importance of personal ties for the women in this study. For instance, the women's replies to the question that inquired about the most influential events and people (in that order) since college were oriented to close people. All spoke first of people, usually of husband, children, other family members, sometimes of teachers, ministers, or friends. Few mentioned events at all.

A further look into the interview data reveals what might be
called consequences of attachment and caring. These are reflected in
the convergence of responses in two areas covered in the interviews:
the "quality of present home and out-of-home situation," including
important current issues of daily life, relationships, marriage, sex
life, vacations, work (out-of-home, paid, or volunteer); and the issue
of a "sense of belonging," of being "at home in the world," including
family, community, networks, and social life, and how these might have
changed over the years. According to the responses, the two areas are
intertwined for these women. In their replies the notion of attach-
ment to people and to principles and ideas relating to people's lives
predominates. Caring and responsibility define the psychosocial modal-
ities of behavior of this group of women.

Alice's first response to both these questions had to do with
church and faith. To "sense of belonging" she replied "church and
family and tradition"; her primary network is church-related. She has
a "deep relationship with her prayer group," which she explained is not
primarily a sharing group but an intercessary one that accepts prayers
from other members of their church--they pray for others. Alice feels
intimate with the prayer group members, three female "Christian friends."
She has prepared and distributed throughout her state an adult educa-
tion program which necessitated "millions of hours in the library."
Her satisfaction in her faith has influenced her marriage, allowing her
to be closer and more able to confide in her husband. In listening to
Alice, hearing both the words and the affect, one grasps that her faith
and religious life provide her a sense of purpose, a "raison d'etre."

Besides that part of her life, Alice also has a community of other friends, social connections going back to childhood for herself and her husband. She has "deep roots" in her small town. Chortling, she said, "Sometimes I do feel swamped, even trapped, between carting my semi-invalid mother-in-law around, seeing about my mother, babysitting for my daughter's three children, and getting my fifteen year old to meetings and so forth, and still being a wife to my husband. Still, I love all these people very dearly and receive tremendous support from them." This last quotation shows clear awareness not only of the emotional interdependence with those one cares for and is responsible to, but also its simultaneous costs and benefits.

Barbara's responses also reflect the importance of attachment, but her ties and caring consciously focus primarily on her husband, children, home, and to some extent her friends and social life. The depth of her caring for her sister emerges in the discussion of what she would like to leave, or pass on to others, in the section "Growing Older." Unlike Alice, who cares and is responsible for people peripheral to her family (those who ask for prayer, the adults who use her educational program), Barbara says in reply to her current home and out-of-home situation, "I don't know, it sounds like a dull life, but it isn't. . . . I just want to get the children through school, in jobs, and married." She and her husband are "good buddies," she has good friends, her satisfactions are in her home. As for her "sense of belonging," she points to her husband and children and friends. Activities such as the art museum are enjoyable, but not important. Her religious faith is of significance, not churchgoing.

She mentions a recent change in her social life, that she and her husband do not socialize and "party" as much as they did when their children were younger. Barbara says she just does not enjoy cocktail and dinner parties and meeting new people as much as she did, but prefers spending time informally with old friends. "We don't socialize as much as in the past. We went too much. I wished we had stayed home more." Persistent questioning led Barbara to say that she wished she had not left her children so much on the weekends when they were young. Despite the obvious devotion, she seemed to feel badly, perhaps even guilty, that she had not fulfilled her responsibilities to her children. These comments lead to speculations that a woman who does not have a great deal for herself and expresses no wish for her own life, may be more apt to feel she can never give quite enough to those dependent on her. It also raises questions about idealization of the past when the children were young. It is as though Barbara has forgotten what it is like to be home with several young children and that she might have wanted to go out on the weekend to have a respite from the insatiable demands of the children.

Of current importance to Diane is her life style, encompassing "the support of the people involved in my activities," dancing, painting, and the historical society. She has close friends, close women friends, some couples, and one man, "a special friend in critical matters ... I am fortunate in friends." She has roots in her town of 1800 and the home she bought there after her divorce. She continues onto say that painting seriously is a major issue for her now plus the "way I live without alot of things." Her "sense of belonging"

is tied to "my style, my way, which is to know a range of people," not just "rich, intellectual people," the sort of people she and her husband tended to befriend during her marriage.

In speaking of her teenaged daughter, who lived with her father and his new wife and baby for two years, Diane said, "I'm happiest when my children are in the best situations for them." This sentiment suggests an aspect of attachment where care and responsibility can be carried out not through physical closeness, but through consciously chosen distance.

Here, then, is a woman who has actively cared for a family in the past, but now is content to live alone, if she thinks her children are happier living away from her. Activities, art and dancing, are prime interests for Diane now. She desires few "things" in her world, which remains richly peopled, no longer by intimate family members, but by "a range of people." She struggles with knowing herself within the context of others.

Ellen, when asked about current home and out-of-home issues, asked me if I meant political. When I was noncommittal, she moved on to talking of her concern regarding her husband's career and the economic condition of poor people and friends under financial strain. She acknowledged that her wish to have enough money to travel, to stay in lovely places, to "live the good life" is important to her now.

Ellen's best friend is her husband. Her "sense of belonging" comes from "people, but also a sense of place. For Southerners home is--or have I just read too many novels?" She has a strong feeling of community with her peers at work. While she and her husband have

many friends, the closest are out of the city in their home states
and in other parts of the world. She is ambivalent about living in
a big city. "I like anonymity, but I realize you could disappear
and not be noticed. That would never happen in the town I came from."
On the other hand, she likes the opportunity a large city affords
for extending one's group of friends and acqaintances. "Perhaps that's
one reason I didn't marry earlier. I didn't want to live in a small
town and see the same people all the time." Here, Ellen acknowledges
in several ways (one might even wonder about her initial response
to my question, asking whether I was referring to political issues)
that closeness is difficult, but there are drawbacks to anonymity,
including isolation. Much of her caring emerges in political and
economic concerns oriented to those who are less fortunate than she.
At the same time, she admits her own relatively frivolous material
wants. Even in this woman, whose life has been so different from
the others, who has not taken active care of her own children or anyone
else or had a long-term marriage, one can see the consequences of
the continuous spreading nature of attachment and attachment behavior.
Vis-à-vis children, it must be remembered that Ellen has devoted her
adult work life to teaching young adolescent children, pouring creative
effort into teaching, writing educational programs, and heading her
department for a large school system.

Attachment can be seen in different forms and at varying times
in these six women. This observation corresponds to McGuigan's concept
of the variety of women's timing patterns in work, school, and home-
making, where activities tend to appear, disappear, and reappear. Fay

presents an example of this weaving or braiding idea in attachment

behavior. She remembers an early interest in and commitment to "making

a contribution," serving others, helping people who were mistreated

and downtrodden. She recounted learning early from her parents' exper-

ience that individuals can change a corrupt town, that justice can be

wrought. While this remained a major principle and ambition, responsi-

bilities, as she saw them, to family members absorbed her time and

energy for many, many years. At one time she cared for her father and

father-in-law and her husband's elderly aunt with little support from

her husband or brother. After the deaths of the elderly relatives, ten

years of difficulty with one of her children ensued. Now that this

child is an adult and "making progress," Fay can turn her attention

and energy to her social concerns in her community, her city. She can

pull political strings behind the scenes, "push buttons and make things

happen." Accomplishing good works, especially in a game-like way, gives

Fay enormous pleasure. Her tale of political conniving that resulted

in enlarging and "by the way" racially integrating a senior center

demonstrates the possible outcome of hard work coupled with clever pol-

itical maneuvering and know-how in the head and heart of someone enor-

mously committed to a principle. Here one can see attachment behavior

where deep personal feelings pour into efforts at helping and caring for

people who are not known personally.

Singing and clubs, her "battery rechargers," plus spending some

time in nonsexual relationships with good male and female friends, and

some satisfaction with her children give Fay a "sense of belonging."

In granting that the sources of her chief satisfactions and "sense of

belonging" are primarily outside her family, Fay admits sadly that there is a "gap" in her life, that after spending years trying to "reach" her husband, she has finally given up. She stays in the marriage she says, because it is "convenient," but she has turned her feelings of caring almost entirely to looking at and "solving people problems."

In discussing the issues of her current situation and "sense of belonging," Cynthia took the opportunity to talk about her inner life. It is fascinating to observe in the data the repetition of each individual's personal theme as well as the broad themes that touch all of the participants. As mentioned earlier, the inner-outer struggle has been a life-long one for Cynthia, one which surfaces in these questions as well as in others.

Around current issues, Cynthia says she is no longer interested in volunteer work. "I want to do what I want to do." While she likes her work, she feels she is not giving it enough attention now so it is "in limbo." Cynthia does not confide in her mother or sister or her long-term friends. She enjoys different activities with different sets of friends but does not wish to be intimate. It is only with her husband that she is close and open, and it is towards him that she feels she wants to turn more attention now. To her, he seems more tired nowadays after his very strenuous work. He will be retiring soon and needs "nurturing," Cynthia thinks. She intends to turn her active caring to him, to "fuss over him some now."

Reviewing this material of Cynthia's, I thought about the concept of disengagement or withdrawal at middle age. Certainly Cynthia seems

to be pulling back from volunteer and paid work and moving toward no one except her husband. Perhaps this is, however, just another example of a variation in pattern. Cynthia's husband is a little older than most of the husbands. Further, since his job has necessitated his being away from home several days each week, his retirement will be more of an adjustment for them, one assumes, than for couples where the husband has worked a more usual schedule. Therefore it is possible to view Cynthia's behavior as linked to the reality of her life rather than as a psychological reaction to aging. Hers may be an appropriate response to her spouse's role change and his needs more than a "disengaging" from life. And while she expresses a sense of care and responsibility for her husband's well-being both physically and psychologically, she stresses in the interview their "fifty/fifty" relationship.

In talking of her home city of twenty years, Cynthia spontaneously brought up the notion of having a "sense of belonging which I haven't had in years." She does not feel the need to stay where she is forever but for now it gives her a "good feeling."

Cynthia, in discussing her "sense of belonging," of being connected, "of being at home in the world," spoke of some ways she believes she has changed over the years. What evolves is a picture of how she experiences herself now in contrast to her memory of herself in the past. She articulates what might be called her "sense of maturity." This concept serves as one focus of the next section of the interview analysis.

### D. Change and the Sense of Changing

All the women interviewed saw themselves as changed since college. Some spoke of internal change, stating, for example, that they knew themselves better or were more accepting of their foibles. Many talked of this change in relation to others. They commented that they are kinder, more understanding, more realistic about others. Sometimes they referred to feelings of change and sometimes to behaving differently.

In response to the question in the questionnaire, "In what ways do you think you have changed since college?", the word mature was used spontaneously by a number of women. They frequently answered, "Matured," "I feel mature now," "I hope I have matured!" I became curious about what maturity meant specifically in terms of the women's personal experience of having changed, of being different now from in the past.

Therefore, in the interviews when asking again about change since college, I referred back to the questionnaire responses and suggested that each woman tell me how and in what ways she had matured over the years. Interestingly enough, no one demurred or asked me what I meant. Rather, they all accepted the idea of maturity and used it to describe themselves as adult females.

This phenomenon has important implications which I will explore further in the concluding section.

When asked directly how she had matured, Cynthia answered that she was more realistic, harder working and more conscientous, and that she had learned to "curb her temperament." She commented that moving to

different sections of the country made things like who your father was

or "being cute" less important. For her, it has

> taken all these years to realize you have to be yourself. . . .
> The realization of yourself is important and the realization
> that you cannot go through life thinking you're going to get
> your happiness through your mother or father, or husband, or
> children or home. . . . You have to depend on yourself for hap-
> piness, pleasure, and sense of accomplishment: other people can
> contribute, jobs can contribute, but no one else can give you a
> happy life.

Introspective, Cynthia addresses the changes she has experienced

within herself. She feels she now sees the world and the people around

her more clearly. She can try harder, maintaining an effort better

than she could in the past. Further, she can "curb her temperament,"

restrain or modify herself vis-à-vis others. She speaks of relinquish-

ing certain social roles—being the daughter of the town doctor, count-

ing on her "cuteness" in her interpersonal life. "You're a fool if at

forty-five you still expect to be elected cheerleader."

Cynthia says she has always felt different from other people; but

she does not "use it to a disadvantage anymore." In the past her

"dingbat image used to hurt, to confuse me." She is terribly sensitive

herself and acutely aware of others' feelings. She has learned, she

says, "that I can dish it out, but I can't take it. . . . that if you're

open, people want to be open with you."

My understanding of what Cynthia meant is that she is both very

aware and very curious about people, but she realizes that she is not

usually comfortable being intimate or confiding, therefore she must not

let her inquisitiveness and alertness loose. She tended to ask pene-

rating questions in the past, but has "learned to handle that part of

my personality until I can trust that someone won't open up." She

finds it easier to live away from her hometown and old college friends in whom she confided when she was younger.

Because of her personality, Cynthia says she has had to work very hard on relationships. She suffers alot. She knows that everyone does. She likes people socially, has compassion for them, but does not like them in general. At the same time she is interested in people's stories, believing that everyone's life contains the makings of a novel.

One might speculate that along with these hard-won insights, Cynthia has achieved a kind of high-functioning isolation where she maintains an emotional distance possibly out of the ken of her social contacts and family. It is only with her husband that she has an open relationship. She describes this relationship as having evolved from an early period of "wanting a daddy," through a period in her thirties when she became critical of her husband's decision-making, to a point at forty when the marriage shifted to an equitable, "fifty/fifty" relationship. In her marriage also she has moved away from concerns with popularity, with pleasing others. "It is important to face yourself and your family, not the rest of the world. I no longer try to please, not even [husband]. I try to work with him."

Cynthia's description of her marriage presents a tidy example of gradual change over time from a dependent to an interdependent position. The road, according to her report, entailed a realization of herself, a separation of herself from her parents, and to some extent from her husband and children. She tells that she learned other people contribute, but they cannot make one's happiness. She assumes that

others figured all that a long time ago, but for her it has taken a

long time. And now she has a "sense of improving, of doing better in

life."

Gilligan writes of this change from independence-dependence to

interdependence:

> By changing the lines of developmental observation from self
> and work to relationships of care, women depict ongoing attachment
> as the path that leads to maturity. The parameters of develop-
> ment correspondingly shift toward the progress of affiliative
> relationship, charting the dissolution of dominance and subordin-
> ation through the development of relationships toward inter-
> dependence (1982a, p. 110).

While Cynthia provides us with an instance of a shift away from

dominance and subordination toward interdependence, her path to matur-

ity has not been solely along the line of ongoing attachment and care.

Listening to her story, one observes that no abstract theory works

wholly. It is an oversimplification to focus solely on attachment.

One can see, in the picture Cynthia paints in her own words, the inter-

weaving of a sense of individuality and self-awareness apart from, as

well as in connection with, others. Her sense of maturity, of growth

and change, cannot be explained completely as evolving through attach-

ment, care and responsibility to and for others. It also has come about

via the other side of the continuum, separation, whereby she achieved

the realization of herself, no longer dependent on mother, father,

husband or children for her happiness.

So while the issue is not solely attachment, women's experience,

as Gilligan observes, is different from men's in that the behaviors man-

ifested in attachment and separation are most likely within the context

of "lives of relationship, their orientation to interdependence, their

subordination of achievement to care" (1982a, p. 110). Women do seem to perceive and construe social reality differently from men. "Relationships are given, not contracted." Women do appear to blend "identity with intimacy by defining themselves through relationships with others" (1982a, p. 110). For women generativity does not begin at midlife as Vaillant's (1977) data on men suggest. From a woman's perspective it occurs earlier for both sexes, "given that the bearing and raising of children will have taken place primarily in the preceding years. . . . Similarly, the image of women at midlife as childlike and dependent on others is belied by the activity of their care in nurturing and sustaining family relationships" (1982a, p. 110).

In reference to middle age as a stage of life, an interesting finding regarding the notion of "midlife crisis" emerged in this study. All participants denied a current crisis of any sort, "empty nest" or otherwise. Retrospectively, however, I could recognize in the material a major change, upheaval, or crisis that the women mentioned occurring about ten years ago. How they viewed the incident and whether they saw it as a crucible for maturation varied among the individuals.

Assessing Alice's changing and sense of maturity, one is struck forcibly with the importance of ongoing affiliation, of relationship and caring. She recognizes that there is a subordination of achievement to care.

Alice's reply to the question of how she had matured was that she is "more tolerant of everyone's mistakes. I hope people will do good, but I understand now what people are up against." She relates her maturity to the struggles to accommodate to a marriage which in the early days was stormy, but in many ways satisfying. She spoke with

intensity of the trying years when her children were toddlers, she and her husband young, stubborn, and lacking in awareness of male-female differences. She explains that her husband was an old-fashioned father, overly strict with the first child, and "never washed a dish in his life." He was not empathetic, could not really understand experiences he had not had. On the other hand, she describes him as a warm, loving person who always wanted her to have a life of her own outside of child-rearing and homemaking. He has influenced her to become more assertive, to be more real. "My husband has taught me to be more honest in my relationships--I used to be too afraid of offending anyone to be myself. . . . I worked hard keeping my proper front up and was afraid to be myself."

About her values, Alice said they had changed little since college. Her report is in keeping with findings that suggest "attitudes and values with which one leaves college have considerable permanence" (Freedman, 1962, p. 857) and are likely to persist relatively unchanged well on into middle and old age (1962, p. 864). Nonetheless, the explanation of the "little change" is revealing. Alice submits that there has been an "integration of religious values," that she "truly understands" what she used to think and say because of her early and thorough religious .upbringing and training.

Influenced by her husband in her secular behavior, Alice has been strongly influenced by her minister in her religious life. For twenty years after college, Alice was an agnostic. She continued to attend Bible class, but she questioned her previous learning and training until "a wonderful minister led me into a new and exciting relationship with

the Lord Jesus. I don't know how to put that without sounding like a fanatic but it turned my life upside down eleven years ago and I've been a far happier and I hope better person since." This event, becoming a charismatic Christian, can be interpreted as Alice's midlife upheaval or crisis. She views the "coming alive in my faith" as a crucible for maturation.

Although remarkably cheerful and matter-of-fact, Alice is not a Pollyanna who disavows feelings of frustration or deep sadness, or who has to appear perfect or perfectly happy. In the interview she reveals strong, lingering feelings of loss for a beloved son-like nephew who died fifteen years ago. She admits that she is a disorganized housekeeper who can never seem to "keep the clutter in hand." She expresses disappointment in herself, hurt, and perhaps even some regret in relation to not fulfilling her potential in the arts. Regarding her painting she said, "That's the one thing I have almost given up that hurts. I found painting and children didn't mix. I'm already beginning to get back to doing more now that my children are out from underfoot. Now it's my grandchildren who get into my oil paints!"

There seemed to be no wish to place blame for her unrealized ambitions in art. Rather, Alice accepted the choice she made to put her children before possible personal achievements. Speaking of her parents, she stated that they always encouraged her to be herself. Her father supported his family of daughters in whatever they tried to accomplish. A slight show of bitterness surfaced in her remarks that the college, its "bragging about alumnae who have been successful in the world," created in her a nagging sensation that she was letting the college down by being "a passive cow," that she should have been doing

something really significant. In truth, however, she felt fortunate
and has enjoyed being able to stay home with her children and now her
grandchildren. She states she is grateful that life has allowed her
to do and be what she most wanted. "I am basically a happy person
though I get frustrated at times, as who doesn't. I enjoy my talent in
the arts, and the serenity that middle age has brought--it was hard
won."

Quite unself-consciously, Alice discloses the effect on her of her
father, her husband, and her minister. Her reliance on approbation of
the men in her life might be explained from the standpoint that she
grew up in a family constellation of all females, except for her father,
within a society based on the predominance of males. Further, she has
only daughters. This line of thinking, combined with the dominant
social roles of the men, leads to consideration of her degree of inde-
pendence/dependence in relation to these male figures. Certainly, they
are portrayed as active in her changing, in her sense of herself as
"gaining wisdom and maturity" in middle age. Yet Alice does not come
across as passive in any area of her living. The orientation she
depicts is strongly interdependent with all of those within her ken,
including the researcher at the time of the interview, when Alice, of
all the participants, performed most like a peer engaged in a mutual
task.

In contrast to Alice, Diane spoke of her changing, her sense of
maturity, as having come about through "the enormous social changes of
our times" and her "determination over the years to work through this
stuff." Her internal struggle is verbalized as "my way," a "process

that allowed me to detach myself from extreme self-consciousness,"
that "allowed me to develop as a woman." Commenting that "there are
always things coming up to work on," she wonders aloud if it is "self-
serving" to be absorbed in one's inner life and struggle.

The consideration of the self-absorption, or perhaps selfishness,
involved in the process of introspection and reflection raises an inter-
esting proposition. From the interview it is apparent that Diane
focuses often on "finding her center," yet she is worried that her self-
awareness, her search for individual identity is somehow wrong. Her
quest, which can be assessed as separation and individuation as opposed
to attachment or connection, disturbs her for it could diminish the
priority of others. In juxtaposition is my experience of being with
Diane, who concentrated intensely on relating and communicating during
the interview. She stated, after all, that her life theme has been to
be able to express herself to others, to let people know what she
thinks and feels, to be confident enough to teach.

Highlighting Diane's fears about the self-serving nature of her
pursuit of identity is essential for this study, lest too much emphasis
be placed on the power and correctness of attachment in women's lives.
In our zeal to promote attachment, separation and individuation could
come to be regarded as unnecessary and bad or unworthy in women's
development. And while social scientists are just discovering the
meaning and strength of attachment and affiliation for women, Diane and
her cohort have known all along that caring and responsibility for
others has provided in large part their sense of identity and integrity.
Consequently, efforts aimed at separating and individuating can stir

feelings of guilt, as well as fear of criticism from family and community. For these reasons, and because growth results totally from neither one nor the other, it is well to keep in mind Bardwick's line from her article "The Seasons of a Woman's Life": "In a way, life is a dialectic process of continuously separating and attaching, connecting and individuating" (1980, p. 55).

Asked about her values, Diane responded that her chief value in college had been to be an artist, "to identify in the world in that way," but that she went as far as she could with her art then and was just getting back to it seriously now at fifty. She needed the interim years to develop as a woman, through marriage and children. "I knew no other way then to develop the self-confidence I needed to learn how to speak and teach ... to fulfill my wish to paint." It is not that Diane returns emotionally to her young adulthood to resume her painting, but rather that she returns to her art as a mature, middle-aged woman, able to extend beyond the earlier work.

The dissolution of her marriage, eight years ago, Diane deems the "extreme choice," an event inevitably detrimental to family and disruptive to the community. While she recognizes the period immediately before her divorce as the low point in her life, she is cognizant that she used that time profitably. Not the only one of the group to have therapy, she views the experience at that perplexing time as providing her an opportunity to discern her wants and to enable her to make a transition from one stage to another.

Diane speaks warmly of a man who is her "best friend," of how good it is "to be known" by him. She says, however, that she does not

expect that she will remarry, that she is more comfortable single.

She can be more herself. She "falls into representing someone else"

when she is married or "with someone." The inference is that there is

a tension for Diane between being independent and dependent, that she

finds some problem in establishing an interdependent relationship with

a male partner. To maintain her sense of self is perhaps why she

chooses to live alone. Bardwick writes, "Maturing is not only change.

It also involves coping with what one has to do, accepting compromises

and one's ambivalence in every commitment" (1980, p. 54). Diane's

living alone can be interpreted as one of those compromises, a way for

her to cope with her ambivalent feelings around identity and intimacy.

Like Alice and Cynthia, Diane neither places blame for whatever

she sees as her tasks or uncertainties in life nor takes adequate credit

for her achievements or attributes. She is modest in saying she is

"fortunate in that respect," that is, in having close friends, or that

probably every young woman finds the "experience of being a mother very

exciting, very pleasurable." This reluctance to condemn others or laud

oneself is intriguing, as it emerges in diverse spots with each of the

women. Such a stance could imply passivity or a degree of martyrdom or

masochism. Conversely, it might reflect a practical acceptance of one's

situation, and therefore be evidence of an aspect of maturity.

With Ellen, the career-achiever, this unassuming attitude surfaced

in the discussion of her job, which she described as a "lucky match for

my interests" and ambitions. She states that while her earlier ambi-

tions were swayed by the world of her upbringing, they were set primar-

ily by her "own limitations." Currently, she wants to work less, to

move out of her career, not into a new profession, but into something
absorbing, walking distance from her house, an effort where she could
make use of her talents for organizing, "putting things together."
Ellen wants more time for herself, to read, to learn to sew, to take
piano lessons, "to do physical things." She fantasies becoming athletic,
playing tennis, skiing, doing "things most of our classmates did in
their thirties."

Ellen's current desires present an exposition of Giele's cross-
over theme and McGuigan's "braid of threads." Ellen is flexible and
adaptable enough, at least in her thinking, to consider a crossover of
roles, leaving a high-level career to move to the role of an upper-
middle-class homemaker with the leisure to sew, play the piano, to
finally read "the whole of Proust." She is no longer satisfied with a
long commute, but wants to walk to a job that is involving, but not a
serious career with the implications of climbing the career ladder.
Ellen wants to pick up neglected aspects of herself in music, sports,
domestic pursuits, and reading.

When asked how she had matured, Ellen replied that she is "nicer
now . . . more appreciative of those who are different . . . more cur-
ious about people and things . . . Isn't that what adulthood means? Con-
cern for others." Finally she has recognized the confines of sameness.
A major change, she points out, is her increased curiosity about people
and things. She explains this shift, related to her personal life
theme, as having come "about through living, not through my work." She
refers to an intellectual transformation that occurred when she was
thirty-one and spent a year in a special program at a large university.

Ellen's values have not varied much since college, but have "surfaced." She continues to treasure friendship, integrity, honesty, and obeying rules. Interjecting a comment that everyone needs a rebellious period, she says that hers was in high school, but she realizes that for some people it does not come until forty or forty-five. A certain "in-built, daily behavior and order" is requisite for Ellen's comfort. She appreciates those who have large goals and achieve them although she does not. The only one to mention it, Ellen values her country.

For Ellen there was a deep loss ten years ago when her mother died, and a major transition and gain eight years ago when she married. This period represents the time of principal upheaval in her adult life. About her mother, she at first said little, just that they had had a good relationship, "a normal mother-daughter relationship. She was not my best friend, but we had wonderful times together. She had a great sense of humor." Later Ellen confessed to missing her mother a great deal, and added that losing her was "devastating." Of her relatively recent marriage, she smiled and said it is "great," but not always easy. Ellen, who lost her father at two, grew up in an extended family and enjoys having a number of people around, but admits it is hard to have to often put someone else first. Although it is tempting to link Ellen's mother's death and her marriage two years later, there is no data to support the connection.

Asked how she had changed, in what ways she had matured, Fay first answered that she always wanted to "make positive change, but I've narrowed down. I realize I can't lick the whole world, but I can create change." Fay refers here to her political/public service life, where she sees herself as increasingly pragmatic, less idealistic. Encouraged

to talk more specifically and personally, Fay says, "To be happy, I have to do my own thing. I have a weird marriage. [Husband] and I each do our own thing now." She recalls years of therapy and efforts to reach her husband, and is pleased that she can dismiss some of that now. The years 1968 to 1976 were years of sorrow and despair, with losses of older family members, a severe depression for Fay and serious problems with one of her children. She believes that is all behind her now and celebrated being fifty--once she was reminded that it was her birthday. "When I turned fifty, I thought it was beautiful. I'm having a ball!" As she has become more realistic in her notion of how one can contribute to society, Fay has become increasingly resigned in her personal life. She accepts her relationship with her husband, and "I accept many things I don't like in my child's behavior and attitudes." In the interview she said, "I could never reject my child, could you?" Now, in point of fact, she and her child seem to be embarked on a rapproachement after ten years of strife.

When asked how she got through the bad years, Fay shrugged and said she did the best she could. This attitude, expressed as "I toughed it out" or "I hung in there, what else could I do?" was apparent in several of the women. They accepted, they coped, or "muddled through." Details of what was involved in that process are missing. Perhaps these women find it unworthy and unproductive to dwell on life's painful experiences. Cynthia said, in talking of the hardest period in her life, "Life is like that, but it isn't really what happens to you in life, because I don't have one friend who hasn't had a hard time in her life, problems with children or something that would break your heart,

but what's really important is how you survive it, and how you make these things—I mean, they always hurt you . . . you have to be very insensitive or stupid not to have the pain, but if you can incorporate this into your life and make it a positive experience . . . But you're a fool if you don't think everybody else has pain, too."

In this discussion of life's pain is another example of the non-blame point of view mentioned earlier. Even Fay, who has had little support during terrible times, does not condemn others or herself in a facile way. What does facing life's tragedies and making them into positive experiences signify? Is it a mark of the expansion of caring and responsibility to this necessity? Is it the accepting and coping and compromising that is part of maturity? Is it a way to turn feelings of helplessness and passivity into mastery? There is obviously no simple answer, but it is worthwhile to observe Fay's compromise. While she appears the most isolated of the women and lacking in intimacy, she is highly functional in some areas. The least satisfied in her close personal relationships, she is the most exhuberant of the women in talking of volunteer activities, and her "battery rechargers," singing in choir and chorus, and stamp collecting. Of course, it must be observed that Fay may not be as well off as she reports, and that she may live as she does at great psychological expense.

Barbara found the question about change hard to answer: "That's tough. I don't know what to say." She did go on to say that she was the same, just "grown-up," and that she had gotten over her shyness soon after college when she was first on her own. When asked specifically in what ways she had matured, she repeated, "I just grew up, like

children grow up." In response to the observation that children's growth is marked by certain attainments such as size, skills, increased ability to reason and so on, Barbara said that she does not think differently, but she has learned to cope, to handle things, that she is "on an even keel" now and that was not always true. She did not explain further what coping meant for her and denied that she was ever moody.

Barbara values her immediate family, her children, and her husband, "and education, living well, living a nice, good life, being able to travel, things like that." Barbara denies any ambitions, saying, "I'm a housewife and I'm glad."

In recounting ambitions, only Barbara and Fay report no regrets. Fay's reply is questionable as she contradicts herself, first acknowledging that she wanted to be an engineer and then negating the wish later. The rest all admitted that there were things they did not do that they wished they had. None seemed particularly surprised or self-congratulatory about their accomplishments. Rather, they were matter-of-fact. Perhaps this constitutes another instance of the nonblame/noncredit attitude. Though there was cognizance of the influence of the times on ambition, the lack of opportunity for particular choices in 1952 was mentioned only by Ellen. And even she considers her career choice to have been predominantly a personal responsibility. Ambition, seen as not very different for men as for women, was viewed primarily as an individual matter. While the sociocultural context is not completely ignored, it is only vaguely acknowledged as a determinant.

Unable or unwilling to expand on her experience of changing or being changed, Barbara emerges most clearly as a complex, reflective

person when she talks of her older sister, a recently recovering alcoholic. About this sister, who lives in the same city, Barbara says, "She has recovered but she has not forgiven me, probably never will, because I'm okay and she's not. . . . She blames everyone else for her problems." When her sister's drinking caused a great uproar for the whole family eight years ago, it jarred Barbara into "thinking about things, looking back. It made me stop and think and take stock of everything. I realized what a good life I have . . . If I complain, now my kids say you sound just like Aunt _____." In response to my asking how two sisters turned out so dissimilar, Barbara replied that they were "different types." She regards her sister as "selfish and ambitious," with a need to control her children and everyone and everything. When her children began to break away in their teens, "she could not let go, she could not cope." Even now that she has improved, she does not communicate with her husband or anyone else. It is almost as if Barbara and her sister are opposite sides of a coin. Their unlikeness, at least from Barbara's point of view, is striking when Barbara discusses, in the next section, what she wants to pass on to her children.

### E. The Experience of Growing Older

Cynthia stated, "I think the only drawback to middle age is that the next step is being old. I think middle age is not bad at all. I don't even mind getting older if I thought my health were not going to deteriorate. If I could keep up the activities and the things I enjoy doing the rest of my life, then I don't care if I'm 150, but you know

you're not and . . . . I think the health thing is the key to the whole thing."

This sentiment is echoed by all the women in the generally optimistic, but realistic, assessments of the experience of growing older. Alice says the bad part is having less physical stamina, but considers the present the best time of her life. Having her older children leave was "wonderful." She and her husband have more time together, "can hear each other for a change," can enjoy a "second honeymoon." As to a fantasy of herself as an old person, she says, "The feminist writers would think it pathological, but I would like to be like my mother and grandmother. My grandmother died at ninety-one after an active life. She was delightful. She loved people." Laughing, Alice explained she had a comparison, "a way not to be." Her paternal grandmother was "Just the opposite--morose, introverted, miserable, unfriendly, talented, but rigid. She wanted friends, but didn't know how to make them."

Alice would like to teach or pass on to her children or other people's children her values, especially her religious faith. Teaching these values has been essential enough that Alice has continued as a Sunday school instructor through the years, despite not liking particularly to teach children, and "not being very gifted at it." Asked if she had reviewed her life recently, Alice commented that she had and imagined everyone did at this point in their lives. With her youngest child driving, and knowing that her ninety-year-old mother-in-law "cannot live forever," she has contemplated having more time for

herself and being free to return to the painting she gave up soon after her marriage.

Growing older is positive in Barbara's eyes. Her children will be educated and "settling down soon" and then she and her husband can do what they want, "come and go as we please, travel." In contrast to doing what other people expect when you are young, Barbara says, "You can call your own shots, do what you want to do when you're older." Barbara has no fantasy of herself as an old woman. She laughs and says, "But I don't mind getting old." Although she has had a hip replacement, she considers her aches and pains "a minor inconvenience."

Asked what she wanted to pass on or teach or leave, Barbara, responding in current terms rather than future, stated that she wants to teach her children to be "kind and good, not selfish, to be 'good people.'" She wants them to "help people when they see a need, be concerned and aware, kind and good. You know what I mean." She hopes they will have feelings for other people, that they will be able to understand not just their family and friends, but anyone within their purview. When the researcher proposed that these wishes contrasted directly with Barbara's description of her sister, she at first did not understand. After reviewing her comments that her sister did not care about others, that she was not aware and understanding of feelings and needs of other people, but, conversely, was self-involved, selfish, and controlling, Barbara agreed that she wants the opposite for her children. It was then that she added sadly, "She [sister] doesn't communicate with her husband . . . or anyone" and confided that she missed being close to her.

The priority and power of attachment and of separation are revealed in Barbara's comments about her sister and her children. She exhibits profound feelings of caring for them, and honors the sadness that resulted from the psychological loss (separation from) of that sister, although it is camouflaged by a laconic, matter-of-fact style. Barbara's obvious sincerity in wishing her children to be alert and understanding and responsive to other's needs included a surprising concern for extra-familial people. Thus, for Barbara, as for all the women, while separation and loss inevitably arise in dealing with growing older and death, attachment and caring remain essential elements in their grappling with aging.

About the good and bad parts of getting older so far, Cynthia ventures,

> I don't like not being as physically hardy as I was, but I like very much having more freedom and knowing myself a little better, or thinking I know myself, which is more important really. And being never rich, but all of a sudden feeling comfortable. If somebody said, "don't you have everything you want?" I'd say, of course I don't have everything I want, but I don't want for so much anymore.

Not having a fantasy of herself as an old person, Cynthia says, "I don't really see myself. I know it's going to happen, but I don't know, because I don't know what I'll look like or what my health will be like."

Asked what she wanted to teach or leave or pass on, Cynthia replies,

> If you're speaking of personal accomplishment, I would like to think that I had left the world a little better for having been here, a speck more civilized. I would like to think that I would be leaving three nice people in the world who have some accomplishment--not famous or rich--but who would contribute. . . . We're [Cynthia and husband] both basically rather strong, middle-class people. Our families were people who didn't have real far

up to go but they wanted to do a little better . . . My father
. . . his father was so mad at him for going to medical school
that he left him out of his will . . . My grandmother on my
mother's side came from nice people, but she wanted her children
to do a lot better. She saw to it that all four of her children
finished college and her son even got his Ph.D. And I would like
to think I could do just a little speck better. I don't feel I
really have. I don't think I've done worse. But I would like to
think I could do just a speck better, and I don't quite see how I
can . . . because I don't think my children have yet. I don't
think they've bettered the generation. And I don't think I have
either and I don't . . . maybe I shouldn't expect us to.

Cynthia is unsure that she can pass on to her children the tradi-

tion of her and her husband's families. She puzzles over her children

and her contribution to their not having the same sense of responsibil-

ity to parents and the world, or the same standards, as she and their

father have. Growing older has given her a new ability to sustain this

uncertainty about her children and about other matters in her life.

I used to think you had to categorize everything, and it should
be all worked out and organized, but when you're older you real-
ize it's not that way, so if it doesn't fall into place, then set
it on the back burner and maybe it will indirectly fall into
place when you least expect it. Sometimes you get into a cul-
de-sac, but there's no use beating your head against the wall.

In contrast to Cynthia, Diane has a vivid fantasy of herself as an

old woman, modeled on a little old lady she has seen riding her three-

wheeled bike around town. There are many "elderly, independent, alert,

sympathetic, older women who are good role models" for Diane, who men-

tions nothing bad about growing older. Rather she refers to an increase

in freedom to do more things she enjoys. She is physically stronger

than ever before and relieved at feeling less concerned about her

appearance. The need to be attractive, essential in the southern

upbringing of women, is less urgent for Diane, who declares, "I can be

what I am with less pretense now that I am older." Illustrating and

expanding this observation, Diane invokes a life process.

The first part was building up layers, trying out different
things, and different ways to be. Then you reach a point where
you start a stripping-away process. You find out what needs to
stay and what was just added on, what you want to discard.
Then gradually you get back to what you really are.

For Diane, then, growing older has involved a continuing search
for what she calls "her center." She finds the present a wonderful
time in her life, and recounts with annoyance a gynecologist telling
her a few years ago that he could tell from examining her that she was
getting older, that she "was drying up . . . . That was a terrible thing
to say. This should be a wonderful time in a woman's life, a freeing
time, a time to try new activities" or to return to interests that have
been put aside during what Diane calls the "process years." For her,
those years were full of mothering and being a wife to a man who was
absorbed in school and training for his profession. Now she affirms
that she can, without guilt, lead her own life, develop a lifestyle
that is syntonic for her, that is her "way."

Asked what she wanted to teach or pass on, Diane replies that it
would be similar to her goal in teaching special education classes
where "the core of my teaching" is to support the children in "finding
some joy in whatever they are doing." Diane was silent for several
minutes, considering the question further. With some hesitation, speak-
ing softly, she offered, "There are so many dimensions in the world that
I can only hope my own children find one that is satisfying to them."

"No, I don't have a visual image, but I think of myself as old and
fairly healthy and having a pretty good time. I don't dread it,"
said Ellen. Her only fear is loneliness, and she plans to protect her-
self "from loneliness and dreariness by staying busy and having friends
and interests." Referring back to an earlier mention of life crisis,

Ellen averred that the crisis for her would be losing her husband. The only time in the interview that she showed strong affect, she had tears when she spoke of how terrifying it was to think of that possibility. She smiled and added, "I guess I would handle it, like everything else, by keeping busy."

The good parts of growing older so far for Ellen have been not having to worry as much about what people think and being married.

> Although I still do that, worry, think about what people think because I want people to think well of me. But I think you're not always "imagining," which is not necessarily a conscious thing. Most young people are so aware of themselves, self-conscious, turned in on themselves, so me, me, me . . . And I like being married, but it is not always easy. There are the little things like preferring to get in bed with a tuna fish sandwich, but realizing [husband] enjoys a nice dinner at the dinner table.

Always having to consider someone else is hard, but "it is nice not having to plan a social life." Ellen finds this the happiest period in her life. She muses, "About growing older, I would like to become more physically, more outdoor oriented. That's an image I have. I fantasize myself on the tennis court or zipping down the mountain."

Asked about what she would like to pass on, to teach, Ellen says her advice to young people would be a favorite quotation of hers, "May God give you not peace, but glory." Although she is perfectly satisfied to have peace, she would not recommend it for young people, nor ideally for herself. "There is so much out there, so many things to do that I think to get out there and do them is so admirable."

Fay has no visual image of herself as an old person but hopes to remain physically and mentally active. Ideally, she would want "to just drop dead," but believes she would be a fighter even if she had a

long illness. Fay reports nothing unfortunate about growing older.
Generally she sees herself as more direct with people, more able to
say "no" to unwanted tasks.

Asked what she would like to pass on, Fay evaluates her own chil-
dren. The older child she sees as slowly becoming less self-centered
and more convinced of the virtues of involvement outside one's self.
The younger child, more like herself, is observant, tuned into people,
"can read them." To these children and those of others Fay would want
to leave her belief in the priority of concern for others.

All the women concurred that growing older included some reviewing
of one's life. The retrospection ranged from Alice's matter-of-fact
assumption that all reexamine their lives during the middle years to
Diane's ongoing, intense exploration. Both in therapy and with her
close male friend, Diane has considered her life experiences, discover-
ing that she always tried "to make it work, take a middle ground to
such a degree that I don't risk the extremes . . . his [male friend's]
is the other way. Watching him think through a problem, talking through
stuff helped with my problem in talking. . . . He can create space for
crazy thoughts."

Like Diane, Cynthia divulges a perennial interest in the past,
reaching back to her grandparents' and her mother's youth, as well as
her own childhood.

In recollecting and taking stock of her life around her sister's
bout with alcoholism, Barbara recounts that she realized just how good
her life had been and said, "If I died tomorrow I would've had a good
life."

Having spent a number of years painfully reconsidering the past, Fay says she now chooses to live one day at a time, directing her thoughts and energy, as much as she is able, to daily activities.

Ellen reports she has looked back, but it was not easy for her, although it "probably would be good for me." She wishes she had more ability to think of why she does or has done things, more interest in her motivation.

While the fashion and content of each person's life review is personal and idiosyncratic, that every woman thought about the sweep of her life experiences is noteworthy. The conscious awareness of the endeavor further informs theories of which processes are likely to occur at certain times of life, and hints at how developmental tasks are given meaning as they are lived out in individual circumstances.

In two other areas of "growing older" the women displayed notable commonalities. Overall they expressed in this section, or in other parts of the interview, recent good feelings about less concern with what other people think about them or want from them and more willingness to be direct in interpersonal exchanges.

More striking was the similarity of what each woman chose to leave or pass on to succeeding generations. In all cases the women selected to leave for posterity their personal values. For Alice it was her religious faith; for Barbara her wish that her children be "kind and good, not selfish"; for Cynthia, a belief in progress, moral and material, for each generation; for Diane, individual joy; for Ellen, the search for glory; and for Fay, the principle of contributing to others.

The unambivalent wish to leave to one's children and following generations one's personal moral values connotes a belief in the worthiness and permanence of those principles and standards. The unselfconscious certainty mirrored in this stance is remarkable in the face of the rapidly shifting, ambiguous world of the 1980s. While living pragmatic lives, these women honor the dignity and stability of their beliefs, treasuring them as timeless and enduring.

## F.  Thoughts of Death

The six women all have had thoughts of their own deaths. Each has faced death through the loss of at least one parent; none of the women has a father living. Ellen lost her father when she was two years old, Barbara and Diane the year they graduated from college, and Cynthia, Alice and Fay in the intervening years. Fay's mother died when Fay was fourteen, a loss still painful and unresolved. Barbara and Ellen, who both lost their mothers within the last ten years, said they had been close to their mothers. Though they missed them, both commented that they were grateful that their mothers did not suffer long illnesses. Alice, Cynthia, and Diane have mothers who, in their eighties, are fairly lively, independent women, and all express warm feelings toward them. Only Alice lives in the same community and describes her mother as a role model. Cynthia says, "I'm real fond of my mother, but she is too old and gets a little confused and she really doesn't understand me. She's a dear and I feel very loyal to her, but no." (She does not confide in her mother.) Diane's mother takes care of herself, "is an independent lady."

No longer frightened of her own death, Alice said that her charis-
matic religious experience had reassured her. Although she had been
unaware of it, she had had an unrealized, underlying fear of death
which she had not faced before. She added that some years ago she sus-
tained a loss she has never recovered from completely. Her seventeen-
year-old nephew, who was like a son, was mugged and killed in their
small town. This dreadful experience still saddens her.

Barbara announced that she would "die happy if her children were
settled," had finished school, and were working and embarked on their
own lives.

Cynthia associates to thoughts of death in talking of growing old.

I was terribly fond of my mother's friends when I was growing
up and I still see a lot of them, and it grieves me mightily to
see people who were attractive and happy growing older. This
frightens me and I think it's like dying, that none of us ever
think . . . We know it's going to happen to us, but we think, I'm
not going to worry about that 'til it happens, and I'm good at
that. Not worrying about something 'til it happens.

Asked specifically about death, Cynthia brushes it off saying, "I'd
stop and say, 'Tennis anyone? Who me?'" While Cynthia has thought of
death with feelings of sadness and fear, she tends to put the whole
thing out of her mind as best she can.

Diane grappled with the possibility of death a few years ago when
she hemorrhaged and her physician recommended a hysterectomy. She
reports doing "decisive thinking" about the importance of the wholeness
of her body. "I questioned how it would affect my ability to produce
as an artist if I had a hysterectomy, if I lost a vital part of my
body," and concluded it was crucial for her to remain physically intact.
She was more willing to risk cancer than "sacrifice my potential as an

artist just to be alive." The episode signaled not a tumor, but a dramatic, early onset of menopause. Pleased that she refused surgery, Diane believes she established at that time important guidelines and standards for living her life.

Having recently attended a friend's funeral, Ellen said "[husband] and I keep saying we should sit down and talk about what we want to do with our things, what the other will do. We wouldn't have trouble doing it if we would sit down and do it, but we keep pushing it away." She goes on to say,

> I think I would be scared to death of dying. I can't imagine meeting it with such equanimity, the way our friend did. She knew for six months she was going to die. She planned how to do things, planned what would happen with her personal possessions, planned her funeral and lived alone for most of that time with two cats. I don't see how she stayed at night by herself and faced dying. I think, one, I might do better than I think or maybe [friend] had some sort of inner faith and security that I don't have, but I think the thought that you knew you were going to die would be very tough.

Fay conceded that it is "difficult to conceive of the world going on without you," and stated that she had not thought of death recently, "not really." Then she murmured, "Maybe that's one reason I keep busy." She continued on to discuss the importance of not being ruled by the past or the future, focusing on "time limitations that make me work harder."

Of all the women Fay elaborated the least about death. Unlike Alice with her faith, Diane with her art, Barbara with her children, Cynthia with thoughts of her mother's friends, and Ellen with her musings about her friend, Fay did not associate to questions about death. Perhaps finding them too painful, she banishes thoughts of dying or

death. She has suffered the most losses both through death and dis-
appointment. At fourteen she lost her mother after a long illness,
fifteen years ago she lost her father, father-in-law, and aunt, and, as
mentioned, she has sustained psychological loss of her husband, and
to some extent, one of her two children.

The contrast between Fay's response to a discussion of death and
those of the other women raises questions about reactive patterns stim-
ulated by "normal, expectable" circumstances of life, including death,
versus reactions arising from traumatic experiences, especially if
repeated and unresolved as with Fay. The puzzle is further complicated,
of course, by the personal meaning given to specific life crises, and
the individual's understanding of the string of losses, the "bad luck."
While there are no readily available answers to solve these perplexing
questions or help clarify Fay's responses, the patterns are noteworthy
for later investigation.

## G. Reactions to the Interview

This section includes the women's reactions to the interview, the
researcher's reactions to the participants and their responses, and the
researcher's personal involvement in and reaction to the study.

In reply to questioning about reaction to the interview, each
woman revealed herself, in content and in interpersonal style, much as
she had during the rest of the interview. Often her personal life theme
was identifiable in some form. All gave thoughtful and intelligent
answers. Even Barbara, the least cooperative, was generous in her own
fashion.

Lively, forceful, and straightforward, Alice joined with the researcher in a mutual effort. She was clear and to the point, her voice rising and falling as she expressed herself. Uninhibited in showing feelings, she chose descriptive terms, as when she laughed and said, "I have an absolute horror of sounding like a Pollyanna," but her life is happy and fulfilled. Her theme is reaffirmed as she says that she has found meaning in her life. A sign of Alice's openness was that she left the researcher feeling like a splendid interviewer and with the sense that for her, as well as for Alice, it had been "fun."

As to Barbara, her "no comment," typically laconic, was followed by her assessment that she was not helpful because she could not answer the questions. After being reassured, she brightened a bit and said she had a newspaper article she wanted the researcher to read. The editorial deplored the narcissism and selfishness of modern society, as does Barbara. The interview was difficult for both Barbara and the researcher, who felt forced to work very hard, torn by wondering how much to probe, and consequently discouraged and fatigued. The suggested theme that Barbara "just goes along" or "goes through the motions" reappeared here in what she said and in the slightly sad or depressed affect. However, just as the indifference and constriction were offset in several ways earlier during the interview (humor, discussion of her sister, wishes for her children), they were altered here by the acknowledgment of her meager participation and by her sharing with me something she considered valuable, the article she had brought from her hometown newspaper.

Cynthia rewarded the researcher by stating that she had said some things she would say to no one else, not even her husband.

> You think you don't want to talk about yourself, but once you get started you get wound up. You find you say things you don't know you're thinking or you don't know you've experienced. I think it's very good. I really enjoyed this a great deal more than the questionnaire.

Restless and nervous at the beginning of the process, Cynthia tried to draw the researcher into answering the questions first. Later she relaxed and concentrated on answering for herself. However, to use one of her expressions, "only a fool" would believe that Cynthia was entirely open, since she had emphasized throughout the interview the contrast between her apparent extroversion and her tendency to keep private her inner feelings and thoughts.

The interview with Diane was absorbing and lengthy. It was rewarding to hear this exceedingly articulate woman tell of her battle to speak, to talk so others can know her. Still working towards that goal, Diane hoped the researcher had not been bored. She worried that some ideas had not been clearly expressed. For her the interview had been arduous at times.

> Words are so obscure. I see what you're doing. Your thesis of learning that happens in these years of our lives. I wish that I had had more awareness of that when I was younger. I think it would have lessened my pain. And I think, I hope, something of that came out of this for you to communicate to others.

Referring to the belief that learning is a lifelong process not conffined to youth, Diane supported the researcher's efforts as carefully and sensitively as she had responded to all the preceding questions.

Ellen confided that later she would probably think of the single most significant thing which she had failed to mention in the interview.

She wondered if she had answered the questions or if she had just "talked on, in a self-indulgent way," and she admitted that she felt a "little embarrassed that I didn't have more important things to say." Pleasant, somewhat formal or distant, Ellen was conscientious through- out. She reassured me that I had contributed to her having a clearer picture of herself and commented that she understood quite well my wish to give something to her and the other women in return for their partic- ipation. Likening our similar "Victorian" upbringings, she said that she too has a strong sense of responsibility and is "imbued with the Puritan ethic."

The interview with Fay, the first one, was in many ways the most touching and unsettling for the researcher. Saying that she approached it as a "learning game, an opportunity to learn something" about her- self and about the interviewer, Fay was at first totally optimistic and enthusiastic. Given a hint that she could speak personally opened up painful, sad feelings. In answer at the end to the question of how she had experienced the interview, Fay replied that it was "comparable to psychotherapy, sometimes painful, but I enjoyed learning about both myself and others. Maybe I got carried away with it." Fay is the only one of the women who has written the researcher since the reunion. Her several long confidential letters suggest that the interview had a sig- nificant impact on this woman, who is likely the loneliest and most needy of the six.

Being the investigator in this study of middle-aged women has been a powerful experience for me, because I was and am one of them, in feeling as well as in the reality of the shared college years. The

women responded to me and I to them with a caring and responsibility that would not have existed to the same extent had we not been classmates who recall a special time and world which remains now only in our memories.

At the time of the reunion my reactions were intense. I was both exhilarated and exhausted, much more so than during or after therapeutic hours where I participate as the therapist. The fatigue resembled that which follows exciting and frightening physical adventure when I have pushed myself beyond my normal endurance. Next ensued feelings of mild depression marked by a certain withdrawal. For a period of days, perhaps even weeks, I was in the thrall of the reunion, a little "spaced out," not thinking clearly, but captured by feelings, memories, flashes from college days and from the reunion weekend. When it occurred to me that I had no interest in listening to the tapes of the interviews or in thinking about them in a coherent way, I wondered if I was suffering from concern over my lack of theoretical underpinnings or from being a neophyte researcher, feeling unprotected without my usual neutral stance. While both of these issues pertained to my reaction, my hunch then, and assumption now, is that the intensity of my reaction related to my personal involvement with the participants. Not only were these women my age, in many ways like me and in some different, they were my old classmates. They evoked in me my past, and questioned my present, much as I had theirs.

How much was/am I like/unlike the class of '52, at least those who responded to the questionnaire and those who took part in the interviews? Like most of them, I was born and raised in a middle-class

family in the South. My mother was a housewife, my father a country boy who went to the city to become a doctor. Like most, I had several siblings, had gone to private school, and do not remember having a life plan. Being raised in a cosmopolitan city and educated at an unusual secondary school made my background somewhat distinctive, but the single significant difference was my religion. I was one of two Jewish young women in a class of Christians, predominantly Protestant. While I was clearly aware of the religious difference at the time, I do not remember that it created a hardship or a feeling of isolation for me.

My interest in the college and my class was reawakened a few years ago when my older daughter moved East after college and met some of my old classmates, who welcomed her into their homes like a long-missed daughter. When I asked my daughter what she thought of my southern friends of thirty years ago, she said, "Oh, Mom, I love them. They're just like you!" I was aghast that my shrewd twenty-two-year-old, Berkeley-reared, female off-spring likened me to women who have lived stable, traditional lives, while I have moved across the continent, become "liberated" and a professional career woman, divorced, remarried, and once was even registered with the Peace and Freedom Party.

In retrospect, after much thought and the involvement in the study, I tend to agree with my daughter and remain impressed not with the importance of the differences, but with the depth of the similarities. My first inkling of the strong connection that held after so many years came as I addressed the questionnaires. I had the peculiar sensation that I could envision each girl as I remembered her looking and being at seventeen or twenty. I reexperienced the distinctive feelings of living

in close contact in those beautiful, if antiquated, dormitories. My
adolescent agonies and delights stirred inside my mind and soul. I
could smell spring in Virginia and remember misery, existential and
concrete. When the responses to the questionnaire poured in, I was
delighted, stunned and somewhat awed as I grabbed each one from the
mailbox. Realizing that my old classmates had taken me and my question-
naire seriously, I was mesmerized by their telling me about themselves
and their lives. I was impressed that they treasure and value much that
I do--family, especially children, education, being conscientious and
responsible, and reading. So while there are differences in religious
and social and political outlook, there remain essential personal paral-
lels.

Of course, not all answered and some responses were sparse, but
many were wonderfully generous and gratifying. In reading the completed
forms, I felt humility and a growing sense of responsibility to the
women, some of whom had written on backs of pages after covering all the
fronts. Over half of the respondents included personal notes. The
small size of the school, the socioeconomic class of the students, the
fact that it is a woman's college in the South, all possibly explain
the positive response. While there is no way to measure the importance
and influence of these factors, they deserve mentioning.

In the weeks before the reunion I had many thoughts, and antici-
pated everything from envy on the part of others to stage fright and
blocking on my part when it came time for me to give my report on the
questionnaire to the class. My preparations reflect how I viewed the
group and my relation to it. First of all, I gave profound consideration

to my clothes. It meant a great deal to me to "fit in," to be appropriate. It was also a self-test to see if I remembered correctly how it was and is back there. The other part of preparation involved planning the best report I could, practicing the presentation so that I could comfortably deviate from my notes and interact informally if that seemed more appropriate. In retrospect, I felt that I was, and wanted to be, like my classmates.

The question for consideration is how my involvement with the participants influenced the collection and analysis of the data. While I see this as unanswerable in any specific manner, I can say that I believe the interviews reflect mutual caring, but also a mutual respect that lent itself to the honest pursuit, if not the discovery, of truth. This belief does not resolve the dilemma, found in all clinical study, of understanding in substantive  terms the meaning of the relationship between the inquirer and the respondent. Undoubtedly, the personal relationship colored the quality of the interaction as well as my interpretation of the results of the interviews. My hope is that my consciousness of the complications of human interpersonal experience provided a safeguard against distortion of what I heard. Further, I trust that this awareness, arising from my daily clinical work, allowed me to use myself as a sensitive sounding board, alert to the inevitable intricacies of human interaction.

In this chapter I have used the women's words to understand their lives and experiences. I have noted themes of interest to me and relevant literature. From this process of analysis and writing, the concept of maturity emerged as a linchpin of this study. The next step was to

present it as a cohesive element, to use the concept in a way that would make sense of the themes and categories both theoretically and clinically.

In the next chapter I discuss theoretical considerations relevant to the concept of maturity as demonstrated by the women interviewed. I also consider the concept in more general theoretical terms and specifically as it relates to theory of women's development.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION:  THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND

THE CONCEPT OF MATURITY

In this chapter I will discuss observations made throughout the
study in the light of the concept of maturity as an issue in women's
development and will consider the theoretical and practical implica-
tions.

## A.  Reflections on the Findings and the Use
## of Theoretical Models

The findings in this study reveal that there is neither a single,
overriding issue that defines the development of the women interviewed,
nor one overarching construct that explains everything about them.
This perception befits the subject matter, for when viewing lives,
there is simply no one theory that tells all or even a part of the story
perfectly.

In psychology and sociology, efforts to synthesize findings into
holistic theories or to discover primary explanations bring attendant
difficulties along with achievements.  One example is the tendency to
reductionistic thinking in the clinical application of psychoanalytic
theory, with its childhood model of development emphasizing Oedipal con-
flict and resolution.  Here the meaning and quality of adult personality

and behavior are often explained primarily by origins in past childhood fantasy and experience.

Another example is Levinson's rigid, all-encompassing age-and-stage model, where adult developmental tasks and modes are depicted as fixed and inexorable if proper growth is to take place. Both this and the psychoanalytic model have been roundly and justifiably criticized not only for attempting to provide total explanations, but for being primarily male models. Levinson's model seems especially inappropriate for understanding women, whose lives and daily routines are not usually as orderly or predictable as those of the men in Levinson's work (see McGuigan, 1980, p. xii). However, even the newer research on women's development by women presents another problem of perspective. In giving one focus or one explanation, dialectical thinking is forsaken in the effort to promote a new idea. For example, in Gilligan's original and insightful work on the importance of attachment in women's development she seems to lose sight of the equal significance of separation and ignores the intertwining of the attachment-separation polarity.

Although it is tempting to unify and to simplify, I believe there can be no single theory or explanatory model. A multi-model approach and the ability to shift perspectives are essential in the effort to understand and appreciate the complexities of human development.

With the above statements about theoretical models in mind, the question devolves upon what can be learned from this study of ordinary women of a particular class, race, and age. I believe the data which illuminate aspects of these women's lives can suggest concepts relevant to other populations of middle-aged women. These ideas, which need

testing in diverse populations, are set forth in an effort to inform further our theoretical and practical knowledge and understanding.

### B. The Perspective of this Study and the Selection of the Concept of Maturity

From its inception, the approach of this study has been phenomenological. My interest has been in examining and describing what the women participants told me first in writing and then in face-to-face interviews. The circumstances of the research situation, the occasion of a college reunion, determined the cross-sectional nature of the work. Limited to one opportunity for in-person investigation, I focused on questions related to how the women saw themselves and their lives at the moment of the interview. Everything I learned from them I view as a reflection of their current status both in their inner lives and in their external worlds.

Responses to the questionnaire first alerted me to the women's view of themselves as mature. A process was set in motion by this recognition of their view of themselves as having matured, of being mature, of feeling mature. It led to my asking them to tell me in the interviews precisely what they had in mind, to define what maturity and being mature meant to them. Throughout the following literature search, the analysis of the interviews, and the writing-up of the findings, I continued to contemplate the issue of maturity. Out of this process has evolved its choice as the umbrella concept for organizing the selected material and the concomitant clarification of the perspective of this study.

After completing the interviews, but before listening to and anal-
yzing the tapes, I conducted a literature search which revealed that the
burgeoning research and theory in adult development of women is in a
state of flux and rapid change. Some of the innovative work depicts
women as indeed different from men in certain aspects of their develop-
ment. It proposes that issues of separation and independence seen in
present theory as primary paths to maturity, identity, and mental
health, may not be similarly applicable to women as to men. Instead
they emphasize attachment as a major theme for women and trace another
line of development centering on relationship and care rather than indi-
viduation and independence.

Discovering this category of developmental research and thinking
was encouraging and stimulating, as it provided a viable theoretical
framework for my findings. I have no question that the women in my
study have lived lives of relationship and care. Appearing quite func-
tional, they have a strong sense of who they are and how they fit into
the world. And interestingly enough, they have said that they are
mature.

Early in my perusal of the literature a sentence in Gilligan's work
caught my attention and remained in the back of my mind. Gilligan
wrote,

> To expand the conception of adulthood that retrospectively
> shapes a developmental account (hanging, always, as Piaget saw,
> from its vertex of maturity), the study of women must begin
> with a descriptive or ethnographic approach to admit new con-
> structs to the understanding of what constitutes maturity
> (1982a, p. 89).

Although I am still perplexed by the actual meaning of this convoluted
sentence, it continues to intrigue me. It has led me to ponder

seriously the Piagetian position of understanding development from the apex of adulthood rather than from the vantage point of childhood. Understanding and interpreting the present (the adult) from the perspective of the present (the verbal report of the adult's behavior and experiences) takes on greater significance (for me). Obviously individuals' current views color their past history, just as the past influences the present. The import of the concept, however, lies in the acknowledgment that what the adult reflects is the culmination of that person's development to that point in her life. This perspective leads naturally to Gilligan's recommendation of the descriptive study as a way to an "understanding of what constitutes maturity" and an essential method for generating relevant theoretical concepts. Hence, the comment supports this type of research at this point in the life cycle, and even the focus on maturity.

Heartened by the literature and inspired by the women's use of the concept of maturity, I chose the latter as a matrix or point of view from which to discuss ideas and observations drawn from this study. While I do not consider it an overarching concept, the rubric provides a useful framework for numerous observations made in the previous chapters, including the pivotal issues of attachment and separation.

## C.  Maturity as Viewed by the Participants

From a common-sense vantage point, maturity can be considered synonymous with growth and change over the years. The women's views in this study encompass both a cognitive, self-reflective evaluation and a more subjective, affectual feeling or experience of themselves

as mature. Spontaneously, they asserted that they had acquired a feeling of and a state of maturity through living. Looking back, they deem themselves as immature thirty years ago when they left college, and describe an alteration both within themselves and in relation to others as a natural outcome of their lives. This alteration embodies a variety of changes in a number of areas of their lives. Frequently the consequences are ascribed to experiences both positive and confrontative with close others. While there is the implication that maturity has come about gradually and cumulatively, there is a suggestion not of a finished product, but of much accomplishment and achievement. There is, perhaps, the hint that this point in the life cycle represents a zenith of one stage and also the brink of the next stage, that of growing old.

The women speak of themselves as having matured, being mature, and feeling mature. They describe a change over time from an earlier period when they saw themselves as immature. Now they observe themselves as being, behaving, acting in an adult manner. They allude to an inner feeling or sense or experience of maturity.

Maturity, as it is used here, includes a perception of one's self as changing and having changed over time in certain individual traits and as a whole person. Involved is the subjective sense of the self as grown-up, of having the identity of an adult woman. Maturity is experienced as coming about through inner growth and struggle and external experiences, and is realized both intrapsychically and interpersonally. Following are some examples of how the women use the concept in their descriptions of themselves.

Cynthia's perception of herself as having matured is manifested in her statements that she is more realistic, harder working, and more conscientious. These personal attributes are expressed as modifications rather than transformations of earlier characteristics. Similarly, the other women usually view themselves as not having become radically different in their maturing, but as having changed in degree, direction, or awareness. There is recognition of increasing or lessening or moderation in attitudes and personality features. A number of comments indicate also that their awareness is at a different level, often involving articulation of values and beliefs that might have been vaguely assumed, but only dimly perceived or understood. Alice says that she is more honest, "Not that I was dishonest," but "I often let my fear of hurting others keep me from saying what I meant, and I thought it was so important to keep up a proper front that it got in the way of my relationships." Here Alice demonstrates that she sees herself as having grown in an area of morality, finding that the internal change affects her interpersonal life. At the same time she states that she is more tolerant of everyone's mistakes, hers included. Her earlier wish and expectation that "everyone will do good" has been modified by her own experiences, by understanding and empathizing with "what people are up against."

An example of maturity relating to the whole person rather than to specific traits is seen as Cynthia reflects on herself as no longer "cute," playing roles as a "cheerleader," or "doctor's daughter," or "clinging, dependent wife," but as a woman who looks to herself for "her happiness, pleasure, and sense of accomplishment."

Maturity, marked by the subjective sense of having changed, is illustrated by Diane in her remarks about her "determination over the years to work through this stuff." She speaks of the "slow process that allowed me to detach myself from extreme self-consciousness," that "allowed me to develop as a woman." She speaks eloquently of her lifelong wish to identify as an artist and her realization that only by achieving the self-confidence she now feels about speaking and teaching could she experience that identity. Diane's statements reflect a sense of herself as a mature woman who can at last feel herself a grown woman and an artist.

I have attempted to describe and illustrate aspects of maturity as I saw them emerge from the interviews and the questionnaire. These aspects and their context provide a helpful background for examining a variety of findings central to the women's maturity.

### D. Four Themes of Maturity and Their Implications

The responses of the women suggested a number of motifs significant to this period in their lives. These themes represent a combination of actual clusters of data along with my own schema superimposed. Like the categories in the analysis of the interviews, they divide into separate entities some aspects of human experience which overlap and entwine in conversation and in life. They reflect my concerns and impressions rather than accepted or predetermined concepts or abstractions. Distinguishing the category of "the power of attachment and caring" or "the experience of growing older" from "personal life themes" only helps clarify issues that do not in reality exist separately.

Similarly, the following attempt to discriminate themes identified as "freedom from self-consciousness" and "accepting limitations of self and others" aims not to pigeonhole the responses but to allow for closer scrutiny and a greater comprehension of the feelings and experiences expressed by the women in this study.

## 1. Freedom from Self-Consciousness

All the women stated, in one form or another, that they currently have less concern than previously with how they appear to others and also what others think of them.

This change is expressed by Ellen when she says, "Although I still . . . think about what people think, because I want people to think well of me, but . . . (I'm) not always imaging, which is not necessarily a conscious thing. Most young people are so aware of themselves, self-conscious, turned in on themselves, so me, me, me."

Diane, regarding her physical appearance, comments that she is pleased to be "less worried about what I look like. I don't have to be so attractive, the way southern women are raised to be. I can be what I am with less pretense now that I am older."

While shifts in social roles are a natural outcome of life transitions, diminished self-consciousness also affects roles and role restrictions. All the women except Ellen note that their social life is different now. No longer so interested in being hostesses or going to parties or "keeping up in the local social scene," they talk of enjoying informal activities that do not necessitate the time and energy once expended on planning and carrying out elaborate social rituals.

One suspects that this change may also be related to having already

achieved a desired social status and being secure with one's husband's

success.

Keeping up a front is not important enough to Fay to compensate

for having to "do all the work," socially and physically, when enter-

taining with her emotionally estranged husband. She has given up

couples' social life and interacts more suitably and happily on her own.

Volunteer work, a priority for all the women in the past, no

longer holds the same attraction. Several women reported great relief

when they were able, as a result of their age, to retire from the

rolls of the Junior League. Bored with ladies' meetings and programmed

"doing-good," they prefer to pursue their own particular interests.

Diane spoke to a meaningful change in social role and social life

since her divorce. Freed of her role of "doctor's wife," an onerous

one for her, she has found her own life and friends. "We used to go

only with rich and intellectual people." Now Diane has friends of all

ages, from very young to very old and from all classes and backgrounds.

Her friendships revolve around the myriad activities that interest her.

In this matter of being freer from self-consciousness Diane says now

she "can be what I want"; as Cynthia says, "It's important to be your-

self"; and Ellen says she does "more what I want to do." Fay states,

"I do my own thing" and Barbara sighs with relief that she is no longer

an unwilling captive of women's volunteer organizations.

## 2. Being More Direct with Others

In conjunction with comments that relate to newfound freedom from

self-consciousness, the women raise as an associated issue: their

ability to be more direct both with close others and with people in general. While this change is universal with the women, Alice introduces an interesting aspect in commenting on her change. "I think I am more real than I was. . . . My husband has taught me to be more honest in my relationships with others . . . I used to be too afraid of offending to be myself." Here Alice alludes to a deeper matter than just saying what one thinks or means more directly or clearly. She refers to the distortion of one's own self and feeling about one's self that can be a part of indirectness or avoidance of expressing honest feelings and thoughts.

Fay says that part of being older and feeling adult has been learning to say "No" when she does not want to take on a task or responsibility in her community. Although Fay does not relate this recent ability to an improvement in her relationship with her previously alienated child, one could wonder if her change might have affected positively her behavior and attitude as the mother of a young adult child.

## 3. Doing What I Want versus Pleasing Others

Another motif connected with relationships is what the women express as being less caught up in pleasing other people. Barbara says, "You can call your own shots, do what you want when you're older."

For Cynthia the issue is the more complicated one of being who you are and facing yourself rather than pleasing others. She says, "I used to think that you had to like everybody. That everybody was basically good, that I was running for cheerleader and best all-around all of my life. And all of a sudden you think, now that is ridiculous.

I cannot go through life facing other people; it's far more important that I face myself and my family. I'm not even trying to please them anymore. Not even [husband]. I don't try to please him, I try to work with him."

## 4. Accepting Limitations of Self and Others While Retaining One's Ideals and Values

I extrapolated this theme from various observations made in different parts of the interviews. Each woman dealt at some point with her own constraints or those imposed by her life and the important people in her life. Yet universally and unequivocally they retained their ideals and values, stating the values clearly as part of what they wished to pass on to the next generation.

Alice accepts that she and other people are up against difficult problems and harsh disappointments and losses in life, but she continues to want for herself and others to "do good." Cynthia laments that her children do not have her values, do not want to make themselves and the world a little better than the previous generation did, but she says,

> Life is like that, but it isn't really what happens to you in life, because I don't have one friend who hasn't had a hard time in her life, problems with children or something that would break your heart, but what's really important is how you survive it . . . you have to be very insensitive or stupid not to have the pain, but if you can incorporate this into your life and make it a positive experience

Diane recognizes that she is constrained in relationships with men by her own dependency needs, but she retains her ideals in this area. Ellen says she is content to have settled for a peaceful life, but she honors glory, and recommends the pursuit of superior accomplishments to young people and, ideally, herself. Sadly, Fay accepts

her inability to improve her marriage or to leave it, but she continues striving to bring about "positive change" that will effct the quality of life of less fortunate residents of her community. She thereby carries on her parents' and her own social-moral pledge. Even Barbara, most reluctant to reveal her feelings, admits the disappointment and hurt in the loss of her sister, but preserves through her wishes for her children her values of communicating and caring.

## 5. Some Implications of the Themes

The motifs described thus far evidence growth and change which the women recognize in themselves and view positively. An important consideration is the absence of apparent guilt or feelings of selfishness about these changes, implying a shift toward putting themselves and their wishes in the forefront. Since there is no question that these are traditional women who have led lives of caring and responsibility, it is striking that they view these changes as signs of their maturity.

Accepting the idea that the changes inherent in these themes are constituents of maturity, it is worthwhile to reflect on their psychological and social implications.

Psychologically, the implication is that the women are less conflicted about putting themselves first. Intrapsychically, this indicates that at this point in their lives they feel less at the mercy of their impulses. In other words, they can care about what they think, what they feel, and what they want without fear that they will become totally self-centered, run rough-shod over others, or give themselves over to a life of pleasure. One can speculate that when aggressive and

sexual drives are moderated by life experiences, self-assertion

becomes allowable.

A sentence of Gilligan's is interesting in light of my specula-

tion on the upsurgence of assertion when aggression is less fearful.

She writes, "Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an

adulthood of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility,

and the origin of aggression in the failure of connection." Whether one

accepts the idea that aggression grows out of a lack of connection or

attachment, it is nevertheless possible that increased assertion is

predicated upon some realization that acting in one's own interest will

not disturb important ties in one's life. Heretofore, in the accepted

male-model version, the assumption has been that it is through separa-

tion that one can individuate, consolidate identity, and by implication,

be independent enough to act in one's own interest. My thought is that

these women can separate and individuate, can achieve for themselves

at this juncture, because of an expansion of an aspect of attachment.

Having reached another level in their relationships of caring and

responsibility, they can care more for themselves without feeling

selfish or guilty. Hence, the newfound individuality of the women can

be interpreted as reflecting a new experience of responsibility and

caring, in this case for one's self, rather than as a failure of connec-

tion.

From a sociological standpoint one can wonder about social influ-

ences on the changes discussed and attributed to maturity by the par-

ticipants. Although the women deny being influenced by the women's

movement, it is my guess that their increased freedom and flexibility

in social roles are also influenced by larger social change. Baruch and Barnett (1979) present findings that correlate with observations · made about the women in this study. They consider social and economic forces in combination with life-cycle events to explain how people develop, and report that "what is intriguing is that our belief that changes in the situation of women have had an important impact gets little support from the women themselves." Similar to the women in the interviews, "many women said that the movement had not affected them because they had always thought women could and should do anything they wanted" (1979, p. 9). Baruch and Bernard state that the women attributed changes within themselves to chronological age, as did this sample. In explaining their findings that many of the women they studied had increased self-esteem, they conclude "that just as women have previously tended to blame themselves, their individual failings, for feelings of dissatisfaction and depression, they are now attributing more positive feelings solely to personal, internal factors, ignoring social, political, and economic causes" (1979, p. 10).

Sociological implications of the changes reflected in the reported themes include such possibilities as women's greater freedom to pursue their interests, to resume previous pursuits or to move into new creative or work worlds at this stage in life. Heretofore this period has been regarded as a point of stagnation or time of loss of old roles with no new ones, except grandparenting, available. If women see themselves in different ways at fifty, there is great potential for what Jung called "self-actualization," the struggle toward the maximal realization of one's potentialities.

Examples of returning to set-aside interests can be found in Alice and Diane, who are reverting to serious art work, and in Ellen, who is moving into areas she feels she neglected in the past, including trying athletics for the first time.

Giele's crossover theme presents one pattern for major role shifts that could occur as a result of the changes reviewed. Giele defines this theme as "the mechanism that enables individuals to exchange roles, either through time in the course of their own life cycle, or at any given time with others by bridging the boundaries of functional specialization" (1980b, p. 6). Women of middle age, then, could assume roles usually relegated to younger women, or men, or could take over roles more ordinarily held by men. For example, a woman who had been a housewife could become the bread winner for herself and her family, while her husband retires from his work to housekeeping. It may well be that a woman's ability to shift roles comfortably is related to the flexibility and responsiveness necessitated by her previous activities as a homemaker and child-rearer.

In thinking about the intrapsychic and social outcomes of maturity, one might anticipate a feedback loop or spiral. Psychological freedom informs and furthers events on the social level, which in turn influence the intrapsychic state. The more one can function without feeling guilty or selfish, the more apt one is to function well and consequently to be successful and rewarded by society, which in turn supports positive feelings about one's self and one's activities, thereby furthering the activities, improving the psychological state and in short creating an upward spiral. One must also consider, however, the reverse possibility, the downward spiral, beginning either with the

social or psychological, or more likely with a combination of both.
For some women, because of intrapsychic conflicts, family concerns,
societal constraints of poverty, or minority status, the opposite spiral
can be set in motion by one's individual change, or personal change can
be frustrated by the negative feedback loop.

### E. The Women's Style or Manner as It Applies to Maturity

General observations gathered from the experience and data con-
tent of the interviews provide a context for discussing two illustra-
tive motifs:  the "no blame/no credit" posture and the importance of
daily life.

A central impression of the women that I gleaned first from the
questionnaires and subsequently from the interviews was that of a
matter-of-fact point of view coupled with a lively interest, a "joie
de vivre."  Theirs seems to be a practical perspective whereby they
take for granted shifts over time.  They easily grasped a developmental
orientation, looking retrospectively and prospectively.  Their matter-
of-fact contending with what they presented as recently-acquired ways
of feeling and being implies an overview of life's course.  My assump-
tion is that it is only from the vertex of maturity that one can have
this view of the past, the present, and the future.

Although these women have unusual resources in terms of education,
status, finances, family networks, and generally stable lives, these
advantages do not protect them from usual life problems.  Regarding
these difficulties, they exhibit awareness of their struggles, a depth
and range of associations and affect, but also acceptance and an

impressive long-range optimism. This range of association and affect
indicates a high level of maturity and mental health, as is corrobo-
rated by Mahler's research on children (1975), and Horowitz's schema
describing stages of development in self-images and relationship models
in adults (1979).

While the women have thought of the future and provided for their
well-being financially, there is emphasis on the importance of daily
life. The quality of one's everyday existence far outweighs interest
in planning for vacations or retirement. This focus is particularly
expressed by Diane and Ellen. In speaking of her current life, the
important issue for Diane is "the way I live, just how I live in a daily
way. I shop locally, raise my own food, live very modestly and like
it. I live comfortably in a world with a honed-down style, very simple."
Ellen values an "in-built behavior, a daily way of behaving, order,
predictability." Not one of the women longs for or mentions special
occasions in the future. As well as being reality-oriented, this may
be related to the realization that the next stage is old age.

An interesting and somewhat baffling finding that fits into the
matter-of-fact context and pertains to all the women is what I have
labeled the "no blame/no credit" phenomenon. By this I mean simply
that I could find little evidence that the women blame others, society,
or, in a facile way, even themselves for misfortunes or inequities
that have befallen them. It is obviously important and a sign of
maturity to take responsibility for oneself rather than reproach one-
self or others. Further, one might assume that not ascribing blame
would more easily lead to learning from mistakes than if one external-
ized or lapsed into unproductive mea culpa whenever one met adversity.

Nevertheless, sometimes others, individually or collectively, are responsible for circumstances or experiences that have negative results for another individual. Thus I was puzzled to hear that the women perceive that their opportunities and their ambitions were no different than for men of their generation. In this instance, where they indirectly take total responsibility for their choices, they seem to be engaged in blatant denial of a social reality. I can speculate and make guesses relevant to the narcissistic affront the situation implies, or in relation to the fear or guilt of implied criticism of their parents and college or even to the possibility that the denial was a transference response related to competitive feelings directed toward myself as the researcher.

The "no credit" aspect of the phenomenon mentioned is also difficult to understand fully. At one level the frequent reluctance of the women to accept recognition for their accomplishments could be assigned to what might be considered appropriate social humility. Actually, I don't think the response is that simply explained. Again, I have no data to support my thoughts, but I would venture that the hesitance represents a protection against opening up the Pandora's box of the inequity between men and women of their generation, or from a more intrapsychic but perhaps related vantage point, it is a piece of magical thinking. One can protect oneself from evil by pretending the reverse of what one really believes or feels.

The outstanding curiosity regarding the existence of this twofold phenomenon of no blame/no credit is that the women do not seem to want to, or be able to, come to grips with the issues. In discussion of

other matters I could discern, hear, see, or sense their grappling with ambivalent and paradoxical feelings and thoughts. Here there was an apparent lack of tension, leaving the women appearing too calm and too cavalier, too accepting and nonassuming, even in areas normally found complex and perhaps even disturbing. It would be interesting and profitable to explore this subject further with another group of women of the same age, as well as of other generations and socioeconomic and racial status. Comparison with other groups might explicate the findings and clarify whether they are related to these particular women or reflect a more general aspect of how women view themselves in relationship to others and to the exigencies of life.

### F. The Interplay of Attachment and Separation-- The Experience of Middle Age

Attachment, looming large in the development of women, is interwoven with the process of separation in the lives of the women studied. I believe that middle age is a time when these polarities converge and interact. Paradoxically, the joining and interplay of the two seemingly opposite forces permit the fulfilling of certain major tasks of this period. Two of these, prominent in the women's lives, are letting their children go and facing the loss of their parents. Attending to these processes of transition and loss can expand our conceptions of their maturity.

Gilligan's work sets the stage for approaching and examining these life happenings. Her research and writings, delineating the developmental line of attachment and its centrality for women, provide theoretical undergirding for a fresh look at what has been called the

"empty nest" and the business of "adult" children and their aging

parents, a matter of growing importance in our society. Extensive

quotes from Gilligan are presented here. Although her writing is some-

times difficult to follow and her sentences are often convoluted, she

touches on points of significance to this study.

In her discussion of women, their work and personality in the

middle years, Gilligan suggests that "the major transitions in women's

lives would seem to involve changes in the understanding and activities

of care." She continues on to say that the "events of midlife--the

menopause and changes in family and work--can alter the woman's activ-

ities of care in ways that affect her sense of herself. If midlife

brings an end to relationships, of the sense of connection on which she

relies, as well as to the activities of care through which she judges

her worth, then the mourning that accompanies all life transitions can

give way to the melancholia of self-deprecation and despair. The mean-

ing of midlife events for a woman is contextual in the sense that it

arises from interaction between the structures of her thought and the

realities of her life" (Gilligan, 1982a, p. 111).

Gilligan asserts that women reach midlife with a psychological

history different from men's "and face at that time different social

realities," that "they also make a different sense out of experiences

on the basis of their knowledge of human relationships. . . ." Further,

> they arrive at a different understanding of the possibilities
> that inhere in relationships both for oppression and for growth.
> In this sense, women's development delineates the path not
> only to less violent life but also to a maturity realized through
> interdependence and taking care (1982a, p. 113).

Gilligan's position and theoretical considerations, stated above
and throughout this work, have expanded my understanding of women's
development, providing a base from which to understand further the
issues of midlife and maturity. My study confirms the importance of
attachment, but an interesting finding was that the "context" (to
use Gilligan's recommendation) in which it occurred suggested the equal
importance of separation in the women's lives. It seems that the success-
ful execution of tasks that mark maturity at this phase of life depends
on the interweaving of attachment and separation. Further, I think
that attachment brings with it the ability to identify with "the other,"
the identification thus serving as a springboard to deal successfully
with separation. The issues of letting children go and losing parents
illustrate these concepts.

The women in this study are letting and have let their children go
in a fashion that indicates their maturity. (Although several have
late-life children still at home, it is my impression that these chil-
dren are not being used to meet attachment needs.) Letting children
go is a loss for parents that involves both attachment and separation.
My speculation is that the mother who can tolerate her intense attach-
ment alongside strong feelings of separation does so through the quality
of her attachment and the sense of her own identity and her child's
own separate identity.

The bonds of attachment lead to a parent's identification with the
child, of considerable help to the mother in separating. This capacity
to identify with both the self and with the other provides perspectives
the mother can compare: her own wanting to continue to care for her

child as she has, i.e., separation as loss; or from the child's point of view, separation as growth. The ability to go back and forth between distinct vantage points, according to Piaget (Ginsburg & Opper, 1969), indicates a mature level of cognitive development. Caring and rsponsibility (attachment) thus shift to a different level with successful separation.

The women in the study acknowledged missing their children, but were obviously enormously pleased by their children's efforts in their own worlds. Typical of their class and culture, they displayed their pride as parents in reporting their children's ventures in school and career. A number acknowledged special gratification resulting from their daughter's accomplishments and independence, which they pointed out far exceeded those of "our generation of women." No one expressed the feeling about letting children go and discharging her responsibility as a parent better than Barbara, who is the most family-bound of the group. She said, "I could die happy tomorrow if I knew my children were all settled on their own."

In the area of growing older and losing one's parents the women again identify both with the self and the other, in this case their parents. Aware of the life cycle and lifelong development, they speak of their own physical decline, the noticeable deterioration of parents and older friends, and the imminence of death. This awareness of their own mortality is corroborated by Vanian's study, where "personalizers," those who revealed cognizance of their mortality, were all women (1983). The task of facing one's own, and one's parents', aging and dying brings into play and interplay the feelings of attachment and separation. As

with their children, the women appeared able to sustain the ambivalent

forces of connection and disconnection. When Barbara and Ellen speak

of their mothers' deaths ten years ago they both voice sadness at the

loss, with Ellen saying that it was "devastating." Yet each said with

deep feeling that they were so happy that their mothers did not linger

and suffer. Clearly, their identification was with their mothers' pain,

as well as with their own bereavement.

I believe that the women's recognition of both forces, the accep-

tance of the feelings and experiences of attachment and separation,

with children and parents, signify maturity in middle age.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR

CLINICAL PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

This study describes a group of women in their early fifties.

who attended a small, private, conservative, southern college.

Thirty years later they appear mature, both to themselves and to the

researcher.

Before discussing the implications of this research, I want to

present some of my general impressions of how and perhaps why the women

have achieved maturity. While these ideas have not been "researched"

here, I think they deserve attention because they are commonsensical,

like the women, and because they suggest future study.

While children's development is measured by others, if adults are

to be measured at all, they usually do it for themselves. The ability

to "size up" oneself, as these women have, can itself be viewed as a

sign of maturity. The women have a clear sense of what it is to be

grown-up--they have recognized what they were supposed to do and have

done it. Not oblivious to transitions in their personal lives and in

the world around them, they seem able to go through difficulties and

come out of them. Their lives have not always been easy, and certainly

not simple, but the women have preserved a continuous core for them-

selves, have accepted their lives in a way that has allowed them to

continue growing. At this point they are saying, "This is my life and I am glad to have had it."

The women share attributes, characteristics, ways of life, or points of view that relate to their reckoning with their lives. They have had clear criteria and benchmarks for knowing what it is to be adult and have made use of them in an uncluttered, unambivalent, unconfused way. They are certain of their values and sure that these values are good ones in our society. Perhaps living traditional lives, with strong emphasis on family and personal relationships, has provided a context for security, yet not prevented growth. At one and the same time they live pragmatic and deeply feeling lives. One cannot help admire these ordinary women.

While there is no evidence that the women studied and discussed here are the same as, or reflect accurately, any other group of middle-aged women, there is reason to think that the findings reported and analyzed express certain patterns of living, a certain essence of human experience in middle-class women. Thus, on the basis of this work, it has been possible to say something regarding significant patterns in the adult development of women. In turn, it is relevant to assess the implications of the findings for social work research and practice, as well as for related mental health disciplines.

There are several areas where the study is relevant to all clinical work. Its approach parallels the ideal practice of psychotherapy, where the clinician stays close to what the client is saying and doing; there is always the movement back and forth between theory and data,

thereby preventing inaccurate reductionistic thinking and inappropriate treatment.

Clinicians, especially clinical social workers, have always dealt a great deal with women and their children. Because the population is living longer, especially women, better understanding of life from the half century on is important. As the population continues to shift, clinicians will be seeing adult children and their parents, and will also be involved in helping women who are at this crossroads deal with their longer, healthier future. The more understanding clinicians have of women functioning successfully, the more able they are to help both those who are having transitional or chronic difficulties. Additionally, since most clinical social workers are women, studies that explicate normal expectable reactions are valuable to clinicians both personally and professionally.

More specifically, this study raises issues around old stereotypes and new thinking. It brings into question notions about when and what are midlife crises, ideas about the effects of the "empty nest" syndrome, and the meaning of menopause and aging for middle-aged women. All of these areas deserve further research. We need to ask women what they think about these matters and how they experience them. We especially need to ask women of varied economic, social, and cultural backgrounds.

In the area of new thinking and theorizing, I believe this study has implications for practice and research. In clinical work we can look for and appraise the motifs examined here with an eye for their particular meaning in middle-aged women. We can approach clients with some different ideas about the meaning of separation and attachment at

this point in life. Certain thoughts and behaviors of female clients can be reevaluated in the light of the significance of the intertwining of these developmental lines at this time, and the realization that these have psychological and social ramifications.

It appears in this study that the women are satisfied with their lives and that the contentment derives in part from their achievement of maturity. It would be important to study women from disparate social, economic, ethnic, and cultural milieus to ascertain the influence of these factors on what appears to be the natural growth and development of this sample.

Finally, my intent has been to conduct this study in a manner which represents the essence of clinical social work research, the explication of the person in social context.

APPENDIX A

Elise S. Wolff
1034 Shattuck Ave.
Berkeley, CA  94707
(415) 524-3325 or 465-8377

Dear Class of '52,

Yes, it has been 30 years since our class, though not all of us,
graduated.

Musing over my irrational wish to go to our reunion led me to ponder-
ing how in the world I ever got from there to here.  The questions
quickly translated into curiosity about all of us--wondering what we
are like now, where we have been, and where we see ourselves going.
We have lived through a period of remarkable change:  born in the
Depression, childhood and early adolescence during World War II,
young adults in the post-war years and in the 50's, and women through
years of ferment and enormous social, political and cultural change.
In the thirty years from 1952 to 1982, I imagine we have all faced
tragedy, times of desperation and of joy that we could not possibly
have imagined when we were 21.  Now, at 51 or 52, we are on the thresh-
old of a new stage in our life cycle.  It is perhaps an appropriate
time to reminisce and to look ahead.

With the above in mind, I have been considering how to approach all
of you and how to tap your fund of experience for a preliminary study
of our journey.  (Now that I have studied early childhood development
and pregnant teenagers, I am eager as a doctoral candidate, to move on
to grown-ups!)  The result of my thinking and writing is the enclosed
questionnaire which I hope you will complete and return to me as
quickly as possible.

My plan is to present an overview of our views for us to think about
and react to at our reunion.  The Class President tentatively suggests
Saturday lunch as the time when our class will be meeting alone and,
thus, could talk about ourselves in private.

I hope each of you finds the questionnaire exciting, interesting,
stimulating, or at least worth your time.  If you have any questions
and/or suggestions, please write or call me.

I am delighted that I have found a way (if you return the question-
naire) to legitimize my going all the way to Virginia in the spring.

My best,


Lise

enclosures:  instructions for questionnaire, questionnaire
             and stamped, addressed envelope

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Your responses are confidential.  No names or individual identifying information will be used in any oral or written report.

It is easier for purposes of follow-up if you do put your name on the questionnaire, but it is not necessary.  Please feel free to leave your name off if you prefer.

If there are questions you do not wish to answer, just skip them. If there are no appropriate answers or categories provided, feel free to supply your own--you are not limited by the questions or answers as they are stated.  Any additional thoughts and comments on specific questions or in general are welcome.

March 1982

College Class of 1952[*]

ALUMNAE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name_____ Maiden name (if different)_____

2. Current address _____

_____

_____

3. Birthplace _____

4. Age _____

5. Did you graduate from College in 1952?
   _____ yes
   _____ no

   If not, how many years were you at College? _____

6. Education after College

| | Age at (re)entry | Field or type of degree | Year(s) | School |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| _____ bachelor's | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ master's | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ doctorate | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ professional degree | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ certificate or credential | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ study without degree | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ other_____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

7. Has any member of your family gone (going) to College?

   _____ grandmother          _____ aunts, cousins
   _____ mother               _____ daughter
   _____ sister               _____ others

8. If you have/had a college aged daughter, would you want her to go to College at the present time?
   _____ yes
   _____ no

[*]Capitalized College refers to the college of this study.

9.  Marital status
    _____single (never married)      _____remarried more than once
    _____single (divorced)           _____separated
    _____married (only once)         _____widowed
    _____remarried

10. Age at first marriage_____
    Age at subsequent marriages_____
    _____

11. Number of children born to you_____

12. Your age when first child was born_____

13. Your age when last child was born_____

14. Number of adopted children_____

15. Reason for adopting
    _____unable to have own children
    _____concern with population growth
    _____humanitarian reasons
    _____other (please explain) _____
    _____

16. Number of stepchildren _____

17. Number of grandchildren _____

18. Husband's age
    _____ under 50
    _____ 50-55
    _____ over 55

19. Husband's education _____

20. Husband's present occupation _____

21. Did you work before marriage?
    _____ no                    _____ yes, volunteer
    _____ yes, full time        _____ not applicable
    _____ yes, part time

22. Did you work after marriage, before having children?
    _____ no                    _____ yes, volunteer
    _____ yes, full time        _____ not applicable
    _____ yes, part time

23. Did you work after having children?
    _____ no                    _____ yes, volunteer
    _____ yes, full time        _____ not applicable
    _____ yes, part time

24. If yes, when did you begin working? \_\_\_\_\_ children preschool
\_\_\_\_\_ children school age
\_\_\_\_\_ children left the home

25. Are you working now?
\_\_\_\_\_ no                           \_\_\_\_\_ yes, part time
\_\_\_\_\_ yes, full time              \_\_\_\_\_ yes, volunteer

26. What is your present occupation? _____

27. Do you plan to continue working for the next 5-10 years?
\_\_\_\_\_ yes
\_\_\_\_\_ no
\_\_\_\_\_ not applicable

28. Do you contemplate changing occupations in the near future?
\_\_\_\_\_ yes
\_\_\_\_\_ no
\_\_\_\_\_ not applicable

29. If so, what kind of change would you like to make?

30. Since leaving College, in what geographical locations have you
lived for a year or more?
\_\_\_\_\_ Northeast U.S.              \_\_\_\_\_ Hawaii or Alaska
\_\_\_\_\_ Southeast U.S.             \_\_\_\_\_ Europe
\_\_\_\_\_ Midwest U.S.               \_\_\_\_\_ Asia
\_\_\_\_\_ Southwest U.S.             \_\_\_\_\_ South or Central America
\_\_\_\_\_ Northwest U.S.             \_\_\_\_\_ Africa

31. How many major moves have you made? \_\_\_\_\_

32. What kind of community do you live in now?
\_\_\_\_\_ urban
\_\_\_\_\_ rural
\_\_\_\_\_ suburban

33. How do you rate your satisfac-      34. How do you rate your satisfac-
tion with the role of wife?            tion with the role of mother?
\_\_\_\_\_ high                            \_\_\_\_\_ high
\_\_\_\_\_ medium                          \_\_\_\_\_ medium
\_\_\_\_\_ low                             \_\_\_\_\_ low
\_\_\_\_\_ not applicable                  \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable

35. Do you have the number of        36. If no, would you want
children you would like:
\_\_\_\_\_ yes                             \_\_\_\_\_ more
\_\_\_\_\_ no                              \_\_\_\_\_ fewer

Please indicate the extent to which the following contribute to
your sense of life satisfaction:

37. Children
   _____ high
   _____ moderate
   _____ low

38. Husband
   _____ high
   _____ moderate
   _____ low

39. Work outside the home
   _____ high
   _____ moderate
   _____ low

40. Hobbies, personal interests
   _____ high
   _____ moderate
   _____ low

41. Friends and social activities
   _____ high
   _____ moderate
   _____ low

42. Other_____
   _____ high
   _____ moderate
   _____ low

43. What is your religious
    affiliation?
   _____ Catholic
   _____ Protestant
   _____ Other _____
   _____ None

44. Do you attend religious
    services?
   _____ regularly
   _____ occasionally
   _____ seldom
   _____ none

47. Are you active politically?
   _____ very
   _____ occasionally
   _____ seldom
   _____ never

48. What is your predominant
    feeling aobut the current
    political climate?
   _____ approve
   _____ disapprove
   _____ neutral

49. Was College a good choice for you?
   _____ yes
   _____ no

How would you rate your College experiences in the following areas?

50. Intellectual
   _____ excellent
   _____ good
   _____ fair
   _____ poor

51. Social
   _____ excellent
   _____ good
   _____ fair
   _____ poor

52. Preparation for marriage
   _____ excellent
   _____ good
   _____ fair
   _____ poor

53. Preparation for motherhood
   _____ excellent
   _____ good
   _____ fair
   _____ poor

54. Preparation for work outside
the home
_____ excellent
_____ good
_____ fair
_____ poor

55. Preparation for community
involvement
_____ excellent
_____ good
_____ fair
_____ poor

56. Preparation for leisure activities
_____ excellent
_____ good
_____ fair
_____ poor

57. How many College friends do you still communicate with regularly
(in person, by phone, through letters)?
_____ none
_____ one
_____ two to five
_____ six to ten
_____ more than ten

58. Has the life plan you had at
leaving College changed?
_____ a great deal
_____ a little
_____ hardly at all

59. Have your attitudes about child
rearing changed since College?
_____ a great deal
_____ a little
_____ hardly at all

60. Is your mother living?
_____ yes
_____ no

61. Is your father living?
_____ yes
_____ no

62. Has your relationship with your
mother changed since leaving
College?
_____ a great deal
_____ a little
_____ hardly at all

63. Has your relationship with your
father changed since leaving
College?
_____ a great deal
_____ a little
_____ hardly at all

64. How would describe your relationship with your parents now?

65. Have you had occasion to seek counseling or therapy?
_____ yes
_____ no

66. What activities do you rely on for intellectual or creative
stimulation?

67. When you contemplate the future of your children (or other people's children), what are your main concerns?

68. What were your most significant experiences at College?

69. Who were the most significant people for you at College?

70. What event(s) have been most prominent in your life since College?

71. In what ways do you think that you have changed since College?

72. What and who have been the most significant influences on your life since College?

73. Was your life affected by the Women's Movement?
    _____ a great deal
    _____ a little
    _____ hardly at all

74. Do you participate in physical activities?
    _____ regularly
    _____ occasionally
    _____ seldom
    _____ never

75. Have you had any serious illness or surgery in the last ten years?
    _____ yes
    _____ no

76. Do you see your physical activities lessening in the next ten years?
    _____ yes, a great deal
    _____ yes, a little
    _____ hardly at all
    _____ no, they have increased

77. Have they lessened in the past ten years?
    _____ yes, a great deal
    _____ yes, a little
    _____ hardly at all
    _____ no, they have increased

78. What new or old activities or interests would you want to cultivate
    further in the next 10 years?

79. What qualities do you like most about yourself?

80. What characteristics or circumstances in your life situation would
    you most like to change?

81. If you had (or have) a daughter how would you want her life to be
    like yours, and how would you want it to be different?

82. What would you most like to accomplish in the coming year?

in five years?

in twenty years?

Comments:

Please return questionnaire in enclosed stamped envelope.
                        thank you--

APPENDIX B

CLASS OF '52---30TH REUNION
INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Introduction:

Signing of release form

Possible use for PhD dissertation ICSW

Confidentiality and right to refuse to answer or to continue

Return of 69 Questionnaires--feel free to ask me questions which I
can answer on the basis of replies

I believe that learning and growing are driving forces throughout
our lives. I am particularly interested in knowing more about how
adults grow and learn. People do this in all different ways. I
want to understand what you see as important for your self now and
for the future.

There are not many studies of this kind and those few have been on
men. There are varying ideas about what happens to people at 50.
Some writers say people turn inward, some say they move outward, that
dormant abilities blossom. In any case, I am interested in your sense
of yourself, your feelings re yourself, your thoughts about who you
are and who you were and who you think you will be.

I will ask you questions about yourself, your family, your health,
your current home and out-of-home experience, about getting older,
about how you have changed and stayed the same in the 30 years.
Perhaps we can both think as we talk of an image of your life, or
themes and threads that weave in and out. I will look to you to help
me understand and clarify what you are telling me.

I hope you will get something out of our experience together.

1. Changes since college

(Why did you choose college?)

How do you remember yourself? a visual image? What was important
then? What did you believe in?

Change in values, ideals, goals--at college, at 21, 30, 40, now?

Change in political outlook? World certainly looks different now

Women's Movement--wanted to talk to everyone about it.

Are you different? what has changed, continuous? People have non-radical changes. Lots of people said they had "matured." In what ways have you matured. Specifics re change. Do you see changes as result of the "times," personal experiences? Are they internal, in terms of others? e.g., tolerant

2. History of marriage(s)--past, present, future; good and bad; satisfactions, dissatisfactions; what husband is like, work, personality
If remarried, how is second different? If not remarried, what was change like?
Children--as a group had c early, many had last in 30's, what of that?
What are you learning from that child?
Probe for changes mentioned in #1 re marriage, husband, children

3. (Ambitions) Everyone has things they wanted to do that they did not do, things they did that surprised them later. How about you?
What ambitions? did they change? Some said that college experiences caused change in ambitions. Could lead to what you think of now as positive or negative.
Do you have regrets?
Some believe ambition for men and women is different--do you?
Have you had fulfillment (or substitution) of ambition through family life?
What about interests in reading, arts, music re fulfillment.

4. High Points/Low Points, times of transition, change and crisis (age demarcations, bench marks in life cycle)
When you look back what was the time(s) of stress, crisis for you?
What happened? How did you get through it? Would you do it differently now?
Most distressing and wonderful time of life?
When was the best time? What was going on? Vignette or story.
How do children fit into these best/worst times?

Impact of children now--at home or leaving, left?

We read in <u>Time</u> of "mid-life" crises, "empty nests." How is it for you? Does it seem like a crisis time?

5. Physical Health

What are special health issues for you recently, now?

Ob-gyn hx

Menopause--are you menopausal? Hysterectomy? Symptoms? What's mid-life change for you as a woman? Body image? Sexually?

6. Quality of current home and out-of-home situation

What are the important issues for you now?

If children are gone, what will daily life be like, how is it different, also vacations, sex life?

Quality of relationship with husband? Others?

Whom do you confide in?

Are chief satisfactions in marriage?

Work--has your development in professional, volunteer, or other in-home or out-of-home work paralleled development in other areas?

Quality and meaning of work and work life? Relative importance/satisfaction of work?

7. Finances--people indicated great concern re economy of our country, the world, source of anxiety at some level for all. Financial security and comfort relative to that of parents at this age, 50?

How long do you, or your husband plan an active work life?

What about retirement?

A lot of people mentioned travel in the questionnaire. What, where, how? Chance for adventure, stimulation, escape from boredom, romanticized?

8. Sense of belonging, being connected, being "at home in the world"
Importance of family, friends, church, community, work, affiliations.
Status, economic security, tradition

What is your community?  Who?  How do you participate?

What are the important ties? where do you go for a sense of belonging?

What networks of relationships are important?

Are these long-term, or recent? do they change, the networks or
individuals?

Who is your social life with?  Has that changed over the years, and,
if so, in relation to what, e.g., stage of life, interests--

Those who do not have the sense of belonging--different, how?


9. Growing older

Fantasy of self as an old person.  fears and hopes re aging.

What enjoyed and disliked aspects so far?

Strengths and weaknesses now?

Grandchildren

What do you want to pass on, teach?

Mastering life and one's own hx through a better life for one's
children--an idea some people have

Review of life, dreams?

Questions re aged parents.  Thoughts about death?

What is next?  The future--what thoughts. plans?


10.  Experience of the Questionnaire and the interview?  How do you
think you used it?  Comments?

Do you want a report?

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