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**T H E   B O N D   O F   S I L E N C E**  
**WOMEN IN THE TRANSITION TO THE SECOND HALF**  
**OF LIFE**

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## ABSTRACT

Adulthood, and particularly, women's adult developmental stages are still an undeveloped area of research (Levinson, 1978; Chiriboga, 1981, 1989). There are studies about the menopause, the "empty nest syndrome", the "double standard" of aging, as well as middle-aged women's need for growth and expansion. However, these issues are controversial (Bart, 1971; Chiriboga, 1981, 1989; Datan, Antonovsky & Maoz, 1981; Downing, 1987a; Neugarten, 1968a, 1969; Rubin 1979).

Achieving a greater understanding of the experience of this phase in a woman's life became therefore the core purpose of this study.

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) Grounded Theory was chosen as the method because it is geared towards discovering new theories in relatively unknown areas of human behaviour. The sample which evolved as the study proceeded, reached saturation point and ended with a sample of 79 white middle class women.

In the process of constantly analyzing and comparing the data, five different groups of women emerged: a group of housewives and four categories of working women, viz. career women, traditional workers, late bloomers and early retired. An additional division according to their menopausal status ended with four groups: pre-, peri- and post menopausal women, and a group of women who had undergone hysterectomies.

Categorizing women in terms of either career or menopausal status does not provide adequate explanations for this stage in life.

Results indicated that all the women were going through a transitional phase. This transitional period was characterized by biological and psychological endings and losses which appear to be universally experienced (Downing, 1987a; Luke, 1981; Mankowitz, 1984). On top of the universal layer was a cultural layer of living in a contemporary youth oriented society that abides to a "double standard of aging". It contributed to the bond of silence that, according to the women, wrapped this transition and turned it into "the neglected crisis".

However, underneath the painful realization that a certain era in life had come to an end was the urgent need to expand, grow and challenge potentials that were not yet used. This turned out to be the "core variable" (Glaser, 1978) of this study. These results confirm Jung's (1933, 1976) point of view that a major change in the psyche is taking place in midlife. This change, as indicated in this study, moved the women from their familiar roles of the first half of life to the second half of life. It emphasized their needs for personal self-actualization and contribution to society at large.

Looking at this period as a process that consists of both losses and emerging needs "to become one's own person" explains the controversy concerning this stage in life.

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The character of adult life  
is one of the best secrets  
in our society.

Adults hope that life begins  
at 40 -but the great anxiety  
is that it ends there. The  
result ...is almost complete  
silence about the experience  
of being adult.

Daniel Levinson (1978).

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In her book Addiction to Perfection Woodman (1982) expressed the view that:

Linear thinking does not come naturally to me; moreover, it kills my imagination. Nothing happens... And so, rather than driving toward a goal, I prefer the pleasure of the journey through a spiral. And I ask my reader to relax and enjoy the spiral too. (p. 8)

Unlike Woodman, I have to obey a certain orderliness in writing a thesis, yet I found that the spirit of Woodman's words, the image of her thinking in a spiral way, has been present throughout. It took almost two years to see the "spirals" fall into place to form a circle. The whole process of the study reminded me of a pregnancy - rather a long one - in which a slow yet steady growth took place.

#### Confession and Conception

On reaching a certain age, and becoming aware of the physiological as well as the psychological changes encountered during the menopause (menopause as the obvious biological sign of reaching middle age), I became intrigued and began to explore that particular period in the life of women.

Quite typically, as I discovered later, my own knowledge was very limited. Besides having an older, menopausal friend who used

to complain about her hot flushes, I had not heard much discussion on that subject. Could it be that I myself was simply avoiding the issue?

My early pilot research was conducted in Israel. Six female friends in their late forties and early fifties met for group discussions on midlife issues. All were educated career women who, with the exception of one recently widowed, were all married. Each woman was a mother of adolescent children, some of whom had already left home, while the others were in the process of doing so. Initially, group members seemed to avoid focusing on midlife issues. My role as facilitator involved redirecting their attention to these areas.

G., who was the first to speak and the most ready to look into herself, said that the cessation of her monthly periods was a partial relief for her, as she no longer had to worry about falling pregnant or suffering from pre-menstrual tension. She said that, for years, whenever she encountered the subject of midlife, she would try to avoid it: she convinced herself that this subject was of no interest to her, believing that avoiding the topic would help keep that phase of life at a distance. In retrospect she admitted that her method of denial was the worst way to face the "sudden" realization when it came to her.

Recently so many things had happened at the same time in her life. One of her parents had passed away and her eldest daughter had married and left home. Strange body sensations and unfamiliar feelings crept up, and there was a new way of relating to the calendar, whilst the mirror was saying, "Who are you fooling now?" The myth of life's perfection, G. felt, was broken.

M. the eldest, used one of the ways identified by Marmor (1967) as typical of coping in midlife: the denial, by escape, to frantic activity. She admitted that people do not talk about the subject, but she questioned the whole concept of middle age as being a problematic transitional phase. She related to her parents' death five years earlier, her daughter's marriage and departure, the cessation of menstruation and frequent attacks of dizziness, by asking whether the same changes in an earlier phase of life would not create the same affective reactions. M. was the one who tried hardest to find reassuring answers to questions raised in the group, by intellectualizing these issues.

R., who lost her husband less than a year before, preferred to talk about the shame of aging, saying that the shame she felt was connected to her preoccupation with it. She told the group that on the day her husband returned from the hospital after a heart attack, she looked in the mirror and told herself: 'R. you are an old woman! Instead of caring for my husband's good health, my children's progress and being a good teacher in school, here I am now having these egotistical concerns'. Her doctor, to whom she went for help for her anxiety and insomnia, told her that it was nothing to do with midlife but just the fear of death. She had undergone a hysterectomy three years prior to her husband's death, and felt that the menopause was not applicable in her case.

B., a mother of a 14-year old autistic boy, who kept silent most of the time, said almost apologetically that the bigger problems in her life made it seem indulgent for her even to think about this "nonsense". Other themes that came up during the discussion included:

- The realization of becoming the middle generation whose task

is to be responsible for the care of old parents and to continue the tradition of the family.

- The acknowledgement that midlife issues, although of major concern to women, also affect men.
- The fact that extra time was now available as children were leaving home, brought with it questions such as: "Who am I?" "Now that the children are gone, what of my dreams that I did not actualize?"

The menopause, it seemed, was not central to the lives of these particular women. On the contrary, the encounter brought up many other issues that bothered them. Yet no clear picture of the way in which women go through midlife had emerged. There were inconsistencies in what the women said, questions were asked and remained unanswered. The brief glimpse into Pandora's box was frightening. The questions that came to mind included:

- Is the menopause a non-event in a woman's life - even a relief - or is it a repressed issue?
- What causes women to react differently to this stage in life?
- How are women in midlife affected by the empty nest syndrome, the aging process, the death of aging parents, the new sense of time? How are these issues interrelated?
- Is it true that women are reluctant to talk, particularly about this stage in their life? If so, why?
- What is the medical approach to the middle-aged woman's symptomatic complaints?
- Is there a connection between traumatic events in a woman's past life and the way she will pass through midlife?

The group discussion confirmed Neugarten's (1969) observation

that the two trends characterizing middle aged women were:

- The menopause is a "taboo" subject in discussions among women, where issues such as bringing up children, premenstrual tension and other related subjects are usually reflected upon.
- Paradoxically, however, there seems to be a need to talk and gather more information, knowledge and advice.

It was also interesting to note that although the pilot study meetings took place in Israel, where the religious and cultural background is different, many of the themes raised there have come up over and over again in the individual interviews and in group discussions in South Africa.

#### The Various Aspects of Midlife: Overview of the Literature

An examination of the literature revealed, it seems that this phase of life has literally a thousand faces. The literature was largely congruent with the material that had been brought up in the group encounter. There were articles which dealt specifically with the menopause; these were based mainly on the medical model. Other articles dealt with "the empty nest syndrome", aging, death and the finiteness of time. Moreover, as Hunter and Sundel (1989) observed, articles had "contradictory findings".

The medical point of view was represented by both "Feminine Forever" (Wilson, 1966) and "No Change" (Cooper, 1975). They referred to the physiological aspects of the menopause as the main issue in women's midlife crisis, and advocated the

possibility of overcoming nature by using hormone replacement therapy. The women whom Wilson and Cooper introduced in their books appeared young and vigorous.

The sociological point of view was highlighted in the writings of De Beauvoir (1949) in The Second Sex. The description of "a second-rate middle-aged woman" who "sadly weaves the very nothingness of her days" (p. 604) was a cry for change in a patriarchal society. De Beauvoir referred especially to those women who "gambled" their existence on their sexual attractiveness and for whom reaching middle age meant reaching a dead end.

Kate Brown, Lessing's heroine in Summer Before The Dark (1973), represented the dull, brown, invisible family nurturer, caretaker and organizer, who neglected to develop her identity. On reaching middle age, Lessing, a feminist in her own right, confronted Kate with questions about who she was, and where she was going. Looking at the title of the book, one can hardly ignore the symbolism in the comparison between the seasons in nature and the seasons in a woman's life.

An even worse replica of the "Kate Brown's" are the "martyred", depressed, overprotective, middle-aged women who end up in mental hospitals. These were the women studied by Bart (1971). She found that the loss of the role of a mother in women who were raised on the myth of super-wife and super-mother, led to feelings of emptiness, redundancy and meaninglessness. This inability to express angry and aggressive feelings accompanying their loss led to depression and hospitalization.

Becker (1975) considered depression in middle-aged women to be existential in its essence: the manifestation of a loss of roles combined with the fear and "the denial of death", which was the title of his book. Becker believed that a society that deludes its members about the future, denies mortality, and does not supply some substitute belief is to be blamed for the depressive reactions found among its female members.

On the other side of the scale were those women, studied by Rubin (1979), who looked forward with hope, happy to be free finally from commitments to family and children. The "empty nest syndrome" that bothered so many of Bart's (1971) women is seen as a positive move toward growth and new beginnings for the women in Rubin's sample.

The psychological point of view was elaborated on by Downing (1982, 1987a) who took her readers on a voyage through her own menopause. Delving into her dreams, she interpreted the archetypal figures that appeared in them as representatives of ancient Greek mythology. They symbolized and played out the inner psychic changes that take place in middle-aged women. Downing (1982) invited other women to "come and celebrate with me" the pain, horror, joy and hope that the menopause activates, and to experience it as a "soul event" in its multidimensional aspects.

The middle-aged, over-painted, sexually-driven caricature that resembled the adolescent was the one which Deutsch (1973), the Freudian psychoanalyst, described in her book The Psychology of Women. This image certainly contradicts that of Rubin (1979) and Cooper's (1975) women, not leaving much hope for a meaningful

future for the aging woman. The drifting, pathetic heroine figure described by Williams (1950) in his book, The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone, was a concrete illustration, written by a male author of Deutsch's (1973) psychological view of middle-aged women.

De Castillejo's (1973) description of middle-aged women was a mild and tender portrait of women whose autumn of life "is richer than the spring if only (they) can harvest the ripening fruit before it falls and rots" (p. 149).

#### The Media's Attitude Toward Women in Midlife

Judging from the mass media, women in midlife are almost totally ignored. Advertising is not geared to them even though their buying power is considerable. The randomly-selected June 1988 issue of Cosmopolitan magazine, for example, displays almost only beautiful, young women, with the sole exception of a report on the famous middle-aged singer, Miriam Makeba. The gorgeous young faces on the covers of popular magazines are a well known phenomenon. Even Lear's, the new American magazine for adult women, which appeared to signify a growing awareness of middle-aged women, seems to cater only for the beautiful and successful ones.

In his 1989 movie, Another Woman, Woody Allen portrayed a middle-aged, highly sophisticated New York woman who discovered the emptiness of her life. However, the movie remains an intellectual exercise on the subject of midlife transition.

### Terminology

The interchangeable use of various names in referring to midlife adds to the blurred picture. Medical jargon speaks of the "menopause" or "climacteric", while daily language refers to "the change of life" or "women of a certain age". Psychological jargon uses phrases such as "midlife crisis", "the empty nest syndrome", less negative phrases such as "the postparental phase", or more neutral ones, such as "the mature woman", "middlehood" or "adulthood".

The question remains as to why we need so many different terms to describe a normal stage in human development, and what this diversity means.

### The Lack of a Holistic Approach to Women in Midlife

Even after a review of the literature on midlife, confusion still reigned.

Several questions remained:

- Why is the picture so fragmented and controversial?
- Is there any common denominator among middle-aged women at all?
- Is it the bond of silence surrounding this phase of life that prevents us from seeing clearly what is really happening?

What had become clearer was the need for a holistic view and theory of women in midlife, to replace the existing fragmentation. Focusing only on the menopause involved overlooking the many other aspects that play a role in this period of life. To quote Levinson (1978) on this issue:

Great masses of data have been accumulated about specific features of adult life. There are statistics on marriage and

divorce, health and illness, life expectancy, occupation and income. There are studies of such stressful events as retirement and "the empty nest syndrome". We have, in short, extensive information on adulthood - but a very limited understanding of its nature. The basic developmental principles of adult life remain an enigma. (p. 3)

### Selecting a Methodology

The pilot study of six Israeli women seemed to suggest that the menopause was only one aspect of the complex phenomenon of midlife. A review of the literature confirmed this impression. A need for a better understanding of women's midlife transition emerged.

It was clear, when looking for a method of conducting the research, that qualitative analysis would be the most suitable choice as in-depth, first-hand interviews and group encounters enable one to obtain a perspective on midlife.

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) "Grounded Theory" was chosen because it is geared towards discovering new theories in the field of human behaviour. Glaser and Strauss recommended that one should approach the subject with as few hypotheses as possible and let the material speak for itself.

### Outline of the Study

Chapter 2 reviews the adult holistic developmental theories of Erikson (1963, 1978), Gould (1978) Gutmann (1985) Jung (1933, 1976), Levinson (1977, 1978). The ensuing chapters assess

various existing approaches to the different aspects of midlife. In chapter 3, the menopause is discussed from the medical, psychological and sociological points of view. Neugarten's (1968, 1969) work, Mankowitz's (1984) analysis of a menopausal woman and Downing's (1987a) personal journey through this stage of life are reviewed. Chapter 4 examines the aging process, dealing with the double standard of aging in our contemporary society (Israel, 1977; Sontag, 1972) as well as interpreting the Greek myth of Demeter and Kore (Luke, 1981). The fifth chapter, "The Empty Nest Syndrome", introduces the thoughts on the subject of Oliver (1977), Rubin (1979) and others. Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the changes in family structure, the sexual response in midlife, as well as the specific characteristics of this particular generation of middle-aged women. Chapter 8 deals with depression in midlife and reviews Bart's (1971), Becker's (1975) and Jacques' (1981) approaches. It examines middle age as an ongoing process of loss, of depression, and of inner need for growth. Gutmann's (1985) theory of depression in middle-aged women as a masked need for growth, as well as Frankl (1967) and Maslow's (1968) thoughts on the subject are presented. Chapter 9 highlights the differences between men and women, as identified by Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982a) and other feminists, and the way in which these apply to midlife. Chapter 10 outlines the methodology of grounded theory. The results of this study are described in chapters 11, 12 and 13 and the last chapter offers conclusions and recommendations for a preparatory, educational approach to midlife for men and women.

## Summary

This introductory chapter highlights the blurred picture one faces when approaching a study of women in midlife. It emphasizes the need for improved exploration and understanding of this phase in women's lives. The next chapter will introduce some holistic developmental theories and will examine their applicability to a woman's adult life.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Somewhat ironically, the field of middle age is more like a newborn infant than the mature adult it studies.

D. Chiriboga (1981).

This chapter addresses the major problems and theories in the field of adult developmental psychology. Specifically it examines the approaches of Erikson, Levinson, Gould and Gutmann. Importantly, these theories have been developed by men. Erikson, and Levinson in particular, dealt with the phases in men's adult life. To date, no theory applying specifically to women's development during adult life has been published, although Levinson is currently working on such a theory.

#### Reflections on Problematic Areas in the Field of Middle Age

Research in the area of adulthood reflects a paucity as compared with the richness of research conducted on child development (Brown, 1985; Golan, 1981, 1986; Hunter & Sundel, 1989; Levinson, 1978; Mercer, Nichols & Doyle, 1989). Chiriboga (1981) highlighted some of the controversial issues concerning the middle years:

- The first question is whether adulthood is, in fact, a discrete developmental phase in the life span. Are there any idiosyncratic developments in midlife that justify a

distinction between this period and others like childhood, adolescence and old age.

- The second question is whether midlife is solely an age-bound phenomenon: or represents a more complex sociocultural construct of which age is only one factor. What are the age boundaries of middle age? Age is only one component in a more complex process.
- Can middle age be broken into smaller units as is done, for example, with child developmental stages?
- Another area which needs more exploration is that of the effect of events taking place during childhood and adolescence on the middle-aged personality. In other words, can we predict, on the basis of earlier patterns, someone's reactions in midlife?

Chiriboga (1981) claimed that though knowledge concerning midlife is still restricted, it points towards the probability that adulthood is a distinguishable developmental stage, in which important changes take place over a period of time.

#### "Midlife Crisis": A Positive or Negative Experience

One of the common terms associated with the midlife period is "midlife crisis". The relationship of this period to "crisis" - with its a negative connotations - interested such theorists as Erikson (1963, 1968), Gutmann (1975, 1985), Jung (1933, 1976), and Levinson (1977, 1978). Viewing "crisis points" in the life span as part of the process of development and growth, they did not stress the pathological aspects. Hunter and Sundel (1989), Jacques (1965), Neugarten (1968a), O'Connor and

Wolfe (1987), and Vaillant (1977), shared this opinion that "crises" are a normal part of the transition from one stage to another.

### Midlife as a Transitional Period

In terms of mythology, transition is associated with the Roman god, Janus. Janus, which in Latin means "passageway", was described as having two faces, thus able to look both backwards and forwards simultaneously, depicting the very nature of all transition.

Transitions are part of maturational processes which are affected by biological as well as sociological factors (Oerter, 1986). They are times of exploration and indecision, of mourning for the recent past, and apprehension about the coming future. They are times of "feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-confidence...and may contribute to feelings of impatience, frustration, irritability, intolerance and disorganization" (Mercer et al. 1989; p. 3). Neugarten (1970) added that even transitions tend to vary for each individual, family, cohort or even society.

O'Connor and Wolfe's (1987) study, On Managing Midlife Transitions in Career and Family, elaborated on this viewpoint. They found that their midlife subjects varied in their "intensity of transition", some perceiving it as paramount in their lives, while others viewing it as auxiliary. Their results described midlife transition as a process of five phases: "stability,

rising discontent, crisis, re-direction, and re-stabilizing" (p. 805). Like Erikson (1963), they suggested that phases may overlap and differ in pace and length.

### Riegel's "Dialectic Interpretation of Development"

Riegel (1975) who was mainly interested in what happens during transitional periods along the life-span, considered transitions as "developmental leaps", "critical choice points" or "existential challenges". According to him, a transition from one steady period of life to another as yet unfamiliar one, should not be considered in terms of success or failure, but rather as a tension between these two forces. The struggle between the poles of this "dialectical conjunction" promotes growth and helps one to move into the next phase in life. In this way, a crisis can be viewed as a lever for innovation and transformation. Riegel (1975) was of the opinion that in order to grow and attain a better grasp of life, adults must understand and adapt to these states of contradiction and tension as part of evaluating situations and developmental changes. He asserted that rather than avoiding the process of change, one should integrate the "dialectic interaction" as a tool of every day life.

"Crisis", in its negative sense, occurs only when there is a short circuit in the "dialectic interaction". The "dialectic interaction" comprises four levels:

- The inner-biological.
- The individual-psychological.
- The cultural-sociological.
- The outer-physical.

One of the major obstacles in a smooth "dialectic interaction" is produced by the fact that only one level of interaction, the inner-biological, has a stable pattern and can be predicted ahead of time, while the others are sometimes arbitrary depending on external circumstances.

What is missing in Riegel's theory is a differentiation between the sexes. The cultural, sociological and psychological inner dialectic interactions within a certain culture are, in general, different for men and women. As will be shown, this is particularly so when reaching midlife transition (Roberts & Newton, 1987; Mercer et al. 1989).

#### Changing Archetypes

Guggenbuhl-Craig (1981) looked at transitional periods from an archetypal point of view, saying that what characterizes a transition is a struggle between leaving behind a certain archetype and discovering the powerfulness of a new one. In midlife the conflict is between the archetype of the adult which is being challenged by the newly emerging archetype of the senex.

Papodopoulos (1987) dealt with the conflict that arises between the two extreme drives that an adolescent faces in his\her transition from childhood to adulthood. On the one hand is the need to leave his\her parental home, and on the other hand the already unfolding need of coming home, to a differentiated and separate place of his\her own. Homecoming can be perceived as moving to a different geographical place, where the young adult arranges his/her life according to his/her own will. But homecoming can also take the form of finding a comfortable

psychological place of existence within oneself, without necessarily involving a concrete change in place. This sense of psychological homecoming involves a deeper level of inner integration. In Papodopoulos words: "homecoming may be the archetypal image that surrounds the tension engendered by the dialectic endeavour between regressive and anticipatory searching for home at a given time" (pp. 8-9).

How is all this connected with midlife? It seems that within every transition from one phase of life to the other, the conflict unfolds between those two polarities, leaving one "home" in order to move to another. One can argue that "homecoming" in midlife is similar, from a biological as well as a psychological point of view, to the need for "homecoming" in adolescence. Both experience a meaningful change in their bodies as a result of a hormonal imbalance, a change whose influence is reflected in the whole personality. The visible bodily transformations that take place in midlife call for a new relationship with the changed body image, the "concrete home". There is a need to come to terms, psychologically, and feel at home with the changes that take place.

#### Jung: The Transition into the Second Half of Life

Although Jung's (1933, 1976) theory, using his term, "the transition into the second half of life", lacks a clear design of stages and transitional periods, and does not specify any particular sex, it is chosen to be reviewed because it represents a philosophy of life. It brings an enlightening "Weltanschauung" and understanding of the meaning of adult life

and old age in the life of the individual as well as in the life of the society. Jung (1933, 1976), whose influence would be seen later in Levinson's (1977, 1978) concept of adult stage development, divided life into two phases; the first and second half of life. The latter begins, according to him, between the ages of 35-40. Jung described the second half of life generally as a time for individuation for men and women. The process of individuation is characterized by a change in the psyche, a change that is beyond the control of the ego. It even represents a threat to its function. Jung claimed that this "dualistic phase", the moving away from the "paradise of the unconscious", so characteristic of youth, toward a greater acceptance of the world as it is, with all its flaws and weaknesses, is part of the nature of adult life. A process of introspection and deep reflection supercedes the interest in external life events and ego needs. Unfortunately, this change is met with reluctance and might result, according to Jung, in depression, neurotic symptoms and inflexibility.

This transitional period is also the time when one gets in touch with one's contrasexual characteristics. Men get closer to their Anima which represents their feminine, emotional and creative side, while woman get in touch with their masculine side, the Animus, which represents analytical thinking, aggressiveness and decisiveness. Both sexes strive to develop these aspects that have remained less developed during the first half of their lives, and to integrate the polarities into a whole, thus coming closer to the self which is the archetype of wholeness.

Reflecting on the process of individuation, Jung (1982) said

that the woman who is happy staying in the state of being "a femme a' homme" and neglects developing her Animus is not a fully individuated and developed person, but rather the container and pool of man's feminine projections:

Woman as a personality, however, is a very different thing; here illusion no longer works. So that when the question of personality arises, which is as a rule the painful fact of the second half of life, the childish form of the self disappears too. (1982, p. 160)

Jung believed that in contrast to the first half of life where man's contribution is mainly to the species and nature, the meaning and reason for man's longevity in the second half of life lies in his contribution to culture. This is what Harding (1933) called "the period of culture, the time of the beginning of wisdom" (p. 270). More than in Western societies, this is clearly seen in primitive tribes where the older generations are the carriers of tribal heritage and cultural values.

Jung criticized modern society's adherence to youth, foreseeing difficulties for those who try to live the "afternoon" of their lives as if it is still "morning" thus denying potential parts of themselves.

### Jungians' Comments on Jung's Views

Harding (1933), remarking on Jung's term the "afternoon" of life, and what she called the "autumn and winter", said that the fear of aging and the flight from it is an "adolescent attitude". Harding commented that the loss of religious beliefs, so characteristic of modern man, had robbed him of the peace of mind

and acceptance of old age and death that was natural to the Gothic era, where older people used to retire from daily life and dedicate their days in the service of God. The Indian people, according to her, pursued a similar route.

Downing (1987a), explaining Jung's unspecified theory concerning each sex's development in the second half of life, suggested that it might be "because of his tendency to disregard those correlations between physiological and psychological changes so much emphasized by Freud" (p. 9).

Whitmont (1987) added that the change in the psyche, which is transpersonal in nature, is met with the ego's fear of being flooded and carried away to unknown territories. The two basic ways of dealing with this powerful rising force are either by identifying with it through "symbolic images" such as are seen in rituals, or by negation and avoidance of the signs by using intellectualization.

Berry (1975) regarded Demeter as the goddess of the "horizontal world" who is responsible for vegetation and growth on earth. She connected the rape of Demeter's daughter, Persephone, and the latter's abduction to the underworld with a vertical act which symbolizes the deepening of consciousness, an unavoidable developmental phase in the life of a woman. The fact that Gaia, goddess of earth and Zeus colluded with Hades in his rape of Persephone means that rape in this case indicates a broadening of consciousness as a universal phenomenon.

#### Erikson's Stages of Ego Development

Erikson (1978), who jokingly said that his students call his

lectures on the course of life "from womb to tomb" or from "bust to dust" is, unlike Jung, very specific and structured in his outlook on a universal ego development during life. However, unlike Levinson (1977, 1978), Erikson (1963) did not link his stages to specific periods of time but rather divided them along ego developmental lines.

Following his theory, one sees the gradual process of growth and maturity from infancy to old age. There are eight stages of ego development. Each stage is distinguished from the other by an ongoing interaction and struggle between two polarized forces - a negative and a positive one - characteristic of that specific stage. The goal is to achieve a certain equilibrium between the two extreme forces, but never a total victory or defeat. Growth emerges as an outcome of that conflict and the move into the next stage is thus smoother. The crisis that emerges during a transition from one stage to the other is viewed by Erikson as a critical and sensitive time when a new potential trait of the personality evolves, but is certainly not the negative disaster associated with the word "crisis".

Erikson's eight stages of ego development are:

- Infancy, during which the challenge is to establish a sense of hope, otherwise mistrust develops.
- Early childhood, where the challenge is to overcome shame and doubt, become autonomous and acquire a sense of will power.
- Play stage, where one is supposed to develop a sense of purpose and initiative and overcome guilt.
- School age, where the challenge is to become competent, overcoming feelings of inferiority.

- Adolescence, which is the time to find one's identity and develop a sense of fidelity.
- Young adulthood, the challenge is to have the capacity for love and intimate relationships.
- Maturity, where the challenge is to enlarge one's interest in humanity and learn to care for others in the broad sense.
- Old age, the challenge is to reach wisdom through integration of the personality as a whole, thus coping better with despair and the fear of death.

Erikson (1959) assumed that, within the normal person, a blueprint for these stages is present.

#### Comments on Erikson's Theory

The fact that Erikson paid more attention to early developmental stages while less focus fell on the later two thirds of life was criticized by Levinson (1978) and Roberts and Newton (1987). They disagreed with the way he combined 40 years of adult life in only two stages of 20 years each. Levinson (1978) pointed out that only the seventh stage in Erikson's theory, generativity vs. stagnation, begins at about the age of 40 and deals with the issues of midlife.

Vaillant (1977), whose findings supported Erikson's theory, suggested adding a ninth stage of "career consolidation" (p. 202) between the sixth stage of intimacy and the seventh stage of generativity. Vaillant assessed this stage to be a trivial one, with no remarkable spiritual growth. He found that the men in his study were, at this stage, "colorless" conformists who actively pursued materialistic benefits. Vaillant equated this

stage to the latency period, ages six to ten.

Fiske (1977) commented that Erikson's eighth stage is "the most intrapersonal of all of his life stages; one in which human relationships may become close to symbolic, that is, change from empathy with particular others to empathy with "humanity" (p.50).

Peck (1968, pp. 88-89), elaborating on Erikson's work and relating specifically to the seventh stage, generativity vs. stagnation, reviewed the four main challenging tasks faced by adults approaching midlife:

- valuing wisdom vs. valuing physical power.
- socialising vs. sexualizing in human relationships.
- cathectic flexibility vs. cathectic impoverishment.
- mental flexibility vs. mental rigidity.

Davidson (1979) commented that Peck's (1968) first two goals are especially difficult to achieve in a youth-oriented society where a "beat the clock attitude" prevails. In such a society, men, particularly, cling to sex and power in trying to suffocate their fear of aging. Davidson asked:

- "How can we value wisdom in a society that values physical power?"
- "How can we value nonsexual relationships when our society sexualizes everything from soup to nuts via the mass media?" (p. 167).

Golan (1986) anticipated a new upgrading of Erikson's stages of development as a result of longer life expectancy.

#### Levinson's Theory of Adult Development

Levinson's (1977, 1978) theory, more than the other two

theories, dealt specifically and in detail with the stages of men's adult development.

Levinson (1978) confessed in the introduction to his book, The Seasons of a Man's Life, that the interest in adult development came from his own curiosity when he himself was approaching middle age. He was interested in discovering whether there was a sequence of developmental phases in adult life as there was in childhood.

Levinson chose to study 40 men between the ages of 35-45 years. He thought that because the sample was so small, including women in the study would not add to its validity. In any case, his opinion was that in spite of the differences between women and men, both sexes experience their adulthood in a similar way. Levinson's sample represented men from the fields of manual labor, administration, academia and art in equal numbers.

Starting his project in the late 1960's, he found that there was little theory and even less research regarding the course of adult life. Although there was a lot of detailed information pertaining to various aspects of adult life, there was limited knowledge of its true nature as a period in life. Levinson claimed that the reason for this lack of research is our reluctance to face mortality and to accept it. Avoidance of perceiving middle age as a time of decline, paradoxically prevents us from evaluating midlife's potentials.

According to Levinson, men's adult life lacks a concrete marking event that would help to distinguish one phase of life from the other, such as in earlier phases of development.

Levinson said that even the menopause, which is an unavoidable biological message for a woman, has not proven itself to be a useful guide in studying the life course of adult women.

Levinson divided men's development into five stable periods. Every period is connected to the other by a transitional period which lasts four to five years. A transitional period serves for contemplating and reassessing the period left behind and also for discovering and planning the next one.

The periods are:

- Pre-adulthood: age 0-22
- Early adulthood: age 17-45
- Middle adulthood: 40-65
- Late adulthood: age 60-85
- Late late adulthood: age 80+

In each period a man is supposed to achieve certain goals which are universal and specific to that particular stage of life. Levinson (1977) stressed that:

A period is defined in terms of its major tasks which require a man to build his life structure, and is not defined in terms of external events. This theory does not predict events but the meaning of an event and its impact will depend on the developmental stage in which it occurs. (p. 100)

However, in his final conclusions, Levinson admitted that he was surprised to find an age linkage between a certain pattern of behavior characteristic to a certain stage, and the time it occurred. The patterns appeared, regardless of differences in sociological, psychological or biological status. Levinson argued that only when we are looking separately at each aspect of a certain stage are we able to find differences between

individuals, whereas when a holistic developmental approach is used, an age-linked pattern of behaviour emerges and gives the theory its universality.

According to Levinson, the four challenges of the early adult phase are:

- Shaping a "dream" of one's sense and place in relation to the world.
- Finding a mentor who will support and challenge the young man's "dream".
- Establishing a work situation.
- Developing an intimate relationship with a chosen man or woman and building a family of one's own.

These goals can be seen as cornerstones for the "on the road to maturity" man. The ways in which one achieves these goals during early adulthood will shape one's achievements in the ensuing developmental stages.

Midlife transition, according to Levinson's theory, is the period of time that bridges early adulthood and middle adulthood, and occurs around the age of 40. Levinson's findings show that about 80% of his male subjects went through a severe to moderate crisis during midlife transition, during which they questioned their whole world-view, past achievements and future aspirations. The process that Levinson calls "disillusionment" is that during which one recognizes the need to shed most of one's values and dreams, face maturity and take responsibility for one's own life. From this point of view, the crisis is a positive one.

### Gilligan's Comments on Levinson's Theory

Gilligan (1982a) tried to prove that there are differences between women and men's psychological developments along the course of life. She commented that three out of the four basic goals which, according to Levinson (1977, 1978), a young adult male should achieve in order to succeed in later life, deal mainly with external achievements such as his ambitions, planned career and status, and the ways to get there. His emotional development is left on the periphery. The "mentor" and "the special woman" are just means to achieve these goals. In other words, Gilligan is saying that the stress is not so much that of developing man's capacity for intimate relationships as that of using those figures in order to achieve one's ambitions.

Gilligan (1982a) cited one of Levinson's (1978) conclusions in order to prove her point:

In our interviews, friendship was largely noticeable by its absence. As a tentative generalization we would say that close friendship with a man or a woman is rarely experienced by American men. (Levinson, p. 335)

Some research based on Levinson's theory comparing women's stages of development with men's stages will follow in order to highlight the differences between the sexes in adult years.

### Women's Adult Developmental Stages Based on Levinson's Theory

Roberts and Newton (1987) reviewed four dissertations (Adams, Droege, Furst, Stewart) which used Levinson's basic findings to see whether they could also be applied to women's

development along the stages of adult life.

Roberts and Newton (1987) found that the 39 women under study moved through the same adult developmental phases as men did, and had to achieve the same goals. However, differences between the sexes did exist and started already in the early adult phase. The differences were seen in the ways women perceived and achieved the four specific and essential goals of the early adult stage in Levinson's theory. Forming a "dream", finding a "mentor", establishing a profession and developing an intimate relationship with a mate.

Stewart (1977) suggested that with regard to the "dream", the major difference between the sexes lies in the fact that men's "dream" deals mainly with their place in the external world, what kind of career they are going to pursue, and what "Everest" they will conquer: an individualistic dream, as Stewart coined it. This stands in contrast to the "relational dream" or "split dream" which is characteristic of women's early adult development. Women's relational dreams consist of a picture they have about their future life, and deal mainly with their relations to their husbands, families and children. The core of women's life, in contrast "to men in the world", is "woman at home".

The "split dream" was a compromising combination of the individualistic dream, characteristic of man, and the "relational dream", characteristic of woman, where the woman tried to "find herself" by putting together her dream about home and the vision she had about the sort of career she would like to develop beside her family. Droege was of the opinion that the "split

dream" consumed a lot of woman's energy and distracted her from achieving her dreams in both worlds satisfactorily. Droege's subjects felt that a commitment to one dream meant giving up the other, therefore they had difficulties coping competently with both.

Finding a mentor was also an area in which women who had individualistic or split dreams underscored men. This confirmed Levinson's (1978) and Fuchs's (1980) views that women had difficulties finding mentors. Their suggested explanations varied from men's prejudices toward career women, their sexual fantasies that distract them from mentorship to the lack of enough women mentors in high career positions in the working world. Stewart and Furst found that, in cases where the mentor was also the husband, he "did not provide consistent support of dream components that threatened the stability of their own family and love life" (p.158).

As for the third goal of the early adulthood stage, building a career, two different variables appeared, which both seem to lengthen the period it takes women to achieve their careers. The first variable reported by Stewart (1977) and Furst (1983) seems to characterize women in terms of "relational dreams". These women started to think of a career of their own only when they reached their 30's and their children had already grown up. At that time the women were at least 10-15 years behind men of the same age who had invested a great deal in their careers while the women stayed home and raised their children. The sex and age biases that these women might face when applying for a job in their mid 30's might play an important role in their chances of achieving goals.

The second variable, reported by Stewart and Adams, appears to indicate that those women whose pattern of career resembled men's, i.e. pursuing their individualistic dream, slowed down on approaching their 30's. Simultaneously, a need for a meaningful relationship, and/or building a family became more important in their lives (see also Leiblich, 1986).

However, Droege's results showed that, on reaching middle age:

Those who worked were not any happier and did not have a higher sense of self-esteem than those who were unemployed housewives. There were happy and dissatisfied women in both groups. (p. 159)

As for the fourth goal, forming a meaningful relationship with a partner, women were also in a disadvantageous position. As was mentioned previously, husbands were not as supportive of their wives as wives were towards them, and therefore the supportive network that men benefitted from did not exist for women.

Roberts and Newton (1987) proposed that the men in Levinson's study, as well as most of the women in their study, had one thing in common. Both sexes had a dream of the "wife-as-supporter-of-husband's-goals, but not the other way around" (p. 158). As Anais Nin (1970) summed it up in her diary:

The essential difficulty I see in the relationships around me is that the women, the wives, are willing and ready to help their husbands to fulfill their desires, their objectives, their development or career. But in few of the husbands do I see the same helpfulness. There is a fear that the development of women will make her less of a wife, mate, that

they might even lose her. (vol. 3, p. 215)

Applying Levinson's (1978) stages to their sample, Mercer et al. (1989) found that the stages occurred at different ages, in different orders and more irregularly than those reported by Levinson.

Mercer et al. (1989) developed a scheme of five developmental phases in women's adult life:

- 16-25: the launching into adulthood phase
- 26-30: the leveling phase
- 36-40: the liberating phase
- 61-65: the regeneration\redirection phase
- 80 : the creativity\destructiveness phase

It seems that the period of 25 years between the third and fourth phases, between "becoming one's own person" and retirement, is too generalized. In a study such as theirs, where they looked for transitional periods every five years, middlehood is not specified enough.

#### Gutmann's Generic Model of Development

Gutmann's generic model stands as an example of another general developmental theory which explains rather than specifies and defines stages along the course of life. Gutmann (1985), who admitted being influenced by Erikson's ego development theory, was of the opinion that each developmental stage consists of three substages:

- Genotypic eruptive period.
- A reciprocal period.
- A sculptured period.

A genotypic period is characterized by the coming to an end of "a chemical and biosocial event" such as, for example, the menopause or infancy, and the beginning of a new, but yet unknown pattern. This substage, the first in a process, is an unconscious one and manifests itself through dreams, mood fluctuations and other unconscious means. Gutmann said that: "these diffuse energies are at the outset like the wings of fledgling birds; they have not yet tuned their beat, nor found their proper air" (1985, p. 200). Denial mechanisms are used to repress the unexplained restlessness. Gutmann cited the example of adolescents who, in the face of raising sexual drives, turn to religion, or middle aged women exhibiting depression in order to suppress their emerging masculine traits.

The continuity of the process and the beginning of the reciprocal period is dependent upon the acceptance of the first period by some influential members in the close surroundings, so that space is left for experiencing what is as yet unexpressed consciously.

The sculpturing period which follows and is based on the positive resolution of the previous two, is characterized by the integration of the new pattern which becomes part of the whole repertoire:

It is only in the terminal, sculptured phase that culture plays a primary role in determining the conventional expressions, the personally useful and socially valued outcomes of the developmental potentials. (Gutmann, 1985, p. 201)

However, Gutmann argued that women's reciprocal and sculptural

parts of mid life transition are unaccepted socially. Thus they are unable to proceed with the process, which then expresses itself in depression.

Gutmann's generic model partly explains the lack of a well established theory about this particular stage in the life of women, as well as the controversial results regarding women's attitudes towards the empty nest, menopause and so forth. It also makes women's silence more understandable, because the bond of silence is composed of conscious and unconscious elements. Overall, Gutmann's theory concurs with the current approach of viewing mid- and late life as a time of expansion rather than decline (Baker & Wheelright, 1984; Lock, 1985; Mercer, Nichols & Doyle, 1989; O'Connor & Wolfe, 1987).

#### Gould's Approach to Midlife

Gould's (1978) adult development theory is not divided into structured and specified chronological periods, but instead deals mainly with issues that come to the surface and demand their resolution in midlife. Gould discussed various problematic areas typical of men and women who reach middle age at length. He was convinced that the primary task of adulthood is to correct some of the unrealistic and idealized images that we, as children, carry with us as we grow up. The two most disturbing myths that middle-aged women have to shed are, using Gould's words, the "protector myth" and the "togetherness myth".

Talking about the current middle age generation, Gould said that from early childhood these women were educated to believe that:

The only way to get power was to marry it, and that to marry power it was necessary to have the power of physical attractiveness....that men were attracted to helplessness in a woman as well as to her looks. (1978, p. 246)

Women manipulatively projected their aggressiveness onto men, wishing to live sheltered and safely under the protective umbrella of the husband, and sharing his life as if it was hers, believing that "there is no life beyond this family" (p. 267) and that being together is the key word to happiness.

Midlife confronts women with the sudden realization of the universal truth that we are lonely mortal creatures in this world. The result is a tremendous amount of anger projected again toward the husband who is blamed for his wife's feelings of being "cheated".

Gould, similarly to Levinson (1978), perceived a process of disillusionment among men with the myths of their life. Whereas women feel deceived by their "heroic husbands" who turn out in midlife to be disappointing males, men feel robbed of their sense of omnipotence and immortality. In a way, their obsession and investment in developing their careers which acted as a defence against the awareness of finality, is coming to an end. On reaching the peak of their careers in midlife and having to struggle against competition from other younger adults, or sometimes realizing the opposite - that they will never "make it" - is experienced as a psychological trauma and shock. In Gould's words: "Work loses its illusory magical protective powers" (p. 238).

### Summary

The holistic developmental theories discussed above were based on men's developmental phases or referred rather generally to both sexes. Psychologically, women were found to follow different adult routes of development to those of men (Gilligan, 1982a; Roberts & Newton, 1987; Tamir, 1989). As an holistic approach to women's development in adult life is still missing (Hunter & Sundel, 1989), the following chapters will review separately certain aspects of women's midlife, examining their influence on the quality of women's adult life.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MENOPAUSE

The menopause brings with it a distinct biological message announcing that the reproductive period in a woman's life is coming to an end. However, as Levinson (1978) mentioned in his study, even such a clear signal is not a sufficient marker when studying the course of women's midlife.

This chapter will review the menopause as a multidimensional and complex phenomenon. Criticism of the medicalization of the menopause and Hormone Replacement Therapy (henceforth HRT) use will be discussed.

Before discussing the menopause, it seems relevant to look at the rites of passage and dreams regarding this phase in life, which initiate the physiological and psychological changes that take place in the lives of women.

#### Rites of Passage

One of the resources for studying human patterns of behavior and development is the rites of passage which are generally experienced when a crucial event occurs in the life of an individual or a society (Van Gennep, 1960). These are usually supportive to the individual, as well as the society, during the period of change. Furthermore, rituals carry within them the reassurance that an individual is not alone in the world in the particular situation (s)he faces, but that (s)he is part of a

systematic order that unifies the world (Downing, 1987a; Eliade, 1965, 1968; Woodman, 1982 ).

Woodman (1982, 1985) stressed the need for the common rituals in our modern Western society which have been completely lost. She stated that each transition from one phase of life to another involves a symbolic death and resurrection. Experiencing the ritual is reliving these two components in a safe and transpersonal way, extending it into a cosmic phenomenon. Neglecting rituals results in the loss of one's identity.

If one reaches middle age unable to accept the accompanying physical decay, one can lose the benefits of getting old, such as increasing gentleness and understanding and gaining in wisdom - thus increasing one's value to one's community. The recent use of the German word "Torschlusspanic", panic at the thought that a door between oneself and life's opportunities has shut, describes best according to Woodman (1985), the state of awe, fright and pessimism so typical of our contemporary Western society.

Every ritual, according to Van Gennep (1960), consists of three sequential parts: a withdrawal period, followed by a ceremonial act which symbolizes the entrance into a new period, and, the third part, which is revival and growth. However, it is interesting to note that the menopause as a passage in women's life has never had the benefit of this vouchsafement, despite being known as "the change of life" (Beyene, 1986; Downing, 1987a; Weideger, 1980;).

Looking at the sequences of a ritual from the angle of today's middle aged women, one can see that some space and time for withdrawal, which is the first step of entering the rite of

passage, is unrecognized and is even socially discouraged. As for ceremonies, which are the second part of the ritual, there are certainly none to celebrate the menopause, which is part of the reason for women's difficulty in moving through to the third part, where growth and revival take place. Instead, modern woman is deprived of official recognition and ceremony of the change and is left alone struggling to put some order into the past and future.

#### Why Is There Not A Ritual for the Menopause?

An interesting question is why the menopause, unlike other crucial events such as adolescence, marriage and death, never had "rites of passage" in the past or in the present? (Beyene, 1986; Brown, 1985; Van Gennep, 1960). Why should the menopausal woman not share, pray, dance or cry over that passage in her life as Downing (1987a) suggested ?

From an historic point of view, one reason for the lack of rituals may be the shorter life-span of women in the past. At the time of the Roman empire the life span for women was 25 years, rising to 30 in the 15th century, and reaching 50 at the beginning of this century (Mankowitz, 1984). Yet, as Downing (1982) rightfully commented, how can one explain the existence of rituals for older women in the light of this shorter life expectancy?

Richardson (1973) offered the explanation that the menopause as an event is not important in the life of a patriarchal society which judges women according to their usefulness. Weidiger (1980) explained the lack of rituals and society's disinterest in the

menopause by linking it with men's ambivalent attitude toward menstruation. A menstruating woman is regarded as taboo in most societies. The taboo is a defence against the fertile woman who has a magical power over men, who desire her as much as they are afraid of her. This awesomeness and attractiveness naturally decreases and disappears in the menopause, when a woman stops bleeding and is unable to bear children, and thus loses her mysterious desirability to men.

Irregularity of periods during the perimenopausal phase and the cessation of menstrual bleeding which can only be estimated in retrospect, i.e. after a period of at least 12 months, is cited by Lock (1985) as another reason for the lack of rituals. It seems that one could offer another explanation based on women's conspiracy and need for secrecy around an issue that according to the previous explanation decreases her power of attraction. As will be discussed later, the need to stay young and attractive is a universal phenomenon (Luke, 1981). Bart (1971) expressed it beautifully by saying that the menopause has no "Bar Mitzvah".

#### Status Passages and the Menopause

Glaser and Strauss (1971) analyzed and challenged the common opinion among sociologists that status passages are "fairly regularized, scheduled, and prescribed" (p.3.). They added that, beside the fact that these three properties might or might not appear in all status passages, there are other properties that might be relevant to status passages as well.

These properties are:

- Desirability and centrality of the passage.

- Inevitability.
- Reversibility.
- Repeatability.
- Moving collectively ,lonely or aggregatily through it.
- Ability to communicate.
- Voluntarily going through the passage.
- Degree of control.
- Clarity of signs.
- Length of time.

One can also add another property: the extent of preparation the passagee has had prior to entering the event itself. Analyzing the menopause from this perspective, it seems that the menopause, as a status passage, is inevitable but certainly not desirable or reversible. Women do not choose to go through it voluntarily, and because of the lack of rites of passage they move alone through it with little communication or support. The degree of control is debatable even if we take into account the medical intervention by means of HRT. As we will see from the data collected, there is minimal, if any, preparation for this coming passage.

#### Dream Work During the Menopause

The unconscious psyche is the source of conflict and pathology as well as of psychological and spiritual guidance.

Whitmont (1983).

Dreams, as messages from the unconscious, indicate the state of the inner mental life of the dreamer which is repressed during the day. Nightmares, as well as dreams that deal with pregnancy

and childbearing, are themes typical of women who go through the menopause. They express the difficulties women have in accepting the fact that they can no longer bear children (Downing, 1982, 1987a; Mankowitz, 1984).

The continual emphasis on childbearing, the potential for which has come to an end, is expressed in dreams of two kinds. The first point towards women's anger concerning the end of reproduction and appear to be regressive in nature, a yearning to regain the loss of fertility. These dreams portray bloody scenes of children or mothers being cruelly killed. The second kind are dreams where a child is conceived by a postmenopausal woman. One example is the story of Sarah conceiving Isaac, who is meant to be in the service of God, thus manifesting the fact that the birth is a supranatural one. These dreams point towards a new direction in the psychic life of the dreamer, the birth of a spiritual child as a symbol of spiritual growth, mental development and renewal (Downing 1982; Mankowitz 1984).

Another interesting example of such dreams and their symbolic interpretation according to the Jungian analytic approach, is suggested by Mankowitz (1984) who reported on a series of dreams when analysing a woman going through the change of life. The dreams presented issues that the dreamer, herself a professional woman, thought she had already dealt with and resolved. Through the dreamwork one can follow the patient's unconscious presentation of all the hidden themes that she was not able to face consciously in real life. These are the loss of her fertility, the departure of her children, the inevitable aging process and her jealousy towards her youthful looking husband.

Symbols such as a burnt granary, charred and blackened bodies of children, a family house destroyed by fire, all represented the present state of mind of the dreamer, whose ovaries had stopped functioning, bringing to an end her reproductive years, and causing her to suffer from hot flushes. The family house became a place with no life after the children had left and, symbolically, also stood for her empty and aging body. The dream's grey and black colours are typical of the winter season which is usually associated with old age and death.

However, dreams also contain solutions for the future. In this case, the dreamer saw at the back of her burnt house, freshly planted vegetation, illustrating new expectations for the next phase in life, which will be characterized by its more introverted, out - of - the - "lime - light" perspective of life, emphasizing introspection and tranquility.

#### Difficulties in Defining the Menopause

Although the menopause is widely associated with the cessation of menstruation, a clear definition which will enable a better scientific approach to the menopause is still lacking.

Kaufert et al. (1986) reviewed a workshop held in Finland (1985), where researchers from various disciplines, aware of the cross cultural differences which the menopause carries with it, made an effort to reach a common denominator that would enable scientists to study the subject further. It was suggested at the workshop that the natural process of the menopause should be differentiated from other menstrual cessation that occur in the

life of adult women, thus menopausal women would become a composite group who could be studied cross culturally.

An important point to be noted was the conference's recommendation that the menopause be seen as a long term process which can stretch from three to seven years. Thus, scientists should be prevented from drawing hasty or contradictory conclusions, and should rather view the different reactions to the menopause on a continuum. It is therefore essential to distinguish between:

- The premenopausal woman who is generally unprepared for and unaware of what soon awaits her.
- The perimenopausal woman who actually experiences the menopause at present and may suffer from a variety of physiological and psychological symptoms, reacting to them according to her personality structure, and familial and societal status.
- The postmenopausal woman who relates to the menopause from a distance of time and is able, in retrospect, to evaluate it differently from the pre- or perimenopausal woman.

This division into these three main categories of symptoms by the first World Congress on Menopause (1976) provides a useful guide-line to assist the explanation of the different approaches and symptom formation of the menopause.

#### Cross Cultural Differences

Referring to the menopause as a biological development, we might expect that the rate of hormone decline and the degree of symptom formation produced would occur uniformly with little

regard to race or religion, and that the same would hold true for the symptoms experienced.

Bart (1971) however, in her wide range of anthropological research had shown that this is not the case, and there is a difference in the variation of symptoms and their intensity in different ethnic groups. Only one generalization, which is sociological in its nature, can be expressed, and that is whatever the role of women during the fertile years, it is reversed at the menopause (Beyene, 1986). In Western societies there is a decline in status while in Non-Western societies there is an increase in the older woman's prestige. Thus, Thompson (1971) found no psychoses in menopausal Chinese women because the older woman in the Chinese culture has a strong and privileged position in her family. Beyene (1986) who perceived the menopause as a "biocultural experience", found that Mayan and Greek peasant menopausal women differed in symptoms and reaction; the Mayan had no hot flushes, moreover, this word even did not exist in their vocabulary, while the Greek women suffered from various menopausal symptoms. However, for both ethnic groups it was a social upgrading event.

Maoz, Antonovsky, Apter, Wijssenbeek and Datan (1977) in their research on The Perception of Menopause in Five Ethnic Groups in Israel, found that some of the physical menopausal symptoms were to be found in all groups regardless of ethnic origin, while psychological symptoms were more related to ethnic origin. The group of Arab women were more positive in their attitude toward the menopause, feeling that they would gain in their social status, and would be more respected by their husbands. However,

the women in the European group mentioned that they were not expecting any change in their social status, but "were concerned about the possibility of emotional problems" (p. 74).

It seems that the European group's reactions to the menopause is a contradiction in itself. It is part of a double bind in which Western women are caught up when reaching the menopause. Logically they dismiss any future change in their social status, while emotionally they are anxious and concerned about all the unspoken implications regarding this phase in their lives.

The results of Maoz et al. (1977) and Beyene (1986) may be part of an answer to the diversity of menopausal symptoms in various ethnic groups, and the need for a thorough cross-cultural study (Beyene, 1986).

### Historical Background

Hammond and Ory (1982), reviewing the medical background of the menopause, noted that although one can find a great many articles concerning the menopause some of them, particularly the earlier ones, seem to lack correct data. The authors mentioned that it was only in 1775 that Percival Pott first pointed out the connection between the ovaries and menstruation. Menopausal women in that era were treated with remedies that were made of crushed and ground ovaries. It took almost 150 years to establish that estrogens were the main ovarian hormones, and to understand how they were related to menopausal symptoms. This was the starting point for using estrogens for alleviating menopausal symptoms.

### The Medicalization of the Menopause

The menopause is only one link in a chain of changes along the human life line. However, there is a tendency to treat it as a deficiency disease instead of accepting it as a normal developmental phase, an integral part of the aging process (Bell, 1987; Beyene, 1986; McCrea, 1983).

McCrea (1983) protested against what she thought was the medicalization of the menopause, saying that:

During the 19th century, Victorian physicians viewed menopause as a sign of sin and decay; with the advent of Freudian psychology in the early 20th century, it was viewed as a neurosis; and as synthetic estrogens became readily available in the 1960s, physicians treated menopause as a deficiency disease. (p. 111)

Bell (1987) accused the medical profession of using a medical concept to deal with a non-medical phenomenon such as the menopause, in order to hold and gain power within the rapidly developing scientific world.

Bell spotted the beginning of that process of conceptualizing the menopause as a "deficiency disease", back in the 1930's and 40's, when the "paradigm of sex endocrinology" was discovered. It was at this point that a synthetic hormone Diethylstilbestrol (DES), used as a HRT for menopausal symptoms was developed and approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). By doing so, said Bell, the menopause was taken out of its broader cultural and psychological context and instead became a private biological problem of each individual middle aged woman. Treatment became systematic, standardized

and under the total control of the medical profession.

The harm done to women by this constricting purely medical approach was to prevent them from sharing their mutual experiences. Instead they kept a bond of silence around a universal phenomenon which has consequences far beyond its biological aspect. Bell (1987) quoted Hamblen as being one of the gynecologists in opposition to the medicalization of the menopause, saying that if menopause was an illness then "We must accept, perhaps, the statement...that not senescence, but life has become a disease" (p. 539).

It is important to note that the discovery of HRT and the acceptance of a deficiency hormonal model for the menopause prevented women from experiencing the menopause even as a purely biological event. By a continuous intake of estrogen and subsequent artificial menstruation, they were cut off from going through a universal developmental life phase: a phase which involves leaving one form of existence as young fertile women and mothers, and moving to another phase, with all the metamorphoses and losses which are involved. These losses include the loss of reproductivity, the loss of youth, the loss of the motherhood role, and, perhaps most of all, the loss of dreams and illusions (Downing, 1987a).

In research on Medical Perceptions of Menopausal Symptoms Cowan, Warren and Young (1985) studied the ways nurses and physicians assessed menopausal symptoms presented to them by their menopausal patients. They then compared the results with the way the women themselves tended to perceive the same symptoms. Cowan et al. found that the professionals in their

study regarded menopausal symptoms as pathological and tended to take them more seriously than the menopausal women themselves.

Another surprising result of this study came from doctors' and nurses' tendencies to include a psychological dimension in menopausal symptoms, more even than the women themselves, who tended to attribute the symptomatology to physiological changes. Cowan, Warren and Young (1985) concluded that the menopause is still perceived by medical professionals as a pathological period in the life of the midlife woman.

These differences of opinion between the menopausal women and the medical professionals could arise from the different models, the biomedical and biopsychosocial, from which these doctors operated (Lock, 1985), or what Bell (1987) perceived as the medical profession's need to control not only the biological symptoms but the psychological and sociological ones as well.

On the other hand, when examining these results from the women's angle, they can be understood in terms of the double bind in which that women find themselves on reaching the menopause, when they feel they are denied the social recognition of the transformation they are going through. The psychological awareness is then repressed, (it is harder to deny the physiological symptoms), and the whole process lacks assimilation and integration.

As for the change in the medical view, recognizing the psychological side of the menopause, one should hope for its continuation and better treatment.

The tendency of the medical profession to perceive the menopause as a pathological phenomenon can be explained by the

fact that gynecologists and general practitioners see only that section of women population who suffer the most and who are in need of help.

### The Uniqueness of Menopause

The phenomenon of the menopause is unique to the female human being, whereas other female animals remain fertile throughout their lives. The reason for this time limit for women's fertility may lie in nature's wisdom in preventing ova which have been stored since the seventh month of foetal life from being fertilized and bearing abnormal babies (Weideger, 1980). In contrast, there is no physiological male menopause. Sperm, which is freshly produced throughout life, enables man to remain fertile far into old age, although the amount of sperm fluid produced may diminish.

### Time of Onset

Amundsen and Diers (1970) reported that the age of menopause in classical Greece and Rome was between 40-50.

Cooper (1975) who extended it to over 51 years of age, pointed to the phenomenon that menstruation now occurs at an earlier stage, and the fertility period of a woman appears to be lengthened. There also seems to be a linkage between mothers and daughters and the beginning and ending of their menstrual cycle (Beyene, 1986). Campbell (1981) stated that climacteric in the female is generally considered to fall between the ages of 40-55 years. Stoppard (1986) extended the menopause to 64, but stated that the average age in the U.K. is 50. Gerdes (1988) pointed to

an average of 50-51.6 years.

Stanford, Hartge, Brinton, Hoover and Brookmeyer (1987) findings showed the American average to be 51. Menopause, according to their results, was not consistently related to age at menstruation onset, neither to factors such as race, height or weight. However, early menopause was linked with to socioeconomic status.

The differences in age of onset might be attributed partially to the recent increase in the quality of life, as well as to the different criteria used when defining the menopause.

#### Differentiation between the Climacteric and the Menopause

Hammond and Ory's (1982) definition clarified the sometimes interchangeable use of climacteric, which in Greek translates as "rung of a ladder", and the menopause, the cessation of the monthly (bleeding): "The menopause, the episode of the last menstrual period is one event in the climacteric, the period from the onset of decline of ovarian function to stabilization at reduced or absent levels of estrogen production" (p.20). The climacteric can last up to seven years, with changes in the regularity of the menstrual cycle, its length and quantity of bleeding (Cutler & Garcia 1984). Menopause, as a subphase of the climacteric, has occurred when 12 consecutive months have passed without menstruation.

#### The Female Hormones

A short review of the hormonal changes that take place at the

early stages of the menopause is given by way of an introduction to information on the female hormones.

### Estrogen

The female's sexual and reproductive organs are controlled by levels of estrogen which are active from puberty to menopause. The hormone estrogen, as seen in Table 1, is a composition of three steroids - estrone, estradiol and estriol.

Estradiol is the most influential steroid of the three and is responsible for the sexual female development during puberty. Its ovarian secretion decreases around the menopause, thus causing atrophic changes in all the sexual organs, in which estradiol has taken an active part. The breasts, uterus, vulva, vagina and bones, as well as changes in calcium and lipid metabolism, are all influenced by estradiol and undergo a change when the amount of estradiol decreases (Roddick, 1977).

Estrone, on the other hand, is found in greater quantities around the menopause and is accepted as the most influential hormone during the climacteric. Circulating estrone is, however, also reduced to 20% of its previous amount (Hammond & Ory, 1982).

Kaplan (1983) added that another indirect source of estrogens in the postmenopausal woman is her adrenal glands. Adrenal androstenedione is turned into estrone, mainly in subcutaneous tissues, and testosterone is converted into estradiol. However, even this supply decreases in amount in the advanced older woman.

The reduced levels of estrogens vary from one menopausal woman to the other, as does the rate of its decrease. This is

Table 1.

Features of Estrogen Metabolism.


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 Estrogen Concentrations During Menstrual Cycle
 

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	Plasma Concentrations (pg/ml)		Production Rate (ug/day)		Metabolic Clearance (Liters/24)	
	Follicular	Luteal	Follicular	Luteal	Follicular	Luteal
Estrone	50 - 200	70 - 100	109	151	1750	1750
Estradiol	50 - 400	100 - 200	116	204	1055	1055
Estriol	7	10.9				

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 Estrogen Concentrations after Menopause
 

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	Plasma Concentrations (pg/ml)	Production Rate (ug/day)	Metabolic Clearance Rate (Liters/24)
Estrone	30 - 60	45	1610
Estradiol	7 - 15	12	910

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Adapted from Hammond & Soules, 1978, p. 41.

one explanation for the variety of differences in intensity of symptoms among menopausal women. Another biological explanation for the differences in intensity of symptoms lies in the fact that some women are better able to use their other sources of estrogen than other women. Roddick (1977) and Beyene (1986) were of the opinion that sociological, genealogical and psychological factors also play an important role in the degree of menopausal symptoms.

#### Progesterone

Progesterone is another hormone which is secreted by the corpus luteum regularly each month after ovulation has occurred. Its task during the reproductive years is to prepare the uterus for the nestling of the fertilized ovum by lining it thickly. Progestogen, synthetic compounds of progesterone, is used in HRT in combination with estrogen to prevent cancer of the endometrium.

#### Androgens

Androgens, which are the male hormones, are secreted by the ovaries as well as by the adrenal glands. Their task in the female body is to stimulate satisfactory levels of sexual drive and to help in the maintenance of the bone structure and muscle tonus (Sherwin & Gelfand, 1987). At the time of menopause, when levels of estrogen and progesterone are decreasing there is still a secretion of the androgens, which are converted into estrogens in a chemical process that takes place in the fat cells of the body. Therefore, fatter women can enjoy the benefit of having higher levels of estrogens during the menopause thus suffering

less from hot flushes and other menopausal symptoms. An estrogen-androgen preparation is reported (Sherwin & Gelfand, 1987) to increase sexual drive in postmenopausal women.

### Symptoms of the Menopause

The imbalance of female hormone secretion, starting at the climacteric, affects women and causes a variety of symptoms.

Magalini (1981) listed 17 symptoms associated with the menopause. Hot facial flushes, chills, sweats, tachycardia, palpitations, nervousness, irritability, depression, headaches, lost or increased libido, abnormal uterine bleeding, pruritus vulvae, atrophic vaginitis, breast pain, hypotrophy of breasts, bursitis, bone pain and hypertension. Magalini's (1981) prognosis was that symptoms might last months, and sometimes even years, but might also disappear spontaneously.

Downing (1982, 1987a) added insomnia as a frequent symptom accompanying the menopause, explaining that as women tend to view the menopause as a kind of symbolic death, refraining from sleep, which in itself is a certain form of death, was a way of prolonging life.

Neugarten (1969) mentioned a study conducted in England in 1930 showing that 85% of the menopausal women had some menopausal symptoms, but only 10% were badly disturbed by them. Similar numbers were found by Bell (1987), Cooper (1975), Gerdes (1988), Stryker (1977) and Weidiger (1980).

### Differentiating the Menopausal Symptoms

One of the difficulties in trying to define menopausal symptoms is the question of what the true menopausal symptoms are, and what symptoms are attached to it yet may be part of the aging process, or caused by a change in social status, or affected by psychological stresses.

The First World Congress of Menopause (1976) concluded that menopausal symptoms should be divided into three main categories:

- Symptoms resulting from hormonal imbalance.
- Symptoms created by social and cultural influences.
- Symptoms reflecting the specific personality.

The division seems to clarify some of the ways in which to deal with the subject, thus alleviating some of its complexities.

Neugarten (1969) relating to this problem, said:

Symptoms ascribed to menopausal change by one or another investigator over the years have embraced every body system and a good portion of all the vasomotor, cardiovascular, metabolic, sensory, digestive, skeletal, muscular, glandular, central nervous system, mental, emotional, and temperamental manifestations known to medicine and to psychology. (p. 44)

Therefore Neugarten recommended further investigation, and discrimination between direct and related symptoms of the menopause.

Neugarten (1969) found two schools of thought regarding the subject of the menopause. The first is a physiological approach which saw the menopause as a biological process and its symptoms to be the outcome of a hormonal imbalance. The other, a

psychologically orientated approach, saw the symptoms as a continuation of a problematic psychosexual development rooted in adolescence and reactivated during the menopause.

Benedek (1950) and Deutsch (1973) represented a school of thought that drew similarities between the menopause and puberty. Both periods were seen as times of hormone instability resulting in physiological and psychological symptoms, but if puberty was the entrance to womanhood and motherhood, the menopause was its finale.

Bell (1987), Greenwood (1987) and McCrea (1983) were of the opinion that only hot flushes and night sweats were a direct result of hormonal imbalance. The other symptoms were found, according to Greenwood, in various life stages of women without any specific intensification in midlife. Greenwood (1987) stressed the importance of discovering whether menopausal symptoms stem from hormonal imbalance or whether the symptoms were connected to sociological factors, or were interconnected.

Some elaborations on the main menopausal symptoms will follow.

### Hot Flushes

The hot flush brings a sudden wave of heat all over the upper part of the body resulting, at times, in sweating. A study by Casper, Yen and Wilkes (1979) showed that the average hot flush lasts 2.7 minutes. An elevation of 7.5 degrees F in the finger's temperature was measured, accompanied by nine extra heart beats per minute.

Women may suffer from hot flushes for as long as nine

years, but most women stopped being bothered by them after approximately two years, when a bodily adjustment was reached. A woman will suffer fewer hot flushes when her hormonal secretion slows down gradually, than when an abrupt fall in hormonal levels intensifies the symptoms.

Hot flushes are connected to the decrease of estrogen secretions and affect almost 75% of menopausal women. Gerdes (1988), Hammond and Ory (1982), and Laufer, Erlik, Meldrum and Judd (1982) agreed that there is no simple answer as to what causes hot flushes. However, there is a tendency to relate the changes in body heat to the hypothalamus and the uneven levels of lutenizing hormone release (Casper et al., 1979). Another possibility lies in the closeness of the pituitary gland to the area in the brain which controls the body temperature. The irregularity of the pituitary function during the menopause might also affect its neighboring organ (Greenwood, 1987).

Greenwood (1987) preferred to relate the hot flushes to an "adolescent acne", and called for the "demystification" of them.

Weg (1989), confirming the results of Bart (1971) and Neugarten (1968a), found that women who "choose to live multiple roles" (p. 35) do not suffer from hot flushes.

### Vagina and Uterus Changes

Decreased levels of estrogens and androgens result in the thinning of the vagina's cellular tissues (Weg, 1989). Masters and Johnson (1966) described them as "almost giving the impression that they can be seen through" (p. 233). A secondary loss is a decrease in the vaginal lubrication which Masters and

Johnson (1970) related to the insufficiently thick layer of vaginal tissues where moisture can be produced. These changes result in painful intercourse. The inner lining of the uterus becomes atrophic and the uterus shrinks, according to measurements taken by Masters and Johnson (1966). Both vagina and uterus lose their elasticity.

### Clitoris Changes

No significant changes in clitoral functions or size are reported, except in some cases of advanced age, between 60-70. However, sensitivity to and irritation by rough stimulation may increase as a result of the change in tissue fattiness (Masters & Johnson, 1970; Weg, 1989).

### Coronary Heart Disease During the Menopause

It is accepted that premenopausal women are protected against heart disease as opposed to postmenopausal women (Hammond & Ory, 1982). Though still controversial, recent studies (Bush et al. 1987; Gruchow, Anderson, Barbonak, & Sobocinski, 1988; Hunt, Vessey, McPherson, & Coleman, 1987) indicated that estrogen reduces the risk of coronary heart disease. However, the role of estrogen as a protector against coronary diseases is yet unclear, as studies by Hassager and Christiansen (1988) indicated. The postmenopausal women who received HRT in their study showed an increase in blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Exogenous estrogens, as opposed to endogenous estrogens, might be the reason for these different results. Or it could be that progesterone or another hormone which is active during the premenopausal phase

and which decreases in the menopausal years is the "protector agent" yet to be discovered (Hammond & Ory, 1982).

### Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a bone disease characterized by a reduction in bone density and accompanied by increasing porosity and brittleness (Greenwood, 1987; Stoppard, 1986). It is associated with loss of calcium from the bones. Osteoporosis is found in almost 25%-30% of people over 65 and is four times more common in women than in men (Greenwood, 1987; Stoppard, 1986; Weg, 1977). Hammond and Ory (1982) estimated the ratio to be 8:10.

Osteoporosis is almost unheard of amongst black women (Greenwood, 1987), or Mayan and Greek peasants (Beyene, 1986) due to their life style. The annual loss of bone thickness in menopausal and postmenopausal women is 1-1.5%. The degenerative process goes on until about a third of the bone consistency has diminished. The results of this slow process come to light usually in the 70's when women suffer from fractures in their hips. In extreme cases one can see the loss of total bone mass exhibited in loss of height, difficulty in maintaining normal posture, fragile bones, and frequent acute pain. The course of loss of bone density can now be traced with modern diagnostic equipment, thus overcoming the difficulty of predicting who will suffer from osteoporosis (Greenwood, 1987).

Osteoporosis is considered a postmenopausal pathology and is primarily estrogen-dependent. Hormone replacement therapy could prevent the loss of bone density during the postmenopausal years, but could not reverse the damage that has already been

done ( Gerdes, 1988; Stoppard, 1986).

The controversy around HRT makes the benefit of estrogen replacement therapy questionable in relation to osteoporosis. Treatment with estrogen has shown benefits for some people but not others. Greenwood (1987) reported on recent changing attitudes in the medical model assessing that life-time dietary habits, calcium and vitamin D intake, fitness, exercise and genetic factors for dense bones may be more significant than estrogen in the maintenance of good bone structure. On the other hand, a recent study of estrogen\progestogen treatment is found not only helpful in preventing bone loss but also in reversing and increasing bone density in early postmenopausal women (Riis, Johansen & Christiansen, 1988; Munk-Jensen, Pors, Obel, & Bonne, 1988).

Table 2 is a list of factors which increase the risk of osteoporosis.

#### Hormone Replacement Therapy

Hormone replacement treatment or therapy (HRT) was developed as a natural answer to the medical conceptualization of the menopause as a hormonal deficiency disease. Treatment consists of administering estrogens, whether in a natural or synthetic form, in order to balance the weakening hormonal system. Natural estrogens were found to be a better choice (Hammond & Ory, 1982).

The 1960's became a boom time for HRT which was accepted and thought of as "The" answer to all menopausal problems, promising to keep women "feminine forever", as well as preventing genital and breast cancer (Wilson, 1966), to the extent that in

Table 2.

Factors that Increase Risk of Osteoporosis and Fractures.Genetic or Medical Factors

Being thin (especially if you are short).

Female relatives with osteoporosis

Early menopause.

Being in non-black ethnic group.

Chronic diarrhoea or surgical removal of part of the stomach or small intestine.

Kidney disease with dialysis.

Previous fractures that occurred easily, without major trauma.

Lifestyle Factors

Lack of exercise

Very high-protein diet.

High salt diet.

Lack of vitamin D from sun, diet, or pills.

Smoking

High alcohol use.

Low-Calcium diet.

Never having borne children.

Adapted from Greenwood, 1987, p. 55.

the mid 1970's, 50% of middle aged, middle class American women were taking HRT. In addition, local use of estrogen cream was found helpful in alleviating pain resulting from lack of moisture and lubrication of the vagina. According to McCrea (1983) and Bell (1987), its popularity made HRT number five on the American list of the most used drugs in 1975.

However, a significant increase in endometrial cancer in those patients who were on estrogen replacement therapy drew the attention of researchers in the second half of the 1970's (Hertz, 1977; Roddick, 1977). A link between the two was found, and it was confirmed that unopposed estrogens stimulate hyperplasia of the endometrium. The correlation between the two might not be a simple one of cause and effect, and is still in need of being explored (Greenwood, 1987; Hertz, 1977; Roddick 1977). However, as a result a meaningful drop in the use of estrogen occurred. According to Hammond and Ory (1982), the ratio between non-users of HRT developing endometrial cancer was 1/1000/year as opposed to that for users of HRT, 4-8/1000/year. McCrea (1983) quoted Ziel who found that HRT users ran a risk of 4-20 in developing endometrial cancer.

The linkage of estrogens to endometrial cancer brought a change in its administration. Estrogen was administered in a cyclic combination of estrogen and progesterone (cyclo therapy). The latter lowers the risk of endometial cancer by stimulating a monthly shedding of the endometrial hyperplasia, thus causing an artificial menstruation. Women who have had a hysterectomy continue to use unopposed estrogen.

However, controversy still exists as recent cohort studies

(Hunt, Vessey, McPherson, & Coleman 1987; Key & Pike, 1988) indicated an increase of 2.5 times of endometrial cancer in women using regimes containing estrogen and progestin.

Breast cancer is also thought to be connected to the use of HRT, though the clear connection and rate of occurrence is not yet known (Armstrong, 1988; Hunt, Vessey, McPherson, & Coleman, 1987; Wingo, Layde, Lee, Rubin, & Ory 1987). However, a study by Kesley and Berkowitz (1988) employing 20 control groups, found no evidence of this.

The controversy grew with recent findings which connected the growing use of cyclo therapy with greater incidence of cancer of the breast (Ewertz, 1988). Recent Swedish research by Berkvist, Adami, Perssen, Hoover and Schairer (1989) studied 23,244 menopausal women who, for over six years, had been taking either estrogen in the form of estradiol, or a combination of estrogen and progestin. Their results indicated that women on estrogen, when compared with menopausal women who were not taking any hormones, had about twice the breast cancer rate, while those on the cyclo treatment had four times more than the non-takers group. Thus, by combining progesterone to prevent endometrial cancer, the risk of cancer of the breast seems to grow.

In the light of these results, Barrett-Connor (1989) recommended that the cyclo treatment be questioned while estrogen treatment be continued as it reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases and, taken on its own, runs a lesser risk of breast cancer.

Hertz (1977) reviewed 30 years of research on animals and

the relation between the use of estrogen and malignancy growth. He concluded that the quantity of estrogen administered, the duration of treatment, and heredity are factors to be taken into account when looking for a cause and effect relationship between the administering of estrogen to menopausal women and cancer.

Davey (1989), head of the Menopausal Clinic at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, stressed that the present regime of the cyclo therapy is effective and provides good hormonal replacement, but has the major disadvantage of producing a period which some women find unacceptable as they grow older. For the last five years, his team has been involved in a study, trying to find a method of treating women and providing them with HRT without producing a bleeding period.

As for affective disorders, it is not yet clear what the role of estrogens is. Stoppard (1986), in discussing involuntional psychotic reactions, noted that studies showed no change or relief as a result of prescribing HRT to depressive patients. Dewhurst, interviewed by Cooper (1975), expressed the opinion that he was less certain as to whether headaches, palpitations and depression were directly dependent on hormones. Gerdes (1979) came to the same conclusions with the menopausal group of women she investigated.

A recent study by Sherwin (1988) indicated that there is a positive relation between the two. Women under that regime reacted positively and depression was reduced.

Other risks ostensibly connected with estrogen intake include hypertension and headaches (Hassager & Christiansen, 1988), and gallstones (Kakar, Weiss & Strite, 1988; Roddick, 1977). Table 3

indicates the risk areas associated with HRT intake.

As for the progestogens, though very helpful in reducing the risk of endometrial cancer, they appear to be connected with higher blood pressure and heart disease (Hassager, 1988). This remains, however, a point of controversy.

### Conclusion

The controversy concerning the menopause is seen in the various attitudes toward the use of hormone replacement therapy.

For those who regard the menopause as a strictly biological event of hormonal deficiency, the answer is unhesitatingly estrogen replacement (Cooper, 1975; Wilson, 1966).

Masters and Johnson (1966, 1970) were of the opinion that the atrophic progress of the sex organs could be prevented when using the drug. However, they also found that regular sexual activity in older age, regardless of the use of HRT, is responsible for adequate vaginal lubrication levels. They recommended the use of HRT specifically in the case of women who, for various reasons, do not lead a regular sex life. Masters and Johnson (1966, 1970) believed that, although hormonal deficiency plays a role in the sexual functioning of older women, it is only one factor and "certainly not absolute" (1966, p. 242). There is a multiplicity of reasons for the changing patterns of human sexuality. Proof of their approach is found in the universally unlimited spectrum of variations of sexual responses seen in aged women. If hormonal decrease was solely responsible for the change, a universal response should have been displayed.

Table 3.

Women with These Problems Should Avoid Hormone Replacment  
Therapy.

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Heart disease.

High blood pressure.

Breast or Uterine cancer.

A history of stroke.

Liver disease.

Diabetes.

Gallstones or gall bladder disease.

A history of blood clots.

Large uterine fibroids.

Migraine headaches.

---

Adapted from Greenwood, 1978, p. 92.

Neugarten (1969), whose main research on the psychological effects of the menopause was conducted in the 1960's, when estrogen started to gain popularity, recommended widening the usage of HRT by pointing out the long-term preventive advantage of estrogen.

Williams (1971) recommended careful administration of HRT especially to prematurely menopausal women who, at the age of 40 or even younger, show a seven-fold increase of incidence of coronary disease compared to women of the same age group who still menstruate.

Cooper (1975) was one of the main protagonists of HRT as a biological "lib" for women who do not have to be affected by age any longer; no wonder the title of her book was No Change. Treatment, according to Cooper, eliminated the short and long range of menopausal symptoms. Weidiger (1980) did not see HRT as the perfect solution, because it is not completely safe, as it is not appropriate for every woman and does not cure every symptom. Downing (1982) referred to the menopause not "just as a trivial change whose rough spots can be eased with a little hormone treatment...but as a soul event" (p. 17). She felt that in taking HRT, women lose the chance of experiencing the menopause on its psychic level and enriching themselves as a result. Hammond and Ory (1982) stressed that the exact influence of HRT is still not precisely known and is prone to controversial opinions.

Thus, according to the above researchers, the benefits of HRT are still debatable in the medical community.

Tunnadine (1983) was of a similar opinion and saw a need for

further exploration and the development of alternative treatments. She strongly opposed the administration of HRT just to cheer women up or keep them looking younger. Bell (1987), criticizing the medical model, argued that the usage of HRT implies an oversimplification of a phenomenon which is basically sociological in its nature. It is the result of trying to keep women's status at a low profile. Greenwood (1987) expressed the same opinion: "Biology is only a part of destiny" (p. 69).

Davey (1989) believed that while there is no ideal treatment for all menopausal problems, new approaches to HRT can help most women, and prevent long term effects such as heart disease and osteoporosis.

An examination of the diverse and controversial medical opinions on HRT administration explains women's confusion, as it makes the decision whether to use HRT or not a difficult one even for those women who are informed and aware of the situation. It indicates the need for further studies as well as a cautious approach from both the medical profession as well as the women themselves.

#### Alternative Ways of Treating Menopausal Symptoms

As indicated by the above discussion, HRT is certainly not the absolute answer to all menopausal problems and, needless to say, is not appropriate for all women. Those who suffer from liver problems, cancer, gallstones or thromboembolism are at high risk when using HRT.

Alternative methods of treating menopausal women include

tranquilizers or antidepressants which are used to reduce tension and levels of anxiety. Yet, as was discussed earlier, these symptoms are secondary and not the primary menopausal symptoms.

Barbiturates and clonidine are administered to ease hot flushes. Clonidine was found to be effective in reducing 46% of hot flushes, but its side effects include decreasing amounts of saliva and changes in sleeping patterns. Compared with HRT, clonidine is less effective as a way of reducing hot flushes (Laufer, Erlik, Meldrum, & Judd, 1982).

An attempt to treat hot flushes in a behavioral mode was reported by Germaine and Freedman (1984), who selected a group of 14 perimenopausal women who suffered from hot flushes. They applied two circulating heated water pads of 42 degrees C to the women's backs, for a period of 20 minutes. This immediately caused hot flushes in the subjects. The induced hot flushes exhibited the same physiological reactions as involuntary hot flushes. A six-sessions training course in progressive muscle relaxation was then presented to the subjects, who were asked to use it prior to the initiated hot flushes. A 60% drop in hot flush recurrence was reported. A control group of 12 premenopausal women reported no hot flushes during the experiment while undergoing the same procedures.

Other recommended means of reducing the frequency of hot flushes are refraining from drinking such hot beverages as coffee and tea, which include stimulating agents, or alcohol and highly spiced foods. Tension and tiredness are also related to an increase in hot flushes (Greenwood, 1987).

Table 4, serves as a summary of the pros and cons of the usage of HRT.

Table 4.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of HRT Usage.**

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**Advantages**

Reduces risk of brittle bones.

Decreases risk of heart disease.

Eliminates vaginal soreness.

Eliminates hot flushes.

**Disadvantages**

Increases growth of uterine fibroids.

Increases risk of heart disease or stroke.

Increases risk of breast cancer.

Increases risk of gall bladder disease.

Monthly periods continue.

More medical visits.

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Adapted from Greenwood, 1987 p. 95.

## Women's Attitudes towards the Menopause

Thus far the medical approach to menopausal symptoms has been examined and the different understandings of this concept. This section will review what women, themselves, feel about being menopausal, as reported in various psychologically orientated studies.

Neugarten, who conducted a great deal of research concerning the menopause in the 1960's, was one of the pioneers in challenging the view that women loathe the menopause. Criticizing psychological professionals and their approach to the menopause, Neugarten (1969) said that studies regarding the symptoms of the menopause were conducted only on clinical cases, while insufficient studies considered healthy menopausal women. The reason for this was that middle-age was a rather neglected stage of life as it did not engender interest.

In her article, A New Look at the Menopause, Neugarten (1969) noted that what characterized her subjects' attitudes towards the menopause was their willingness to talk about a subject that is usually an avoided topic. They displayed a need for additional knowledge and exchange of views. Because:

The menopause, unlike menstruation and certainly unlike pregnancy and childbirth, was a relatively taboo topic, one which did not often provide material for the typical coffee klatsch with friends and neighbours or for conversations between husband and wives. (p. 67)

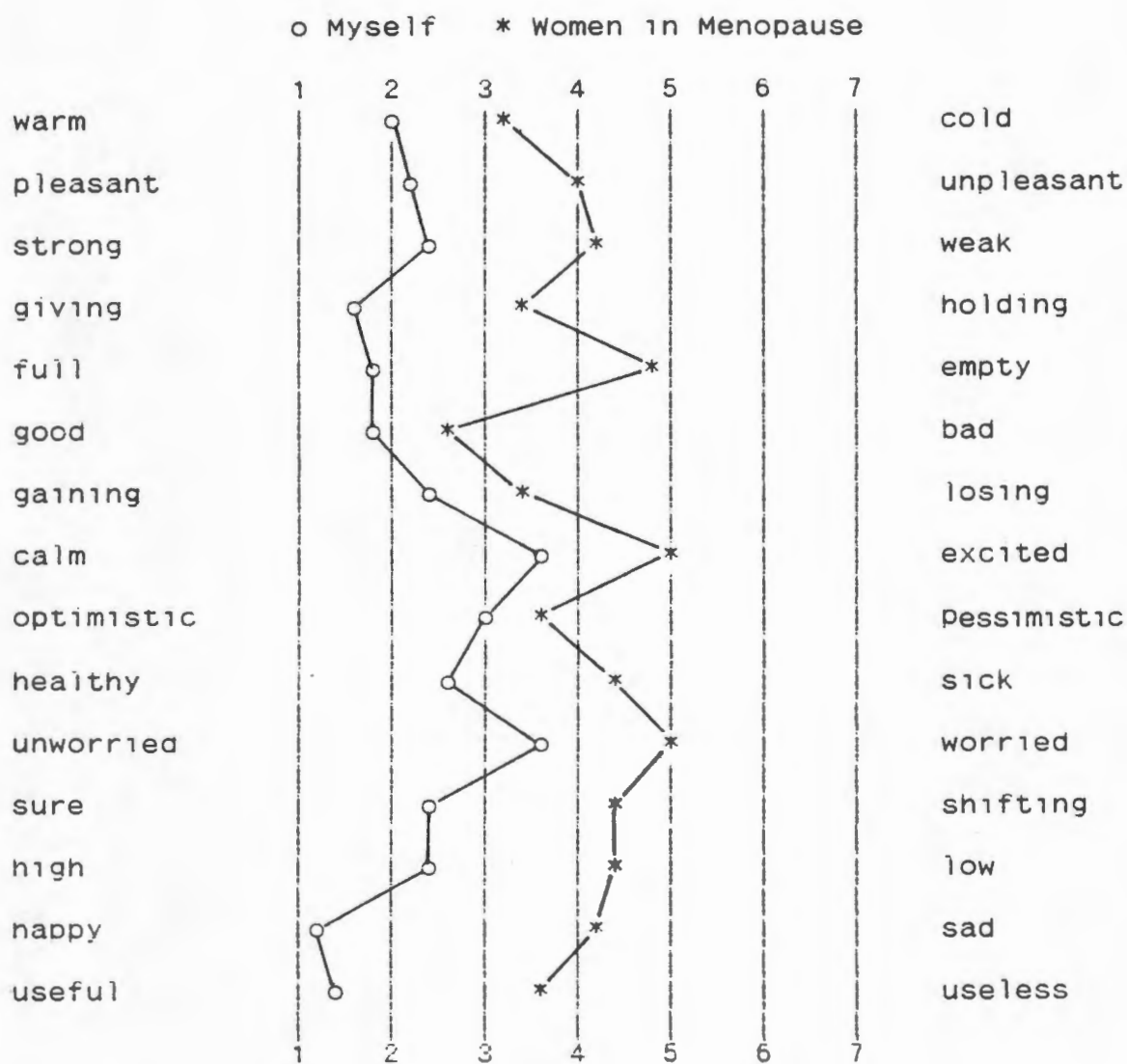
Neugarten's sample consisted of one hundred white middle class, American women, aged 45-55, who were grouped together

although they varied in their pre-, peri- and postmenopausal status. Neugarten found that there were no meaningful differences between those three subgroups except for the intensity and recurrence of symptoms. Neugarten used a battery of different psychological tests in order to counteract the various biases of each test. She thus was able to get a well rounded response to the phenomenon of the menopause. As indicated in figure 1, analyzing the data it became clearer that women were giving different answers to the same questions when phrased differently. When asked direct questions about their relatedness to their own menopausal process and how it affected them, they were much more tolerant and carefree than when they were asked to describe menopausal women's reactions in general. There the women drew a much more severe and dark picture of the menopause, tending to project menopausal symptoms onto others, while denying the same symptoms in themselves.

When she compared women aged 45-55 with younger women, 21-30 years of age, it became clear that younger women tended to regard the menopause as a more serious and negative event than did the women who experienced it at the time. Neugarten's explanation was that the younger women's distance in years from the menopause made them consider the menopause as part of a whole unpleasant process of getting old, while those who experienced it concurrently were able to relate differently to each aspect of the ageing process, and thus see the menopause the way it was reported in the research.

Neugarten concluded that women had mixed feelings about the menopause and that the picture of the menopausal woman as

Figure 1.

Women's Controversial Attitudes Towards the Menopause

Adapted from Neugarten, 1969, p. 45.

portrayed in her research is not solid or clear enough to make any generalizations. However, an interesting common denominator for all the women in Neugarten's sample was their feeling that they were moving from one part of their life to another.

Neugarten's approach to testing menopausal women, and the various replies she got in response to the different tests, showed the complexity and depth that one confronts when studying women's relationship to the menopause. It also clarifies the need to go deeper into women's psyche in order to understand this period in a woman's life better; a period which in many cases she, herself, is not conscious enough about. In the light of this research, it is evident that multiple-choice questionnaires are poor tools for testing women's attitudes to the menopause.

Similar recent results by Richardson and Sands (1987) concerning women's attitudes to death confirmed the multiple levels on which women react when questioned about sensitive issues. Their results will be broadly reviewed in Chapter 4.

An excerpt from Caine's (1977) book, where she portrayed her own mixed feelings about the menopause, may serve as an example of Neugarten's (1969) results, confirming the ambivalence and lack of clarity women find in themselves when reaching the menopause:

I was so busy that it did not dawn on me for three months that I had missed three (menstrual) periods. I paid no attention, thought it was because I was working hard. My periods started again, then stopped again, were very irregular, did not last as long. Then, finally one day I realized that this must be the menopause. I don't know why

it took me so long to admit it. I was terribly depressed. I had never believed that would happen to me; for some reason I had assumed that the laws of nature would be suspended for me. But then, I had never expected to be middle-aged either.... I certainly did not want any more children. Nevertheless, it was a sign of age and it bothered me, so I put it out of my mind. (p. 173)

Gerdes (1979, 1980) conducting research on two groups of climacteric women, one with presenting menopausal symptoms and the other without, stated that 22% of the women had said that they had not been able to speak to anyone about the menopause. More than 50% wished to know more about it. She found that the need for more information was particularly evident in the case of the psychosomatic group among whom lack of knowledge and information heightened their a sense of anxiety. Concluding her research she said; "So far, only one point stands out clearly and that is that each woman reacts differently to this period" (p. 140). According to Gerdes, research is still needed to help us predict how different women will react when approaching the menopause and thus enable us to develop preventative methods.

According to Mankowitz (1984), the menopause was approached mainly as a negative phenomenon and only few women examined it in terms of a growing experience, or saw it as a positive developmental stage leading to a better acceptance of aging and mortality. Whilst collecting data for her book, Change of Life, she found that:

The women showed markedly ambivalent attitudes. They did not want to acknowledge the menopause, or its imminence and

inevitability for them; at the same time, in spite of themselves, they were desperately anxious to know more and to find out what I knew and would share with them. (p. 11)

Most interestingly, added Mankowitz, the ones who showed a genuine desire for knowledge were those young adults whose mothers were going through a difficult menopause.

Kaufert and Gilbert (1986) conducting a study on the use of psychotropics in the menopausal population of women, described the stereotype of the middle aged woman as a common, monotonous, dull and melancholy woman. They found that women use twice as many tranquilizers as men, particularly during midlife.

Kaufert and Gilbert (1986) brought into their article some findings from the Kaufert's Manitoba project in which 2500 middle aged women, 40-59 years of age, participated. Most women in the study stopped giving birth around their mid-thirties. Only 5% of the subjects had their children after reaching 40. When asked, 96% of the women answered that they did not want to have children anymore and neither did they feel sorry about losing their reproductiveness. According to Kaufert, these findings do not correspond with the accepted idea that women mourn the end of their child bearing years. Yet Kaufert was also aware of the fact that closed questions might elicit limited answers.

Kaufert and Gilbert (1986), in line with Lennon (1982), drew attention to the possibility that the menopause is accepted as part of life's metamorphosis if it happens according to an expected time table. It might be emotionally problematic when it occurs earlier or later than estimated.

It seems appropriate to sum up this section with words used

by Downing (1987a) in writing her autobiographical book, Journey Through Menopause:

Yet I knew almost nothing of the distinctively female ways of navigating this passage and felt myself to be confronting a transition for which my culture had somehow conspired to keep me unprepared. I felt alone, uninformed, somewhat afraid - and yet also curious and expectant. (p. 3)

#### The Feminist Point of View

The feminists' point of view is cited by McCrea (1983) who believed the menopause to be a normal part of the aging process. She therefore strongly opposed any artificial intervention which was, according to her, maladministered by the male dominated medical profession which viewed the menopause as a deficiency disease and women as sex objects.

Pregnancy or non-pregnancy are hardly diseases; and neither is menopause...the temporary hot flushes some women experience may be compared to the high-to-low voice register changes adolescent boys evidence when their reproductive capacity is gearing up. We no longer castrate young boys to preserve their male sopranos, nor should we treat hot flushes with a cancer-and-cholesterol pill. (Seaman and Seaman, quoted in McCrea, 1983, p. 118)

However, McCrea also blamed those younger feminists who, not yet approaching menopause themselves, redefined it in purely social terms, rejecting any trace of biology as male chauvinism. By stressing the normal course and uncomplicated passage, what had been ignored were those women who suffered and

required medical help. These women had a deep sense of humiliation and dismay at having to admit that what they thought should have been a normal state of affairs, actually needed medical treatment (see also Posner cited in Lock, 1985).

Troll (1977) explained the absence of feminist writings on the menopause with reference to the fact that, in the 1960's, the women's movement was a young movement, whose leaders had not reached this stage. They were mainly interested in young women's issues.

Of interest is Rubin's (1979) book, Women of a Certain Age, based on in-depth interviews with 160 middle aged women, in which not even a word was mentioned about the menopause. This is surprising as it deals with "women of a certain age", at which age the menopause is not the only issue, but certainly one of its aspects. The silence and avoidance of the topic of the menopause speaks for itself. It is a feminist orientated book with a strong emphasis on socio-cultural influences and biases, but in her approach, Rubin was committing the same sin as that for which she condemns society.

#### Suggestions for Changing the Attitudes

Downing (1987a), in opposition to those who call for the "demythologizing" of the menopause and relating to it as a simple biological phenomenon, believed that;

We really require a remythologizing of it. I would wish us to learn to view menopause developmentally rather than pathologically, as a life phase rather than a degenerative or deficiency disease, and to see it not only as a physiological

event but as a psychological one, as a soul experience. (p. 13)

### Conclusion

Women's attitudes towards the menopause are complex and multilayered. These attitudes are affected by various cultural inputs, older and recent ones. Therefore, listening with a "third ear" is necessary for a better understanding of menopausal women.

A short review of hysterectomy will follow. The necessity of dealing with hysterectomy became evident when 20% of the female participants in this sample were found to have undergone a hysterectomy at some stage in their adult years.

### Hysterectomy

Hysterectomy, the removal of the hystero or the uterus, is a surgical intervention when cancer or excessive bleeding of the uterus occurs. It seems that there is a growing tendency among gynecologists to perform unnecessary hysterectomies (Fuchs, 1977; Greenwood, 1987). Fuchs (1977) and Stoppard (1986) claimed that 25-30% of American middle aged women had undergone hysterectomy without good cause. Fuchs (1977) strongly protested against a tendency among a growing number of gynecologists to perform hysterectomies on menopausal women just because that organ was not needed any more, saying that one could develop this absurd thought and recommend the removal of the un-needed breasts and thus prevent breast cancer.

Eastman (1983) reviewed a study conducted by McKinlay on 8000 menopausal women and found that a third of them had

undergone hysterectomy. McKinlay reported that almost 650000 hysterectomy operations are performed annually in the U.S.A. Neugarten (1969) quoted similar percentages, based on the National Health Survey. Fuchs (1977) cited a number of 780000 per year.

On reaching menopause, women who have undergone a hysterectomy prior to the menopause, will experience menopausal symptoms in the same way as those who had not had a hysterectomy (Kaufert & Gilbert, 1986). However, the case is different when an oophorectomy, the removal of the ovaries, is performed. As the removal of the ovaries causes a sudden hormonal deficiency, it follows that the usual course of hormone therapy is required.

McKinlay (1983) found that women who had hysterectomies were in a worse condition than the women who went through a natural menopause. For instance, they used double the amount of tranquilizers. According to McKinlay, tranquilizers were responsible for the poor image that the menopausal woman acquired.

Kaufert et al. (1986), in an effort to define clearer guidelines in studying the phenomenon of the menopause, suggested that women who had undergone hysterectomies and/or oophorectomies (surgical removal of the ovaries) should be differentiated from natural menopausal women when studying the phenomenon of the menopause, because valid differences are found between the two groups. The differences are physiological as well as psychological. The suddenness of the surgical event versus the natural cessation of menstruation is a meaningful difference to a woman's body system as well as to her perception of the removal of an organ that is highly connected with her femininity.

### Summary

The conceptualization of the menopause as a "deficiency disease" and the wide use of HRT in preventing its symptoms put women out of touch with a natural biological phenomenon that has psychological implications as well. The lack of rites of passage helps to make the menopause a non-event in a woman's life. The complexity of women's attitudes towards the menopause is seen through the various contradicting studies. Yet, most of the studies emphasize women's needs for more information and better understanding.

The development of the necessary rituals around the menopause and the resultant integration of it into the fabric of women's life will help in breaking the bond of silence around it.

## CHAPTER 4

### AGING

Has aging a meaning? Like so many other things in life, it has the meaning we are willing to seek and bring to it. Contained within the aging process itself, as within a stone or a piece of clay, resides the meaning.

Soucie (1987).

In the end everything comes back to oneself.

Huffington (1989).

Soucie's (1987) words bring to light the process of aging which, from its very nature, confronts one with the need to examine one's whole philosophical approach to life and particularly the meaning of one's transient existence on earth. According to Soucie, the questions are cutting through, looking right into the core of our being, examining our whole past life's achievements and failures.

Aging, according to Moody (1986), is a phase in life which fiercely unveils the timeless split between flesh and soul. The fear of aging, which is heightened in modern man, arises from a contemporary attitude towards life which values dynamic action over thoughtfulness and meditation, which are more characteristic of the ancient world. The loss of a religious belief in a transcendental meaning in life and the shift towards a search for personal meaning, carries within it despair on approaching middle age. The aging modern man, said Moody, suffers from the "horror of the vacuum" and the "limbo state of inactivity" (p. 12).

Gadow (1986) was of the opinion that aging, although being a universal phenomenon, has a subjective meaning which is unique to each individual. Understanding the phenomenon of aging must combine scientific, objective methods of research with subjective experiences, "it requires...that the question 'How old are you?' be joined with the questions 'What is it like for you?' and 'What does it mean to you?'" (p. 132).

### Aging in the Future

The Argus (1988), a Cape Town daily newspaper, honoring the Aged Week, put forward some interesting figures concerning the increasing growing number of people over 60 in the world's growing population. In the year 2000 South Africa alone there will be well over half a million white people and a million black people over the age of 65.

Already one sixth of the British population are over 60. In the year 2025 the world's population of people over 65 will be a trillion and tending toward becoming a majority in western countries.

Aging people of today and tomorrow are better off in every aspect, compared to previous generations. They are better informed, taught and trained. Their health is better and so is their life expectancy, but above all their expectations of life are higher and they are becoming a power that cannot easily be dismissed. The indifferent attitudes toward old people, whose electoral and buying power is becoming stronger as the years pass, will have to change and their influence will be felt as they

become more empowered.

The following pages will indicate how difficult it is to deal with these universal emerging questions, and even more so in our youth orientated, double standard society, which on top of being dichotomized along lines of race, color, sex or social status, is also splitting into young\old categories (Hillman, 1979).

### Women's Attitudes Toward Aging

In her book The Way of All Women, Harding (1933) devoted a whole chapter to dealing with "autumn and winter" of women's lives. Harding divided aging women into 3 groups:

- The agrarian woman who identifies with nature and feels part and parcel of it. Autumn, for her, is the natural next step after the blossoming of spring and ripeness of summer. This type of woman who acts from the collective unconscious accepts aging with no complexities or ego struggles.
- The second type, is the more differentiated woman, the one whose ego controls her life, who is ambitious and struggles to acquire status and power. She reacts differently and is unwilling to let go. She fights a lost war in a pathetic way in order to retain power, and refuses to accept limitations and the decline of her power, be it a physical or intellectual one.
- The third type is the woman who is able to transcend the ego demands and is tuned to her psychic needs in each phase of her life. She will not fight nature as the previous one nor

vanish into the past as the first one but will find a new extended meaning to her life which will be introspective in its attitudes.

The essence of life lies, according to Harding (1933) in the ability to pass, fully conscious, through all the stages of life's cycle, including old age, and experience them from the multisidedness of both Logos and Eros:

A woman who has in this way experienced both sides of her own nature shows, as old age approaches, a warmth and maturity resembling the red and gold of autumn. (p. 284)

It seems that the tragedy of modern woman is that she still wants to be the "young one" instead of the "wise one" when she ages.

#### The Senex-Puer Archetypes

Hillman (1979) discussing the senex-puer archetypes and their manifestation in our era added that the phenomenon of 'home for the aged', or special urban areas where only young people live, the specialization in geriatric and adolescent psychologies heightens this archetypal split while Western aging population is growing in numbers.

The counterpart of the puer aeternus is the puella aeterna archetype whose negative aspects dominate those women who fear growing old. These are the women who identify with their adolescent children and behave as if they were their friends. They will never reveal their age and will follow every new diet or fashion promising eternal youth. (Singer, 1973; Von Franz, 1970)

### The Double Standard of Aging

In looking at the existing double standard of aging, we need to differentiate carefully between culturally induced characteristics of attitudes towards aging and the universality of the process which embraces all human beings. Anais Nin's (1977) statement described in a gentle way the differences between the sexes regarding age:

The aging of a man is accepted, he can age like a bronze statue, acquire patina, can have character and quality. We do not forgive a woman aging. We demand that her beauty never change. (p. 61)

De Beauvoir (1949) expressed her view of aging bluntly, condemning society by saying that men and women go through the same biological aging process but society does not look upon men as 'flesh' as it does on women. Man is separated from his aging body and is appreciated according to his mental ability, whereas woman, on reaching a certain age, is devalued for losing the criteria by which she was judged. De Beauvoir commented that the aging woman loses her mystic attractiveness of youth and instead reminds man of his own mother, which evokes in him feelings of awe, fear and hostility.

Sontag (1972) in an article named The Double Standard of Aging followed De Beauvoir, blaming Western industrial society for the youth orientated myth that they developed, encouraged and turned into a selling product. In a world like this, says Sontag, "Old age is a genuine ordeal" for men as well as for women, but "It is particularly women who experience growing older

with such distaste and even shame" (p. 29).

The double standard of aging exhibits itself in the way middle aged men are judged according to their financial or political strength and status, whereas women are judged and evaluated only according to their appearances. But while men's power and status are not prone to decrease with age, women's beauty and sexual attractiveness naturally do. That is the source of the tragedy. The shame, according to Sontag, afflicts middle and high class women even more than working class women. Sontag found that the fear of aging is even stronger than the fear of the biological manifestations of the menopause.

Following Sontag's trend of thought, one can add that the menopause can be hidden, but certainly not the signs of aging. Sontag (1972) believed that women will overcome these double standards only when they will stop buying society's messages:

Instead of being girls, girls as long as possible, who then age humiliatingly into middle-aged women and then obscenely into old women, they can become women much earlier - and remain active adults, enjoying the long, erotic career of which women are capable, far longer. Women should allow their faces to show the lives they have lived. (p. 38)

Block, Davidson and Grambs (1981) in an article entitled Women Over Forty, highlighted the double standard of aging, asking the reader to imagine a Jacqueline Bisset affair with Cary Grant, as opposed to an affair between Robert Redford and Katherine Hepburn. Block et al. described the American aging woman as one who has lost her "marketable attributes" in a "buy and sell" society, which ages women 20 years earlier than men.

Lipka's (1987) research under the title Women; Why Does Society Age Them Sooner, confirmed Sontag's (1972) accusations, finding that different attitudes towards aging still existed in the late 80's. Lipka (1987) wanted to ascertain what the attitudes of young college students to older people were. His results showed firstly, that there was no sex difference in the way his male or female subjects perceived older people. Secondly, the double standard of aging was distinctive when his subjects attributed 49 year old women with the same characteristics they found in men age 55.

#### The Sudden Realization of Aging

Though we are all familiar with the progressive stages of life, it is amazing to watch the universality and frequency of the phenomenon of "sudden realization" and "surprise" women exhibit when reaching midlife and having to admit it to themselves.

In the following pages examples from Greek mythology, fairy tales, literature and writings by a contemporary professional woman will be used to describe the inner turmoil of women when confronted with the truth as it is reflected in the mirror. Also interesting, though not surprising, is how this "sudden realization" is connected to the season of spring and its metaphorical symbolization. The following examples highlight these connections:

- The abduction of Kore, Demeter's beloved daughter, begins on a spring day, while Kore is playing innocently in the blossoming

fields.

- The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone by Tennessee Williams, (1950) a novel dealing with an aging actress and her gigolo.
- Death in Venice by Thomas Mann, (1970) opens when the respected middle aged writer, touched by the spring weather, embarks on a journey to Venice. There, trying to capture his lost youth, which is projected upon a young and beautiful boy, he drives himself to death.
- The Bee Keeper, a 1988 movie by Angolopolus, where Marcello Mastroiani, the middle-aged, depressed hero, loads his bee hives onto his truck in search of spring blossoms. Like the bee-male in the spring, he too will find his end.

Mankowitz (1984) commented on this common unreadiness for change, saying that: "The fear of seeing, the denial of knowledge, is in fact an important aspect of any difficulty or crisis to be faced" (p. 39). Downing (1987a) added that being confronted with the unconscious always takes the form of being raped or abducted, for we refuse to move there willingly. Neugarten (1976) and Lennon (1982) found that crises along the course of life come about only when changes are not expected and foreseen ahead of time.

As will be shown in later chapters, the primal shock of realization gives way to a painful process that can be essentially positive in its outcome, helping to enlarge and enrich the person, and bring into awareness the hidden but undeveloped potentials of oneself. Where denial and projection play a strong role the prognosis is poor and the outcome doomed to failure.

The following pages will illustrate, using three pieces of

literature, the universality and commonness of the phenomenon of suddenly realizing that one is aging. The first is the Greek myth of Demeter and Kore. Before exploring the literature further, a general overview of the meaning and importance of myths will follow.

### The Interpretation of Myths and Fairy Tales

Von Franz (1972) regarded gods and goddesses in myths as archetypal representatives of the collective unconscious, where each god stands for a particular form of human behavior. The gods in the various myths emphasize different human aspects which are incomplete and/or inadequate and in need of development and change. However, in contrast to human beings, gods and goddesses in the myths react to the extreme fullness of their emotions. According to Von Franz, gods do not possess "shadows" as do humans, therefore they can allow themselves the luxury of not hiding and repressing their feelings. In this way they represent basic human nature, uncluttered by cultural and social influences.

Whitmont (1987), in agreement with Von Franz, believed that through these forces which operate within individuals we could learn of the dramatic universal events that escort the changing phases of human beings. The myth could be seen as "symbolic psychodrama", where the gods, who are the main actors, play a powerful role leading towards transformations. Myths and rituals are helpful because they contain within themselves the healing and remedial factors for the individual who is going through a changing phase, thus enabling each individual to work through and to form his or her solution to a given situation, combining the

personal with the transpersonal. Whitmont's opinion supports Berry's (1975, 1978) psychoanalytical approach to therapy that 'like cures likes'. Whitmont (1983) said that:

The integrity of an individual life, no less than of the collective life that is culture, depends upon the myths. Their archetypal themes give form and meaning. Falling out of meaning, out of touch with archetypal structuring, means disintegration. (p. 30)

Papadopoulos (1989), in a lecture at the Jungian Center in Cape-Town, was of the opinion that, as a therapist, recognizing the myth that the patient is "living" through, and being familiar with the way the myth develops and ends, is helpful to the healing process. The therapist knows that his patient is in the middle of a collective experience and is able to follow the process and reach out when it is necessary.

#### The Myth of Demeter and Kore

The myth of Demeter and Kore, as portrayed by the New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (1968), based on the Homeric hymn begins:

She loved her daughter Kore tenderly. One day Kore was gathering flowers in the fields of Nysa with her companions when she suddenly noticed a narcissus of striking beauty. She ran to pick it, but as she bent down to do so the earth gaped open and Hades appeared. He seized her and dragged her with him down into the depths of the earth. Demeter meanwhile had heard her child's despairing cry for help...bitter sorrow seized her heart.... Over her shoulders she threw a sombre

veil and flew like a bird over land and sea, seeking here, seeking there.... (p.152)

After the ninth day of desperate mourning, Demeter pulled herself together and along with Hecate, who stands for the intuitive aspect in the feminine, went to consult Helios the sun.

Helios is the representative of the masculine principle of logic and analytical thinking (Luke, 1981). This step of consulting her Logos, contacting her thinking function, can be seen as the first attempt a woman makes towards a solution. The two, Hecate and Helios, Eros and Logos, are the two opposites which, when integrated, would bring forth a satisfactory solution at the end of the process. However, at this very phase of the process Logos is of no help, because the aging woman has still to go through a period of anger, nonacceptance, sadness and depression before she can come to terms with the painful loss of youth, the acceptance of life's limitations and transience, and integrating, according to Hillman (1979), the senex and puer polarities. Paradoxically only when a woman leaves behind her "daughter identification" can she rejuvenate herself and regenerate in an inner psychic sense, which has nothing to do with age and its temporariness.

Thus, in the myth, after a disappointing consultation with Helios, Demeter's next step was to take care of the late born baby, Demophoon. With this child, which symbolizes both a regressive tendency and a newly born potential in an aging woman, Demeter decides to take no chances and raise him as an immortal. However, his biological mother, the down-to-earth instinct which accepts nature's laws, and which is another aspect of Demeter,

prevents her from doing that. The attempt to recapture youth is doomed to failure, thus opening the way for an understanding that the solution would not come from impulsive attempts to stay immortal but from developing intrapsychic potentials.

However, Demeter still needs to go through the process of mourning for a whole year until, with the help of the gods, she comes to an agreement which is a compromise in its essence: her daughter will stay alternatively with her and her husband Hades in the underworld. Only once this compromise is made can a woman start to integrate the three basic phases of life, youth, maturity and old age, the aspects that are represented by the three goddesses appearing in the myth, Kore, Demeter and Hecate. Otherwise, says Luke (1981), falling into a middle age crisis is unavoidable.

Kore, it is important to stress, is not only a pathetic young part that the aging woman is clinging to, but also an ability in the aging woman to revivify and find a new, but different meaning in the second half of her life. And reaching that place can only go via the unconscious. (Downing, 1987a; Jung & Kerényi, 1985; Luke, 1981; Mankowitz, 1984)

This myth is bound to various interpretations. The popular one is the explanation of the differences in the four seasons of the year, whereas Luke's (1981) interpretation, which was discussed above, is a description of the feminine intrapsychic process of aging. At the same time as a woman is suddenly abducted from her own youth, painful events in her external life and family are taking place. Her children move out to establish themselves as differentiated entities and leave the nest

empty. As is usually the case, the whole process of change begins by being projected outward, and only later is slowly integrated to become part of the self. Luke (1981), in viewing the two mythological figures, Demeter and Kore from a subjective level, saw them as representing the inner struggle within a woman between the "daughter identification" part and the mature component that emerges in the second half of life. This intrapsychic conflict, being denied in reality, catches the woman unprepared. Very suddenly she loses touch with her youth, which escapes to the unconscious. In Luke's (1981) words:

The moment of breakthrough for a woman is always symbolically a rape - a necessity - something which takes hold with overmastering power and brooks no resistance. Any breakthrough of new consciousness, though it may have been maturing for months or years out of sight, comes through a building up of tension which reaches a breaking point. (p. 56)

Jung (1982), writing about The Psychological Aspects of the Kore, saw the origins of that myth as lying in the matriarchal level of human development, when men and the patriarchal principles were not yet in power. He saw the two goddesses (mother and daughter) as an extension and completion of each other, representing the full potential and spectrum of the feminine. Jung (1985) also interpreted the Kore figure to be that childlike part of the woman of which she has to let go in order to mature and individuate on entering the second half of her life.

According to Jung and Kerenyi (1985), Kore represents the maiden in general, with no particular features nor individual

character. She is the "goddess maiden", one who is equivalent to and representative of the short period of blossoming in nature and womanhood. That is why, after going through a transformation that followed the abduction and her marriage to Hades, her name is changed to Persephone, symbolizing the end of one aspect in a woman's life and entering a new realm. Kerenyi's (1985) description is a condensed summary of the whole process of maturation, saying that:

By entering into the figure of Demeter we realize the universal principle of life, which is to be pursued, robbed, raped, to fail to understand, to rage and grieve, but then to get everything back and be born again. (p. 123)

### The Fairy Tale of Snow-white

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who is the fairest of us all?

The fairy tale of Snow-white, in contrast to the previous myth of Demeter, represents a negative solution to the aging process, the inability to cope with it and to accept life's limitations.

Regarding fairy tales as representing "the basic patterns of the human psyche" (Von Franz, 1982, p. 1), one can examine the step-mother of Snow-white, as a representative of the feminine reaction toward the "sudden realization" of losing one's beauty, and aging. The irony is that the queen, who is narcissistically self-absorbed in her beauty (Bettelheim, 1980), consults her mirror every single day, to be reassured of her attractiveness

and charms. Yet she is surprised and shocked by the mirror's shatteringly new statement.

A mirror, being a technological or social tool that "registers information about a subject or object and reflects some portion of that information back to the observer" (Scheibe, 1979) is a source for self realization. A mirror can also be used as a safeguard, such as in the Greek mythological case of Perseus and the slaughter of Medusa. However, a mirror can be dangerously misused when coming to interpret the meaning of the reflected image, for the mere fact that the images reflected by the mirror are not the things themselves and even change right to left. The self absorption in the reflected image is another danger that our queen (like Narcissus) fell into: "For such absorption can lead to a kind of hermetic isolation where reflection and re-reflection create an unending chaos of logically unpinned possibilities" (Scheibe, 1979 p. 62).

The fairy tale continues when the queen orders the huntsman to take Snow-white into the forest, kill her, and bring back her lungs and liver, so she can eat them and thus incorporate Snow-whites' beauty, that she herself has lost. Bettelheim (1980) saw the step-mother in Snow-white as a primitive narcissistic personality, fixated in her oral phase, believing that one can gain one's enemy's power by eating the symbolic parts.

The difference in Demeter's and the step-mother's reaction to the loss of their youth is rooted in their different links and attachments with their female offsprings. While Kore is the beloved child of her mother Demeter, or - perceived from the subjective level - the two parts of her personality, the younger

and the older, do have a loving relationship. They are connected and bonded, although temporarily they must be cut-off from each other. Snow-white is a step-daughter, a foreign element in the step-mother's psychological development, an external object that has not been internalized, but is only being reflected in the mirror. The punishment that the step-mother is subjected to, having to dance to her death in her red hot dancing shoes, goes well with her insatiable need to stay young and attractive. She is really not looking for a way to solve her problem, or come to terms with them. That is why she is doomed to failure, while Demeter and Kore are united again, though their new relationship is different from what it was previously. The change is in the new and delicate balance which is taking place in the adult woman's psyche where the prospects of ageing, and approaching death are now accepted. Thus enabling the mature woman to move on and discover her yet undeveloped potential and new levels of consciousness, while retaining part of her youth which is in itself the ability for continuous growth.

Lot's Wife: Look Not Behind Thee (Genesis XIX 17)

The difficulties of a woman letting go of her past, her properties and all that represents her previous life, is symbolically represented in the biblical story of Lot's wife. Her transformation into a pillar of salt (a punishment for disobeying God's order not to look back at the destroyed city of Sodom) is a lesson in human nature.

This curiosity illustrates a universal difficulty in relinquishing what belongs to the past, the sadness of leaving

behind whatever it is, and the unhappiness when forced to move to a new, yet unknown territory. What is more symbolic than using salt, a substance used for preservation - as a way of teaching us an old universal lesson, that transformation is part of life, that without change, life stagnates, and whoever wants to preserve life as it is - is condemned to death - physically or mentally.

#### A Modern Woman's Sudden Realization

Among the various controversial attitudes one meets when reading contemporary research and articles dealing with women's aging, "Confessions of a 45-year-old feminist" by Joan Israel (1977) stands out. Hers is not a myth or a fairy tale, but a document written by a contemporary feminist therapist who testified that she has never accepted "the Great American Sexist Dream about youth, slimness, and big bosoms" (p.65.). On the contrary, she taught her women clients to rely on their talents, and develop their own independence materialistically as well as psychologically. Her words speak for themselves when she asks:

So, if I was so clearly dedicated to feminism and the more significant aspects of women's character - besides looking young and therefore beautiful while I did so - if I was going around raising everyone's consciousness, why should I worry about my own? I would be one of those model women who would age gracefully. I'd age with confidence, with security, with adventure.

Then one day, a few weeks after my 45th birthday, I looked in the mirror and said to myself, "Joan, you look old!".... I did not like what I saw, but I was finding it hard to admit

this.... Why did the shock of aging come to me this year?  
(pp. 65-66)

The openness with which Israel (1977) admitted her painful and "sudden realization" of getting old is a modern proof of the old universal truth acted out in the myth of Demeter. The mirror, as seen in the fairy tale of Snow-white, and the confession of Israel, plays an important role as the reminder of a woman's vanity and decline. According to Cooper (1978), the mirror symbolizes the transient disappearing world, but also a person's knowledge of himself\herself. The mirror is regarded as having magical power turning its viewers inwardly toward introspection. Needless to add, only if they are ready for it.

#### The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone

This book presents an unusual combination: it was written by Tennessee Williams (1950), a homosexual male writer, and he wrote about a menopausal woman. Hence it should be examined cautiously. The book begins at five o'clock in the afternoon, in the spring month of March. Stone is the menopausal, middle-aged heroine's name, a famous American ex-actress, who retires and lives in Rome the city that, like herself is famous and known for her past. Significantly, "Romeo and Juliet" was the last play she acted in, which was a disaster according to the critics. Stone, as portrayed by Williams, is an extroverted, ambitious, cold and manipulative lady who built her career on her beauty and youth, and when approaching middle age is left with the "ritual of nothingness", drifting from one gigolo to the other.

Stone is a very narcissistic and self-centered personality.

She invested in and developed to a large extent only one side of herself during the first half of her life. Reaching midlife she is unable to accept the psychic changes of the second half of life and cannot surrender her inflated ego to the self (Baker & Wheelwright, 1984), and thus, like the queen in Snow-white, is doomed to failure.

Before moving to another aspect of aging - the prospect of death, some figures dealing with aging in the future will follow.

#### Approaching Death

Life is a preparation for something that never happens.

Yeats Moody (1986).

One of the major dilemmas of middle age, is confronting one's own death. The way one will approach it and come to terms with it will affect the quality of his/her future life.

Some attitudes toward death will be cited here, while other approaches will be combined within the chapter dealing with depression.

Harding (1933) said that the last developmental phase in one's life is preparing him\herself to accept his\her death - what Jung termed "the achievement of death". However, one's attitude is to postpone for as long as possible the inevitable fear of death. The way particularly men choose to run away from it, is by continuous efforts to actualize and achieve more and more goals in life (Gould, 1978).

Frankl (1967) believed that paradoxically the awareness of the "transitoriness" of life was a lever to transcend the fear of death and live a meaningful life:

It is the very transitoriness of human existence which constitutes man's responsibility - the essence of existence. If man were immortal, he would be justified in delaying everything...only under the pressure of life's transitoriness does it make sense to use the passing time. Man has to be reconciled to his finiteness and also be able to face the transitoriness of his life. (p. 30)

#### Death Attitudes Among Midlife Women

In a recent study Richardson and Sands (1987) conducted research on a sample of 74 middle class women, aged 30-49. The study cast light on the intricate attitudes toward death, the various concepts and symbols death holds, and the difficulties researchers face when coming to evaluate those attitudes.

Using direct and indirect methods of measuring attitudes to death, Richardson and Sands (1987) found contradictory results, which only when combined, reflected a wider spectrum of the conscious and unconscious attitudes toward death. For example, those women who were asked directly about their attitudes towards death, denied any such fear, but their fear of death was clearly shown in projective tests. Richardson and Sands (1987) found that in addition to a link between middle age and death awareness, there is also a link between developmental stages and attitudes towards death. The younger women in their sample differed from the older ones in their attitudes to death. Whereas the older women repressed their feelings, therefore were less aware of them, the younger ones were less scared, and more open and ready to

explore the question. The authors suggested that the differences in testing approaches as well as cultural and socioeconomical factors were responsible for the vast diversity in the results.

The fact that Neugarten (1969) found similar results when studying the phenomenon of the menopause, confirm the questions raised in chapter 1 and 2 concerning the full understanding of women's attitudes toward midlife in general and particularly of the subject under study - death. Because death of aging parents, "death" of certain body functions and the shortage of time left, are not abstract issues anymore for middle aged women, but become concrete issues as long as one is willing to deal with them.

#### Summary

Concluding the chapter on women's attitudes towards the sudden realization of aging, it seems that the universality of this phenomenon is as old as the phenomenon itself. However, living in contemporary, Western double standard youth-orientated society makes it even more difficult to accept aging. Therefore, the 'sudden realization' is painful.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE EMPTY NEST SYNDROME

Another aspect of the move into the second half of life is the coming to an end of the childbearing and childrearing years, when adult children, start to leave home. This period is referred to as the "empty nest" period or syndrome. The term itself has earned criticism, which will be dealt with at a later point in this chapter. Other topics will include controversial attitudes regarding this period, and a suggestion for looking at the time of a child's departure as a process that starts before the first child moves out and comes to an end after the departure of the last child.

Interpretations of Greek myths and the Odyssey will highlight some universal aspects of marriage conflicts, which are not infrequent at this life stage.

#### The Controversy Around the "Empty Nest Syndrome"

McCullough (1980) argued that "the empty nest syndrome" as a name for the period, is too controversial, as is the use of the term "the post parental phase". The latter is incorrect as parents are always parents, although their roles change. Her suggestion is to use the term "post launching period".

Oliver (1977) said that:

The term reflects both sexism and ageism. The language of the barn-yard has, for too long, been used as referents to

the female members of the human race. "Birds" and "chicks" become "old hens" and "old hens" face the "empty nest". (p. 87)

Oliver preferred the use of the term "post-mothering conflict". Nevertheless, Kaufert (1985) still referred to the "empty nest\castrated mother hen" syndrome, which underlies menopausal depression.

These arguments concerning the name of the phenomenon are typical of the divided opinions regarding the whole issue of the departure of children and its meaning.

#### Crisis or Relief

The controversy regarding the empty nest phase is reflected in research, where Neugarten (1968a), Rubin (1979) and others stressed the sense of freedom that women feel after their children have left home, while Bart (1971), Deykin et al. (1966), and Oliver (1977), to mention just a few, found this a stressful period, which affects mainly mothers. This controversy clearly speaks for itself in the case of the Human Development and Aging Program (1969), where several researchers working together, interpreted results from the same study in different ways.

Thus, Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) reported that compared with other periods in the lives of their respondents, the empty nest transition was not perceived as traumatic. At a later stage Krystal and Chiriboga (1979) concluded that: "The so-called 'crisis' of the empty nest may be more myth than reality" (p. 215). While in 1981 Chiriboga concluded his argument as to whether the empty nest phase is a crisis or a relief, by saying

that "It would appear to have elements of both" (p. 19). But both Krystal and Chiriboga (1979) recommended looking at the empty nest phase as a process that starts even before the first child leaves home, continues while the other children prepare for their departure, and certainly does not end when the last one has gone. Their opinion was that more research was still needed in this area.

Thurnher (1977), a member of the same team, supported Bart's (1971) results that depression and morbidity are part of the empty nest syndrome. Fiske (1977) using the same data from the Human Development and Aging Program, interpreted the results still differently, acknowledging the difficulties in studying this area, saying that:

In this study, a great many of the women confronting the departure of their youngest child were very maladapted at the baseline, but they were not consciously, or at any rate articulately, associating their misery with the pending transition (p. 10).

Fiske's (1977) observations fall in line with those of Neugarten (1969) and Richardson and Sands (1987).

Harkins (1978) in a sample of 318 empty-nest women concluded that the effects of the empty nest are not significant and disappear within two years.

Golan (1986) said that "The meaning of mid-life events for a woman reflects the interaction between the structures of her thought and the realities of her life" (p. 19) and that the empty nest transition is particularly difficult for the housewife, who draws her self-esteem and sense of power from being needed as a

mother. She may react with depression when her children leave home.

Relating to the empty nest as a process and recognizing that the sadness which accompanies the early phases of the process is sometimes hidden from women themselves, are two important issues to examine when attempting to understand this aspect in mothers' lives. Viewing the empty nest as a prolonged process explains part of the controversy around it. Fiske's (1977) findings confirm the difficulties when trying to assess women's attitudes to this period in their lives.

#### Rubin and "Women of a Certain Age"

Rubin (1979) was interested to learn women's reaction in a period when a major role in their lives, for example mothering, comes to an end. She studied 160 middle aged American women, 35-54 years old, whose youngest child was not less than 13. The women came from working, middle and upper middle class backgrounds. Rubin found no differences with regard to class. On the contrary, her findings showed that "gender transcends class" (p. 218) regarding this particular period in women's lives.

Rubin found that most of the women in her study felt free to pursue their own interests, now that their children had left home. Those women who exhibited signs of stress were not so concerned with their children's departure, but were apprehensive about their future. Rubin argued that the stereotype of the empty nest depressed mother is part of public opinion to such a degree that researchers, such as Glen (1975) and Lowenthal et al. (1975) studying the phenomenon, misinterpreted their findings. These

originally pointed toward a relief in women's feelings after their children had left home, instead of depression.

### Guilt Feelings

Another area highlighted by Rubin (1979) is the sociological expectations laid on women to raise well adapted and successful children. This brings about psychological pressure that decreases when the children leave home. However, women still feel responsible if their adult children, who have already left home, do not "make" it out in the world, and see it as their failure, being incompetent mothers. According to Rubin, guilt feelings arise in two areas:

- In taking the responsibility for the failure of her children.
- In admitting a feeling of relief when children leave home and the woman is free to pursue her individual interests.

### Educating Mothers

As a conclusion to her study, Rubin suggested that:

- There is a need for women to prepare themselves in advance for the time of their children's departure.
- The preparations should be directed towards enlarging women's interests and involvement in the outer world.
- Educating women to understand that the empty nest phase is not the end of their lives, but just another phase in the life span that has come to an end. There is meaning in life thereafter.
- Women should be reeducated, acknowledging that it is acceptable to feel relieved and pursue new interests when children have left home.

One could easily agree with Rubin's recommendations. However, it seems that what she has missed out is acknowledgment of the universal need for mourning the loss of the role of mothering, a process that women should be allowed to work through before moving to the next step which is self actualization. By mostly emphasizing the social oppression of women, Rubin (1979) overlooked the universal need for mourning the departure of children (Luke, 1981) which is the first part of the process Rubin talked about. Moreover, her focus is making it socially unacceptable for women to get in touch with those feelings, and work them through.

#### The Nest is Not Empty - the Woman is Empty

Oliver (1977), who found that women manifest with depression in the post-mothering period, traced and interpreted the origins of depression to the emptiness that a woman experiences within herself. It is not the emptiness that accompanies the loss of the children, said Oliver, as much as the loss of power and control over her family, and the realization that she has lost a main social role.

Oliver compared the change that follows the departure of children to occupational retirement in men:

The socialization of women, which places mothering at the center of a woman's life, with the result that, regardless of other areas of competence, mothering becomes the major source of self-esteem for many women. (p. 87)

This socialization process is responsible for women's depressive reaction to the "post mothering conflict".

### Fathers' Attitudes to the Departure of their Children

Lowenthal, Thurnher and Chiriboga (1975) found significant sex differences across all four adult life stages, with women in all ages reporting more stressful experiences than men. The post-parental stage appeared to be the most critical for women.

Krystal and Chiriboga (1979) also found that mothers are the first to react to their children's departure, and that their reaction is more emotional than their husbands', who are often absorbed in their careers. Husbands start to later react to the change.

In contrast to Lowenthal, Thurnher and Chiriboga (1975) and Krystal and Chiriboga (1979), Rubin (1979) found that fathers sometimes suffered the departure of their children even more than mothers. The departure did not come as a surprise to mothers but as a continuous process of the children's growth. Fathers, on the other hand, regretted not having spent more time with their children.

A sad observation to make is that men's mellowing and developing ability to give warmth (Gutmann, 1975; Jung, 1933, 1976) occurs at a time when their children are in a stage in their own development, where they fight for their independent identity. Thus, fathers and children fail to connect with each other because of their divergent developmental processes.

### An Interpretation of the Myth of Demeter and Kore

The myth of Demeter and Kore has already been interpreted in chapter 3, where it dealt with the process of aging. However, as

Luke (1981) mentioned, the myth can be understood on two levels - subjectively and objectively. On the subjective level, Kore represents the young part in every woman who is afraid of losing her youth and is not yet ready to accept aging. On an objective level, Kore is a beloved child that matures and leaves home to build a life and a marriage of her own. It is this part of motherhood, the letting go of children, which women are ill prepared for. A mother, Demeter, is surprised and reacts with anger and depression until finally acceptance and reconciliation is achieved.

The empty nest syndrome is represented in the myth in its purest form. It encapsulates feminine psychology, where Demeter displays the symptoms of a depressive woman whose child has left home (Luke, 1981).

Downing (1987b) explained that the goddess Demeter who, as a baby was swallowed by her father Kronos into his belly, has missed a proper childhood. In this light we can better understand the mother's overprotectiveness of Kore, and the difficulties she has in separating from her. She is trying to endow her child with all that she had missed out, and is unable to differentiate herself from her daughter. Demeter, is according to Downing, haunted by the negative characteristics of the child archetype.

Von Franz's (1982) commented that the differences between the mythological gods and human beings are that the former are stripped of any cultural restrictions. They therefore fully express their emotions while the latter carrying their shadow and repressing their feelings, highlight the problem of the contemporary empty nested mother, who seems to be locked

between her inner needs to mourn the departure of her children, as represented by the myth of Demeter, and "obeying" a present norm which tends to regard this period as a liberating one. It seems that both needs have a place in a woman's life. They are sequences and not contradictions along the process. First comes the need to grieve a most meaningful period that has gone past, and only then is it time to develop new avenues of interest. This is also the message that the myth itself conveys.

### Conclusion

Chiriboga's (1972, 1979, 1981) different opinions concerning the "empty nest syndrome" represented the controversy in this area. In 1972, Chiriboga (in collaboration with Fiske Lowenthal) concluded that the departure of children is not a traumatic event in a mother's life. In 1979 Krystal and Chiriboga surmised that the empty nest syndrome is a myth more than a reality. While in 1981 Chiriboga suggested that there are elements of both stress and relief in women's reactions to this phase in life, and that one should look at it as a process and understand the various reactions along a continuum.

Adopting this approach one create a continuum with Bart's (1971) depressed women, and Oliver's (1977) empty and powerless women at the beginning phase of the process and Rubin's (1979) relieved and meaning-searching women at the very end. Thus, a pattern of women's attitudes towards the end of the mothering role in their lives emerges. Sadness and relief are not necessarily contradictory but may be complementary.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE FAMILY IN MIDLIFE

This chapter will look into the changes that take place in the family structure during midlife and their effects, specifically, on the middle aged woman. Mythological goddesses, as universal aspects of women's inner psychic characteristics, will be reviewed and their relation to this particular phase in life will be discussed. The present generation of middle aged women will be described and compared with the previous as well as the younger one.

#### Changes in the Family during Midlife

Midlife as a stage in the family life cycle is a fairly new one. It is an outcome of the longer life expectancy of individuals, combined with the move from an extended multigenerational family system to a nuclear family system. As is the case with the menopause, this change in the family structure lacks any rites of passage to indicate symbolically that a certain phase in life has come to an end, and a new one has begun. We do find familial rites of passage such as birth, graduation and marriage ceremonies, but none which deals with the ending of the parental task.

#### Changes in Life Expectancy

Significant changes in years of life expectancy have occurred in the last decades. These changes are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5.

Changes in Life Expectancy Over the Years.

Year	Men	Women
1920	53.6	54.6
1940	60.8	65.2
1960	66.6	73.1
1980	70.0	77.5
1983	71.0	78.1
1985	71.2	78.2
1988	71.5	78.3

Adapted from: Statistical Abstract of the U.S. (1985). and The World Almanac and Book of Facts (1990).

Block, Davidson and Grambs (1981) cited that by the year 2050 women will live nine years longer than men. Livson (1977) estimated that, on average, a woman can expect to live 33 years more after her children have left home.

At the beginning of the century the average couple was expected to survive together for just a year and a half after their last child married (McCullough, 1980; Rubin, 1979). Now the couple has almost a quarter of a century to spend together after their children had left (Schaie & Willis, 1986).

The growth in life expectancy also includes a slow but steady drop in the age of women having their last child. In addition, women are younger when the last child leaves home. The average family now has 2.3 children compared to 3.3 in the 1900's (Troll, 1977; Rubin, 1979). The total size of the average family is in a decrease from 3.29 persons per family in 1980 to 3.17 in 1988 (The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1990).

As in other transitional periods, this phase too needs acknowledgement and preparation.

#### The Postparental Phase in the Family Life Cycle

Family life can be divided into three parts:

- Before children are born.
- Time of raising children.
- The postparental phase.

Each phase has its various manifestations and influences on the marital relationship. Children's departure leaves a void and forces the couple to re-evaluate a relationship that sometimes might only have been kept alive by the presence of children.

Levinson (1977), who defined the family as a unit whose goal is to rear children during early adulthood, questioned its function in mid- and late adulthood. He saw a need for a new structure to be designed in order that the family would survive, considering the changes mentioned above.

McCullough (1980) was of the opinion that one should assess the family in midlife not only from the aspect of the "empty nest syndrome" but also the family's reservoir of strength and closeness in order to predict the couple's ability to carry on. McCullough (1980) believed that:

For some families reaching this stage may be a time of completion, a second opportunity to consolidate or expand by exploring new avenues and new roles. For others, taking a second look may lead to disruption, divorce, a sense of loss and general disintegration. (p. 171)

Garrett (1982) perceived the midlife phase in the life of a family as a time of "shrinkage", whereas the family of origin becomes "a self-liquidating group" (p. 407). This is an outcome of the natural move of the younger generation out of their parental homes to establish themselves as individuals.

#### The Marital Relationship

Golan (1986), like Duvall (1967) and Garret (1982), foresaw the marriage of the middle-aged couple as walking on The Perilious Bridge, the name with which she entitled her book. She dealt with the fragile issues that this period brings up, suggesting that the married couple is most distanced from each other at this time of their married life, compared with other phases in life.

Jung (1933), discussing the completion of the contrasexual aspects, foresaw the probability that sometimes there would be, "a sorts of catastrophes in marriage; for it is not hard to imagine what may happen when the husband discovers his tender feelings, and the wife her sharpness of mind" (p. 108).

Sontag (1972) was of the opinion that the double standard of aging is a factor that might shake the stability of the marriage. It finds the husband in the prime of life, while his wife is at a cross-road questioning her identity and social values.

Troll and Smith (1976) viewed the first phase of the marital relationship as fundamentally based on the young couple's physical attraction to each other, while what is characteristic of the second phase of their mutual lives is the recognized need for an intimate relationship which is less dependent on sexual desire but is full of tender feelings and close friendship. Peck (1968) called it "moving from sexualization toward socialization".

Another variation in the marital relationship, suggested by Fiske (1977), is that, whereas at the early stages of childrearing the mother forsakes the husband in favor of her offspring, now approaching the empty nest period, the general direction is toward moving back in order to give their partners support.

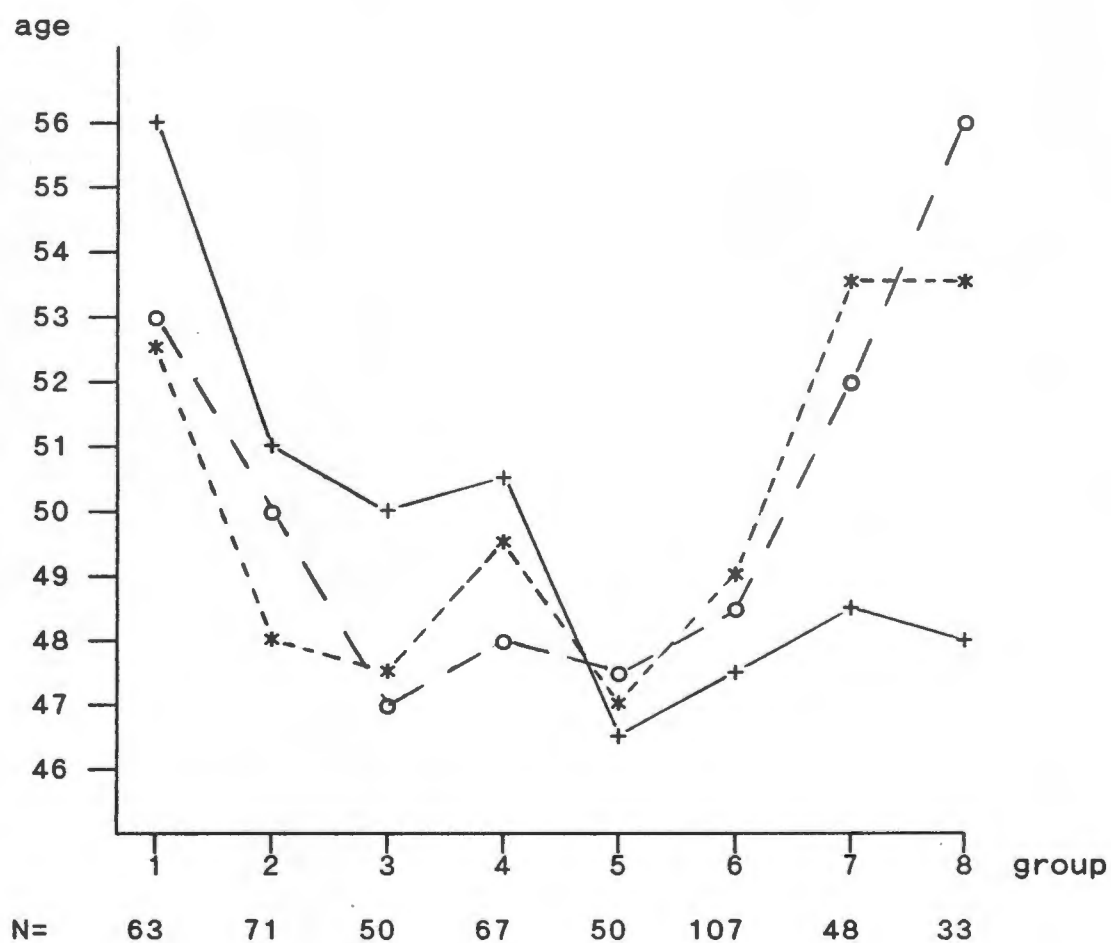
Thurnher (1977) found that wives were more affected by the departure of children than their husbands who were still busy with their careers. The couple is, according to Thurnher, "out of phase with one another" at this particular time when the wife most needs a supportive husband. This was indicated in Thurnher's research by women rating their marital

dissatisfaction during midlife higher than men's ratings. However, Thurnher noted that this picture reversed itself when husbands approach their retirement. Then another aspect of "out of phase with one another" is reached in the life of the married couple. The wife who has already adjusted to the changes in the family structure is now more assertive and independent whereas her husband is more vulnerable and needs her emotional support. However, in contrast to their husbands, Thurnher (1977) found that women were more attuned to their husbands' needs at this particular time, and were ready to help them, responding to their emotional vulnerabilities.

Friedman, (1987) came to similar conclusions regarding the shift in power within the dyad when reaching retirement. A positive correlation was found between power and happiness within the marriage, where husbands rated their first years of marriage to be the better ones. While 68% of women-subjects but only 28% of the male-subjects perceived their present midlife married years to be the best. Friedman (1987) concluded that the very same feminine characteristics that were devalued in the first half of life are appreciated in the second half of it. Friedman's introspective study consisted of a retired population of people 65 years of age and over, thus reflecting a change in the marital relationship. Figure 2 illustrates the fluctuations in the couple's satisfaction along their marriage.

Arnold and McKenry (1986) added that on reaching midlife, a lot of women re-enter the working world while their husbands find themselves in a vulnerable position and in competition with younger ambitious men who are looking to take their place.

Figure 2.

Differences in the Couple's Contentment Over the Life Span.

Note: \* Locke-Wallace  
 o Rollins-Feldman  
 + Blood-Wolfe

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Adapter from Garrett, 1982, p. 423.

Their wives' re-entry into work makes the situation even harder to deal with. The midlife couple's closeness is at its lowest point at this time.

These findings aroused in Garrett (1982) the following questions:

- If happiness increases amongst couples who are married longer, as we see from these studies, is it because unhappy couples had already divorced?
- Do older couples settle for less in their marital relationship, and thus report more marital satisfaction?

Garrett (1982) said that:

At this stage it may become necessary for spouses to recognize, redefine and reintegrate the successes and failures in their marriage. They may find their priorities shifting from earlier needs for security, performance, and role fulfillment, toward a desire for greater companionship and understanding. (p. 141)

In cases where the partners have moved too far from each other, the marriage might suffer from what Golan (1986) quoting Rhodes called "rediscovery vs. despair", in Eriksonian terms.

Livson (1977), reflecting on Ingmar Bergman's movie "Scenes From A Marriage", questioned whether a marriage is an obstacle to individuation, because paradoxically the very nature of the process of individuation is a journey that can only be made separately and not as a couple, because it is a journey into one's own self. Another question that Livson raised was whether a marriage is used as an escape from the protective parental umbrella, in order to establish the partners' own separate identities, only to discover later in midlife that they have

confused their marital partner with a parental figure from the past.

Guggenbuhl-Craig (1981), talking about the "individuation marriage", partially answered Livson's (1977) question, saying that the deep goal of a marriage is not to maintain a balance of "happiness and well-being" but to help partners to confront all their individual miseries with one another. Only by bringing to consciousness the archetypal images that are carried unconsciously by each of the partners and are played out in the marriage scene, dominating and overshadowing it, can one individuate herself/himself.

#### Divorce in Midlife

Fusch (1977) believed that the growing rate of divorce is part of a culture that puts the individual and his/her achievements on a pedestal, combined with the fall of religious restrictions opposing divorce and the easiness with which it is achieved and accepted socially. Middle age divorces are also influenced by the sudden realization of the shortage of time left to still achieve the hidden hopes of the past. Another reason for delaying a divorce until middle age is the need to protect one's own children and sometimes avoid parental disapproval.

Rubin (1979) pointed out the difficulties divorced women confront specifically during midlife. For many of them it means significantly lowering their economic standard of living. Their social status is also lowered, as are their chances of remarrying. Twenty per cent of the middle aged women in Rubin's sample avoided confronting issues of marital dissatisfactions with

their husbands for fear of precipitating adverse reactions. In addition, to make such a drastic change would have long term consequences "for something which is a half baked dream" (p. 130).

Garrett (1982) and Rollins (1989) reported no significant rise in midlife divorces in the U.S. in the last 20-30 years as compared with the general population. But, that did not mean, according to Rollins (1989), that the middle-aged couple was happy within the marriage. They stayed together because the "alternatives to married status are worse than a poor-quality marriage" (p. 181).

In contrast, Arnold and McKenry (1986) focusing on the growing numbers of divorces in midlife, cited that a third of all divorcees nowadays are middle aged people. Compared with getting a divorce at a younger stage in life, the authors found it becomes an ordeal in midlife. Arnold and McKenry found that most of the divorcees in their sample experienced either a midlife crisis (57.7%) or a midlife transition (23%). Sixty per cent of the respondents named their spouses' midlife crisis as being the main reason for their divorce, while only 21.1% took the blame themselves. According to the authors, results indicate that projections are used when one is asked to assess ones failure in marriage, and partners have difficulties in working through and understanding their individual responsibility in the relationship.

#### Integrating the Contrasexual Characteristics

The gap between the marital partners during midlife, as was described in the previous section, is in contradiction to another emerging trend of development of the human psyche which begins

around that period: the process of integrating one's contra-sexual characteristics (Jung, 1933; Bakan, 1966; Neugarten & Gutmann, 1968b; Levinson, 1978; Droege, 1982; Golan, 1986). This integrational process should enable partners in a marriage to relate better to each other, as they are intrapsychically better connected to themselves. Men becoming what women expected them to be: more nurturant, caring and interested in a closer and more intimate relationship, whilst women become more assertive, outspoken and in better control of their lives.

This contradiction might be understood along a continuum. Whereas at the entrance to the second half of life the couple's relationship is at its lowest point, reaching the end of the process after several years, during which adjustments take place, the couple has a better chance to get closer to each other and form an intimate relationship. Thurnher's (1977) findings reported above confirmed this tendency. As death looms closer it might also bring a couple closer to each other.

#### Mythological Heroes and Their Relation to the Midlife Family

The following section will present three mythological heroes. The interpretation of their adventures shed light on the reconnectedness which is the goal of a married couple on approaching midlife.

Downing (1982, 1987a, 1987b), writing about her personal journey through the menopause, incorporated in her writings the Goddesses of Greek mythology as inner feminine archetypes. Each goddess representing a different feature of feminine psychology.

The goddesses chosen to relate to in this section are Hera, who acts out the complexity of a married woman in the Greek mythology, and Hestia, the homely insignificant housewife. Modern women of today still experience and act out Hera's and Hestia's characteristics, which proves their universality.

### The Odyssey of the Middle-Aged Couple

Papodopoulos, in a series of lectures to the Cape of Good Hope Center of Jungian Studies in Cape Town (Feb. 1989) examined the Odyssey. According to Webster's Dictionary, the Odyssey is "an ancient Greek epic poem, ascribed to Homer, about the wanderings of Odysseus during the ten years after the fall of Troy". Papodopoulos commented that the Odysseus' journey and adventures can be interpreted from various angles. It can be read as an individuation journey of a middle aged man, or as a man's anima development as seen through the various meetings of Odysseus with feminine characters along his Odyssey. It can also be interpreted as the changing phases of a marital relationship of twenty years duration, analyzed from the male partner's point of view.

To continue Papadopoulos' train of thought, we learn from Greek mythology that Odysseus arrives home after twenty years of external adventures, ten years of which he spent fighting the Trojan War, a war which brought him worldly honor and glory.

As the war began he was reluctant to leave his family and home to join the Greeks on their way to Troy. However surrendering to the prompting of his unconscious, he left for the war, to complete his "hero's journey". After the war ended, it took Odysseus another ten years of heroic adventures to reach

the shores of Ithaca, his homeland. And, as Papadopoulos (1989) pointed out, it takes Odysseus twelve chapters of the Odyssey, exactly half of the whole epic, to reach home geographically, and another twelve chapters, to reconnect with Penelope, his wife and partner. The last twelve chapters of the Odyssey represents Odysseus' struggle to get rid of his wife's suiters, to be recognized by his son and his people, and only at the very end of the epos do we hear about the effort to reconnect directly with his wife.

Both Odysseus and Penelope know that there is still a long way to go in order to establish a new kind of a relationship based on mutual closeness. But both are also aware that the external adventures and ego needs so characteristic of the first half of life are over. Odysseus, the representative of the young adult-male and husband who had the need to become "his own man", using Levinson's (1977, 1978) term, has settled down.

As for the wife's part, Homer tells us that Penelope did not "recognize" her husband when he first arrived in the palace. Even at the end, when she is awakened - literally and symbolically, from her sleep, and told that Odysseus her husband, on whom she has waited faithfully for twenty years, has come home. She is angry with the maid and does not run happily to greet him, as we would imagine a Hollywood-style movie would have depicted the homecoming. Instead she tells Telemachus her son, who blames her for her coldness and distancing of herself from his father Odysseus, that both she and his father will use their own methods to find each other again.

A couple's pace of reconnecting in the transition into the

second half of life, is a long and arduous journey toward "recognizing" each other again. Moreover, it is a universal phenomenon that takes them apart but also carries within it the opportunity to reunite again, at a later stage in life, if they are prepared and ready to work toward that reunion.

### Hera the Goddess of Marriage

The Greek goddess, Hera, is mainly identified as the wife of Zeus, and less as a separate goddess in her own right. Her fights with her husband, the jealous scenes and the efforts she makes to keep him enslaved in the marriage are what characterize their stormy relationship.

Stein (1977) and Downing (1987b) regarded Hera as representing that need in a woman which seeks to enmesh in man, that needs a relationship with a man, sometimes exclusive of any other relationships, so as to become an undifferentiated part of her partner. In Stein's words (1977) this is the "mating instinct". But Hera also represents that need in woman which craves for a meaningful relationship with a man, a relationship which is more than just being the mother of his children and a sexual object, but an intimate and close partner. According to Downing (1987b), that is why Hera is also the archetypal representation of that part in a woman which is never satisfied in a marriage situation where her only role is just being a wife.

The tension between being engulfed by the togetherness and being her own person is the essence of the conflict and clash between Hera and Zeus, between wife and husband as partners in a

marriage:

Hera's jealousy is a painful initiation into the realization that Zeus cannot bring her to fulfillment after all, that she has projected onto him her own unlived masculinity, her animus. (Downing, 1987b, p. 86)

Hera's struggle to tame Zeus is endless. At one stage of the relationship Greek mythology tells of Hera's experience of separating from her obsessional need to chase Zeus, leaving him, in order to stay alone on the island of Euboea, the place where she was born - which means that Hera is trying to return to her roots, to the beginnings, to look for her own identity. But the endless struggle continues even after Zeus, playing a dirty trick and using her jealousy, succeeds in bringing her back to Olympus. Downing (1987b), understood Hera's forgiveness as the universal inner need in women to stay in a marriage, not only literally but as a sign of a feminine inner psychic need for relating to others.

The myth also shows that in a patriarchal society, a wife's need to separate herself from her absolute identification with her husband and her marriage, in order to individuate herself is still impossible to achieve completely.

#### Hestia Goddess of the Hearth: The Neglected Archetype of the Housewife

Hestia the goddess of hearth, whom Demetrakopoulos (1979) called "the forgotten goddess" is according to Greek mythology, the first daughter born to Kronos, and also the first to be swallowed by him "into his belly", and the last to be rescued by

Zeus her brother.

This is interpreted by Demetrakopoulos as the female being dominated by a patriarchal society. Hestia who spent the longest period of time in Kronos's belly, also represents an archaic, inferior and submissive layer in feminine development, and "is obviously still a convenient hook in the 20th century for projections about single women and housewifery" (Demetrakopoulos, 1979, p. 56). On another occasion Hestia, who was one of the twelve major Olympian gods and goddesses, had willingly given up her respected place to Dionysos thus disturbing the balance of the symmetry between six gods and six goddesses. This act emphasizes the power of the masculine principle and so decreases the values of the feminine.

However, though humble and plain, Hestia was a central and respected goddess whose altar was present in every Greek city, where she was offered the best sacrificial offerings.

Demetrakopoulos (1979) assessed her as being the feminine "bonding" part, the part which keeps the family together. In addition she had skills in creating a homely atmosphere.

According to Downing (1987a), Hestia portrays the stereotype of an uninteresting female who is unadventurous and nonseductive, whose presence, warmth and essence is taken for granted. Hestia is the goddess who, within her plainness and simplicity, contains the deepest meaning and centrality of feminine life, as symbolized by the hearth, the central place in every home.

Downing (1987a) herself, on reaching the menopause, went for a journey around the world. On coming back home, to the same geographical place, she discovered a new dimension, the Hestian

aspect within herself, the ability to form a relationship with all who stood for the common and ordinary in life, and yet being able to see it as "numinous", in contrast to her previous externalized professional life which overemphasized the masculine:

Hestia may remind us of that aspect of the feminine which is hidden, devalued, and often self-demeaning, but also offers a subtle powerful critique of our tendency to define ourselves in ego terms, by reference to our outward accomplishments and visible successes. (p. 142)

#### Conclusion

Women of today who see home as narrowing their self actualizing needs, tend to misunderstand, deny and repress the Hestian aspect within themselves, trying to develop their animus, and at times being even obsessed by it, thus prolonging their process of "coming home" - coming close to true femininity. This tendency toward one-sidedness harms both professional women and housewives. Both misunderstand and misinterpret it. In order to regain this aspect women in the 20th century must come to recognize the importance of the feminine and stop competing with men. They have to come back "home" to their true femininity which differs from masculinity. Beside the worldly aspect that women rightly work on developing, they must not forget the importance and centrality of home which is a core part of each woman.

"Homecoming" today does not mean going back to the stereotype of the housewife that Friedan (1965) described in The Feminine Mystique. Homecoming is recognizing this 'homely' part in oneself and making it an integral part of oneself.

Guggenbuhl-Craig (1981) commented that, instead of neglecting the archetype of the wife in favor of the archetype of the professional woman, it would be better for the present generation of women to enrich themselves with a "multiplicity of archetypal possibilities".

As this study was done on a sample of the present middle aged generation, it seemed important to look for the special characteristics of that particular generation. The following section will deal with those.

#### The Present Middle Aged Generation of Women in Western Society

All those qualities which today we look upon as enviable possessions—freshness, self-assertion, daring, curiosity, youth's lust for life—were regarded as suspect in those days that only had use for "substance".

S. Zwieg, (1943).

Several authors have commented on the importance of understanding the specificity of each cohort in order to understand better differences and similarities between ways of life of two or more generations (Baltes, Reese & Lipsitt, 1980; Block, Davidson & Grambs, 1981; Mercer, Nichols, & Doyle, 1989). Phenomena such as the Great Depression, the Second World War and the feminist movement have shaped each of these generations of women differently. Block et al. (1981) cited Neugarten and Brown-Rezanka who, in 1975, studied three cohorts of women, those who were at that time 60-65, 40-45, and 25-30 years old. Meaningful differences in level of education, size of

family of origin and size of one's own family, as well as differences in life expectancy, rate of widowhood and divorce, and work patterns indicated the socioeconomic and cultural changes that took place within each generation.

The following section will deal with the specific characteristics of the 1935-45 cohort. It seems that the present middle-aged generation of women has a double problem in coping effectively with their age. Whereas before the distinction between young and old age was clear cut, nowadays middle age can be seen as an extended twilight zone of youth, a land with yet no rules of its own. These women, though belonging to a generation that was born just before or during the Second World War, come from a well defined and stable world, where each class and individual knew his\her place and status, her\his tasks and boundaries exactly. This generation of women have been taught that "the only way to get power was to marry it" (Gould, 1978, p. 246). Women were raised in a culture that expected them to stay home and rear their children (Musgrave & Menell, 1980). Pursuing a career was in contrast to the image of the "good mother".

Nairne and Smith (1984) added that part of that image was due to Bowlby's theory about "maternal deprivation" that was published around that time, and though done on orphans, had a strong impact. The fact that it was the end of the Second World War and the jobs that during the war were occupied by women were needed now for placement of the returning soldiers, helped to emphasize that women and particularly mothers should stay home (Friedan, 1965).

In the middle 1960's, when this group were already mothers of

young children, a meaningful change took place in Western society. The sexual revolution that followed the discovery of the "pill" was on its way. The women's movement spread its ideas calling for women's self-actualization and finding a meaning beyond one's family. The younger generation started to develop a different life style consisting of assertiveness, free sex, and a demand for equality between the sexes. The adherence to youth that followed put the generation we are talking about in a double bind. In Miller's (1981) words, they could "hardly..remain so isolated from others who have different values" (p. 59). On the one hand, they were threatened by the changing world, but on the other, they could see what they had missed. They felt lost, cheated and angry.

Troll (1977) said that in contrast to older generations who did not experience the feeling of being "shelved", partly because of the shorter life expectancy, today's generation, especially older women tend to be thought of as "poor, dumb and ugly". These are the women, according to Troll, who were raised to find their self-value through a relationship with a husband and their family. But unlike their mothers they live in a changing world and:

They have lived beyond the point for which they have been prepared, beyond the point where they are necessary, beyond the point where they know what to do with themselves, beyond the point where anybody knows what to do with them. (p. 6)

Brown et al. (1985), describing a gloomy picture of the American matron, added that unlike nonindustrial societies, midlife "does not bring as many positive changes ...as it does into the lives

of women elsewhere" (p. 5). The American middle aged woman's children live usually far away from her so that their communication system is only through the telephone, while food and meals as unifying symbols of family togetherness is maintained through "take aways" and "fast food restaurants", and advanced medical services substitute the spiritual powers of the tribal old wise woman.

#### Middle Aged Women in Non Western Societies

In contrast to the description above, Brown (1985) and Kaufert (1985) reported that the status of middle aged women in non-industrial societies improved. They are less constrained and confined in their daily dealings with men and become part of the respected elderly group that as young women they had to submit to. As middle aged women they are in charge of the younger women of the family and turn out to be authoritative figures who delegate chores to the younger generation of daughters and daughters-in-law. Their work load lessens and their managerial power increases. In contrast to the empty nest phenomenon and loss of power over children in modern western societies, these middle aged women become the most important figures in their families, especially in those cases where husbands are much older than the wives. They have their sons in their power and play a leading part in the extended family life.

As post-menopausal women no longer pose any threat to the tribal males and are not bound any longer to small children, they are free to move around visiting friends and family in other communities. Their influence on the tribal life is also extended

to the spiritual life of their communities and they carry on the tribal rituals and traditions. They become the wise old women.

#### Summary

Reviewing the specific characteristics of the Second World War generation which this sample consists of indicates that beside the universal changes that take place during the transition into the second half of life, women are caught in a "double bind" between their traditional upbringing and the changes in women's perceptions of themselves resulting from the Women's Movement. Unlike non-western societies this specific generation has lived, using Troll's (1977) words "beyond the point for which they have been prepared", and are confused about their present role in life. Recognizing the archetypes that are involved and living accordingly, would lift the confusion that women are caught in at the present.

Americans share the attitude that aging is a disease rather than a normal process. "Sick" people are not supposed to exhibit any desire for sex, nor do we think of sick people as sexually attractive. (p. 31)

Masters and Johnson (1966) pointed to another difficulty and that is the reluctance of menopausal women in participating in research of this kind. Davidson (1979) confirming Masters and Johnson finding, attributed the difficulties in sexual functioning during this period to a lack of knowledge. She saw the cure in "normative sexual education" that will be preventive in its nature.

Gerdes, (1979, 1980), conducting research on the psychosoma-role interaction in climacteric women, found her subjects lacked information regarding the sexual response of the middle-aged and older women. Gerdes considered it a "conspiracy of silence" while Weg (1989) blamed long sustained "destructive stereotypes" and myths.

This chapter will look into these aspects, indicating the lack of adequate information and its harmful consequences on the midlife couple's relationship.

### Physiological Changes

As indicated earlier, the female internal and external genital organs change during the climacterium. The breasts sag, vagina and uterus shrink, and the major and minor labia loose their elasticity and change their coloring. The female suffers from a thinning and drying of the vagina which may result in

difficulty during intercourse and a feeling of irritation during urination after intercourse. This sensation may last for several hours or days.

Masters and Johnson (1966) were of the opinion that: "Generally, the intensity of physiologic reaction and duration of anatomic response to effective sexual stimulation are reduced through all four phases of the sexual cycle with the advancing years" (p. 238).

- Lubrication takes the older woman 1-3 minutes, whereas before she needed 10-30 seconds from the beginning of sexual excitement.
- The orgasmic capacity is retained, but is shorter in duration. The number of contractions is decreased to half of the original number, from 5-10 contractions to 3-5, and might sometimes be accompanied by pain. Usually the pain develops at the end of the climacteric and can be treated with HRT, with positive results.
- The resolution phase is quicker compared with the younger woman. (Masters & Johnson, 1966, 1970).

The capacity of the older woman to enjoy sex way into old age depends on its continuity. In cases where a woman maintains steady sexual activity once or twice per week, even without an artificial supply of HRT, there should be no reason for problems.

To a significant degree, regularity of sexual exposure will overcome the influence of sex-steroid inadequacy in the female pelvis. Such a woman, unsupported by sex-steroid-replacement techniques, develops all of the physiological stigmata of steroid starvation, but the pink, atrophic vaginal barrel still produces sufficient lubrication and,

with regular usage, does not constrict significantly in size.

(Masters & Johnson, 1970, p. 341-342)

Moreover, said Stoppard (1986), "The only barrier to a more active sex life is the availability of a partner" (p. 111). Masters and Johnson (1970) highlighted the increased importance of masturbation for women between 50-70 years as a means for discharging sexual tension, usually when an adequate sexual partner is not available.

#### The Aging Female Sexual Response

Thompson (1971) viewed women theoretically as being capable of enjoying a sex life as much before as after the menopause, with the only difference in passion and intensity. Sex, according to Thompson, is mellow now, containing less lust and more intimacy and tenderness. This is also the time in life when declining male potency often matches a woman's more uninhibited desire and perhaps for the first time in life they are equally mature sexual partners.

Giambra and Traynor (1978) comparing frequency of sexual daydreaming between two groups of women, aged 35-49 and 50-54 found that the later group had 32% less sexual daydreams than the younger group. However, another study by Giambra (1983) done on a larger scale did not show any differences between 40-54 year old women and their younger counterparts regarding their sexual daydreaming.

Kaplan (1983) saw the sex life of the older woman as interrelating with her relationship to her husband as well as her psychological state of being. Variation is the key word,

according to Kaplan, and while some women will show a greater interest in sex, others interpreting their husbands' lack of interest in sex as a response to their aging body, will abstain from sexual activity altogether.

Cutler and Garcia (1987), aware of the lack of adequate information dealing with the sexual response of perimenopausal women, conducted research with the intention of ascertaining whether there is a link between decreased levels of hormones and sexual activity in that specific time. The subjects were 124 perimenopausal, white, American women, with an average of two years college education. The women did not use any kind of HRT, and none of them had a hysterectomy. The reported results are:

- In general, no significant decrease was found in sexual arousal and in the ability to enjoy sexual intercourse.
- A certain decline in sexual activity was seen only in subjects with particularly low levels of estradiol.
- No deficiency in vaginal lubrication, or increase in dyspareunia (pain during intercourse) was found.
- Symptoms of atrophy which can cause these symptoms appeared usually toward the end of the perimenopausal period.

The authors remarked that they were aware of the fact that the high social and educational levels of their subjects might have been a reason for the non-changing sexual patterns. They recommended clear differentiation between perimenopausal and post-menopausal patterns of sexual behavior. Their results supported Masters and Johnson's (1966) findings that a significant loss of lubrication is evident only five years after

the end of menstruation.

From a psychological point of view this is a time of great sensitivity and vulnerability for both sexes who need reassurance that they are still desired, despite their declining body images.

Psychologically, some women, because of stereotyped thinking, might feel sexually inadequate and abstain from sexual activity, especially those women who identify femininity with reproductive capacity, and consider that the loss of one presupposes the loss of the other. On the other hand, some women might react with intensive and heightened sexual activity with the same underlying fear (Deutsch, 1973).

De Beauvoir (1949) ironically commented that the price a woman in her mature years frequently pays for the sexual inhibitions and coldness of her youth, is that when finally she begins to feel free and in touch with her sexual drives, her husband has long since become resigned and accustomed to her indifference and has made his own arrangements.

Masters and Johnson (1966) saw an increase in sexual activity during the forties and fifties and explained it as originating from two polarities. On the one hand, there is the "freedom from fear" of pregnancy and on the other hand there is what Deutsch (1973) termed the panicky feeling of "closing of the gates" and an urge to conceive another child before it is too late. Certainly there is a difference between these two ways of expressing sexuality, whereas in the former sex is enjoyable, the other is an indirect means of achieving another goal.

De Castillejo (1973) described sex in midlife as ceasing to be a biological function exclusively, and becoming instead an

expression of love. In this context the absence of fertility, that the woman experiences, is beside the point. The older woman has a great advantage, she is free to use her body as an expression of deep feeling.

Huyck (1977) pointed to the fact that for those women, who used sex as a means to get benefits from their spouses or needed to test their own power and worth through sexual encounters, midlife was a dreadful period. On the other hand, Huyck believed in the ability of middle-aged women to enjoy sex more than in their youth, but commented that they are caught in a cultural double-bind, by the presence of fewer men due to higher mortality among males, which decreased women's chances to use their potential.

Rubin (1979) attributed women's sexual inhibitions in young adulthood to a lack of sex education for both sexes, and also to the presence of children at home, which caused women to repress their sexual drive. Reaching a certain age, Rubin was of the opinion that "Sex? It's Gotten Better and Better", which is the title of the chapter in her book that deals with sex. The better quality of sex is attributed, according to Rubin, to the influence of the Women's Movement beginning in 1960s, the awareness of their rights and also to the development of assertiveness and authenticity which are often part of midlife as a stage of development. One of the changes, according to Rubin, is the husband's decrease of libido which allows his wife to start listening to her real libidinal tempo and enjoy it.

Rubin (1979) mentioned however that about half of the cases she came across were women who, sensing the decline in potency

in their men, while aware of their own rising desire, had once again, as in other phases of their lives, given in and inhibited themselves sexually in order to protect their men from experiencing failure. In Rubin's words, it is "one of life's rotten tricks" (p. 97). In spite of it all, sex has improved, according to Rubin, and the vitality and livelihood of women's sexuality is enhanced.

Golan (1981) called attention to another angle of the sexual response in middle age, saying that those women and men whose psychosexual development was problematic over the years, are prone to use the fact of getting older as an excuse to refrain from any sexual activity at all.

Nairne and Smith (1984) found that the gap between women's sexual development and the way they practise it, does not diminish on reaching midlife, in spite of women's greater awareness of their libido. This is particularly evident in the current middle aged generation who are "reflectors of their men's needs and wishes...the frustrations and discontents, that men bring to the relationship still dictate their behavior, if not their desires" (p. 102).

Downing (1982), in opposition to Deutsch (1973), suggested that what Deutsch regarded as latent homosexual feelings, awakened in women on reaching the menopause, plainly indicated middle aged women's urgent need for intimate and meaningful relationships, which unfortunately for both sexes, women can find more easily among their own sex than with men.

Nairne and Smith (1984) as well as Roberts and Newton (1987), confirmed Downing's observation, adding that in general men's

nurturance needs are fulfilled better than women's, since they themselves are the nurturants.

#### Summary

One is again aware of the diversity of attitudes: De-Beauvoir (1949) who saw the woman as a loser all along the way, Rubin (1979) who emphasized woman's tendency to give up because she perceives her husband's needs to be greater, and Downing (1982) who referred to the new phase of sexuality as a genuine discovery now that motherly obligations have ceased to play an important role in women's lives. The issue of midlife sexuality is still wrapped, specifically for this present middle aged generation, in prejudices and misinformation and needs to be demystified through actually dealing with it in a more open way.

## CHAPTER 8

### DEPRESSION IN MIDLIFE

Depression is really the wallflower of mental illnesses, lacking the romanticized "wildness" and "passion" of mania or schizophrenia.

Nairne and Smith (1984).

Figures from the U.S. and Europe show that the female population in Western societies suffer from major depressions twice as frequently as men. The figures for females are from 9% to 26% and for males 5% to 12% for the general population in U.S., (DSM III, 1987; Gove and Tudor, 1973).

Pearlin (1975) hypothesized that the different roles that the sexes perform in the society they live in, were responsible for the stress and depression they suffer from. He conducted a study of 2300 American subjects, 58% women and 42% men, with an age range of 18-65. Pearlin cautiously screened his testing devices in order to exclude the possibility that women who are generally more open than men in admitting their feelings, would bias his research. He found that the women-subjects of his study scored 20% higher than men on the depression scale.

Pearlin also found that there was no difference between housewives and working women with regard to depression. In contrast to the socially accepted idea that housewives suffer from depression more than their working companions, Pearlin thought that working women might be affected by the double burden of stressful demands they face both at work and at home. It is not only the work-load that a working woman carries but also the

extra roles that she has to fulfil. In order to justify her work, she has to excel in both fields. She has to be a supermother and wife, to satisfy demands placed on women in general, but especially working mothers. Pearlin came to the conclusion that:

- The more children a woman has and the younger they are, the higher the risk of depression.
- Women without a supportive system, be it a husband or members of the extended family, are prone to depression.
- The older the woman and the less strain she has on a three dimensional level - the less depressive symptoms are found.
- Middle class working women are found to be under more stress compared with working-class working women, because they attach a higher value and meaning to their work than their working - class sisters.

Pearlin's results stand in contrast to Bart's (1971), who concluded that housewives are prone to suffer from depression more than working women. However, we have to keep in mind that Bart's sample consisted of just middle aged hospitalized women, while Pearlin's was a mixed-age, random population. It is therefore not possible to compare the findings of those two studies adequately.

Looking at Pearlin's results, it seems that it is not the chores of running a home that frustrate the housewife, nor the work-load at her business that puts stress on the working-woman, but the need to perform satisfactorily on different levels. This means that in just being a woman one is prone to depression. To put it simply, a woman does not have to reach middle age in order to develop depression. She has good reasons for developing it at

an earlier phase of her life.

Winokur's (1973) study can be viewed in this light; it questioned whether there is a higher risk for women to develop an affective disorder during the menopause. Winokur studied 71 women who had a history of affective disorders before or after the menopause. His findings showed that the risk is an insignificant one. There is a 7.1% risk during the menopause in comparison to 6% risk during other times in a woman's life. These results might suggest, according to Winokur, that depression or what he termed involitional melancholia is not connected directly to the menopause. However, Winokur's results are in contradiction with Jung's (1933, 1976) views (see section on endogenous approach).

Nairne and Smith (1984) highlighted another aspect of depression in women, saying that depression for women becomes very complicated because of the mere fact that when they become depressed and needy of others, there is nobody available because women are the traditional givers of care and nurture. Nairne and Smith also found that research from different countries indicate that women are at least twice as likely to be depressed as men.

However, Nairne and Smith hardly mentioned depression in midlife. They lay emphasis on life events which cause depression in women, such as death, divorce or sexual abuse. In this respect they were similar to other feminist oriented authors who refer to women in general and forget that each phase in life is unique, and that along with the sociological influences there are universal phenomena as well.

### Depression in Middle Age

Depression is sometimes a concomitant feature of midlife crisis, but as with other aspects of this stage, its aetiology is arguable and controversial. Basically, there are two different approaches to explaining depression in middle-aged women:

- The endogenous approach, believing that depression is an outcome of inner struggles and unresolved complexes of the past.
- The exogenous approach, which views society and culture as the main influence and reason for depressive reactions.

### Involucional Melancholia

Depression during the climacteric has been seen as a separate clinical entity - involucional melancholia - first defined as such by Kraepelin in 1896. He did not consider it to be constitutionally determined but a result of cultural circumstances.

Freud (1917), in his paper Mourning and Melancholia, described the similarities and differences between the two phenomena, saying that while mourning is a conscious process of grief over the loss of a close person, melancholia is an unconscious lament for a lost object, that is not clearly understood by the mourner himself.

Involucional melancholia is manifested by anxiety, depression, apprehension or paranoid and other delusional ideas. Involucional reactions occur more likely in persons who have a certain constellation of personality traits such as shyness,

rigidity and inhibition. They evince a history of failure with the feeling that life is almost over (Coville et al. 1960).

The term involuntional melancholia has been through some changes of definition. Involuntional melancholia was included as such in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM II), but appeared in the DSM III under major unipolar depressive disorders, and again as the "melancholic type", a subheading of the major depressive disorders, but no longer with specific reference to menopausal women.

What characterizes the melancholic type according to the revised edition of the DSM III (1987), is at least five of the following symptoms:

- Loss of interest or pleasure in all, or almost all activities.
- Lack of reactivity to usually pleasurable stimuli (does not feel much better, even temporarily, when something good happens).
- Depression regularly worse in the morning.
- Early morning awakening.
- Psychomotor retardation or agitation.
- Significant anorexia or weight loss.
- No significant personality disturbance before first Major Depressive Episode.
- One or more previous MDE (major depressive episodes) followed by complete, or nearly complete, recovery.
- Previous good response to specific and adequate somatic antidepressant therapy, e.g. tricyclics, ECT, MAOI, lithium.

### The Endogenous Approach

Jung (1933, 1976) believed that the changes taking place during the transition into the second half of life are the cause of the higher rate of depression seen in some of the men and women around the age of forty.

The changes are basically rooted in the tendency of the psyche to increase its consciousness, and to move away from ego dominance and servitude to nature, into the wider range of the "self". This inner tension between the threatened ego and the emergence of the self, cause the former to defend itself in the form of inflexibility and hardening of the personality which drives some middle aged people into inflexible and dogmatic ways of behavior.

Jung (1976) said:

Whoever carries over into afternoon the law of the morning must pay for it with damage to his soul...The very frequent neurotic disturbances of adult years have one thing in common. They want to carry the psychology of the youthful phase over the threshold of the so-called years of discretion. (p. 14.)

Unlike others (Becker, 1975; Jacques, 1965), Jung was of the opinion that depression is not the result of the fear of death, which is still remote, but rather the fear of the yet unknown forces pushing one to integrate the polarities, the anima and animus and expanding consciousness.

Guggenbuhl-Craig (1981), elaborating on Jung's approach, explained the occurrence of depression along transitional

developmental periods as the outcome of an intrapsychic change, when one archetype is moving away and another archetype, not yet recognized, is taking its place. Such is the case in puberty when the archetype of childhood is replaced by the archetype of adulthood. And between 45-55 this archetype of adulthood is replaced by the senex. Guggenbuhl-Carig's thoughts about the fear arising from the senex archetype enables us to understand more clearly, from a universal point of view, women's attitudes towards aging as was discussed in the chapter on aging.

Gutmann (1985), whose genotypic theory of stage development was discussed in chapter 2, argued against cultural anthropologists who see the change in older women as a result of external sociological influences rather than internal changes within the inner life-structure. Gutmann (1985) divided the life span into two basic periods:

- The parental phase.
- The postparental phase.

During the parental phase each sex is "allowed" by nature to develop only one half of his\her characteristics in order to serve nature and procreation. Thus, in the parental phase women utilize their feminine side of nurturing, caring, tenderness and warmth in order to provide emotional security to their offspring, while men, who are responsible for the physical security, are "allowed" to develop their masculine side, their aggression, power of will and other physiological attributes. During the parental phase, women project onto men their animus qualities. Reaching the post parental phase, both sexes are free at last to develop their opposite latent characteristics. Gutmann, was of

the opinion that women's depression exhibited in the post parental stage is a result of their inability to deal properly with the three sub phases of this stage.

Using Gutmann's words, depression is "a crisis of psychiatric proportions", and is an outcome of denial and anxiety aroused at the level of the eruptive phase, when the increasing awareness of the masculine traits, such as aggression, dominance and power frighten women. Those women, whose husbands feel particularly threatened by that change, might deny and repress the "eruptive" trends, feeling guilty of owning such feelings or needs. Thus, women cannot continue with the reciprocal and sculptured phases, and as a result, disguised symptoms of depression might appear.

According to Gutmann, depressive symptoms are not a reaction to the empty nest as Bart (1971) thought, but a response to the rising masculine power that women are afraid to acknowledge and put into use. The inner psychic need for growth is met with cultural restrictions resulting in depression.

Keeping Gutmann's (1985) theory in mind and comparing postparental women with teenagers in the eruptive phase, it seems that the younger ones are in a far better position. Our contemporary Western society is well informed and aware of the maturational processes of adolescents, and is generally geared toward helping youngsters to overcome their turmoil. In contrast, a post-parental woman enters the eruptive phase with less empathic understanding from her family. Her husband, might himself struggle with his midlife transitional period, while the children are busy in their own world. The bond of silence around

midlife, and the lack of a supportive peer group take their toll. Integration of the postparental phase becomes a lonely difficult task.

Gutmann gave an example which illustrates his theory. A 53-year old woman was misdiagnosed as suffering from depression. When tested, her associations on the Rorschach test were: two fighting bulls, a volcano erupting, an eagle hovering, and most interestingly, a colorful butterfly breaking out of a chrysalis. These images brought Gutmann to the conclusion that they were certainly not of a depressive nature, but instead depicted the inner growth of masculine forces within the postparental women, who was unconsciously repressing them. Not recognizing postparental potentials and needs in women is, in Gutmann's opinion, keeping them as "perpetual victims" of their own needs.

The similarities between Jung (1933, 1976) and Gutmann (1975, 1985) are that both men foresaw the period, which in Jungian terminology is referred to as "the transition to the second half of life", and Gutman called it "the postparental phase" - as a time when inner processes push towards the development of the contra sexual sides. Both men also saw neurosis and depression as disguised reactions for the undercurrent of need for personal growth.

However, it seems that Gutmann put too much emphasis on the role of parenthood in adult development and overlooked developmental stages of singles - married or non married women.

It is interesting here to look at Withmont's (1987) approach to "dis-ease". As a Jungian and homeopath, he believed that: "In reference to individuation, illness can be seen as an initiatory

stepping stone, a means toward reaching an evolutionary telos...disease symptoms as 'the cry for simillimum', the spirit essence" (p. 13).

Nairne and Smith (1984) held the same opinion, saying that depression might serve as a motivation for introspection and growth.

### Reactivating the Infantile Depressive Position: Jacques'

#### Approach

Jacques' (1965) views on depression in midlife represent the psychodynamic approach. He perceived the midlife crisis to be depressive in its nature, regardless of differences between men and women. The central and crucial aspect of midlife is the inevitability of one's own personal death. Coming to realize that midlife is only one stage before old age and death, reactivates the infantile depressive position (Klein, 1946) which is a developmental phase typical of the second half of the first year of life. The infant struggles then to incorporate the "good" and "bad" objects, which stand for the life and death instincts. However, the difference between infancy and middlehood is that while the infant's struggle is an unconscious one by its very nature, the adult's working through the depressive phase is connected to his personal death, and should be according to Jacques, a conscious process. In order to gain: "the deepening of awareness, understanding and self realization...genuine values can be cultivated - wisdom and courage, deeper capacity for love and affection and human insight" (p. 13).

### The Exogenous Basis for Depression

This is not a good society in which to grow old or to be a woman, and the combination of the two makes for a poignant situation.

Bart (1971).

An entirely different approach to depression and its origins in midlife is represented in the writings of Bart (1971), Deykin, Jacobson, Klerman and Solomon (1966), Golan (1986) and Oliver (1977). All, interestingly enough, are women who find society and the codes it imposes onto women to be the reasons for the depressive reaction during the empty nest period. What Kaufert and Gilbert (1986) called "the role loss theory", is a time when a woman's role as a mother or wife is diminished, and if her investment during these years was mainly at home, she might lose, at that point, her self-esteem and meaning in life.

Golan (1986) summed it up saying that: "women's problems stem from external causes" (p. 69), and depressive symptoms during midlife are a result of a society that constricts women to stereotyped roles.

Deykin, Jacobson, Klerman and Solomon (1966) studied a small group of middle-aged American women, who were diagnosed and hospitalized for depression. Their findings reaffirmed a relationship between middle-age, emptying of the nest and depression. The existence of unfinished business between mothers and their children during this time, activates depression in the former. Deykin et al. (1966) divided their sample into two groups:

- Women who openly acknowledged their conflict with their

children. These women felt betrayed, unrewarded, and in need of a closer relationship with their children.

- Women who consciously accepted their children's departure, but were unaware of the resentment it aroused in them.

The differences between these two groups were significant. The open-conflict group was less educated, and most of the women were born in foreign countries or were a first born generation in the U.S. Their work-history was shorter, and most were divorced or widowed. While the women in the second group were American born, better educated, married at a later stage in life, worked for most of their married life and had a lower rate of divorce than the first group.

These results might point towards an interesting issue:

The more sophisticated a woman is the harder it is for her to admit her feelings openly concerning the departure of her children, and the greater is the need to hide those feelings from husband and children.

This might also be an answer to Rubin's (1979) different results which were discussed in chapter 4.

The starting point of Bart (1971), an American anthropologist who referred to herself as "the Margaret Mead of the menopause" was that depression in general is connected with loss - be it a loss of a role, as sociologists view it, a loss of meaning in life, as Existentialists see it, or the way Freudians regard depression to be partly an outcome of the inability to express anger openly, and directing it inwardly instead, using suppression and denial. Our society, said Bart (1971), moves her members to regard motherhood and wifeness to be the most vital

and valuable role in a woman's life. Those women who invested everything in their homes and children show:

A history of martyrdom with no payoff, to make up for the years of sacrifice; inability to handle aggressive feelings, rigidity, a need to be useful in order to feel worthwhile, obsessive compulsive supermother and superhousewife behavior; and generally conventional attitudes. (p. 166)

They are likely to suffer most when they watch their nest emptying, their need for gratitude and recognition for service now rejected, and the centrality of their life constricted and minimized. The loss might result in their low self-esteem, low self-confidence or feelings of emptiness and depression.

Bart tested 533 American women between the ages of 40-59, who had been diagnosed as depressive but had not been hospitalized for depression before the diagnosis. She arrived at the following results:

- Overprotective women were more likely to be depressed, when facing the fact of their children leaving home.
- Working women were less depressed than housewives.
- Working class housewives had a lower rate of depression than middle class housewives.
- Depression was tied to ethnic groups: Jews have the highest rate, Anglos the intermediate and blacks the lowest rate of depression.

The secondary gains of developing a depressive reaction must also be taken into account, according to Bart, because for the martyr type who cannot express her anger and frustration openly, this is a manipulative way of gaining the lost sense of being needed,

having a sense of power and self worth. As Chesler (1974) remarked, depression is a woman's "choice". It is safer to become depressed than admit and express anger.

Bart's results contradicted Deutsch (1973) and Benedek (1950), who claimed that "masculine" women suffered more during the menopause, while Bart saw the traditional women who follow the feminine role of motherhood and wifeness as weaker and more vulnerable in this period in their life. Bart's results depicted women in a certain era of America's post-war life. Her sample of middle aged, depressed women was characteristic of what Friedan (1965) called "Occupation: housewives", those women who in the decade after the Second World War were brainwashed by the mass media to believe that "Feminine fulfillment is the cherished and most self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture"(p. 18). Both Bart (1971) and Friedan (1965) saw women as: "The casualties of our society. They were doing what they were told to do, what was expected of them by their families and the mass media" (Friedan, 1965, p. 183).

Oliver (1977), like Bart (1971), thought that in a society that stresses motherhood as the major role in a woman's life, the loss of her role is the loss of her identity and self respect. If a woman draws her power from controlling and managing her family, then she might become depressive when her children move out. The depressive state is a reaction to that loss of power and not to the departure of her children. As mentioned in chapter 5 the problem, according to Oliver, is not the empty nest but the empty woman, the emptiness which is part of not having a meaning in life. Oliver (1977) believed that actually there were many more depressed middle-aged women than one was aware of. Women

## CHAPTER 7

### THE SEXUAL RESPONSE IN MIDLIFE

There is no time limit drawn by the advancing years to female sexuality.

Masters and Johnson (1966).

There is no prestige attached to having sex with me. From "It Hurts to Be Alive and Obsolete".

Moss (1970).

Physiologically, women have the capacity to enjoy sex as they age (Weg, 1989). Psychologically they become more aware and assertive of their sexual needs, but sociologically they may have difficulty finding a partner. Moreover, the lack of information regarding this period in life makes this aspect in a woman life difficult to cope with.

Huyck (1977) attributed the limited research done on women's sexuality in mid and late adulthood to social prejudices and falsity. The reasons, according to Huyck, may lie in the tendency to associate sexual activity with reproduction, so that the end of the former presupposes the end of the latter. In addition, many researchers in the field of human sexuality are young themselves, and may have difficulty imagining older people participating in sexual intercourse and even enjoying it. These difficulties may also be interpreted as due to their links with their aging parents.

Block, Davidson and Grambs (1981) added another explanation to the uneasiness with which society looks upon the sexual relationship between older people.

themselves tried to hide their feelings from their children and husbands.

Depression, added Oliver, was also a result of the double bind in which women find themselves nowadays, where the emphasis on the centrality and importance of a mother as a caretaker and provider of emotional security for her children, makes her a fully involved partner in their lives. But then, when the time comes and her children are mature, she is expected to withdraw quietly and retire from her motherly role, while the privilege of feeling sad is denied her in the name of her children's emotional stability.

Rubin (1979), in contrast to Bart (1971), Deykin et al. (1966), and Oliver (1977), argued that her sample of 160 healthy middle aged women reacted differently to the empty nest stage, and did not show signs of depression. On the contrary, the women were eager for their children to leave home so they could start using their new freedom in a satisfactory way for themselves.

The differences in the results between Bart (1971) and Rubin (1979), beside being done on two different populations, a hospitalized vs. a healthy one, might also lie in the gap of almost ten years between Bart's study in 1971 and Rubin's in 1979, when the influence of the women's movement had already had its effect on women's status. Part of the difference in results might also indicate the double bind that Rubin's women found themselves in, feeling restricted on the one hand to admit feelings of anger, frustration or emptiness, as Oliver (1977) reported, and also restricted by the spirit of that time calling women to rediscover and free themselves from home and family ties.

Rubin's book is an example of this approach. It deals with Women of a Certain Age and looks only at the cultural and social influences that play a role in women's present life. These factors are certainly part of women's present condition, but Rubin neglected to distinguish and see that midlife is composed of universal biological and psychological layers which predate the social ones.

An answer to Rubin's claim that her women did not suffer from depression on reaching the departure of their children, is the goddess Demeter's depressive reaction to the empty nest, as interpreted by Luke (1981). This reaction is entirely different from some of Deykin's (1966) subjects or Bart's (1971) women, who would not openly admit their sadness, anger and frustration but instead direct it inward. Demeter allows herself to express her feelings to the utmost. She is openly grieving, angry and revengeful and acts upon it, as the Homeric hymn describes her: "...in rage and despair she withdrew from Olympus...she prepared for mankind a cruel terrible year; the earth refused to give forth any crop..."(New Larousse Encyclopedia Of Mythology, 1968, p. 152). Demeter is certainly not the martyr type that Bart is talking about, nor is she "Portnoy's mother", but rather the archetype of a depressed post-parental mother, free from any cultural layers.

Becker (1975) believed that the combination of losses of a cultural and social nature with the menopause which is "the utter bankruptcy of the body" (p. 214), was the reason for depression in middle aged women. However, "the accent on social role as the key to the syndrome is correct because it is the superordinate

level of the problems that absorbs the bodily level" (p. 217). Becker saw depression to be more common in Western societies where the loss of a belief in a supernatural power brought along among others the fear and denial of death.

Miller (1981) and Woodman (1982, 1985) perceived depression to be "a disease of our time", an outcome of a breakdown of social value systems and rituals that used to protect the individual within the boundaries of his\her community and give him\her a sense of selfhood. The loss of that sense of safety and unity with the cosmos forces one to develop his\her own individuality on the one hand, but on the other hand the exposure to various newly spread social ideas is confusing and might cause depression. It also might explain the rapid growth of sects and cults which seem to offer a renewed identity to those who struggle to develop one.

Kaufert (1985), in what she termed the "empty nest\castrated mother hen theory of menopausal depression" (p. 185) cited the present explanation to menopausal depression as arising from the tension of losing one's reproductivity on the one hand and the departure of children on the other in a society that encourages a smooth separation between mother and children.

### Summary

Two main questions have come to light in this chapter: Is depression really manifested in midlife, and what is its cause?. It seems that the answers to these two questions depend on one's weltanschauung and is bound to cultural influences.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SEXES

The woman was born mother, mistress, wife, sister. She was born to represent union, communion, communication...

Anais Nin (1967).

We are witnessing at present the emergence of thorough studies done mainly by women on women (Bardwick, 1971; Chodorow, 1978; Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1982, 1984; Gilligan, 1982a; Hewllet, 1987; Josselson, 1987; Miller, 1986; Rossen-Cardozo, 1989; Suib-Cohen, 1989). All of these authors analyzed the differences between men and women, stressing the positive in the "not highly thought of" feminine traits. This chapter will review some of the differences.

A passage by an Abyssinian woman, quoted by Kerenyi (1985) best describes the differences between men and women:

How can a man know what a woman's life is? A woman's life is quite different from a man's. God has ordered it so. A man is the same from the time of his circumcision to the time of his withering. He is the same before he has sought out a woman for the first time, and afterwards. But the day when a woman enjoys her first love cuts her in two. She becomes another woman on that day. The man is the same after the first love as he was before. The woman is from the day of her first love another. That continues so all through life. The man spends a night by a woman and goes away. His life and body are always the same. The woman conceives. As a mother she is another person than the woman without child.

She carries the fruit of the night for nine months in her body. Something grows. Something grows into her life that never again departs from it. She is a mother. She is and remains a mother even though her child die, though all her children die. For at one time she carried the child under her heart. And it does not go out of her heart ever again. Not even when it is dead. All this the man does not know; he knows nothing. He does not know the difference before love and after love, before motherhood and after motherhood. He can know nothing. Only a woman can know that and speak of that. That is why we won't be told what to do by our husbands. A woman can only do one thing. She can respect herself. She can keep herself decent. She must always be as her nature is. She must always be maiden and always be mother. Before every love she is maiden, after every love she is a mother. In this you can see whether she is a good woman or not. (p. 101)

#### Overview of the Literature

Freud (1905, 1925) attributed the differences between men and women to their differences in anatomy. His saying "anatomy is destiny" carried within itself his basic approach. The different ways in which men and women resolved their oedipal complex led, according to Freud, to the formation of a well developed super ego in man, which was based on impersonal judgment. While the woman's moral system was dependent only on her emotional state, and therefore was hierarchically less

developed and prone to irrational judgments.

Erikson (1963, 1968), in common with Freud, saw the differences resulting from biology and its symbolic reflections. A woman, said Erikson, is born with an "inner reproductive space" which exposes her to feelings of emptiness and a need to contain and be contained. She is engulfed by that feeling which influences her state of being. These differences between the sexes can already be seen in early childhood games, in the way girls play intimate games indoors, whilst boys play competitive games outdoors (Lever, 1976).

According to Gutmann (1985), the sex differences are not just innate instinctive traits, but are the product of a culture that cares to supply emotional and physical safety to its young members. The distinction between male aggression and female nurturance which is developed during the parental phase, is necessary for parents of both sexes, in order to raise their children in an environment that provides physical security and food as well as warmth and emotional safety. In this way both sexes complement each other. In most societies, according to Gutmann, the female is the emotional care-taker and the male is in charge of physical protection. But by doing so, each sex must give up developing his counter side. This neglected side will eventually be developed later in the life cycle, after fulfilling one's commitment to nature.

On reaching middlehood, when children leave home and the "parental-imperative" weakens, both sexes begin to explore and incorporate their repressed side and become more individuated, integrated and androgenous. According to Gutmann (1985), the

differences between the sexes are an important component of human development, even nowadays when a physically safe environment is less of an issue. Still, children require emotional security, and perhaps even more so, with the changes taking place in the structure of the nuclear family. They need more from their parents because of the absence of the extended family. Gutmann strongly opposed the radical feminists' approach of a unisex family where there are no distinctions between parental tasks and role modelling:

The proposal is to insert unisex, in effect a postparental life style, directly into the pivotal years of young parenthood, the period when sex distinctions are normally sharpest. We do not yet know the consequences of this massive revision of the species-typical life-cycle, but it is certain that there will be consequences...and there is a fair chance that they will be disastrous. (1975, p. 183)

Western society with its high divorce rate, single-parent families, decline in number of children per family, and young people who do not consider marriage as a possibility in their life, tends to confirm Gutmann's parent-orientation approach.

De Castillejo (1973) believed that the differences between the sexes are an outcomes of inborn differences as well as the role mothers play in early child care. However, the basic differences can be seen in the way a man is more in touch with reality and consciousness, while a woman is in closer relationship with her unconscious. Her awareness is diffused, and she reviews the world as a whole, whilst man is able to focus, concentrate and analysed. Man interests himself fully in

instrumental work, whilst woman does her work wholeheartedly only in relation to someone she loves, thus causing confusion to what her real needs are.

Chodorow (1978) was of the opinion that the root cause of the differences between the sexes lies in the fact that in most societies women are responsible for the rearing of children and are the first object to be identified with by their children. The girl's identification with her mother is an undisturbed process of identifying with the same sex, a continuous process, that maintains flexible boundaries of the self, whilst the boy must emotionally separate from his mother in order to develop his masculinity. As a result of the differences in the mothering experience, women have problems in separating, becoming independent and individuated, but on the other hand are better able to make positive relationships. Unfortunately, said Chodorow, we live in a male-dominated society which dictates its patriarchal rules, and the value attributed to intimacy, warmth or relatedness are less than the value given to goal orientation and success in the world of business.

Eichenbaum and Orbach (1982), in agreement with Chodorow (1978), called for a new family structure where both sexes have an equal hand in raising their children. The little boy and girl would then have a closer contact with both their personal parents and the femininity/masculinity principles that they represent. In this way both genders would overcome the mutual suspiciousness and antagonism they have, and women will not be any longer the victims of "the tyranny of niceness" (Becker, 1987).

In a later article, Eichenbaum and Orbach (1984) spoke out

against the belief that women are dependent creatures. They saw both sexes as having dependency needs, but while men succeed in hiding these needs, and meeting them first through their mothers, and later their wives, women's needs are not met. Women do not get from their husbands what they invest in them. "Women have not been raised to depend on others. On the contrary, women are raised to be depended upon; to place their emotional needs second to those of others" (p. 17).

Gilligan (1982a) tried to prove that what is seen as weaknesses and inferiority in the feminine is actually potent and powerful. Focusing mainly on Western value systems, she challenged the moral development scale developed by Kohlberg (1973), saying that it was based on a study of only 84 boys, and judged from the male point of view; whereas the comparative women's moral development scale, on the other hand, was measured on a male standard scale, ignoring the possibility of a very different truth and In a Different Voice (the name of her book) that women use. Autonomous thinking, easy decision-making and transcending personal considerations are attributed to men as helping them to develop a moral system which is based on universal principles of justice and is not influenced by relationships. Gilligan (1982a) agreed that it is true that women are different in their judgement and decision-making and that their moral development is connected to the ways they perceive the world, which is through relationships with others, mutual love and care, and their responsibilities towards these relationships. Gilligan, however, saw this moral development scale as an advantage and not a disadvantage in women's

development. Remarking on changes in midlife, when men mellow and look for intimacy in their relationships, Gilligan pointed out that these qualities have already been women's since early childhood.

Whitmont (1983) believed that the differences exist a priori and it is useless attaching any value of good or bad to them. Instead, we should look at them as polarities that strive to achieve integration and completion. Secondly, he stressed the need to differentiate between women as a gender and the feminine characteristics that are part of both sexes. By mistakenly believing that women as a gender are inferior to men, we overlook the truth that actually it is the feminine aspect which is underdeveloped in women, as well as in men, in our patriarchal-oriented society.

Nairne and Smith (1984) raised the question of language usage which describes and carries within itself the differences between sex roles. The idiom "maternal deprivation" which derives from the word "mother", although its meaning relates to both sexes, is only one example. The authors suggested instead the use of "parental deprivation" to describe the lack of care for a child.

#### Summary

A metaphor used by Reeves (1971) describes the differences between the sexes as a difference between two splits: the "public" one which belongs to men, and the "private" one which belongs to women. The incessantly battle between the sexes mirrors the need of each sex to complete its missing second half.

### Differences Between the Sexes Concerning Midlife

Gould's (1978) outlook on the differences between the sexes when they reach midlife has been discussed in chapter 2. However, it is important to expand here on Gould's (1978) distinction between the attitudes of men and women towards work on reaching midlife.

From early age, said Gould, men are expected to "make" it out in the world, and become successful and good providers for their families, whereas the message women get is that their most important role in life and real success lies in the territory of their home. So, out of the necessity to work, men tend to attribute to their jobs some "magical" meaning and make them the center of their lives. Women, on the other hand, attach the same "magical" meaning to their family lives.

On reaching middle age and losing some aspects of the mothering role, women feel freer to pursue their own careers. "In fact" said Gould, "women can utilize their full strength in the career world only after they're convinced that no magical payoff awaits them at home for being a good girl" (p. 257). But on the road to re-entering work are some obstacles. One of them is women's aroused anger, when they recognize that life has cheated them into having to spend all that time at home, especially when they compare their achievements with those of their husbands.

The second problem is women's deep sense that they are no longer willing to compromise. They want to find a job which will be meaningful, and satisfy their needs at this stage in their life. Unfortunately women find themselves in a disadvantageous

position in the work market, where untrained middle aged women are not in much demand.

On the other hand, middle aged men are starting to realize that work is not as central in their lives as it used to be, and they turn towards home, seeking to establish the relationships they were too busy to build earlier in life. But with women looking for a meaning outside their home, men fail to find the partners they look for. The result is that the sexes miss each other, while pursuing different directions.

Gould's views supported by those of Fiske (1977), Jung (1933), Thurnher (1977) views on the gap between the married couple during midlife, discussed in chapter 7. We have to remember that Gould (1978) published his book a decade ago, referring to a particular middle age generation of the 1970's. Hopefully some changes regarding women and work are currently taking place, the outcome of which will only be known in another decade or so. Women now reenter work at an earlier age, while some even do not stop working after their marriage (Hewlett, 1987; Stark, 1983; Suib-Cohen, 1989), or plan their careers sequentially (Rossen-Cardozo, 1989).

Guggenbuhl-Craig (1981) referred to the "archetype of the professional woman" saying that it overpowers modern women, who feel dissatisfied being just mothers. Craig described this need in women of fifty as almost an "obsession" to find themselves. Paradoxically, by surrendering to the "archetype of the professional woman", women give up the free time that they gain when their children leave home. They start working just for the sake of an accepted image of a contemporary modern woman, thus

neglecting to develop their real interests. Craig's recommendation to these women is to enjoy the "multiplicity of archetypal possibilities" (p. 57).

Stark (1983) like Gould (1978), saw the differences as lying in the degree of "achievement" and "affiliation" that both sexes are allowed to develop from early childhood. Boys are encouraged to develop their ambitions on account of their emotional development. Their identification comes from their own actions and achievements. Girls, on the other hand, receive signals to be close to their nurturing capacities which are accepted as more feminine. "In our society, girls are socialized to achieve vicariously. They are taught that who they are - their identity-comes largely from those they live with, their husbands, their children, and those they work for or with" (p. 43).

On reaching middle age, when changes in the family structure take place, and home becomes empty of children, women no longer have the same sources from which to draw their identification. At the same time, men have second thoughts about their "success" in the world. They turn towards home, looking for closeness and warmth. "The paths of men and women cross. This may be unsettling to women who see their vicarious-achiever role being usurped and who are not comfortable with a director-achiever role" (p. 43).

Leiblich (1986) was interested in explaining the situation of middle-aged successful career women, who function socially in an androgynous style, combining in their life the roles of both the stereotyped male and female. She asked herself if the process of trans-sexual change that occurs in midlife (Bakan, 1966; Gutmann,

1975, 1985; Jung, 1933, 1976) would show itself in these women in a masculine form, where they would tend to mellow, soften, look for intimacy, and decline in ambitious drives, or would the change present itself in a tendency toward the "feminine" model. The question was whether women in her sample were thus becoming more assertive, independent, success-oriented and self-confident. The study was done on 24 successful American career women, whose average age was 42, using in-depth interviews. Results showed that the diversity between successful midlife women was spread almost evenly, demonstrating changes in both the "masculine" and "feminine" models. No correlation between age, state of marriage, or family and the direction the change will take place was found.

Leiblich (1986) concluded that "completion" is the key-word. Those women who had developed more masculine skills as younger women, became closer in midlife to their "feminine" side, and vice versa. The socially androgynous achievement in early age, when the successful women were holding both sex-roles at the same time was now completing itself in a psychological androgynous growth, a completion not in role but in the integration of feminine and masculine characteristics.

#### A Futurist View Point

Toffler (1984) believed that we are moving towards an era of "demassification", where among others a change will come in the male-female sex roles. Society will not be based only on patriarchal principles. Instead, pluralism in men-women relationships would be the new evolving phenomenon that Toffler forecasted. Toffler already saw a growing number of young men

starting to question the existing masculine sex role, understanding its disadvantages, and looking for other variations. "Both men and women have changed, new values are emerging, along with new technologies and economic arrangements. I may be too optimistic, but I believe that now, for the first time a civilization is on the horizon which works for, rather than against, the historic liberation of women" (Toffler, p. 136).

### Summary

A radical change in looking at women's developmental psychology has been taking place during the past decade, where women writers attribute the differences between the sexes to various ways of socialization, while disregarding the psychoanalytical approach that "anatomy is destiny". The differences between the sexes are, according to these writers, the core of women's problems. However, writers, like Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982a), and Hewllet (1987), do not refer particularly to women in their middle years, when both sexes seem to pay a toll for these gaping differences. Gould (1978), Gutmann (1985) and Lieblich (1986) looking at midlife as a stage in life where integration and completion takes over, indicated in their studies that this inner need is stronger than any socialization system.

## CHAPTER 10

### METHODOLOGY

The goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved.

Glaser (1978).

The focus of this study is to explore women's transition into the second half of life. The lack of a coherent theory of women in midlife, the conflicting evidence regarding various aspects of this transition and the importance of understanding women's adult development in the face of a growing elderly population have been explored in chapters 1 and 2.

Being an exploratory study, it will not examine a particular theory or hypothesis; rather it will aim at widening the boundaries of the present understanding. The goal is to map women's journey into the second half of life while finding out whether the road ahead is smooth or full of obstacles, losses and tasks to be met. In other words, is it an Odyssey, and, if so, what kind of Odyssey is it? Also, what awaits the one who reaches the shores of Ithaca?

This chapter will, firstly, explain the selection of "grounded theory" as a method to be used in this research. Secondly, it will discuss the procedure of sample selection and the group discussions that were conducted concurrently.

Becker (1975) commented that:

The problem of man's knowledge is not to oppose and to

demolish opposing views, but to include them in a larger theoretical structure. One of the ironies of the creative process is that it partly cripples itself in order to function...in order to turn out a piece of work the author has to exaggerate the emphasis of it, to oppose it in a forcefully competitive way to other versions of truth; and he gets carried away by his own exaggeration(p. 11).

Hopefully, keeping in mind Becker's (1975) approach while utilizing Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory, will enable one to overcome the biases and obstacles and, in a humble way, contribute to the knowledge of women's lives.

#### In Search of a Method

In the search for a method which will suit this study's goal of a greater understanding of women's transition into the second half of life, it seemed that qualitative data analysis should be used, as it provides a richness of material which is lacking when quantitative analysis is utilized (Miles, 1979; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Strauss, 1987; Turner, 1983). However, in an article entitled Qualitative Data as an Attractive Nuisance, Miles (1979) warned against approaching qualitative analysis as an easy method. He equated a qualitative researcher with a child fascinated by a car left at the back of the house: the child who does not know how to drive, might hurt itself while playing. According to Miles, the same applies to those qualitative researchers who, fascinated by the material they collect, might find themselves helpless in the face of what they thought was an

easy method of analysis. Like the child who is playing innocently with the car, the qualitative researcher is at risk of being inundated by the enormous amount of collected data which still needs to be recorded, sorted out, analyzed and written up; and that, in the face of the absence of a systematic method of measurement.

Another problem encountered by Miles and Huberman (1984) was that, due to the great amount of data available, a researcher could not deal with many case studies. As a result, the generalization of his/her results might be in question.

Turner (1983) also saw the large quantities of data produced as the major problem when qualitative analysis is used. The lack of a credible method of analysis with regard to qualitative data, where intuitive interpretations rather than systematic analyses are used in part, results in a wealth of material which may be wasted.

In spite of its problematic aspects, Miles (1979) found qualitative data to be:

Attractive... rich, full, earthy, holistic, "real", preserve chronological flow... lend themselves to the production of serendipitous findings and the adumbration of unforeseen theoretical leaps; they tend to reduce a researcher's trained incapacity, bias, narrowness, and arrogance. (p. 590)

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) model of The Discovery of Grounded Theory, being qualitative by its nature, seemed the most appropriate method to meet the requirements of this study. This method approaches the field under study free of preconceived ideas. Moreover, the method insists on starting any study from an

unbiased point of view, without any hypothesis to be proved, and as few as possible "predetermined ideas". It is a method which enables the material to speak for itself, which seemed important especially in the light of the controversial results in this specific area of middle-aged women. It seemed to be a method which can help in discovering underlying trends and attitudes in women's inner lives, tuning into their emotional world and increasing our understanding.

#### The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis

Glaser and Strauss, the originators of "grounded theory", are both sociologists who believe that a different approach is needed to handle research in the field of human behavioral sciences, because neither of the current two approaches have "been successful at closing the embarrassing gap between theory and empirical research" (1967, preface, p. 7). According to them, qualitative analysis is not preferable to quantitative; rather, in the field of human behavior, the latter method is preferable. The high demands put on researchers in this field to verify and prove their results have become constricting.

Glaser and Strauss's recommendation was toward a change in the basic approach to research, so that theory could be discovered and generated from raw, authentic material instead of being hypothesized and deducted:

Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. (1967, p. 6)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) reviewed three ways of using qualitative data:

- When the aim of the research is to test and prove an hypothesis, the procedure is then to codify and analyze only the data that deals directly with the hypothesis. In that way all the "irrelevant" data, which is an integral part of the phenomenon under study, is ignored.
- When the researcher is only interested in discovering new areas of interest, there is no need for analyzing and systematizing the data.
- The constant comparative method for discovering grounded theory, which basically puts together the two former approaches, using codes and categories in a systemic way that allows the generation of a new theory. Thus, the end result is a more systematically analyzed theory than the second approach, while less restricted in its scope as is the case with the first one.

The new theory is generated from the factual data brought in by the field researcher who then conceptualizes it into a collective general meaning. The relation between raw data and concepts is an interesting one. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) put it:

In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. The evidence may not necessarily be accurate beyond a doubt, but the concept is undoubtedly a relevant theoretical abstraction about what is going on in the area studied. (p. 23)

Thus one case can sometimes be enough to introduce a concept, while more cases will verify it.

Typical of the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis is that analyzing data occurs simultaneously with collecting the data. In this way the researcher does not have to speculate, but rather knows clearly what categories have emerged, and what to compare them with, in order to get more information. He/she then has a direction to pursue. Thus, said Glaser and Strauss (1967), "integration of the theory is more likely to emerge by itself" (p. 109).

In the first method of qualitative analysis mentioned above, the data are first collected and only at a later stage analyzed, wherein the researcher might discover that insufficient data have been collected and gaps of knowledge have appeared. This would not happen in the constant comparative method, where the researcher is in constant control of his/her data by coding and analyzing, comparing and writing memos. The constant analysis of data is a systematically ongoing process:

- Firstly, a certain slice of data is collected and analyzed. As a matter of fact, each sentence is analyzed, and the analyzed data is "fractured" into many pieces. Each of these pieces is a code which is basically an idea or concept. These emerging codes consist of categories and their properties.
- The next step is writing memos on the existing codes. The memos are reflections, associations and ideas that are generated by the categories and their properties. Memos help in furthering the conceptualization of newly existing codes and making connections between them. Thus memos are another

step towards the abstraction of data into a theory. Basically, the memos are the ideas that, when integrated, will form the basis for the grounded theory.

- At this stage, the data have already been checked and analyzed twice; each time new ideas and concepts are formulated on the basis of the previous ones. The next step is for the researcher to decide where to look for the additional slice of data which will then be compared with the existing data in order to consolidate and widen its scope and generalize the theory. In this way, generating new theory becomes an ongoing process of collecting, analyzing, coding and memo-ing, until saturation point is reached, and the accumulating data repeats itself.
- Sorting the memos is the next step. This in itself produces more concepts, and actually organizes the emergent theory around a "core variable", which becomes the basis of the theory. Every new generated theory must be built around such a "core variable", which basically connects all the conceptualized data into one body of theory which becomes integrated. A "core variable" can be a stable description of a social slice of behavior, but can also be a Basis Social Process (Glaser, 1978) which describes in sequential stages a certain piece of behavior that occurs along a period of time and is marked by change along its continuum.
- The last step is writing up the theory which, in fact, is already there, in the form of the memos/ideas that were checked and compared throughout in order to reach a new general theory.

The advantage of the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis lies in the ongoing dynamic process of everchanging and growing theory, which takes place during the research. It reminds one of an evergrowing tree, where the stem is thickening, the roots deepening and new branches, twigs and leaves are constantly growing.

The depth and wealth of understanding of a phenomenon and the analysis of it, also depend upon the understanding and broad-mindedness of the researcher her\himself, because this particular method encourages unlimited freedom and flexibility in ways the subject matter may be studied. That is the reason, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), for the occasional difference in results reached by two workers in the same field. In a later addition, Strauss (1987) stated: "If anybody argues that, 'I didn't see what you saw', then you say, 'of course not, you went in with a different frame of reference, but if you follow me step by step, you will certainly see what I saw'" (p. 50).

Neugarten (1977) recommended the use of the grounded theory approach in "studies aimed at discovery rather than confirmation, and at theory that grows from, rather than precedes, observation" (p. 632).

Turner (1983) was of the opinion that Glaser and Strauss' (1967) method answered some of the difficulties in the field of qualitative analysis, as it provided a procedure to encompass and deal with the unpredictable wealth of material in a systematic way, instead of relying on the intuition of the researcher. The emerging grounded theory is a "complex rather than an oversimplified" (p. 334) one, and the phenomenon under

research is represented with more depth and authenticity.

To conclude, it is important to stress that the difference and originality of this method lies not in the method of collecting data, nor in the unplanned and spontaneous emergence of the data, but rather in the systemic way of organizing and analyzing the data.

### In-depth Interviews

The decision to conduct in-depth interviews arose hand in hand with the choice of the "grounded theory" approach. In-depth interviews as a tool to attain a broad picture of life is a method used by various researchers who are interested in the richness that qualitative analysis brings about. Thus, for his study, Levinson (1978) used, what he termed a biographical interview, which is a synthesis of "a research interview, a clinical interview and a conversation between friends" (p. 15). The clinical aspect of the interview is reflected, according to Levinson, in the interviewer's sensitivity to the emergence of undercurrent material and his\her careful handling of it, while sharing mutual feelings and experiences during the interview emphasizes the friendly aspect of a biographical interview.

Whyte (1984) added that in contrast to a questionnaire, the research interview "is designed to provide the informant with freedom to introduce materials that were not anticipated by the interviewer" (p. 97).

Leiblich (1986), using in-depth interviews while studying crises and transformations that successful career women confront in midlife, found that the introspective tendencies

characteristic of this age-group enabled penetration at a far greater depth than would have been attained if structured interviews or questionnaires had been used.

O'Connor and Wolfe (1987), exploring career and family management during midlife, used a combination of intensive interviews and workshops to attain more information as an opening-up method.

Neugarten (1968c, 1969) and Richardson and Sands (1987), all came to the conclusion that middle-aged women tended to deny their own feelings whilst projecting them onto other women, came as a result of using direct and indirect questionnaires in studying middle aged women's attitudes toward death and the menopause. Their opinion confirmed the choice of in-depth interviews with the women in this sample.

In terms of this study, the fact that the interviewer was herself a middle-aged woman helped to ease the atmosphere at the beginning of the interview and in many cases helped to elicit more information. This corresponds with Levinson's saying that:

What is involved is not simply an interviewing technique or procedure, but a relationship of some intimacy, intensity and duration...Although therapy was not a primary aim, the interviews may have had some therapeutic effects. (1978, p. 15)

On the other hand, the fact that the interviewer was herself in this stage of life, had the potential for introducing subjective bias. She is, however, an experienced psychologist.

A list of areas of interest that were raised included the whole fabric of women's midlife as emerged from the literature

review. Interviews were carried out in an unstructured way as discussed above. The interview would usually start with some leading questions; later in the interview freedom was granted to every woman to weave her own tapestry of life. Direction was given in instances when areas, not covered by the woman herself, were still in need of exploration, according to the original list of questions. When new areas of interest were introduced by the interviewee, they would be codified and analyzed according to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) method and be added to the existing list of questions to be asked. They would then be compared with those of another woman in the next interview. In this way the whole area of midlife was scanned and covered while additional properties continued to emerge. Thus, a comparative method of qualitative data analysis was used to compare each woman with another, to find the similarities and differences, and to build a body of theory.

Each participant was informed of the objectives of the study and confidentiality was assured and guaranteed by using coded numbers instead of names as a means of identification.

Each interview lasted between an hour and a half and two hours, and in some cases, when needed, a second or third interview was arranged. All interviews were tape-recorded and data were analyzed and coded at the end of each interview. The emerging categories were used for comparison and verification in the next interview. This continuous procedure helped in the obtaining of a wider body of information as the research continued, whilst the researcher was in control of the process.

Data were captured on a grid where one of its axes held the

participants' coded numbers, while on the other axis were added the emerging themes. The grid contained 67 themes when saturation point (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) had been reached.

All memos and concepts regarding the emerging themes were written and kept as a "memo fund" (Glaser, 1978), for future use in the write-up stage.

### Discussion Groups

In addition to in-depth interviews it was decided to conduct discussion groups as an extra means of drawing information. Thus, O'Connor and Wolfe (1987), in a study, On Managing Midlife Transitions in Career and Family, combined intensive interviews with workshops and clinical reviews in order to get better access to their subjects' life experiences.

Advantages of Group Work. Group encounters as opposed to individual therapy are generally more beneficial when it comes to changing the self concept of individuals or groups (Kemp, 1970; Konopka, 1972) and especially in helping women to deal with feminine issues and their social status (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1982; Sharni, 1976).

According to Eichenbaum and Orbach (1982) the advantages are:

- As women are "good givers", they succeed in building an environment of trust in the group.
- Women's intuition makes them more perceptive and sensitive to the others in the group. The feeling of being accepted and understood encourages the sharing of emotional material.
- The conspiracy of silence is broken. Participating in a group

discussion which deals with a particularly sensitive subject in women's life demystifies it and make women feel they are not alone in the way they experience their feelings and view the world around them.

- Through sharing mutual experiences, women discover their own power and potential.

Though mainly dealing with old-age groups, Waters and White (1977) reported a project carried out in Detroit, where older people met in small groups for a series of seven meetings, and where they could discuss the information and communication skills they acquired within a bigger group of 30 that preceded the present one. These small groups were run by two paraprofessional facilitators, who were part of the same old-age group, and who had attended a special training program. The rationale for using them as group leaders was the trust and sense of "I have been there already, and look how I coped with the situation" that such people bring with them, thus building confidence in other group participants. Judging from the results, group counselling was highly recommended by Waters and White who found that older people who refused to go for individual counselling preferred sharing their singlehood, seclusion and isolation in a group setting, where they discovered that other members feel the same. This helped them to realize that one is not alone in the world.

Lurie (1977), using a preventative educational approach for professionals' future planning, was of the opinion that transitional phases in life should be dealt with preferably ahead of time, within an educational model instead of a therapeutic one. Structured programs for individuals, groups, couples and families

will help participants in clearing their present transitional turmoil and encourage setting realistic goals for the future.

Block, Davidson and Grambs (1981) suggested self-help groups for older women as a means of exchanging views and feelings, and providing a close network of friendships. Unfortunately, the authors commented, older women are not used to this kind of group, being socialized to believe that other women are rivals rather than friends (Hewlett, 1987; Woodman, 1985).

As soon as women succeed in building feelings of real self-worth, regardless of age or appearance, they stop perceiving middle-age or the menopause as a tragedy, but rather view it as a time of accumulating wisdom and experience. That is the reason why Greenwood (1987) conducted support groups for menopausal women, stressing the importance of helping women, specifically those who reach middle age feeling a loss of goal and meaning in their lives.

Drawing as Part of the Group Experience. Part of the group process was experiencing through drawing. Group members were asked to draw their self-portrait in the first meeting and the way they experienced the group in the last meeting. Drawings were discussed as part of the ongoing group work.

#### Themes Covered

The group experience consisted of eight sessions, of 90 minutes each. Each meeting dealt with a specific aspect of midlife. The facilitator introduced information, after which a group discussion was held. The topics for discussion were

presented in the following order:

- The Greek myth of Demeter and Kore: an interpretation of women's initiation into the second half of life.
- The physiological aspects of aging and the menopause: a presentation given by a woman gynecologist.
- The seasons of man's life: presenting Levinson's (1978) theory on men's developmental stages and comparing them with those of women.
- "The empty nest syndrome": women's reactions to the departure of their children.
- The couple in midlife: the changes within the marital relationship.
- Sex: male and female's changing sexual responses during midlife.
- Dreams and disillusionments: self-examination and reality testing of past expectations.
- Finding meaning and planning the future: setting realistic goals for the next phase in life.

A significant amount of additional information came from these group discussions. This was tape-recorded and analyzed according to the Glaser and Strauss (1967) model. This Data will be not discussed separately, as it was added to the existing data. Themes which emerged in individual interviews but could not be pursued in more detail, partially because of denial, resistance, unawareness or the lack of time, were elaborated and dealt with in a setting where women shared mutual interests. The eight week duration of the groups enabled a period of "pregnancy" and "delivery" for themes that otherwise would not have the chance

to be discussed in such depth and length. A "chain reaction" best describes women's way of dealing with a certain topic. A theme would be introduced by one, pursued further by the others who identified with, added to and amplifying the subject matter. The metaphor that comes to mind is that of an unsteady fountain, at times bursting forcefully and at others flowing quietly.

### The Sample

Utilizing the Glaser and Strauss (1967) "constant comparative method", the sample evolved as the study proceeded. The only decision taken was to conduct this study with white, middle class South African women, as the enormous cross-cultural differences in this country were too wide to be represented in a sample of this size.

Rubin (1979) included only white American women when conducting her research on women in relation to the "empty nest syndrome", saying that: "The life experiences of black and white are so different on so many important dimensions both inside the family and out" (p. 218). Secondly, in order to compare the results of this study with others, such as Fiske (1977), Friedman (1987), Gütman (1985), Leiblich (1986), Neugarten (1968a, 1968b, 1968c, 1969, 1976), Thurnher (1977) and Rubin (1979), it was necessary to use an homogeneous sample.

The sample consisted of Capetonian women aged 41-61 from whom a variety of data were gathered. The sample, its size and the direction in which it would develop, was unpredictable at

the beginning stages of the study, in line with Glaser and Strauss (1967) method. Data were allowed to speak for themselves and to dictate each further step. The sample grew as it progressed, every emerging theme opening the way for a new participant to be interviewed, compared and verified. This process will be discussed in detail at a later stage. On reaching saturation point, the sample included 79 women who were clustered into five different groups. The characteristics of these groups will be discussed in chapter 11.

The 79 women were drawn from two sources. The first source produced an initial group of 21 women. These women responded to an advertisement published in a local newspaper. The remaining 58 women were chosen as a result of the "snow ball" method; that is, they were recommended by friends, colleagues and by word of mouth, thus preventing a biased sample (Droege, 1982; Mercer, Nichols & Doyle, 1989; Rubin, 1979).

The five discussion groups consisted of 35 participants who were part of the 79 interviewees. The groups were offered under the auspices of the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA).

### Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the methodology used in the present study. Qualitative analysis, in-depth interviewing and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) method of The Discovery of Grounded Theory. The latter was found to be the appropriate tool for this particular study. In-depth interviewing techniques were dealt with as well

as the benefit of interviewing as a method of studying middle-aged women in particular. Also reviewed were the way in which the sample evolved and the need for group discussion.

At the end the sample included 79 women interviewees. In addition, five discussion groups were conducted in which 35 of the subjects participated.

In line with the "Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), data from interviews, as well as from the group discussions, were analyzed compared and conceptualized.

## CHAPTER 11

### RESULTS: DISCUSSION OF THE EMERGING GROUPS

This chapter describes the characteristics of the five different groups that emerged while data were collected, analyzed and compared. Each group is compared with the others while similarities and differences are drawn.

#### Sample Development

According to the "constant comparative method of qualitative analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the development of the sample was unplanned; rather it was a process which was unpredictable. It was done in two stages.

#### The First Stage

The first 21 subjects of the sample included 12 housewives and nine working women. The jobs the working women held were traditional ones, such as primary school teaching, nursing and secretarial work. Kellerman (1983), defined traditional workers as those women who work in "female dominated occupations" (p. 1). They are low paid, their work history is discontinuous and they are easily replaced.

In the process of analyzing the data of the nine working women, a small though distinct group of women emerged consisting, at the beginning, of only two women. These women, who were later

called the late bloomers, were women who were housewives and mothers in their early years of marriage, and on reaching their forties, started to develop their careers. They were different in all aspects from the traditional working women. Unlike the latter, they were committed to their work, motivated, ambitious and enjoyed their work as free-lancers, while the others went to work either out of financial necessity or to "kill" their boredom. However, more data were needed at this stage in order to validate this emerging "late blooming" pattern.

#### Characteristics of the Initial 21 Interviewees

Beside the occupational differences discussed above, other variables emerged. These differences are presented as follows:

Age. The mean age of the women was 50.7 years, ranging from 42 to 60. Husbands' mean age was 53.8 years, ranging from 45 to 60 years.

Marital Status. Twenty women were married while one was divorced.

Various Stages of the Menopause. Women ranged on a continuum from being pre-, peri- and post-menopausal, as well as artificially induced menopause, i.e. having had hysterectomies.

Five women were in their post-menopausal stage.

Four were peri-menopausal.

Three were pre-menopausal.

Nine had undergone hysterectomies.

Eight out of the nine had had their uterus removed between 29-40 years of age, while only one had a uterus removal at the age of 52

This high proportion of women who had had hysterectomies led one to question whether housewives and traditional working women present a higher rate of somatic symptoms: or do these symptoms occur only in this particular section of the population that had responded to the advertisement? Gerdes (1979, 1980) found that "feminine" and "undifferentiated" women, as opposed to androgenous women, also presented a higher rate of psychosomatic symptoms.

However, at this stage it was too early to decide, as more information was needed. The percentage of women who have had hysterectomies in the total sample of 79 women was 17 (21%) women. This rate was lower than the rate of 25-30% in the U.S.A. statistics reported by Eastman (1985) and Stoppard (1986).

Differences Regarding Children's Departure from Home Data analysis indicated that:

- All children were still home in seven cases.
- Ten mothers experienced a partial departure i.e. some of the children had already left while others were still at home.
- Four mothers were in their post-parental phase.

Differences in Women's Educational Level Data analysis indicated that:

- Four women were university graduates. Two of them were the emerging late bloomers, who in the end proved to be the highest educated group.

- Five were skilled workers.
- Five were matriculated persons.
- Seven were non-graduates.

Husbands' Education Data indicated that:

- Ten of the husbands were university graduates.
- Five were skilled workers.
- Four were matriculated persons.
- Two were non-graduated persons.

The Second Stage

Following Glaser and Strauss's (1967) method, it became crucial at this point to decide in what direction to proceed, as the different themes opened various directions to be explored. Actually any variable could have been followed for study.

One possibility was to continue along the occupational division and introduce another group of women, such as career oriented women, in order to compare the groups and examine differences and similarities.

Another choice could have been to follow the division according to marital status and to compare married women to unmarried women. The category of unmarried women could have been broken down into widows who had lost their husbands at various stages of their lives, divorcees at various stages, single women who had never been married and lesbians. These different groups could have been compared and analyzed in relation to their transitional phase into the second half of life.

However, in the light of the growing numbers of women

entering the work force (Hewlett, 1987; Izraeli, 1982; Rossen-Cardozo, 1989; Stark, 1983) and the changes in attitudes towards work, marriage and childrearing (Hewlett, 1987; Rossen-Cardozo, 1989; Suib-Cohen, 1989), it was in the interest of the researcher to continue with the study according to the initial emerging groups and study the reactions of the various groups. Each group could then be compared with the other. Thus, it was of interest to discover whether working women, whose boundaries are extending into the external world, are coping better than housewives in this transitional phase. Another point of interest was to discover what the meaning of work was in their lives and what kind of work it was? In other words, if there is a need to develop an educational program for women who are undergoing the transition into the second half of life, what kind of guidelines could be recommended regarding various aspects of their lives?

In order to continue with the study and pursue these goals certain steps had to be taken.

- It became clear that the already existing two groups of 12 housewives and seven working women presented a depressing picture while moving into the second half of life. It therefore appeared necessary to interview more housewives and working women in order to compare them with the original interviewees and to see if the original sample was a true representation of the middle-aged housewife and traditional worker. Consequently, 11 more housewives and 10 traditional workers were interviewed.
- As the late bloomers' group was made up of only two women, sixteen more late bloomers were interviewed.

- It was decided to introduce a fourth group - career women - who, unlike the traditional working women, had a long history of work and achievements.

An interesting development occurred while interviewing career women: a fifth small group emerged. This was the group of early retired women. These women were dedicated to their careers from early adulthood but decided around the age of fifty to retire from their positions and start enjoying life "before it became too late". This group consisted of only four women as it was not possible to enlarge this group, perhaps due to the fact that this trend is a recent and an uncommon one among women in that age group. Nevertheless, the group was included, following Glaser and Strauss (1967) who claimed that even one case can sometimes be enough to introduce a concept, while more cases will verify it.

Thus, after interviewing 23 housewives, 17 working women, 18 late bloomers, 17 career women and four early retired women, data seemed to be repeating itself and reaching saturation point (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The sample of 79 women ended up as five groups: four groups of women who were employed outside their homes and one group of housewives:

- Group 1: 23 housewives.
- Group 2: 17 traditional workers.
- Group 3: 18 late bloomers.
- Group 4: 17 career women.
- Group 5: 4 early retired.

The division between these groups is a mixture of ideological, aspirational, time of commencement of work and

occupational themes. When referring to the above groups the terms "occupational lines, occupational division, occupational distribution or occupational differences" will be used. Note, however, that these terms must not be regarded as descriptions. When the term "working women" is used it refers to the traditional working group.

Appendix 1 contains a detailed list of the participants' marital, educational and professional status.

### Post-Traumatic Events

In addition to the five groups, a distinctive group - though spread among the other five - were the post-traumatic women, i.e. those who had experienced a major trauma in their past life. The eight women in this subgroup were: two mothers who lost their sons in car accidents, two women who suffered from post-partum depression, one woman who had an autistic child, one woman who had a mastectomy, one who was a survivor of the holocaust and one who had recovered from a serious drinking problem. These women felt that they were regaining their full equilibrium at the time of the study, while recognizing their capabilities and limitations. They were not bothered with what one of them referred to as "nonsense" (referring to middle-age), as they felt that the previous traumatic events had made midlife a relatively easy transition. Whether the transitional depression (Golan, 1986; Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1981; Jacques, 1965) is delayed or overcome in the case of these women is an interesting issue to pursue.

### Summary

Glaser's (1978) statement that studies differ as researchers differ was confirmed while following the developmental process of this research. The emerging division along occupational lines determined for this researcher the direction that the present study would follow. Other researchers confronted with the same trends could certainly have taken a different route, which would still have been relevant.

What also came to light was the assumption that approaching the area under study without any hypothesis allowed the emergence of new material, especially in an area which has not been researched enough (Levinson, 1978; Neugarten, 1977; O'Connor & Wolfe, 1987). Thus a qualitative study by Mercer, Nichols and Doyle (1989) ended up with three instead of the two original groups they intended to study. Their original aim was to compare mothers and non-mothers according to their transitional developmental phases. A third group of unmarried non-mothers emerged. This group differed in various respects from the previous ones.

### Biographical Details of the Groups

This section will deal with the five groups in the sample. Members were categorized according to occupational lines. Their biographical details are listed in Tables 6 and 7. This section will highlight their emerging differences and commonalities.

Surprisingly, data show that the groups of housewives, late bloomers and some of the working women, especially those who had

started working only recently, had basically followed the same course in their early years of marriage. They had stayed at home and raised their children. At about the age of 40 they were confronted with an inner need for change. At that point a divergence between the groups occurred. It led the late bloomers towards new challenges and high achievements, the working women to leave home and look for a job, and the housewives to stay at home, frustrated and unable to make a change.

The career women were different: from early adulthood they had taken an alternate route, either by combining work and family life or by staying single. They were confronted with similar dilemmas but, as will be discussed later, went through the transition in a way that was affected by their specific life style.

At the other end of the continuum was the early retirees, who at the end of a long career started to realize that time was running out. What they desired most was to enjoy life while they were still relatively young and fit.

A look at the figures in Tables 6 and 7 highlights and explains some of the differences between the five groups.

#### The Marital Status

On examining the figures concerning marital status it was observed that all the housewives were married, while the other groups varied. The career group had the lowest rate of married women (47%) and the highest rate of unmarried women (53%). The six (35%) single women in the career group, i.e. those who have never been married, form a significant part of this group. Four

Table 6

Profile of Sample.

GENERAL INFORMATION	House- wives	Working Women	Late Bloomer	Career Women	Early Retired	Total
Number	N=23 29%	N=17 22%	N=18 23%	N=17 22%	N=4 14%	79
Mean Age	49.3	46.9	50.3	51.0	52.5	49.6
Husband's Mean Age	52.2	50.2	50.1	53.2	58.5	50.8
Mean Number of Children	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.9

Table 7.

Sample's Marital Status.

MARITAL STATUS	House- wives	Working Women	Late Bloomer	Career Women	Early Retired	Total	
	N	N	N	N	N	%	N
Married	23	13	14	8	2	76	60
Divorced		3	3	1	1	10	8
Widows		1		2		4	3
Singles				6	1	9	7
Separated			1			1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>79</b>

of them were lesbians. Two of the lesbians had been living as a married couple for the past 20 years.

It seems that housewives cannot allow themselves the "luxury" of staying home when getting a divorce. The decrease in financial income forces the divorced housewife out. Thus, all the divorcees in this sample were working. Similar reports were cited by Hewlett (1987), while Izraeli (1982) found that 56% of divorced Israeli women were part of the work force, 17% higher than the rate of married working women.

The single-career women were all successfully self supportive. The question is whether being single forced these women to achieve financial independence, or was it their personal characteristics that dictated that development? Or, alternatively, does being out of a marriage mean that there is no real or projected obstacle to stop women from pursuing an individualistic path, as seen in the single and lesbian women who developed their careers successfully?

However, looking at the figures of the total sample shows that the career women exhibited the greatest variety in marital status, whereas the group of housewives was the most homogeneous.

All of the eight divorcees and the one woman who was in the process of separation, had divorced their husbands in their middle forties, excluding one who had gone through her divorce in her early thirties. Three of them were housewives who had to look for jobs after the divorce. They found themselves working in traditional jobs and struggling financially. One of them, still young, was ambitiously working towards developing her career, even though her expressed motivation was to show her ex-husband that

she "can do it". Three others succeeded in developing a career and belonged to the late bloomers. The other two women were a career woman and an early retired one, who had recently inherited money from her late father.

### Educational Levels

There is a significant difference in the level of education between the housewives and traditional workers and the three other groups, namely the career, late bloomers and early retired groups (Table 8). Comparing the late bloomers to the housewives shows that educational resources, though unused during childrearing years, enabled the former to mobilize themselves on reaching their forties and to fulfill a need that was postponed in early adulthood.

Compared with the group of housewives, the working group, though low in academic education, had basic training and skills, which enabled them to find a place in the job market. Unlike the late bloomers, they were unhappy in their new jobs, as a result of a re-entry into the kind of work which was monotonous and boring and which did not answer their present inner needs for meaning.

The housewives reported the lowest levels of education. Almost half of them did not have a matriculation certificate. This could explain their frustration and sense of "being stuck", as well as their inability to utilize the resources that the late bloomers and the new workers used on reaching the same stage.

The late bloomers and career women had the highest level of

Table 8.

Educational Levels.

	House- wives	Working Women	Late Bloomer	Career Women	Early Retired	Total	
<b>WOMEN'S EDUCATION</b>							
	N	N	N	N	N	N	%
University Graduates	4	3	16	13	2	38	48
Education Graduates		2			1	3	4
Matriculated Persons	3	4	1	2	1	11	14
Skilled Workers	5	7	1	1		14	18
Non-Graduated Persons	11	1		1		13	16
Total N	23	17	18	17	4	79	100
<b>HUSBANDS' EDUCATION</b>							
	N	N	N	N	N	N	%
University Graduates	11	7	10	7	1	36	60
Education Graduates		1				1	2
Matriculated Persons	5	1	1		1	8	13
Skilled Workers	6	2	3	1		12	20
Non-Graduated Persons	1	2				3	5
Total N =	23	13	14	8	2	60	100

education and so did their husbands when compared with the husbands in the housewives and traditional working groups. Part of the success of the late bloomers and career women's achievements might be attributed to their higher education and the stimulus received from highly educated and achieving husbands.

In general, the husbands' levels of education was higher than the women's. The differences in educational levels between men and women confirm findings by Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982a) and Hewlett (1987) who claimed that this was due to socialized male-female stereotypes.

#### Menopausal Status

Table 9 presents the menopausal status of the groups. The working group, being the youngest group, had no postmenopausal women while the early retired group had no pre-menopausal women.

Stoppard (1986) and Greenwood (1987) noted the high percentage of women who had had hysterectomies. As presented in Table 9, 17 of the women in this study had had their uterus removed. Although the number is lower than in Stoppard (1986) and Greenwood's (1987) findings (25%-30%), a percentage of 21% is still high. A significant difference was seen between the housewives and working women, 12 of whom have had hysterectomies, whereas the other three groups had only five women who have had hysterectomies. This might suggest that traditional women tend to be more tuned in and preoccupied with physical symptoms than the professional ones. This would confirm Gerdes's (1980) findings where her symptomatic group of menopausal women,

Table 9.

Menopausal Status.

MENOPAUSAL STAGE	House- wives	Working Women	Late Bloomer	Career Women	Early Retired	Total		Mean age
	N	N	N	N	N	N	x	
PRE	2	7	6	3		18	23	45.6
PERI	7	5	3	5	1	21	27	48.8
POST	7		8	6	2	23	29	53.3
HYS	7	5	1	3	1	17	21	49.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>

consisting of "feminine" and "undifferentiated" women exhibited a higher rate of symptoms when compared with her second group of menopausal women who scored higher on the masculine characteristics.

#### Departure of Children

Children leaving home is a phenomenon common to all groups, though it is lowest in the working group, which age-wise, is the youngest of all (Table 10). However, the presence of most of the traditional workers' children at home (94%) did not make this group happier. A thorough review of the characteristics of the group will follow later in this chapter. In the light of Bart (1971) and Oliver's (1977) results, these women should have felt cheerful and powerful, as they still had their children - their status - at home. In fact, they were unhappy and presented a depressing picture.

#### Summary

The educational levels of the late bloomers, career women and early retirees were found to be considerably higher when compared to that of the traditional workers and housewives.

Another significant difference is the high numbers of hysterectomies in the housewives' and working groups as compared with the other three groups.

All the housewives were married while the other groups were heterogeneous with respect to marriage, the career group being the most divergent.

In terms of age, there was a difference of six years between

Table 10.

Departure of Children.

DEPARTURE OF CHILDREN		House-	Working	Late	Career	Early	Total	
		wives	Women	Bloomer	Women	Retired	N	%
		N	N	N	N	N	N	%
Children at home:	All in	7	7	3	3		20	28
	Partly	6	9	8	4	2	29	40
	All out	10	1	7	4	1	23	32
Total number of mothers N		23	17	18	11	3	72	100%

the average age of the working women group and the average age of the early retired group. Whether some or all of the traditional workers will follow the trend of early retirement is an interesting issue to follow. One of this group of workers, the oldest (53) amongst them, was already expressing such thoughts.

A review of the specific characteristics of each of the five groups will follow.

### Characteristics of the Five Groups

The review of the five groups follows the order of their emergence. Case histories will be presented at the end of the description of each group.

#### Housewives

The group of housewives seemed to be in the worst position compared to the other groups. Their low self-esteem and alienation were, primarily, the result of their being overinvolved with their families. They displayed a spectrum of feelings ranging from depression, frustration, anger and feelings of not being needed. They felt cheated and defeated by life, lacking the confidence to communicate on anything but a domestic level. What made it even worse was their guilt and shame for these feelings.

Envy was also part of their repertoire of feelings. The targets of envy were the following:

- Their husbands, for the latter's accomplishments in the "big world", a fact which contributed to their feelings of inferiority.

- Successful career women whose professional and social status emphasized the formers' lack of it.
- Younger women who appeared to represent a threat to the older women's declining femininity and loss of power at home.
- Mothers who still had their children - their "status symbols"- at home, made the housewives feel uncomfortable and were avoided socially.

The housewives experienced difficulties in accepting the concrete departure of their children. Centering specifically on their anguished emotions, they were unable to let go and see the real need for independence of their children. They felt abandoned by their children, who appeared "ungrateful" for all that their mothers had done for them. The empty nest syndrome, or reversed, the emptiness of the woman herself (Oliver, 1977), and the consequent loss of power and status in the changing structure of the family were major problems they confronted.

Their loneliness was great even though they were surrounded by their families. However, they felt ashamed to share their feelings with their husbands or children, afraid to be dismissed as talking nonsense. They felt guilty because they believed they did not have the right to be unhappy, as they ostensibly had everything to make them happy. They were stuck. Their lack of education and skills played a major role in their fear of risking moving out into the world. Playing the "waiting game" was their excuse to explain their inability to move forward. Chicago (1977) was of the opinion that these "games" started already at a younger age, when as girls, "We waited for boys to call, waited for boys to ask us to dance, waited for boys to take the

initiative in just about everything. Never daring to ask a boy out for fear of being thought 'unfeminine' (p. 122).

"Heshbon hanefesh", literally translated as the "accounting of the soul", is a Hebrew metaphor describing the need for taking stock at various points in one's life, especially on the Day of Atonement. "Heshbon hanefesh", the corner-stone of the transition into the second half of life, is a difficult process for all, but it seems to be even more so in the case of the group of housewives who "looked back in anger" and despair at what they regarded as the crumbling of their lives.

Their confusion is seen through the diffused answers they gave, when asked to define some goals for the near future, as part of replanning their life.

Yet, these heavy feelings in themselves - the second thoughts, the introspection and reassessment of life - are the core, the flesh and blood of the transition into the second half of life and part of the process that leads to change (Gutmann, 1985; Jung, 1933).

Mercer, Nichols and Doyle's (1989) opinion that the phenomenon of the totally dedicated housewife is decreasing in younger generations of women, might be a speculation for the future. However, Gilbert's feminist-oriented movie "Shirley Valentine", released in 1990, describes beautifully the "housewife syndrome" as it emerged in this sample. In the film, Pauline Collins plays the submissive middle-aged housewife who chats to her refrigerator and the wall, while the song, "The girl who used to be me" is heard in the background. Her metamorphosis happens only after she learns to love herself, and pursue her own

interests instead of her family's.

The following two case histories represent two different women from this group of housewives. Both exhibit similar symptoms although coming from different backgrounds, and different educational levels.

#### Case 1 - Housewife

W. is 45 years old, married to a 50 year old businessman. W. had a hysterectomy at the age of 29, and since then was on HRT. During last year a number of stressful events occurred in her life. All three of her children left home. Her husband developed a heart condition and had open heart surgery, and she herself started to suffer badly from hot flushes.

When she came to the interview she was weepy and admitted feeling depressed. She felt thrown away and used by her children who "walked out on her". She badly needed the assurance that they still needed her, seeing herself as "a mother hen who wants her little chicks around her all the time". She still wanted to be in the limelight and felt angry when she was not.

Most of her friends still had small children at home, and, she felt different even when she was included. She felt that she just did not fit in and consequently withdrew.

Her self-image was poor. She saw herself as an "ugly, big fat slob, like a grey jelly fish with no personality and life". She felt that she had lost her womanhood. Her confidence was rapidly deteriorating and she imagined herself to be like a "stump of a tree, wrinkled and dreary". W. did not want her friends to see her in this state. She thought that all old women

are like her, ashamed of their age because they did not feel attractive any longer.

According to her, the marriage was not problematic, yet her husband did not know about her present condition because she could not share it with him. Instead, she withdrew. Yet, she thought he knew about her hot flushes because he could see her perspiring, even though he never asked or discussed the topic with her; had he, she would have felt ashamed. She believed that if she discussed it with him, he would say that it was all in her imagination. So she kept everything to herself.

Because she could talk neither to her husband nor to her friends, she started to feel like "a little dragon who was spitting fire... I want to spit out everything and I can't. I am ready to explode, to get all my frustration out. I just want to shake them and say: 'listen to me for a change', but nothing happens and I keep quiet."

The couple's sex life was not as active as it was before her husband's surgery, but W. did not connect this to his heart condition. Instead, she attributed his lower libido to her loss of attractiveness, saying:

I am starting to think he does not want it with me, because I am not attractive any more. I won't try to make any effort because I don't want to force myself on him. I don't want him to say "yes" just because it must be done, or that it is his duty to do so. I even don't want to hear it, I am too frightened.

Her present state of mind is best expressed when W. says; "I don't want to die, I want to see my children grow old with me, but

I want to stay young. Young is full of life." Her fear of physical death is apparent, yet, all the metaphors she uses to describe herself at the present, point towards her subjective feelings. For instance, she equates the loss of youth and the departure of her children with an end which is symbolized by a dreary lifeless piece of wood.

However, that depressing interview was interwoven with the beginning of possible change to come. Although her reflections went almost unnoticed, they indicated her potential for change. Whether W. will take advantage of it or not, will depend on her personality and environmental circumstances. She, like the other middle aged women in the sample, could not deny the inner urge for change. A new consciousness was on the horizon. W. asked: "What have I missed in my life?" Yet, still unconnected to the question, she answered in another part of the interview "I pushed my husband in his work. When we got married I put everything into the family. We only keep driving the others not ourselves." Further on she remarked that she had decided that "It's only me, I'll live for myself". Her struggle with aging is approached, as in the interpretation of the myth of Demeter (Luke, 1981), by using a rational approach, saying: "I think I must accept it, I must not expect to look what I looked like 20 years ago". She is starting to understand that even when one gets older one can still live and accept every day as it goes by. But as W. rightly puts it: "I step one step forwards and two steps backwards".

Conclusion W.'s transition to the second half of life includes losses which she has difficulties in accepting. The loss

of centrality at home as a mother figure is especially difficult for her: her life having revolved around this role. The loss, of what she perceives as her femininity, is heightened by her husband's lowered libido. Too many things in her life happened simultaneously and she was not prepared to face them. Even now, the bond of silence which she maintains keeps her from seeking any kind of help. Yet, the depressing feelings in themselves are part of her new consciousness, which pushes towards acceptance' of the present situation and the move towards self-actualization.

#### Case 2 - Housewife

A., 50, is married to a husband who is five years her senior and is in the medical profession. She has a B.A. degree and has worked prior to having her three children, who are now in their early twenties.

Being born overseas and losing her soldier-father during the Second World War, she grew up in a family of females. A. describes herself as always being quite a strong person and in control of her life. She was an "A" student who won scholarships throughout her education. On a social level she was head-girl and always tended to be very much of a leader. She brought this reputation as a dowry into her marriage, where she was known as being able to handle everything; her husband used to turn all the "lefties" to her.

The family came to this country 20 years ago. A. explains that she could not go back to work because she was not bilingual. For income tax reasons her husband did not encourage her to pursue a job. She was happy staying home and running the

family.

Whereas at a young age A. tended to structure her life, acquiring a profession and travelling around the world, there was no visible planning of a future in A.'s life from the time she got married and had her children. A.'s needs were enmeshed with the family's, fulfilling her needs to be in control, but at the cost of her own individual development.

A. uses expressions such as "all of a sudden" when describing an incident two years ago when she stopped being in control of her life. This was followed by a terrible sinking feeling in her stomach. She tried to overcome it but did not know how, and then found she was depressed, which is something she had never experienced before in her life. She would get up in the morning, clean the house and crawl back to bed until dinner time. Nobody realized her state because she tried to hide it from her family, yet, she was aware all the time that she was going downhill. At first, she thought that she was having a mental breakdown, and so did her husband when she could no longer hide her situation. The husband, though in the medical field, was for a long time unaware of her situation and unable to read the signs. She even succeeded in hiding her emotional state from her gynecologist to whom she went to discuss her cessation of bleeding.

Talking to an old friend of hers, who happened to be a social worker, revealed to her the losses one encounters on reaching the midlife transition and the depression attached to them. For her it was just something that could not happen to her, she just could not accept it. She did not have difficult

teenage years, therefore she never anticipated that she would suffer in her midlife phase. Besides, she always thought that most women do not have problems with the "thing". She was completely unaware of the changes which have been taking place over the last two years:

- Her three children were now young adults.
- The eldest daughter had left home to share a flat with a friend.
- The middle son had left to do his national service.

Being the sort of person who had always been in control of the family it was hard to accept that her adolescent children were busy with their own lives and she was no longer needed as the "wise mother" she liked to be. The loss of power and control over her children and the family have left her with no power at all. As Oliver (1977) described it - it is not the nest which was empty, it was the woman who was empty.

In retrospect, A. says that it had probably been coming for a long time. It was a loss of self-confidence, not so much to do with getting older, because that did not bother her as long as she felt fit and healthy. It was a feeling of mere frustration, that she had not progressed academically as she would have liked. "I was so busy at home and suddenly..."

Even today A., instead of taking responsibility for her current situation, is projecting all the blame on the political system that is not as supportive of women's re-entry to studies or work as European systems are. She also blames her husband who did not encourage her to re-enter work.

What stands out very clearly in her case, as well as in W.'s

case, is her loneliness, even though she is surrounded by her family:

My husband is a very cold and withdrawn person, he cannot handle any kind of emotions, and when I was trying to say to him that I have problems he sort of withdrew. I could feel the lack of respect...so I could not share it with him....and your children are not interested in your problems, you are MOM, and everybody expects you to cope, you should be able to cope...They've got their teenage problems... Maybe because I've never been the sort of mother that would cry, I used to hide everything from my children...never talked with my children about my problems...

The lack of a network of friends is apparent in her case. She has only one woman-friend from the "old country" whom she trusts and consults with (the social worker mentioned earlier) but, unfortunately, this friend has moved to a different city.

Recently, she started working as a volunteer, and though she felt she was being used, she consciously continues to volunteer her time, as the need for structure in her life is important. Like other late bloomers, she did not make use of her profession acquired at an earlier stage in life.

Loss of respect, pride, shame and guilt are the predominant feelings in A.'s recent vicious circle of life. The whole atmosphere around her is one of uncertainty. Projections, repressions and blame still play a large role in her life, and she still cannot differentiate between them and draw any conclusions.

Unlike W. who is obsessed with her physical deterioration, part of A.'s frustration comes from her unfulfilled academic

ambitions. Losing her role of the "wise woman", the central figure at home, is a narcissistic injury, especially when looking at her life history of war and a drive to be successful. A. was content as long as she could maintain the "dream" of a happy home, the home she did not have as a child of war.

The humiliation she experiences at present, the defence mechanisms of pride and rigidity that she uses, combined with the unfamiliarity of developmental phases during adulthood, make a particular ordeal of this transition in her life.

Conclusion Examining A.'s case one wonders at the combination of a woman's need to hide her feelings concerning this phase in her life, the lack of understanding on the part of family members, and the insensitivity of the medical profession. All these factors contribute to make this transition a neglected phase in a woman's life.

#### Summary of Housewives' Group

Tending to have low educational levels and low professional training, the housewives seem to fit Lipman-Blumen's (1972) third category of her "need-to-achieve" model: the "vicarious" woman, i.e. those women who satisfy their needs for achievement through their husband's success. The housewives provide empirical support for Gould's (1978) theory of women who "marry" power instead of developing it, as well as Chicago's (1977) observation that women are educated to rely on their husbands as the "providers" of their meaning in life, thus neglecting to develop their own.

Being enmeshed in their families, the housewives had problems in differentiating themselves. The transitional period they were currently facing was perceived by them as a time of threat. They felt weak and cheated realizing, in retrospect, their mistakes along the way, yet were paralyzed to change their situation. Their struggle was the tension between feelings of failure and the inner urge to achieve individuation (Gutmann, 1985; Jung, 1933, 1976) in the face of time that was running out. More than any other group, the housewives, leading a "suburban" life (Friedan, 1965), suffered from lack of information, knowledge and direction as to how to resolve their rising dilemmas. Husbands, as indicated by the results of this study and confirmed by others (Izraeli, 1982; Roberts & Newton, 1987), failed to be helpful in this respect. Women tended to exclude their husbands from any involvement as part of a "double bind". On the one hand, they were anxious to share their feelings with them whilst, on the other hand, they were afraid of being dismissed as talking "nonsense". The depressive picture which this group presented fitted Bart (1971) and Weg's (1987) results, which indicated that housewives, more than the other groups, were prone to depression on reaching midlife.

#### Working Women

This group, the youngest among all, consisted of 17 women. Similar to the housewives, they were passive, lacking an ambitious drive to succeed in their work and to change it into a meaningful adventure in their lives. They perceived work as either a duty and a financial contribution to the family's budget or an

"escape from boredom", but certainly not as a lever for growth and development.

Unlike the housewives, this group was not homogeneous with respect to marital status. They were also not homogeneous in their need to work. The divorced, widowed and some of the married women worked for financial reasons, whereas the remainder of the married women worked to "escape boredom".

As shown in Table 11, the working women were divided into two main categories:

- Women who always worked.
- Women who recently started working.

The latter group was divided further into two subgroups:

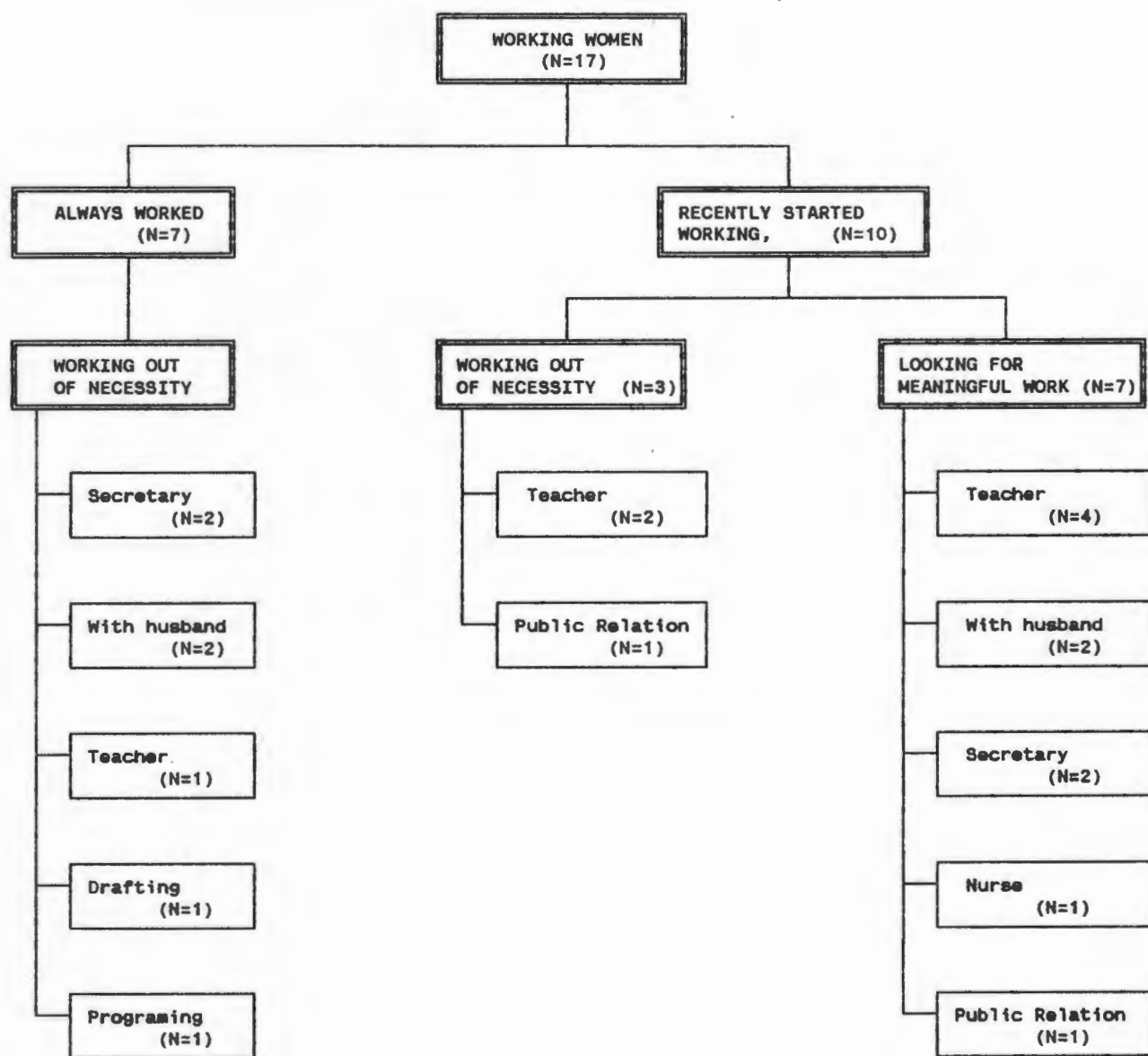
- Women who were "escaping boredom" (this group was made up of married women only).
- Women who worked out of financial need (this subgroup consisted of two widows and one divorcee).

A look at the occupational distribution in Table 11 shows that they were traditional working women (Kellerman, 1983). They were low achievers when compared to the late bloomers and career women.

#### Women who always Worked

This subgroup consisted of two women who were working with their husbands from the beginning of their marriage, helping to build a business, while the others in that subgroup were employed. Interestingly, none of these women made a conscious effort to develop a career while working. More than anything else, they saw work as a duty, while deep down they resented working, having

Table 11.

Profile of the Working Women Group.

a "dream" that eventually they could stop working.

#### Women who Recently Started Working

Ten women started working only in the last few years. Out of these, three needed work in order to support their families after a divorce or widowhood. This confirms Russell's (1989) findings that women's careers are not systematically planned and are "to some degree largely circumstantial" (abstract). Only one of the divorcees took her work as a challenge, planning to turn her job into a career. However, as mentioned before, the ulterior motive was to show her ex-husband that she could "make it". The other seven, while financially secure, went to work in order to alleviate boredom, depression and lack of stimulation in their lives. In contrast to the late bloomers they did not possess good enough qualifications which would have enabled them to find interesting and challenging work. Paradoxically, their basic strength, which lies in their technical training, led them to find jobs easily, but these jobs did not meet their present needs. They are a good example of what Guggenbuhl-Craig (1981) called:

Compulsion to go to work as soon as the mother-archetype has run its course. Instead of freely giving themselves to the multiplicity of archetypal possibilities, they often surrender to the image of the professional woman and believe they find "fulfillment" even in the most boring positions, to which they have often given themselves without the slightest economic necessity. (p. 57)

The case of C. represents this pattern best. At the age of

35 she took a secretarial job, not because she needed it, but to be occupied. Now at the age of 53 she feels "a new need for change for something different, to do something new with my life. I feel something has come to an end."

In spite of the similarities between this subgroup of women who recently started working and the late bloomers, there is a significant difference between them. Both groups spent the early years of their marriage at home raising their children. Both, on reaching their forties, felt an inner need for change. However, the recently working women present a picture of low self-image, frustration with wide range of physical and psychological problems, while the late bloomers are on a journey of self-growth and discovery. More than any other group, the working women resemble the housewives, though they seem to have taken a step further.

One could look at the contrast between the working group and the late bloomers with respect to the academic education of the women themselves as well as of their husbands as explaining part of the differences (see Table 8).

One drawing and two case histories of working women will follow to further illustrate this group. The first case history is of a woman who started working out of necessity at a young age, just after her children were born, and has worked ever since. The other woman started working on reaching her middle years.

### Case 3 - Working Woman

B. is 45 years old; her husband is 49 years old and is an accountant. They have two sons, 15 and 18, both still at home.

Her father, like A.'s in Case 2, was wounded as a soldier in the Second World War and was sent home, where he died not long afterwards. B. went to a convent boarding school where she finished her high school education. She then worked for a few years as a secretary. Her "dream", to use Levinson's (1978) term, was to be a housewife and raise her children on a small holding surrounded by animals and leading a peaceful quiet life, as described in Gerald Durrell's books. In other words, she wanted to build the home she did not have. Being a housewife and mother was, for her, a reconstruction of what she herself had missed. She married her husband at the age of 23, after a five years courtship, and stayed at home for a few years. However, six months after her second son was born she had to go back to work, because they had bought a house and her husband asked her to help financially. She has been working as a secretary ever since, in an uninteresting job, leading a routine kind of life, working five days in the office and weekends in her own house, where she has no help.

Her aspirations had nothing to do with developing a career in her job but rather with travelling and seeing the world. It never occurred to her that she could try in the meantime to grow with her job. Instead, she believed that every passing year would be the last one she had to work. Her unrealistic dreams of the trips she wanted to undertake are in contrast with their financial situation. However, she still would like "to go to the Kruger National Park, to Rome and see St. Peter's, and to see what other countries are like".

For the whole of last year she was depressed, feeling

"lousy", getting mad at herself and asking, "Why am I depressed?" But as the interview goes on she says:

I am bored with my existence, I am not living, I am existing, I don't go out, I don't have any friends, I talk to my husband and he has not heard what I've said. I have asked myself what have I done to better the situation and I have done nothing.

B. is not interested in sex at all, saying: "We are not affectionate, therefore I feel I am being used and ignored, the approach is mainly sexual". She feels her husband is not interested in her, not helping her psychologically to overcome her problems. All he wants is to sit in front of the T.V. set. She feels very lonely, realizing that she does not even like the man anymore. Yet, unlike in the past, at present she feels more strongly to reject him when he approaches her sexually.

B. is aware of the fact that she is miserable but does not see a way out. Although she is an example of a working woman, she is as stuck as the women in the housewives' sample.

The influence of major life events on the individual's development (Mercer et al. 1989) such as the Second World War, is seen in B.'s case, as well as in A.'s. Both were brought up without a father figure, in a post-war milieu. The "relational dream" (Roberts & Newton, 1987) of building a home of their own and compensating for their traumatic childhood could have kept them from developing their own sense of identity.

Conclusion B., losing her father during the Second World War and growing up in a boarding school, developed a "relational

dream" (Roberts & Newton, 1987) which collided with a realistic need to help the family's finances. Because she had always perceived her job as temporary, she never developed it into a career, but instead continued to dream of travels she had never actualized. At present, disillusioned and depressed, she is questioning her whole being. Her transition confronted her with all the issues she preferred not to deal with in the first half of life. In that way, the depression serves as a positive force in the service of the psyche, pushing towards enlarging consciousness and fulfilling inner needs (Jung, 1976).

#### Case 4 - Working Woman

C. is 53 years old and is married to an insurance assessor. She is the mother of a 30 year old married son. She has worked part-time for the last 12 years, doing clerical work, not because she has to, but in order to be occupied, "to do something". Yet, she feels at present that she wants a change. She does not know if she has enough confidence to change to something different, but feels that something has come to an end. Her son does not need her anymore, she is financially secure:

So the time now is MINE [stressing the word mine], but I want to use it purposefully, in a more satisfying way. It is for me now to explore new avenues and find something that can be stimulating for me, but I can't see my way through.

C.s' adult years can be divided into three distinct phases:

- Motherhood and wifehood, up to the early forties.
- An unsuccessful attempt to find a new meaning through an unsatisfying job, up to the early fifties.

- A strong need for personal fulfillment at present.

Unfulfilled in her fifties, she finds herself where the late bloomers were in their forties, looking for a new source that will bring meaning to her life. Unfortunately and unlike them, it took her 12 years to realize that "just doing something" is not the right solution for her (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1981). However, C. is aware, at present, of her inner need to develop her unique way of actualizing herself. She says: "There are a lot of things I'd like to do, simple things, swim and go up the mountains. I like to do voluntary work but only up to a point". In her present approach C. is similar to the small group of early retirees who are looking for the simple things in life which bring pleasure, uninterested in power games, prestige and career.

Conclusion Both B. and C., for different reasons, did not develop their work into a challenging career. But, whereas B. was entering the transitional period, and was in the "rising discontent" phase (O'Connor & Wolfe, 1987), C. already passing this phase, was finding herself in the "re-direction and adaptation" stage (O'Connor & Wolfe, 1987), where she has started to negotiate for a new and meaningful way of life. Similar to the housewives, they were both discontented. The fact that they were working outside their home did not change their inner feelings of frustration and urge for meaning. Droege's (1982) conclusion that there was no difference in the feelings of satisfaction between working and non-working women is confirmed in the case of these traditional workers, but is different in the case of the other two groups of working women, i.e. the career women and the late

bloomers.

#### Drawing: Sitting on the Fence

This picture was drawn by a 47 year old working woman whose two sons had recently left home to join the army (Figure 3). She was resentful of her husband after all the years of working with him in the family business and not being appreciated. Verbally, she talked about her loss of interest in life, wishing she could leave everything but staying only for the children's sake. However, in the drawing one can see that her home, small and moved aside, is no longer playing a major role in her life. She is sitting on the side of a hill, with both her legs already in "the second half". She is on the brink of a transition, while taking a rest to assess and rethink, while the young face on the left side of the drawing is still sadly dreaming of the missed opportunities.

The interplay between the green and the brown colors - growth versus withering - points towards her unresolved inner struggle to become "her own person" (Levinson, 1978).

#### Summary of Working Women's Group

The two subgroups of working women, those who worked all their adult years and those who recently entered the work force, differed in their needs. Whereas for the former work was a source of financial income, the latter searched for "something" which they felt was missing in their lives. As one of Russell's (1989) subjects said: [It was] "preferable to staying at home all day" (p. 20). The first subgroup, though having a long history of



Figure 3. Sitting on the Fence

work experience, were unaware of the fact that work could be more than just a source of extra income. Their "relational dreams" (Roberts & Newton, 1987) prevented them from pursuing a career, which in retrospect they regret. The women who recently started working entered work spontaneously rather than through planning, and used their post-vocational training. They were disappointed to discover that the vague "something" was not satisfying. Neither subgroup had a systematic commitment to work as such. Both ended up in uninteresting jobs. Work, as Coleman and Antonucci (1983) concluded, is an important factor in the life of middle-aged women. However, the results of this group show that work per se is not sufficient to give meaning in life, specifically with women in this transitional phase. Work is not necessarily a solution for emptiness (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1981). Women should be clear about their needs before using work as a panacea.

#### Late Bloomers

The late bloomers were a distinct group of women. This group, as presented in Table 12, consisted of 18 women and was more than any other group, a good manifestation of what Jung (1976) and Gutmann (1985) described as the inner psychic need for a new meaning and expansion on reaching the second half of life. As one of the women expressed it:

The change released a lot of potential that was dormant. It was a real actualizing process. I have done more since I have turned 40 than in my previous life. It is a period of personal growth.... I feel more respected by my family and

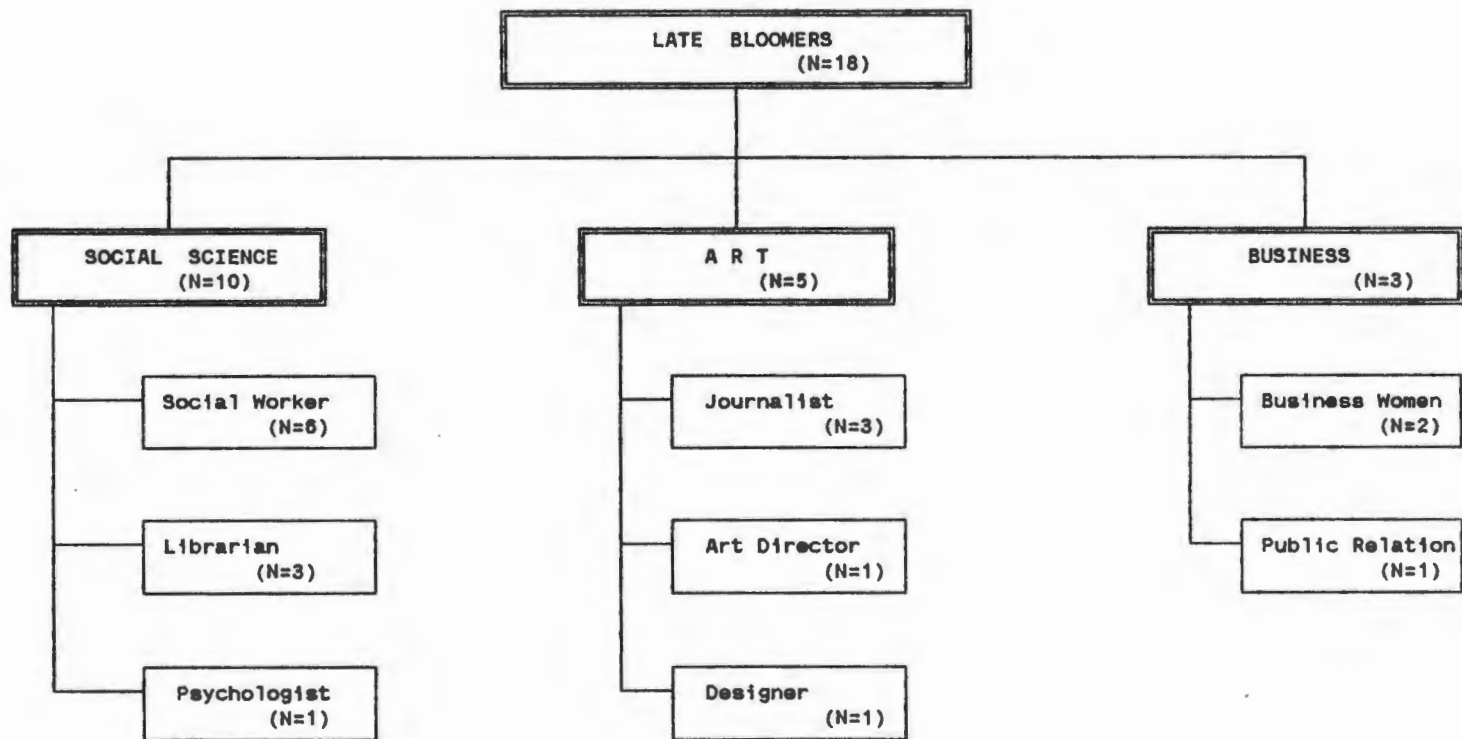


Table 12.

The profile of the Late Bloomers Group.

specifically my husband.... I found friends with whom I can discuss topics that do not interest my husband and have intellectual stimulation from colleagues at work. In spite of all the problems I would be 40 again with pleasure.

Like the housewives, these women stayed at home during the early phases of their childbearing years. But on approaching 40, with children already grown up, they felt a need for achievement outside the family scene and acted upon it - some impulsively, with no planning ahead of time, while a minority preplanned this move. Results indicate that the late bloomers went through the transition into the second half of life with more ease than the other groups in the sample, and certainly more smoothly than the group of housewives who shared a similar pattern in their mothering years. In certain respects, the late bloomers were even in a better state than some of the career women.

It seems that late blooming, which is characterized by career development during midlife, is a phenomenon typically seen in the more educated, married, upper middle class housewife, who usually has a motivated husband and children in her background, and who herself, at a younger stage, was exposed to such stimuli. In a way, this group is the end result of the influence of the feminist movement and the "me decade" of this post Second World War generation.

From this group two subgroups emerged:

#### The Non-Planners

Fifteen of the 18 women completed their academic studies in their early twenties and then got married, staying home during

childrearing years. On reaching their 40's, they obeyed an impulsive and undifferentiated need for meaning and just let things "happen" to them. They re-entered the work force and study, more on the spur of the moment, due to a chance occurrence, rather than preplanning it.

### The planners

Three of the 18 women started working in the particular field of their studies and got married in their late 20's. Like the other is, they also chose to stay home while bringing up small children. In contrast to the first group, they were consciously aware of their needs beyond motherhood and wifehood. They were the ones who consciously planned their re-entry, having the benefit of work experience and a frame of reference to begin with. This subgroup, on reaching their forties, went back to university to complete a masters degree, consciously planning their future careers, building it onto their past studies and work experiences, which had shown them some of their capabilities, potentials and demands.

Interestingly, no significant differences between these two subgroups of planners and spontaneous actors are seen when comparing their present success. Both are doing well. The six social workers and one psychologist reached positions in private and public social services. The three librarians are running public libraries, where one of them developed a special section of women's writings and directs her readers, specifically the middle-aged ones, to the relevant reading material. The three journalists, art director and designer are free-lancers, involved

in the art field, while the three businesswomen discovered their independence and strength through their ability to earn money.

Compared to the working group, who are all traditional working women, eight of the 18 late bloomers are pioneer working women. [Pioneer working women are, according to Kellerman (1983), those women who work in "male dominated" professions, where traits such as logical thinking, efficiency and high achievement orientation are dominant.] Half of them are self-employed, either running a business of their own or free-lancing. This tendency of the late bloomers towards self-employment is higher than is found in the career group. It points towards an emerging need for independence, creativity and obedience to inner needs. These women found the golden mean that exactly fits women's own skills in a market that is not in favor of middle-aged re-entries (Stark, 1983).

Three of the late bloomers' group were divorced and a fourth one was, at the time of the study, in the process of separation. The other 14 were all married. One of the divorcees divorced her husband in her early 30's, while two others divorced theirs in their middle 40's. In one case, the woman was the initiator of the divorce, while in the other case she was left by her husband in favor of a much younger woman. In this particular case, the divorce served as a forceful catalyst, pushing the woman to pursue a stable and secure future through developing her career.

On interviewing the late bloomers and asking generally about midlife crisis, they all answered that being so busy studying and pursuing their careers, they did not remember those years as traumatic. This group included six social workers who, from the

very nature of their work, are more knowledgeable and aware of the changing phases in a woman's life. They admitted dealing with the issues that this phase in life brings. The fact that they were doing exciting, new and meaningful things in their lives, might have helped them to come to terms with changes that were occurring in their own life. One thing stood out clearly: they did not feel a loss of power, as the housewives group experienced. On the contrary, they gained status, respect and confidence. They were on an exciting route of growth and development. In contrast to the housewives' group, they actively took measures against what both groups experienced as a need for a new meaning in life.

Besides reporting feeling energized and in control of their lives, some mentioned the importance of being involved with young people, whether they were students whom they supervised or young colleagues at work. It gave the late bloomers a feeling of keeping young.

Three biographies were chosen to highlight the differences between the planners and non-planners. Through their experiences, one can see the differences in personalities and approaches to life in general, and midlife transition in particular. A drawing by a late bloomer who participated in a discussion group adds another dimension to the urge for self-actualization.

#### Case 5 - Late Bloomer

Z., a non-planner, is a 60 year old postmenopausal woman, who spent the first 20 years of her married life in a small town,

being a mother and housewife. During those years she was active in her community, finding a niche for herself as president of an organization. She described the atmosphere of the place as a good one for maturation. When the time came for the children to attend university the family moved to a bigger city so they could still be together.

Z., acting upon a rather impulsive decision, decided then to go for an honors degree in social work (prior to marriage, she had a B.A. degree in social work, but never worked). It all started by chance when she saw an advertisement in the paper inviting social workers to return to their studies and work. Contemplating that hasty decision, Z. interpreted this need as resulting from her lack of sociability and her inability to enjoy chatting with other women. However, she described it as a challenge and the most exciting decision she ever made, no matter how hard it was. On finishing her degree at the age of 43, she worked in a part-time job, while her children were still at home. Ten years later, at the age of 53, she enrolled in a M.A. program for two years, and acquired a high-powered job in an agency.

Z. described the past 20 years as being hard work, investing a lot in studies at the expense of social life. She felt guilty for not entertaining, not so much for her sake as for her husband's. There was no time for introspection. There really was no time for anything.

Life consisted of getting up in the morning, running, rushing the kids and so forth. She emphasized that being an organized, methodical and hard-working person helped her to cope in those years. The fact that she was able to invest energy and

stamina into activity that was rewarding to her, was a "fantastic" change that released a lot of potential that had been dormant. It was a real actualizing process.

Her husband was supportive but very busy himself, for he too needed to establish himself successfully in a new job. The fact that both of them were so busy pursuing their new careers saved both of them much of frustration.

The importance of a supportive husband vis a vis the success of a wife's career was highlighted by Russell's (1989) findings as well as by the results of this study. However, supportive and helpful husbands are not a prerequisite for women's success. Success had also been achieved among the career and late bloomers, in spite of their husbands being threatened and discouraging.

In her relationships with her children Z. was always the flexible and negotiating party. Her husband always felt that she took the children's side, while she felt that she had to satisfy them all. When the children left, the youngest eight years ago, it became easier, but the emptiness was there especially because all the children left the country. Thanks to her involvement in work she did not dwell on their absence too much, mainly feeling lonely during holidays and on special occasions. To overcome this, she tried to maintain links with the extended family.

Guilt feelings were expressed about being a busy working mother, yet the feedback she got from her children was that they enjoyed her involvement; for them she was a "new mother, a whole new experience". Unlike A., the housewife in Case 2, her role as a "wise mother" did not diminish. On the contrary, she and her children developed a different relationship based on appreciation

and mutual respect.

Menopause was not an important issue. She became perimenopausal at the age of 45, had no symptoms at all; it came and she just accepted it and it faded away. She attributed part of this to the fact that she was a physically fit person.

Now, moving into her retirement phase, she was starting to re-evaluate her past life, and was realizing that there was more to life than just work, because work really took a major part of the last 20 years. Going at a slower pace, finding outlets that were going to be pleasurable and less demanding seemed to her to be part of the future. Yet, she did not feel 60 and when her husband commented on feeling old, she dismissed it as nonsense, believing that "if you start to think that way you feel that way".

Although it was never an issue, the new sense of contributing to the family's budget, being a productive member, was nice. Especially being able to support her elderly mother who was dependent on them. The importance of money is a secondary, though meaningful symbol of independence within the group of late bloomers.

Conclusion Z. emerges as an emotionally stable person, well organized and a hard worker, who "did not have time for introspection", to use her own words. However, being what she was, one could have expected a well-defined and planned re-entry, instead of her impulsive decision.

Her impulsive decision to go back to university could be seen in the light of an unresolved struggle between her guilt

feelings towards her children (who although grown up, were still at home) and her inner need for growth, typical of other women in this sample, and reported in the theoretical part of this study. The fact that after finishing her honors degree and while her children were still home she worked part time for 10 years, shows her commitment as wife and mother, running a home and career simultaneously.

Z.'s healthy tendency, helped her to move through these middle years, establishing herself in a new career which was a most distinguished and exciting aspect of her development in midlife. Preparation, information and full awareness were not her means of moving through the transition into the second half of life, but rather an impulsive decision and a commitment. At present Z. still has reservations relating to her aging, and to accepting it as a biological fact.

The need for separating herself, as a unique and independent professional person, and to find a new meaning in life appears in the story of her life, though not as clearly to her, as to the observer.

Z.'s life can be divided quite distinctly into three stable periods of time, each of 20 years duration, each part distinguished from the other, yet stable and consistent and defined by the roles she played:

- The first 20 years were her childhood and adolescent years.
- The second 20 years were her early and mid-adulthood years which she dedicated completely to her family.
- The third 20's were the years, stretching to her time of retirement.

In her forties she started her re-training years, and only in her fifties was she beginning to develop her career. Compared to men, she was at a disadvantage, being almost 25 years behind (Roberts & Newton, 1987). Compared with the housewives, she managed to avoid all the frustration and depression they went through in their middle years.

Z. is already in the second half of life, a post-menopausal woman whose children left home a long time ago. The passage of time might have diminished the intensity of her feelings and thoughts. Therefore it is interesting to look at the life pattern of Y., another late bloomer. At the time of the interview Y. was 48 years old, peri-menopausal, she had one child who had already left home.

#### Case 6 - Late Bloomer

As in the case of Z., Y's career as a librarian was not planned but rather "happened" at the right time and place for her. She was "in the right place at the right time" in the library to take out some books, when about 60 school-children were standing in line, she asked the librarian if she needed some help. Since those two hours of help she worked her way up to being in charge of that same library.

It was a tremendous challenge after all those years of being home, but as she said "she took it and shook it and had made it her own". Since then a new library was built, and she had to deal with the architects, admittedly with a lot of stress, but she felt "bloody proud" about it. It was "her baby" and she felt that the fact that she could "tackle such a job" and make a success

of it, caused her to realize that there was more to her "than just that".

She was then 40, her youngest child was five, and went to kindergarten. Y. described herself as being then a very typical South African housewife, very bored when all her children were at school, and all they needed from her was feeding and fetching. Going back to work made her realize that there was a whole new world outside home, a world that most housewives knew nothing about.

She felt that she had accomplished more since she had turned 40 than she had done in her life previously. She had learnt more in the past eight years than she ever thought was possible for an "old bird" like her to learn. It was the best decade, despite a mastectomy, which she had had four years ago, despite the lack of a satisfactory sex life, and despite soon having to undergo a hysterectomy. She experienced it as such a period of personal growth that she would be 40 again with pleasure.

She felt that her new sense of independence, her growing assertiveness and power was causing trouble with her husband, who felt threatened, finding her aggressive. She suspected that he thought she wanted to take over. She did not want to keep quiet any longer, and found herself defending her ideas about equality between the sexes. Her self-image was improving and the sense of physical frustration on account of the lack of sex, was channelled into her work, which she regarded as a safer outlet.

One of the biggest problems in her marriage was a sex problem which she related to her husband's background. He was perfectly normal when they first got married but over the years "his sex

drive has gone into his work" and for the last fifteen years they literally had almost no sex. They went for professional help, with no positive results. After giving it a lot of thought, she decided that she still wanted to stay with him, because in many other ways he was a good husband. Acknowledging that the sexual rejection started long before the mastectomy, helped her to cope better with the latter. Yet, she missed his sympathy, "somebody to pat my shoulder". His reluctance and avoidance of any sign of emotionality kept her from sharing with him what was going on in her life. Instead, she had two or three good friends whom she would phone when she needed to.

Like Z., she too enjoyed the fact that she earned money. Her salary was not enough to provide her with financial security, but it was a kind of a reward. The salary cheque was an acknowledgment of effort, which a woman did not get as a housewife, though she worked pretty hard for it:

As a married person and not working, you are always dependent on your husband, whether you like it or not, unless you have some income of your own. I always felt guilty for asking money from my husband, because I come from a very independent family of mother and grandmother who were in business all their lives. I find it really so much nicer to give something which is mine... I like giving. I like also to make things for the house that maybe we can't afford.

She had always had problems with her lengthy, heavy but regular periods. At the time of the interview she was perimenopausal, having irregular lengthy flooding periods, suffering from hot flushes mostly at night. Due to the mastectomy, she was

not allowed to take any hormone treatment. Her urethra had prolapsed and she needed a bladder pick up, so her gynecologist decided to perform a hysterectomy as well. She accepted it calmly, perhaps because she had already gone through "the worst", when four years ago she discovered a lump in her breast. The breast and the lymph glands were removed. She was lucky to discover it at a very early stage so she did not need chemotherapy or any other drastic treatment. Y. never felt that her femininity had suffered from the mastectomy because her femininity was "never bound up in breasts or even in my looks. It was what one felt inside". She felt feminine anyway.

From the point of view of appearance, aging had never worried her. She was not ashamed of it and made no effort to hide it. Her attitude was rational, saying that one cannot run away from it, and, "I was never the kind of person who runs away". The only thing she disliked was the sense of slowing down, and the impediment of her movement.

As far as her children were concerned, only the eldest had left home and the relationship with her had improved subsequently. The three other children were still at home. She was now too busy to worry about them leaving. Occasionally, she wished that they had already left and then felt it was very cruel, thinking to herself "when it will happen, it will happen".

Y. was very much aware of women's place in society and the need for improvement:

I think "midlife crisis" is a lovely term because if you say menopause, it can come at any age and it can also come artificially through having a hysterectomy early in your

life. When I look around me, most women seem affected by it one way or another. Most women would deny strongly that they are in a crisis, but then it depends on their definition of crisis. I see them being frightened of their own futures, not being in charge of their own lives. Also frightened of having menopause and getting to the other side. There is life after the menopause, but I think they think there is not. The dreadful gap in their lives begins when their children leave home. That is a very big midlife crisis for most women if they have nothing else to put in its place and if they submerged all their nature and interests in their children. They don't know their husbands any more because they were busy. It is a very frightening thing and they don't verbalize that. I think an awful lot of women don't think, they don't try and analyze their own feelings. Perhaps they can't, perhaps it was never suggested to them that they should stop and take a look. Maybe they are afraid of finding something about themselves they don't like. But you know you don't have to like all of yourself.

She thought that on reaching middle age all women should read more about it and try to educate themselves so they could cope better. She herself read a lot and organized a "chatting-group" consisting of her women colleagues at work, where they discuss various subjects concerning women.

On asking her the source of her strength, she answered that it came from two sources: a line of strong women in her family, and the sexual rejection that caused her to sit down and think of her life. "I don't know, you just get stronger as you have to, and

as you find the strengths that you need, you sort of keep finding them, and eventually you even don't look for them, you practice and they are there."

Conclusion Y.'s middle years are years of tremendous growth in spite of all the troubles mentioned above. She comes across as confident and energetic, and one can sense in her the need to expand, the need to reach and help other women who are in the same situation as her own. Generativity, Erikson's (1963) seventh stage of ego development, is Y.'s present state. In contrast to Z., who when interviewed at the age of 60, might have forgotten the intensity of her feelings, Y is aware of the personal and common changes she is moving through, and is trying to help other women. She is using the library as a source of providing information and knowledge. The need for growth and for finding meaning in life which emerged around the age of 40, was enhanced by confronting cancer and the risk of death. In the light of that traumatic event other issues such as sexual inadequacy, children leaving home, grey hair and so forth, fall into the right perspective. Life in general is evaluated differently. Y. was able to turn these circumstances to her advantage.

Neither Z. nor Y. consciously planned their re-entry phase, but re-entered rather spontaneously. The deteriorating process of aging, so emphasized in the case of W., the housewife, did not play a major role in their lives. Instead, work and achievement preoccupied them. Having been long-term housewives, both had guilt feelings concerning their attitudes towards money. Now they

find that money means independence.

Y.'s mixed feelings about wanting her children to leave home, brings to mind Rubin's (1979) women and their similar dilemma. However, it would be interesting to follow Y., and other women in the same situation, and to compare their present feelings with their feelings when their children do leave home.

Looking at Y.'s pattern of life, it seems that the source of her successful transition is not connected to whether she had a supportive husband. The criterion is her own determination.

Yet, what clearly comes across in Z. and Y.'s lives is the lack of planning.

It is interesting now to compare another late bloomer, who also entered work at the same age as Z and Y, but, in contrast to the former two planned her return.

#### Case 7 - Late Bloomer

Wisdom does not prevent suffering  
but allows us to find meaning in it.

Moody (1986).

X., too, belongs to the late bloomers' group, but unlike Z. and Y., her re-entry and career development were more planned. She also suffered from depression prior to going back to university. She seems to be more clear about her life in the past and present. She is an introverted person who is searching all the time for more insight and awareness.

X., who was 54 when interviewed, is a social worker who

worked until she got married at the age of 29. Then, having children, all of whom were born with health problems, she chose deliberately to stay home. But she found the time quite stressful, being cut off and living a life just through her husband, who was very busy and dedicated to his work. At the age of 36 she decided to go back to university, taking a three year course in the history of art, following her hobby instead of planning her future career, and feeling that only when her children were at school, would the time be right for her to re-think her future.

In her adult development one can see two distinct stages:

- The first was when she realized her need for something more than just household chores, but that need was not yet strong enough to commit herself totally to its pursuit. That was when she followed her hobby instead of planning her career.
- The second stage came at the age of 42, when she went back to university, this time with a clear plan and highly motivated to re-enter her previous career.

According to X., her midlife crisis came much earlier than for most women. She was consciously aware of her dissatisfaction with being only a housewife and mother. She felt that she had done all she could for her sick children. She felt she had the right to have some sort of life. She wanted to become independent. So after more than 10 years of staying home, X. went back to university, feeling she needed further training in her profession if she wanted to work at a certain level. She completed an honours and masters degree in her field and at the age of 47 started working privately from her home, so that she could enjoy

both worlds: her work and travelling with her husband.

She had always had a very easy time menstruating. Her mother had a late menopause and it seemed that she was following in her footsteps. She started having irregular periods first over a year ago, when she was 53, with no hot flushes. Her gynecologist prescribed HRT. She felt delighted at the change because she was just tired of having periods and bothering about sanitary towels. She just felt that she was getting old and all her friends had already gone through their menopause: it was just about time that she should go through it too. In a way, she was even disappointed that it continued. Yet, she remembered that five years earlier when her friends talked about their periods beginning to stop, she did not want them to stop then. She still felt then that she wanted to be a young woman. She certainly did not want then to have more children because that would have been devastating. It was just the idea that she was still functioning as a woman. However, in the past six years, from 47 to 53, her outlook changed. "I think I probably got used to the idea that it was going to happen, my friends had experienced it, so I was quite ready for it." In contrast to the past, at present she did not feel that it was going to make her less feminine or less attractive to her husband, and she accepted it as part of the life cycle.

The complexity of emotions around the changes that take place in midlife came to light when she talked about her anger against the phenomenon of aging, realizing that part of it was the loss of the sexual drive, which was always a part that she felt belonged to her and which she proudly enjoyed. The excitement and

the feeling of being young was deliberately associated with the feeling that in the past she had wanted and enjoyed sexual arousal, a feeling which came from within. She was aware of that loss first when it happened to her husband when he reached 50. She was then 46, still not feeling the same but knowing what to expect. The anger came at a later stage, when she experienced the loss herself, in a form of a question: "Must this happen to me?" The sense of sexual loss was also heightened by her daughter's emerging sexuality. X. was seeing with pleasure what was going to break into her daughter's life and sadly what was receding from hers.

Her oldest son had left home a year before the interview and stayed abroad, where he would certainly settle. The sad feelings connected to her son's departure were heard in X.'s words:

When my son went overseas, intellectually, I wanted him to go. I knew he needed to be free of the family, to stand on his own two feet. I knew there was a strong possibility that he would never come back, but I felt it was right for him to go. I encouraged him but did not realize I would miss him incredibly. So, knowing does not prevent the sadness, but maybe because I wanted it for his sake, there was no ambivalence, so I had the sadness but I did not have the anger.

The two younger ones were still at home, one will move out in a year, the other one only in five years time, but she thought she was even more ready for that because of her eldest son having gone. For the next five years her life was not going to change very much.

Their marriage was regarded by her as an exceptionally happy one, in which neither of them had ever experienced any jealousy. Both saw their marriage as sacrosanct but, on the other hand neither of them felt complacent about the other. Her introspective character and the need for awareness, which was mentioned before, helped to keep the marriage alive.

X. regards herself as a person who looks into things and does not just land up in a situation. She has always been very introspective and interested in her own reactions. During all of her adult years X. was familiar with the life stages and the tasks that go with each stage. The two major sources were her master's program and the encounter with her patients through work. She did not feel that she herself was going into it with her eyes closed. The intellectual preparation, as a factor which helps coping with certain aspects of midlife, was in her opinion a great advantage. "If you know what to expect, you then take it as normal. If you see it in terms of a normal progression, then you take it the same way. Acceptance is easier, but I don't think it prevents the pain or the sense of loss and sorrow."

Conclusion Being married in her late twenties, having already worked and developed a sense of identity, X. was able to accept easily the decision to stay home and raise a family, but it eventually also served as a catalyst pushing her outside when her children were ready to go to school. The need to go back to university first to attain more knowledge and further training, and only then to start practicing, indicates that re-entering women may benefit from a time of preparation in order to

gain some confidence before entering the world of work.

Being aware of her feeling regarding the departure of her son, X. is able to differentiate between her personal pain and her son's real needs to leave home and develop himself. Seeing her child as a separate entity does not prevent the pain but certainly helps mother and son to separate as two individuals with a good basis for a close relationship in future. Guilt feelings from both sides have no place in a departure like this. The fact that none of the three late bloomers had severe difficulties in letting their children go speaks for itself. Their interest and investment in their own worlds did not prevent the normal pain that accompanies the departure of children, but it provided growth and meaning in other directions.

In contrast to some others in the sample who at the age of 45-46 were unprepared and suddenly realized they were menopausal, X. had six years to prepare herself, listening to her friends and clients. Having a stable and trusting relationship with her husband no doubt helped too. Unlike W. whose menopause was not meaningful to her, and Y., whose mastectomy overshadowed the event as such, X. remembered her reaction to the cessation of menstruation, connecting it with being old. However, the late onset of her menopause eased its acceptance.

What comes across in the lives of Z., Y., X. and the others in the same group is the sense that staying home and raising children was only one stage in their development which, although some chose it deliberately, was not enough to fulfil the entirety of their need. Y.'s words in this respect are characteristic: "I feel guilty sometimes for wanting more from life than just total

fulfillment in my household. But I am gradually coming to terms with it. I can say, 'To hell with it, why must I feel guilty?' I'm still making beds, cooking and shopping and I'm working full time, why must I feel guilty?"

These three late bloomers were moving into the second half of life, with meaning instead of with the void that the housewives and the working women exhibited. They were lucky in the sense that at the time they reached the crucial point in their adult life they were able, one of them consciously, the other two unconsciously, to move out instead of being drawn helplessly into a crisis. They found new avenues in life and some were at this stage what Levinson (1978) called mentors to their young students. Erikson (1963) called this the generativity stage. They were developing their masculine side (Gutmann, 1985; Jung, 1933, 1976; Neugarten, 1968a; Neugarten & Gutmann, 1968b), their assertiveness and intellectual capacities. They were excited and committed to work and brought with them a "zest" for life (O'Connor and Wolfe, 1987).

#### Drawing: The Urge for Self-Actualization

Figure 4 presents a self-portrait drawn by a post-menopausal, 50 years old late bloomer. It shows her ambivalence, though outwardly she is successful. In the background is the serious husband, uptight and representing the past, the orderliness and routine of life, whereas in foreground there is a new-born baby, symbolizing the "potential future" (Jung & Kerenyi, 1985; Von Franz, 1982, 1986). Due to her husband's disapproval, she felt restricted in pursuing her needs. The baby who lies in front of



Figure 4. The Urge for Self-Actualization.

the woman, without being held by her, is that "future totality" (Von Franz, 1982) which is not yet integrated.

#### Summary of Late Bloomers' Group

This group of highly motivated and achieving women exemplifies Jung's (1976) theory about a change that takes place in the psyche around midlife. This change, which according to Jung, is unconscious in the beginning, might explain the unpreparedness and yet impulsive need for a meaning in life, a meaning that is larger in scope than the previous stage of establishing a family life.

Gutmann's (1985) generic model, consisting of three phases which are part of each developmental stage, comes to light in the lives of these women. At the beginning of the genotypic eruptive phase, unconscious of the coming to an end of a stage in life and the beginning of a new one, these women had an unclear sense of needing something else in their lives, a sense which exhibited itself in restlessness, moodiness and a search for the unknown. The acceptance of these changes by close members of the family, the reciprocal phase, enabled these women to continue to pursue and experience their yet unclear needs and integrate them.

The differences between the group of housewives and the late bloomers may lie in the way both groups experienced the three subphases. Whereas both groups had the initial urge to go through the first phase of the genotypic eruptive phase, only the latter could stretch their wings and actualize these needs.

On comparing the late bloomers to the late workers, it seems that the latter started the same process as the late bloomers but

failed where the others succeeded. As discussed previously, the explanation could lie in educational differences, as well as personal ones.

The late bloomers could bridge the two tasks in their lives sequentially, firstly achieving motherhood and then developing a career. They are a good example of Friedman's (1987) findings that work becomes a vital concern in the life of women as they get older. In this respect the late bloomers differ from the mothers in the career group who combined motherhood and career concurrently. However, both groups, the late bloomers and the mothers in the career groups, expressed guilt feelings - the career women for at times pursuing a career instead of spending time with their children, whereas some of the late bloomers felt frustrated and angry as mothers who had to stay home while feeling a need to develop themselves as persons and professionals.

The late bloomers of this study resemble the American "sequencers" that Rossen-Cardozo (1989) described. Sequencing is the current post-feminist phenomenon where American women realize that instead of being a "superwoman", they can do it sequentially in three phases. Thus, they can combine "the best of modern feminism with the best of traditional mothering" (p. xii). Firstly, they develop a career, then they dedicate themselves to their children and later they return to a meaningful, rather than competitive, kind of work.

However, instead of a three-phase sequence development, most of the late bloomers went through a two-phase sequence. For them it was an unconscious two-phase sequential process. They first raised a family and later developed their careers. Women of

today, according to Rossen-Cardozo (1989), are consciously choosing a three phase-sequence of personal and career development.

#### Career Women

All 17 women in this group have worked since their early adulthood and through the years succeeded in their chosen careers (Table 13). An interesting point is that only 5 of the 17 women in the career group were self-employed, compared with 16 of the 18 women in the late bloomers group. This might be explained by the difficulties young working people, in general, face when coming to develop their careers. Individual needs become clearer and stronger when one approaches midlife, and these needs possibly push towards individual solutions. The late bloomers' self-employment could also be explained in terms of market forces, whereby older women have less chance of employment and are thus forced towards self-employment.

Though similar in many respects, the career women emerged as three subgroups in the process of analyzing data.

#### Ambitious Career Women

Two of the career group were, from early adulthood, ambitious and consciously aware of their work and the implications that developing a career might involve. These goal-oriented women planned and structured their careers. Both of these successful women have supportive husbands, which may be a factor that facilitates the successful development of a career.

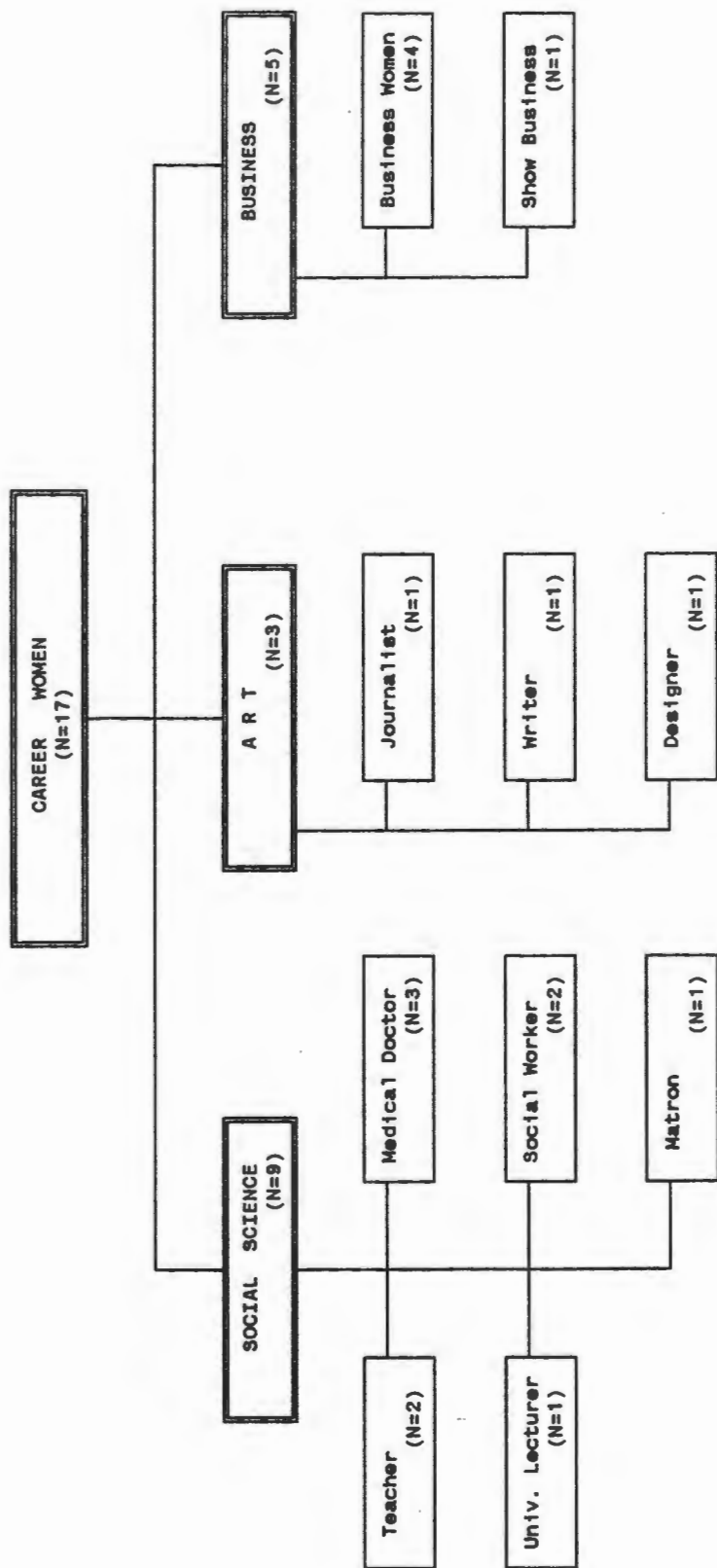


Table 13.  
The profile of the Career Women Group.

### "Slow Burners"

The majority of the career group (15 women) fit Bailyn's (1981) definition of moving to the top in a "slow burn". Izraeli (1982) who described it as the "sleeping beauty phenomenon", was of the opinion that when a woman starts working, she does it with mixed feelings. If she is single she is unsure how a future marriage will influence her career development. If she is married, she is uncertain of how long she is going to work before becoming a mother. Unlike men, whose decision making involves the future, many women plan only for the present. According to Izraeli, it is characteristic of working women to awaken and start developing their career years after starting work, when it might even be too late. Fogarty, Allen, Allen and Walters (1971) who studied Achievement Women in Top Jobs, found that most reached the top quite "incidentally" without planning to do so.

The women who belonged to this subgroup were slowly climbing up the career ladder. In their early years they were still disconnected from their ambitious drives. Yet, unlike the group of working women, they were committed and interested in their jobs. Their career development was unstructured. For these women promotion was sometimes a surprise and a challenge as well. As one of the women who is in charge of a large institution described it: "I was asked to apply, and I did not think I would get it, and I wasn't that interested in it. Rather to my surprise and horror I got it." Her ambivalence is seen when she says: "But I knew that for myself I had to apply because it was a senior position. I needed the challenge of applying and I had to actually prove to

myself that I was worth it". She describes herself:

I am not the kind of a person who has set out to get to the top. I am not frantically ambitious, I am a funny mixture, and am aware of that. There are people who want more money and want to climb higher and higher. I am actually not like that, but on the other hand, there is something in me which said, "Apply!"

This group's careers "boomed" in their forties, when they discovered their strength, capabilities and leadership. A study by O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) on managing midlife transitions in career and family supported this tendency. The authors observed that middle-aged women's "investment in career is on the increase. They often bring new zest and enthusiasm to the workplace, as well as a commitment and maturity that many young workers do not yet possess" (p. 815). In other words, the women started to develop their undeveloped masculine side (Bakan, 1966; Gutmann, 1985; Jung, 1976; Neugarten, 1970). Realizing that being in a top position would not make them less "feminine" they started using their potential and planned their careers.

### Doctors

The three medical doctors, though part of the "slow burners", are a phenomenon of their own. They got married after completing their studies. On becoming mothers of small children, they felt pressurized. They felt unable to commit themselves to a profession which demanded unlimited time. These medical doctors gave up their intention to specialize in specific areas of medicine and chose instead to work, either part-time or full-

time, in clinics that, unlike hospitals, required normal working hours. Like the late bloomers, reaching their forties and with already grown up children, they were out to complete, what they felt, they had missed. The two doctors who knew their limitations were more successful than the one who was still dreaming of the impossible and was unhappily moving from one activity to another.

In conclusion, without exception the married career women were ambivalent about their duties as mothers and wives and their roles at work. However the difference between the ambitious women and the other two subgroups lies in the fact that the former, who were consciously planning their careers, resolved their conflict by learning to live with the guilt, while still striving for the top. The slow burners gave up some of their career opportunities, and compromised on a lesser job.

#### Case 8 - Career Woman

U. is a 51 year old, successful businesswoman, who is married to a successful businessman, and she has three children. She was born into a family which was, according to her description, unstable. The father was a poor provider who could never hold on to a job, while her mother used denial as a defence mechanism, and continuously invented a family history.

U. views life as an ongoing process of climbing up the hill without sliding down. Life for her is: "A series of plateaus from which you don't fall off, but just continue to climb. And you must always go up to another stage, because getting yourself up, setting a challenge is supposed to take the edge off it." This

was her systematic way of coping with life, which helped her to grow up and build a business that, objectively, she could be proud of.

Midlife was not exceptional in that respect. Looking at herself at present she maintains that becoming mature meant getting to know oneself and one's own weaknesses and developing ways to deal with them: "It is not becoming a better person but becoming better able to cope with yourself".

As she is a thinking person, she is able to see that there are benefits attached to aging.

One stops making some mistakes and does not fall into the same traps again. At the same time, if you make a mistake, and you are realistic and honest with yourself, you know that the energy is not going to be what it used to be when you were young, and you learn to harbour that energy, to apply it more strategically and more specifically, you have to learn how to use your time and this concern is a sign of age.

Being aware of the preciousness of time, she thinks in terms of how many more good years are left. She knows that at the age of 50 one has at the most 20 more working years. Studying the life of other successful women and learning their ways of handling old age have helped her to develop a clear plan for her retirement. However, at present, lack of time is really her worst problem, knowing that perhaps she will never be able to do all the things she wants to do, feeling "the more you do the more you want to do". She also acknowledges that when one leads a busy life as she does, one does not have time to savour the most important moments and that becomes a continual conflict.

She fancied that midlife would be the magical moment when she would be free to devote full attention to any given problem. Instead, she discovered that her parents and in-laws had become her responsibility, and that she had acquired substitute aging children for hers who had left.

That she is a practical and systematic person is also seen in her attitude and preparation for the menopause. All her life she had an annual birthday date with her gynecologist, when they used to discuss her health. At 44, he suggested a tubal ligation but she was not ready then to end her fertility, though she certainly had no intention of having another child. It was only at 48, when she had to undergo bladder surgery, that she felt ready to let her tubes be tied, and being practical she combined the operations. At the age of 50, when she began to experience hot flushes, she decided to start taking HRT, which worked like a "charm" for her. She had discussed the menopause and the implications of HRT with friends as well as her gynecologist. She believes that women should develop a network of female friends with whom they could share their experiences of midlife and find new resources.

She does not deny feeling depressed from time to time, but regards this as part of the female condition. She is also aware of the possibility of future loneliness, but fails to develop a strategy for dealing with it, believing that one has to cope with that when it comes.

U. does not count work as a substitute for losses experienced in midlife, because work and family were always in conflict with each other. In her opinion this would always be a problem rather

than a resolution.

Her relationships with her three adult children is, according to her, "a journey of mutual discovery", each one discovering the real adult person beneath the role of mother or child. She feels less guilty today than she ever did before, as she realizes "how well they grew up". She feels that, after all, she did not do "too badly". Her husband found her openness uncomfortable, but she felt that the children had the right to information and she obviously trusted them not to use it against her. Being a successful woman, she found, did exert some stress, particularly on her eldest son, who felt the need to prove he was better than his mother.

As far as her marriage is concerned, she says that she and her husband have a very committed relationship. She never had reason to be jealous of him. If he was jealous of her, it was not for sexual reasons or because of her accomplishments, but because he would have liked to have had all of her time and attention.

Conclusion U. emerges as a strong and determined woman, who climbed the ladder of success without being hindered by the guilt feelings which prevented other women from pursuing their careers. She learnt to cope with them, being able also to differentiate between work and home and not substituting the one for the other. Her attitude to her transitional period is clear and logical. She is able to see the advantages and overcome the disadvantages. The most significant thing in U.'s interview was her great awareness of the passing of time. Unable to stop the process, she tries to be in control of the quality of her time, trying to use it

carefully. This attitude undoubtedly helps her to use her time better at present, while also enabling her to plan the future. The awareness of time is not approached with panic but in a systematic and logical way. U. is always one step ahead of things, being prepared intellectually to face them. She was not caught by surprise by the menopause, and unlike A., the housewife, from her early forties discussed it with her gynecologist. She collects information and does not leave anything for last moment decisions.

There is a conflict between work and home and she accepts the conflict as insoluble. Work is not seen as a substitute for facing problems, as is idealized by the housewives and the late bloomers. Her attitude to work is much more realistic than that of the late bloomers, who still tend to over-idealize working.

#### Case 9 - Career Woman

K., 51, is a widow and the mother of a teenager. She holds a high position in an academic institution. K. sees herself as a late developer. She married in her thirties a man 16 years older and describes her marriage as good until his death two years ago. Initially, she had simply been drifting along and had not deliberately planned a career. She sees her marriage as an important turning point in her life - her husband, being a mentor figure, gave her guidance and confidence. The difference in age between them made her start thinking about and planning her own and her child's future realistically.

Until two years ago she worked in an academic institution where she had influence. After the death of her husband, at the

age of 49, she felt a need for change and applied for a higher position which she presently holds. K. explains that the need for change came as a result of her loneliness caused by the death of her husband. She began to withdraw and felt she needed to find a new life style as a widow, because she and her husband had been extremely close, almost to the exclusion of others. The new position was also a wonderful opportunity, at her age, giving her the chance to do things which she felt needed to be done. She sees it as a step further before she stops working. It is experienced as being in the front seat instead of in the back. The new job is very challenging, and she finds herself confident, assertive and enjoying a new kind of leadership, whereas before leadership was a burden and a duty. With this new insight, she no longer feels naive but instead knows the amount of control that she has over her life. Leadership and power are no longer interpreted as an ego trip for boosting herself but as a means of helping others to better their lives. Understanding and integrating the issue of power makes her a better manager and she certainly feels the difference from responses she gets from the people with whom she works.

The presence of young, spontaneous and enthusiastic people around her is a great joy and she enjoys being a mentor. Generativity, Erikson's (1963) concept of adult ego development, is manifested in her case, as well as in the cases of W. and Y., the late bloomers.

As a widow she finds herself very different from other women at this stage. She does not feel sheltered by a family and does not look at life through the narrow angle of her micro world. She

can manage better and knows that she has to plan her future because no-body else will do it for her. When the time comes for her child to leave home, she recognizes that she will have to find her own niche' and not become a burden to her child.

She does not share these thoughts with anybody because she knows nobody in the same situation. She misses the companionship that she had with her husband and would like to remarry. Yet, she is very realistic about the chances, so does not take any steps to look for an opportunity. She contemplates the idea that if her husband were still alive, the course of her life might have been different and the need for challenges less.

Biologically, she entered menopause two years ago, with hot flushes and sweating, which still irritates her and causes a lot of physical discomfort, especially when she has to lecture in public. She was ready for the menopause and was relieved when it came because of the risk of falling pregnant, which was "a matter of life or death" in her case. U. does not see that as a menopausal woman, she is less feminine or attractive, but she adds that, being married to a man who was much older than her, makes her experience this phase of life differently. Now, as a widow, with a young child needing her attention, busy in her position, she sees the menopause as less important. She experiences this period as a growing one. She commented that if she were still married she might have felt differently. She does not like the change in her appearance, the drying skin and other signs of age, but does not consider plastic surgery, considering that she has better uses for money.

Conversation with her colleagues about the menopause is

restricted to joking about the hot flushes. She finds sharing is more common with topics such as aging parents and children. She admits that this interview was a unique chance to dwell on those aspects that she never discussed before. Yet she questions midlife asking, "Is this such a critical period or is it another period in one's life?"

U. used the words "at my age" a few times and on questioning her she answered that she has a new sense of time. She does not feel old but knows that she is older and has seen and experienced many things. Time is precious and running out and, at the most, she has 15-20 working years left.

Thought of death are no longer threatening, as she almost died when she gave birth to her child. Her father and husband died recently and her aged mother is senile. Being a Christian and believing in life after death makes it easier for her to accept death. Yet, she feels that there are so many things she still wants to explore, having spent so much time at work. She wants to read and travel, learn to play a musical instrument and spend time with other people.

Conclusion U. is a healthy, mature and responsible adult who is very much aware of her growing sense of power and control, in a positive way. She is stable, realistically in touch with pain and sadness, as well as with the opportunities that she can still achieve in the limited time that she has. The death of her husband released potential and needs for which it is now the time to seek fulfillment.

### Summary of Career Women's Group

The two main issues which emerged while examining the group of career women as a whole were:

- The constant conflict between home and career among the mothers in the group. This conflict was not resolved, and carried with it guilt feelings of not being "a good enough mother". Some learned to live with those feelings while developing their careers further but the majority slowed down and compromised in various ways. In the case of the medical doctors it meant never being able to achieve certain specializations. Only when children started leaving home and succeeding in what they were doing, did mothers relax and feel relieved that, after all, they had done a good job.
- A growing sense of assertiveness, self-confidence and leadership characterized those "slow burners" who climbed their way to the top slowly, almost unaware of their ambitious drives. On reaching their middle years they freed themselves from false concepts of the destructiveness of power and learned to use their leadership in a creative, non-threatening way, with "tender power", to use Suib-Cohen's (1989) phrase.

Their reactions to the various emerging themes are discussed separately in the next chapter. However, unlike the dependency exhibited by the housewives and working women, they were independent, knowing their way around; and unlike the late bloomers who were still enthusiastic about the new opportunities, they were realistic and tended to demystify work and its importance in their lives.

### Early Retirees

The four women in this sample women are all in their early fifty's. The average age is 52.7, which means that they probably had at least 10 more years of work ahead of them. Yet, they reached a decision to retire early, feeling they wanted to enjoy life. In contrast to U. (Case 9), who at the age of 50 still sees her career as a climbing graph, these women were looking forward to discovering and enjoying the simple things of life. All stressed the importance of having the benefit of free time for themselves, the ability to live without a pressurized timetable and the ability to enjoy the small things in life: sunny morning walks along the beach, participating in sport activities such as hiking, swimming and golfing, being active in the community and enjoying a quiet and peaceful life.

An important factor that enabled them to reach the decision to retire was their comfortable financial situation. However, only one woman, a lesbian, was a successful businesswoman who made her fortune herself. The others varied. The divorcee inherited some money from her late father, while another had a government pension; the fourth was married to a successful businessman and felt secure enough within the relationship to give up her own income.

This group was small because it seems that the trend towards retirement at an earlier than usual age, is only beginning. It points towards a phenomenon which might grow, as more and more affluent working women discover the "need" to enjoy life. This group may be the forerunners of a fourth sequence in women's career development, following Rossen-Cardozo's (1989) three.

#### Case 10 - Early Retired

P. is a 54 year old woman, a mother of seven grown-up children, all of whom have already left home. She has been divorced for the last 11 years. At present she has a close relationship with a man.

P. is an accountant by profession and has worked almost all her life in a part-time job. She was not prepared to let her work interfere with her home life, never taking work home, enjoying work but not treating it as a full-time career. Work was seen more as an opportunity for being with people and not being totally involved in the home. Yet, she had always felt the need to be up to date in her profession and to specialize in a specific field. She also felt that she never had a good enough support system to be able to dedicate herself solely to her career.

Her divorce brought with it a new sense of independence and a need to fill in all that was missing. Work stayed secondary as it used to be. Instead, she started to be active socially, hiking, joining a study group of feminists and a political peace movement group.

Two years ago, after inheriting some capital from her father, she decided to retire. As her inheritance came in time, she does not need to worry about her financial future and decided that this is now the time to enjoy life. According to P., "Working for almost 30 years is enough".

#### Case 11 - Early Retired

M. is 50 years old, married to a successful businessman eight years her senior. Their three children, aged between 18

and 24, are in and out of home, or as M. puts it, "Somebody is always around". She perceives this stage in her life as one of the better stages, actually better than any other transitions.

Her work history can be divided into two main stages:

- During the first 15 years of her marriage she felt unable to work as much as she liked, or to pursue her interests. At that stage she worked as a part-time teacher, dropping her acting and stage directing "dream".
- During the next 14 years, up to her resignation the year before, she held a full-time pressurizing senior position in one of the academic institutions.

Being part of a research team meant also starting some projects of her own, such as a Ph.D., which P. found to be stressful. She realized that even with a Ph.D. she would go no further in her present position. The conflict took a turn when a strong sense of "I don't need it in my life" took over and last year she decided to resign and give up her studies. P. says:

I enjoy teaching, I enjoy being part of a team, but the whole idea of committing myself to the research, rewriting and retesting was so intense that I decided I'm going to drop out of it. I actually don't need the job financially, I need it for other reasons. So I gave up all the privileges, the status and took it from there. That was a relief, it's almost a challenge to look at what I have not noticed in the years that I was committed, because I work seriously and that means cutting everything out. I have the freedom to say I want to do this and I don't have to write 10 essays, or be at a place at a certain time. I need that freedom, that's

why I am happy.

### Cases Conclusion

Both women, having different marital statuses, had perceived their working histories as stressful, trying to combine childrearing with career development successfully. They realized that they had reached the limits of their careers. Financially secure and relatively young, they embarked on the next developmental phase - retirement, looking to enjoy the everyday things which they missed while working.

### Summary of Early Retirees' Group

The early retired women are an example of a new emerging phenomenon typical of the post-feminist era (Hewlett, 1987), where women realize they no longer have to be "superwomen" and "supermoms".

Confronting their mortality and realizing the shortage of time left, they take a step towards freeing themselves from their demanding positions and enjoying life. Being financially independent is certainly a helpful factor in their decision. Unlike the housewives, the working women and even the late bloomers, they feel they do not have to prove their worth either to themselves or to others. They have already done it. Now they can tune into their current needs which are different in meaning from their previous ones. Interestingly, these needs have a lot to do with reconnecting with nature.

### Conclusion

Following Glaser and Strauss's method, the emerging sample consisted of five groups: one group of housewives and four groups of working women. The career and traditional workers were further divided into subgroups. The "core variable" (Glaser, 1978) that unified all the groups was a sense that a certain era in life had come to an end and the emergence of new needs. Apart from individual differences between the subjects, there were significant differences between the groups themselves, especially between the housewives and traditional workers and the other three groups. Moreover, the three working groups themselves were not homogenous:

- As a group, the housewives were the most frustrated. They presented symptoms such as depression, anger, shame and guilt and experienced a loss of power.
- The traditional working group was as unhappy as the housewives group. They confirmed Guggenbuhl-Craig's (1981) opinion that work per se is not fulfilling if it is meaningless.
- The late bloomers flourished. They were enthusiastic about their new meaningful careers that changed their lives.
- The career women, who unlike the late bloomers, had a long history of work, were more realistic. They enjoyed their growing sense of power and leadership, but demystified work as a "solution".
- The early retirees had found their answer to what some of the women in the career group had already sensed. After a long career, they decided to retire from work and enjoy, each in

her own way, their lives.

Thus, the tendency to divide middle-aged women's reactions into categories of working versus non-working women is too wide a generalization. Secondly, work, or achievement in other areas beside home, is only one aspect that women on reaching midlife have to deal with. The opinion that work solves those issues is a false hypothesis. Meaningful work can be a challenge that helps in easing the transition, but is certainly not the only answer. The need for re-evaluating when reaching this stage in life seems to be a basic inner need that seems to be common to all women regardless of their work situation.

## CHAPTER 12

### RESULTS: DISCUSSION OF THE MENOPAUSAL EXPERIENCE

Whereas women were divided along occupational lines, in Chapter 11, they are divided according to their menopausal status in this chapter. The four groups of pre-, peri-, and post-menopausal, and those who have had hysterectomy will be reviewed and compared.

#### Differential Diagnosis

When dealing with the menopausal woman, It is important to have the three substages of this phase in mind, as they were defined at the First World Congress of Menopause (1976):

- The pre-menopausal phase, when chronologically a woman is approaching the menopause, but no physiological changes are yet seen.
- The peri-menopausal phase, when physiologically there is a change in menstruating patterns, with or without any other physiological or emotional symptoms.
- The post-menopausal stage, when 12 months have passed without any signs of menstruation, while other symptoms, physiological as well as emotional, might still be apparent.

Kaufert and Gilbert (1986) suggested that the peri-menopausal and post-menopausal women should be examined as two different entities, though socially and psychologically they can be grouped under the same umbrella and studied together.

Neugarten's (1969) recommendation was to approach pre-, peri- and post-menopausal women as one group. According to her they differ mostly in intensity of symptoms but represent a cohesive group from a social and psychological point of view.

Data analysis of this study supports Kaufert and Gilbert's (1986) opinion, indicating that there are biological differences between the three groups of pre-, peri- and post-menopausal women. There are also psychological differences, and not merely differences in intensity as Neugarten (1969) suggested. The differences are part of a changing world-view which the menopause triggers. Therefore, putting the three groups under one umbrella is misleading. Because of the length of time during which the climacteric as a process occurs (between 4 to 7 years) the changes along the time axis have to be taken into account and differentiated. Otherwise the results of one study might contradict the results of another. The woman who enters the climacteric is not the same as the person who emerges some years later.

Socially, it is true, that the middle aged woman is stereotypical seen as one of a general group named "women in the change of life", but there appear to be differences in the results of this study between the pre-, peri- and post-menopausal women as they relate their own experiences. The relatively younger pre-menopausal woman still feels part of youth, unaware as yet of what is lying ahead. The peri-menopausal woman confronts the issues of loss of fertility and all its associated implications and has to deal with them. The postmenopausal woman, in turn, emerges at the end of the process and ready for the next

phase of her life, namely old age. Thus, it is not only the intensity of the symptoms as Neugarten (1969) suggested, but the transition from one status to another which is yet unknown.

The 79 women of the study were divided into four categories: three categories deal with their menopausal status and the fourth category with those women who had undergone hysterectomy prior to or during the menopause (Table 9).

The hysterectomy group which consists of 17 (21%) women, should be studied separately as they might represent a different picture from the naturally menopausal women (Kaufert et al., 1986). The artificially induced menopause, the removal of an organ such as the uterus and/or ovaries, which are associated with femininity and fertility, is worth examining. It would be interesting to follow up and compare women's reactions to hysterectomy in various stages of their lives (in early or middle adulthood, in pre-, peri- and post-menopausal women) and also to compare them with women who go through the menopause the natural way. As this comparison was not the major intention of this study, only certain findings will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Another artificially induced method of ending fertility was by tube ligation, which had been used by six women in this sample. Five of the women had their tubes tied in their late 20's or early 30's, mostly for medical reasons. One combined it with a bladder operation in her late 40's; as described before, she had refused to end her fertility in her early 40's, although she did not intend to have any more children.

### Characteristics of the Post-Menopausal Women

Reaching the post-menopausal stage enables women to be retrospective. Retrospection can be used for assessment and re-evaluation of the meaning of their experience. Thus post-menopausal women can be a valuable source of information in a study of this kind. On the other hand, the passage of time causes events that were once significant, to fade. The question of whether peri-menopausal women who are presently experiencing the menopause might be a more reliable source of information should therefore be considered. However, it seems to the researcher of this study that both descriptions are valuable, as the peri- and post-menopausal women complement each other and provide a broader understanding of this phase. In this regard, both present and past are two phases along one continuum - the climacteric. Nevertheless, in order to present themes in perspective, the post-menopausal group will be discussed first.

#### Age

The oldest woman in this group of number post-menopausal women was 61 years old; fifteen years have passed since her last menstrual cycle. The youngest was 48 and she ceased to menstruate two years ago. The mean age of this group was 53.3 years. The average length of time since these women's last period was 5.2 years.

#### Occupation

- Six were career women.
- Eight were late bloomers.

- Seven were housewives
- Two were early retired.

No working women belonged to this group as they were the youngest among all five occupational groups.

#### Marital Status

- Sixteen of the women were married.
- One was a widow.
- Two were divorced.
- One was separated.
- Three were single.

The post-menopausal status and the occupational status at the time of the menopause will be compared in order to ascertain whether there was any connection between these two components.

The following paragraphs reflect the variety of descriptions of the onset, and symptoms of and the reactions to the menopause as given by the post-menopausal group of women.

#### Onset of Symptoms

Some post-menopausal women remembered the onset as coming fairly slowly, with irregular periods for a year. The periods would not appear some months, start again and then fade away. Some women had their periods stop suddenly, while others remarked that, "The menopause did not come, it went away. I did not even notice it".

### Symptoms Description

Symptoms reported varied from none to a long list that included hot and cold flushes, sweating, palpitations, disorientation, loss of memory, lots of bleeding, dry vagina and depression.

At least half of the women in the post-menopausal group had experienced hot flushes in the past, and some who did not take HRT still experienced them at the time of the interview. Attitudes seemed to vary. Those who had "few hot flushes" found them tolerable and could cope with them. Others, who had "many hot flushes" found them irritating, especially in public; for them, the physical discomfort was more difficult than the implications of the menopause. One depressed woman related to the hot flushes in an interesting way: she perceived them as messages from her body confirming it was still alive, equating them to heartbeats.

### Reactions to the Menopause

Some women perceived the menopause as a perfectly normal biological phenomenon which was not worth discussing. Others were even delighted and relieved that it had happened, while others had ambivalent feelings, sensing that "something had come to an end" or that "it had come too early, too suddenly". A minority experienced the menopause as a "humiliating shock", a loss of control over a body that was once a "trustworthy friend".

The advantages the post-menopausal women attributed to the cessation of bleeding varied. For some it was a relief from heavy bleeding and/or pre-menstrual tension. Feelings of having had enough of sanitary towels were also mentioned as a relief. As

one woman expressed it: "After 40 years of periods its a damn nuisance." Discovering that taking HRT meant continuous, though artificial periods, the same woman commented: "I find it a shocking thing that taking HRT means going on with that damn thing all my life, it seems so cruel to be bothered with this all my life."

The menopause brought to an end the fear of pregnancy and with it the need to use contraceptives. Those women who had life-threatening pregnancies or traumatic birth experiences welcomed the coming to an end of this phase, whereas others, being aware of the broader meaning of the menopause, reacted with ambivalence.

This particular generation of post-menopausal women, who did not "grow up" on the pill, as their younger counterparts, were anticipating that this phase would be a release from the use of contraceptives, a time when they would enjoy sex freely. As one woman expressed it: "All my life I did not like using contraceptives and now it should be wonderful." However, this expectation was contradicted by the sudden, unexpected realization of a decrease in either the women's own sexual drive, or that of their husband's or, at times, both. More details on the sexual changes will be dealt with later.

All the women in the post-menopausal group stressed the fact that they did not want any more children at that stage of their life. Yet, paradoxically, they pointed out that one of the disadvantages of the menopause was that they could not bear children any longer. According to them, it was not so much the children that they wanted as the awareness that a certain

control over their bodies had been lost. They had lost the choice of having or not having children, and this was experienced as a loss of power, especially in contrast to their husbands who could have children into old age. This loss of control was described by one of the women as follows:

I was always fascinated by the life of my body, almost as if it were something objective, like a good trustworthy friend. I was taken aback when that friend started acting up on me, it was the first time that I discovered that you can't fight against hormones. It came as a hell of a shock to me, a humiliating shock.

This ambivalence about the fear of pregnancy and the need to believe that one is still fertile is seen clearly in women's reactions to the first signs of irregular periods. Though the chance of falling pregnant at this stage of life is minute, women tended at first to think they were pregnant.

In general, a feeling that an era in life had come to an end was common to all the post-menopausal women, those who were delighted to stop menstruating, as well as those who mourned it.

### Information and Preparedness

Eight of the women, being professionals in the fields of medicine or social science, had information and knowledge about the menopause, while two women exhibited total ignorance and prejudice. The rest had partial information, but certainly not enough to decide on their own whether to take HRT or not. As one expressed it: "I feel ignorant and don't know what to do about it, to take HRT or not. I read the odd things but not enough. It did

come, sort of fairly suddenly, without preparation." This feeling of "suddenness", commonly expressed by women in relation to their aging process, was cited by a 50 year old late bloomer. She experienced the cessation of her periods as a "sudden" phenomenon though she was almost 50.

The fact that all eight women who were informed about the menopause came from the fields of medicine and the social sciences indicates how limited the information is that the "average" woman is exposed to.

#### Attitudes Towards HRT

Thirteen of the 23 post-menopausal women were taking HRT, while eight were not. The remaining two had used it. Women gave various reasons to explain their decision to take hormones:

- Some used it to lessen the symptoms of a difficult menopause.
- Some used it just because it was given to them by their gynecologist.
- Some feared osteoporosis and used it as a preventative method.

Those women who were not on HRT, either felt there was no need to take it as they had experienced no symptoms, or they were able to cope without it, since they regarded the menopause as a natural process. The two women who had been on HRT in the past, but had stopped taking it, reported unpleasantness connected to the renewal of bleeding, swelling breasts or fear of cancer.

The renewed bleeding induced by HRT was welcomed by the women who associated bleeding with femininity and youth, whilst the bleeding was a nuisance to others.

### Career Involvement and Symptomatology

This transition in a woman's life has many facets that can emerge sequentially or simultaneously, thus blurring the clarity and understanding of the process as a whole. Therefore, there are difficulties in differentiating menopausal symptoms from other symptoms relevant to this transition (Bell, 1987; Greenwood, 1987; Neugarten, 1969).

The limited information input and the bond of silence make this differentiation even more difficult.

Early retirees On comparing the post-menopausal women on a group basis, it seems that the two early retired women were happily enjoying their lives, suffering from no menopausal symptoms. One of them, a successful lesbian businesswoman, remarked that she had almost forgotten "that perfectly normal little biological thing".

Career Women Four of the six post-menopausal career women, had no physical or emotional symptoms at all. One of them, a single woman having chosen not to have children, became aware that she had lost her last chance to have children. Her tone of voice indicated both pain and unwillingness to delve into this subject. Being post-menopausal was too late a stage for her to change past decisions.

Two of the career women - M., whose case will be discussed below, and a lesbian woman - suffered from heavy menopausal symptoms, including depression in the case of the latter. She was mourning a long love relationship and did not attribute her

depression to the menopause. This example reflects the difficulty of differentiating symptoms at this stage.

Late Bloomers Seven of the eight late bloomers only experienced mild menopausal physical symptoms. Psychologically, the majority were energetically pursuing their new careers. They felt secure in their marriages, free to enjoy the new opportunities open for them.

Two seemed to be more in touch with their emotional side:

- One was ambivalent about the menopause, expressing feelings of relief from fear of pregnancy on the one hand, as her child-rearing years had been traumatic. On the other hand, she experienced a feeling of loss. This ambivalence became clearer to her through a series of dreams in which she was having a baby. These dreams reminded her of the baby she had lost and had not mourned properly.
- The second was looking forward to the menopause as a time of freedom, when she could get rid of sanitary towels and enjoy sex free of contraceptives. To her shock, she discovered that her husband was having an affair with a much younger woman. She felt jealous, cheated and vulnerable, especially when comparing herself to the young woman who was expecting her husband's child, while "my doors were already shut".

The only late bloomer who described herself as depressed attributed her state to her power-struggle with her husband who was threatened by her late blooming success. Her depression is a good example of Gutmann's (1985) theory about depression in middle-aged women.

Housewives Five of the post-menopausal housewives presented an intense picture of emotional distress and misery. This overshadowed any meaning that could have been attached to the menopause. All were having marital problems, were confused, worried and uncertain about their financial security and marital status in the future. The "martyr type" describes them best. They had difficulties in differentiating the menopause from other issues relevant to the transition to the second half of life.

The sixth presented the same emotional state as the previous five, but having had her tubes tied at the age of 29 possibly places her into a different category.

The seventh one was a post-traumatic survivor of the holocaust who regained equilibrium in her life and did not present as depressed.

Two case studies of post-menopausal women were chosen. One is X., Case 7 in the late bloomer's section. Being a social worker, she was informed and aware of the menopause, biologically as well as psychologically. The way she related to the menopause confirmed Lennon's (1982) assessment that the menopause is accepted as part of life if it happens within the expected time table, but might be problematic emotionally when it occurs earlier or later than expected. The other, a creative woman in the field of the arts, very sensual and in touch with nature, was one of the women who had difficult physical menopausal symptoms, although she herself denied having any emotional problems. Her interview reveals the ways the psyche unfolds universal transformations even when they may be unconscious or repressed.

### Case 12 - Post-Menopausal Woman

X., 54 years old, had a very easy time menstruating. Her mother had had a late menopause, and it seems that she was following the same pattern. She first started having irregular periods when she was 53. These were not accompanied by hot flushes or any other symptoms. She felt delighted at the change, as she was tired of periods and sanitary towels. She felt that she was getting old and it was time for her menopause. She remembered that five years ago, when her friends had talked about their periods ceasing, she feared this. At the time she still felt then that she wanted to be a young woman. She certainly did not want to have children at the age of 47; it was just the idea of still functioning as a woman. However, in the past five years her outlook has changed. "I think I probably got used to the idea that it was going to happen and my friends had experienced it, so I was quite ready for it." In contrast to the past, at present she did not feel that it was going to make her less feminine or less attractive to her husband, and she accepted it as part of the life cycle.

Contrary to some women in the peri-menopausal group, who at the age of 45 and 46 were unprepared and shocked at the sudden realization that they were menopausal, X. had five years to prepare herself, listening to friends and clients. The fact that she has a very stable and trusting relationship with her husband, helped too.

X. was familiar with the life stages and the tasks that accompany each stage. The two sources of information were her master's program in Social Work and encounters with her clients,

some of whom were menopausal themselves. She did not perceive herself as going through midlife, and the menopause in particular, without awareness. She believed that intellectual preparation was a factor which helped women to cope better with certain aspects of midlife:

If you know what to expect, you then take it as normal, if you see it in terms of a normal progression, then you take it the same way. Acceptance is easier, but I don't think it prevents the pain or the sense of loss and sorrow.

#### Case 13 - Post-Menopausal Woman

M. is an artist. As a creative person, she was more closely connected to her unconscious. She is 52 years old, married and a mother of three. All her children have already left home. The youngest one was "kicked out" by her, feeling it was time for him to leave. She stressed that she had always worked and enjoyed what she did, and had never attached her life to her children's lives. She found she was "unable to lose herself in other people entirely". There was always something that she kept for herself. She needed to listen to herself in order to understand and that was best done when she was alone. She did not have a possessive mother and she regarded this as an important element in her growth: "My mother gave me my life, what I wanted I had, I got security and freedom at the same time."

M. perceived herself as a healthy person, having had easy deliveries when her children were born. She regarded the menopause as a difficult time physically but not mentally.

She stopped menstruating two years ago before the interview

suffered from hot and cold flushes, experienced feelings of disorientation, could not remember things, and became unsure of herself. She started to develop heart palpitations and her doctor put her on beta blockers, as well as HRT. Asked about the emotional side of the menopause, she did not think she had problems. M. said that she was not depressed, yet, the following story speaks for itself:

My little farm burnt down three years ago, and I grieved excessively. I just could not accept it because it was a kind of death to me. I never intended to write about it because it was too close to me, but when I am on the farm and work I always carry a piece of paper with me and I wrote tiny little poems. Near the end I had a whole file of them, and when I sat down one day I thought "This is strange, there is a coherent story in all this poetry." When I put it all together I saw that I was not only grieving for my farm, I was grieving for my own body. The greenery that goes, the softness...I see myself standing next to the stream that runs through the farm that ends in a waterfall, that was the only thing that was not burnt. I attached myself to that stream which was a living thing, the water completely unchanged, I said to myself "Be quiet, say nothing, do nothing and wait and see what happens." And the farm started rejuvenating itself before my eyes, I watched it and could not believe what I was seeing. Something that is introduced by humans does not rejuvenate, the buildings.... The farm went on to what it had been, but it regained a new form of life and I wrote about it, about the long journey to the bottom - I am

50 years old.

Conclusion As a person who was born close to nature, where death is an integral part of the cycle, she has a rather complex attitude towards aging and death. She is certainly not the agrarian woman that Harding (1933) described.

She feels flattered when she is told that she looks much younger. She does not want to look 55 or 60, and does not want to die, feeling she would like to live another 200 years; at present she is unable to accept death gracefully, because she is very greedy for life. Unconsciously she equates the menopause with death, and this becomes clear through her poetry.

There is a contradiction in M.'s words when she described, on the one hand, the difficult physical aspect of her menopause and, on the other hand, the denial of any emotional problems. The poetry that emerged during those years indirectly drew the universal picture of a woman who is going through the menopause. People like M. who, through artistic means, describe a process that even they themselves are unaware of at the time, indicate the generality and importance of this phase in a woman's life. This seems to provide some empirical support to Downing's (1982, 1987a), Luke's (1981) and Mankowitz's (1984) views.

The intellectual preparation seen in X.'s case is undoubtedly an important aspect of an easier transition, but it is certainly no panacea that will miraculously erase anger, pain and frustration. Although X. has consciously made herself aware of the menopause, she seems to deal with it in a more positive way than M. who only indirectly came to be in touch with her

feelings towards the menopause.

#### Conclusion : Post-Menopausal Group

Menopause was not a traumatic event for most of the post-menopausal women, at least not when they regarded it retrospectively. The fact that more than half of the women were on HRT decreased the physiological symptoms and confirmed the point of view of Bell (1987), Beyene (1986), Kaufert and McKinley (1985), and McCrea (1983) that the menopause as a biological phenomenon was medicalized, individualized and taken out of its universal context. Being conditioned to perceive menopause as a deficiency disease denies women the right to experience it as a meaningful feminine passage from one stage to another.

The multifaceted features of the transition into the second half of life, and the losses encountered on the way, made differentiation difficult. Neugarten's (1969) criticism that symptoms ascribed to menopausal change embrace almost all bodily and psychologically functions, highlighted difficulties of differentiation. Most of the psychological symptoms attached to the menopause also match reactions which seem to be linked to the departure of children, the encounter with one's mortality, the aging process and so forth.

There were individual differences in reaction to the menopause, but in general those who had active, interesting and meaningful lives coped better than the housewives who were confused, anxious and out of control of their lives.

### Characterestics of Peri-Menopausal Women

This group consisted of 21 women, whose mean age was 48.8 years.

#### Occupation

- Seven were housewives.
- Five were working women.
- Five were career women.
- Three were late bloomers.
- One was an early retired woman.

#### Marital Status

- Eighteen were married.
- Two were single.
- One was divorced.

#### Symptoms Description

The peri-menopausal women have been experiencing changes in their menstrual cycle. Irregularity was manifested either by shortened or longer cycles or by heavier or decreased menstruation.

#### HRT Intake

Proportionally, this group had a higher rate of HRT when compared with the post-menopausal group: 16 of the peri-menopausal women (.76) were taking HRT as opposed to 13 of the post-menopausal group (.57), the former being an average of 4.5 years younger than the latter group. This higher hormonal

treatment may be due to a growing tendency among gynecologists to prescribe HRT, not only in order to reduce hot flushes but as a preventative means against osteoporosis and cardiovascular problems. Most women in the peri-menopausal group had been on HRT from a very early stage of the process. They continued their menstrual cycle regularly, but were not always aware of its artificial implications, as the contemporary medical approach to the menopause saved them the irregularity of their periods (Bell, 1987; Downing, 1987a; McCrea, 1983).

### Emotional Reactions

The medicalization of the menopause (Bell, 1987; McCrea, 1983) seems to help peri-menopausal women disregard its psychological aspects. Remarks such as "I have not given the menopause that much thought as a process, I thought rather more about getting old", coming from a 52 year old, peri-menopausal medical doctor, highlights a tendency to dichotomize the biological aging process from the menopause. She saw the menopause as a temporary reversible hormonal imbalance. The menopause is regarded as a non-traumatic, even delightful event, that frees women from fear of pregnancy or menstrual tension, while other levels of symbolic meanings are denied.

Comparing the five groups of women with regards to menopausal symptoms no significant differences were found.

Ten out of the 21 peri-menopausal women who reported feeling "low", and "depressed" attributed these symptoms to other reasons.

A strong emotional reaction to the onset of the menopause

came from the younger women. The "unexpected" onset of the menopause forced them to confront unresolved issues in their lives, which confirmed Lennon's (1982) observations of a harsh reaction to an unpredictable\unexpected menopausal time table.

This experience was illustrated in the cases of the following women:

- The first, a lesbian, being confronted by her biological changes and reassessing her life, was having second thoughts about her lesbianism, sadly feeling that her fertile years and chances of having a family had gone. She experienced her uterus "as heavy as concrete". The physical "heaviness" made her aware of the need to deal psychologically with the change she was going through.
- The second, a single 45 year old, peri-menopausal woman, similarly held the belief that one day she would get married and have children. When told by her gynecologist, on her annual check-up, that she was peri-menopausal, she reacted as follows:

That was such a shock to me. I had not even thought about that. I was aware that sometime I was going to go through menopausal problems and I assumed I'd go like my mother who had no problems. But I never thought about that, and I just thought I was too young. The shock was because I was not expecting it and because somehow I did not really know what it was all about. Somehow I felt my femininity is affected, is deprived.

- The third, a 46 year old woman reacted strongly when told by her gynecologist that she was peri-menopausal:

I did not dream I would react as if it was a shock. I felt just not a full woman. I felt like part of my life which I have so much taken for granted had stopped, is finished, as if I was drying up, not growing any more. The productive part...this is so ridiculous, one does not want children anymore, in fact it should be a super time, freedom from the monthly problems. It is as if I still wanted it just to make me feel a full woman again. I thought that I am suddenly surging into aging, and one hears so often of the emotional problems that women encounter. Although I knew in the back of my mind that I am moving toward the menopause, it was shocking because it was voiced by somebody who knows better. Her reactions were complicated by her younger husband's declaration that he was in love with a younger woman.

No similarities in background, education or lifestyle were evident between these women, yet their experiences seem to be of an archetypal nature, stronger than themselves (Downing, 1987a; Luke, 1981; Mankowitz, 1984).

The fact that the gynecologist has to be the announcer of the entry into the menopause, indicates a deep-seated denial in women, as well as their inability to prepare themselves for a change and transition into the next phase. As mentioned before, this need to deny is reflected in the way the peri-menopausal women often interpreted the early signs of irregular cycles as a sign of falling pregnant.

The only woman in this group who was aware and preparing herself ahead of time was U., the career woman whose biography was given in Case 8.

### Conclusion: Peri-Menopausal Group

The wide use of HRT from the earlier stages of the peri-menopausal phase decreased physiological symptoms in this group of women. Only in extreme cases, usually with younger women below the average age of the menopause, does one observe a powerful psychological reaction. The modern woman loses touch with the archetypal quality of the menopause, due to both its medicalization and the bond of silence surrounding it. This distances her from experiencing it as a meaningful event (Downing, 1987a). The unexpected cessation of menstruation stresses major unresolved issues connected to her femininity.

Comparing the five groups of women with regards to menopausal symptoms no significant differences were found.

### Characteristics of Pre-menopausal Women

This group consisted of 18 women whose average age was 45.6 years.

#### Occupation

- Two were housewives.
- Seven were working women.
- Six were late bloomers.
- Three were career women.

#### Marital Status

- Thirteen were married.
- Three were divorced.
- One was a single lesbian.

- One was a widow.

No one in this group had yet experienced any changes in menstrual patterns. However, in comparison with the perimenopausal group who were less in touch with their feelings, these women seemed to be more aware, intellectually curious and ready to examine the menopause. They connected disturbed sleeping patterns, weepiness, tiredness, irritability and dryness of skin to the approaching menopause. Being a few years away from the menopause they felt "safe" to ask and explore the subject intellectually. Their interest may reflect the complexity of their attitudes towards the menopause. The fear of the unknown prompts them to ask questions. Not being part of the bond of silence allows them to talk.

Extracts from a working woman's interview highlights the intellectual curiosity, the fears, the lack of information and the need for sharing with other women. Also echoed are the prejudices concerning this event:

It was always a great fear for me to have to go through the menopause. You're going to feel all sorts of hot flushes... Menopause could have been exaggerated through the years and I'd like to see if it is so or not so. I want to see what it feels when one's periods start to fade away. I'm told that one's moods change, but I assume that happens anyway during a month. I have not actually felt any different at that time as yet, so I don't know what age one should expect this. My mother did not tell me anything about her menopause, and having been at boarding school I don't have any memories. My friends have undergone hysterectomies so there's really

nobody to talk to.

Reacting to the above words, which were said in a group discussion, was a 42 year old pre-menopausal woman who could not accept either the thoughts the former expressed, or other peri-menopausal women's descriptions of their experiences. She interrupted them saying she could not understand the "fuss" they were making:

My mother never discussed anything with me, but I am prepared. Books are a good source of information. I hate having periods and will be quite happy when they stop. I don't want to have more children, so it is not a problem. I really don't see it as a problem. There are ways to handle it. Medical science has an answer, and I am not there yet, and nor is any friend of mine.

A week later, in the group discussion, this woman was confronted by other peri- and post-menopausal women who asked her what she was doing in a group like this. She said: "My mother suffered depression during the menopause. That aspect does worry me, but I don't think I am the same emotional person."

#### Conclusion: Pre-Menopausal Group

The pre-menopausal group was more open and willing to explore intellectually the approaching menopause. They felt they had misconceived ideas which they wanted clarified. It seems that underneath this curiosity lies a fear of the unknown. The pre-menopausal women's curiosity is a step forward, a step towards a better understanding, a step towards experiencing and integrating this phase in life.

### The Hysterectomy Group

The group of 17 women who had had hysterectomies, forms one fifth (21%) of the total sample. Examining the time they had their surgery reveals that the thirties and forties are the most common years for this kind of an operation:

- Twenties: - 2 women
- Thirties: - 7 women
- Forties: - 7 women
- Fifties: - 1 woman

An examination of the occupations indicated that:

- Seven were housewives.
- Five were working women.
- One was a late bloomer.
- Three were career women.
- One was an early retired woman.

The fact that the majority of this group (12 out of 17) comprised housewives and working women, begs the question of whether this is a sign of an increased psychosomatic reaction found more often among the more frustrated and less educated population of housewives and working women. Or, do the other groups handle such a decision differently, i.e. do they explore options and ask for a second medical opinion? These questions were not answered in the present study, and further exploration is recommended.

Of interest is the fact that only one late bloomer had had a hysterectomy. Was it due to their involvement in pursuing a new and exciting path in their lives, which kept them physically and emotionally stable?

Generally, the high percentage of hysterectomies performed is criticized by Greenwood (1987) and Stoppard (1986).

Among the post-hysterectomy women reactions varied from relief to depression, as did responses to other aspects of this transitional period. Analyzing data, it seems that the younger the woman is, the more strongly she will react, whereas the older the woman and the more she has suffered from gynecological problems, the easier her acceptance of the surgical intervention will be.

Depression as a post-surgical symptom was reported by 12 of these 17 women and they connected their emotional state with the operation. The others did not report any emotional effects.

A common remark was a feeling of "something which has been taken away, something which was not there any more". Some reacted to this missing part as if it was part of their femininity which has been lost.

However, one 46 year old housewife reported feeling "terrific" after the operation. While other women in her ward said they were sore inside, she felt different, she wanted to get up and go. "I even thought: 'I am a man'." This feeling of being a man can be interpreted in various ways: it can be regarded as castrating her femininity but it may also point towards an emerging sense of power, mastery and potency.

An aspect of interest is whether the menopause reactivates a secondary reaction in those women who had to deal with the removal of their uterus and the cessation of menstruation in their twenties or thirties. However, the difficulties in differential

diagnosis prevented any clarification.

Two case histories of women who have had hysterectomies will follow.

#### Case 14 - Hysterectomy

This woman of 50 who had retired early and whose partial biography appears in the section on early retirees (Case 11), suffered from post-partum depression after the birth of her first child. For the last few years she had a cyst on her ovary and fibroids which caused heavy bleeding; she had a hysterectomy at the age of 48. She commented that she did not feel bonded to her womb because she was not going to have any more children. After the hysterectomy she felt a great relief, saying: "It took care of the monthly hassles because it was hardly finished when it started."

#### Case 15 - Hysterectomy

D., a working woman of 47, a mother of three children, whose uterus was removed when she was 32, remembered being told by the hospital's psychologist of the difficulties some women encounter after such an operation. She reassured her, saying she was planning no more children, so she would not have any reactions at all. However, after the operation she found herself crawling on all fours, on the floor, like a dog and screaming that she wanted her uterus back, feeling "empty of being a woman, a female, a person in my own right, feeling I was nothing, just a shell".

### Conclusion: Hysterectomy Group

A fifth of the total sample underwent a hysterectomy. Among them was a significant number of housewives and working women. Gerdes' (1980) similar findings, namely, that satisfied working women tend to suffer less from menopausal symptoms on reaching this phase, link to the finding of the present study. However, Gerdes (1980) did not specify who were the working women she related to. The results of this study indicate that more traditional working women had undergone hysterectomies than other working groups.

### Complaints Against Gynecologists

Lock (1985), examining contemporary medical models of treating menopausal women, found that the models vary between the "biomedical" and the "biopsychosocial" models, according to gynecologists' education and training. A growing gap between "textual knowledge", "practice" or "a folk model" was another outcome of her observations.

The women in the present study blamed their doctors for being insensitive to their vulnerabilities and needs at this phase in their lives. Examples of this attitude were:

- The indifferent manner in which a gynecologist would communicate to a woman that she was entering her menopause.
- Prescribing HRT without explaining what it was, what the short-term side-effects were, or the possible long-term dangers.

Women felt that the focus was mostly on their physical symptoms, whilst their emotional needs were ignored.

Certainly, women play a part in this attitude. Some women, especially the groups of housewives and working women, are ashamed of their symptoms, do not understand them in the right context and try to hide them from everybody, including their gynecologists. Therefore, gynecologists need to be informed about the psychological reactions in menopausal women.

The results of this study point to the need for a change in the woman-gynecologist relationship. Both parties need more knowledge about the psychosomatic relationship in menopausal women. These results correspond with findings by Gerdes (1980), where gynecologists were found to be unaware of the psychological aspects of the menopause, whereas psychologists disregarded physiological symptoms.

The results of Cowan et al. (1985) indicated that the medical profession regarded psychological menopausal symptoms of menopause as pathological. The women in the present study felt that their doctors ignored their psychological symptoms. The differences in results may stem from the medical profession's tendency to regard the menopause as a deficiency disease and to see each individual woman as a separate "case", instead of viewing the menopausal woman as part of a universal phenomenon and the symptoms as a combination of physiological and psychosociological components.

#### Menopausal Mothers and their Daughters

During interviews women complained that their mothers did not inform them about menstruation, nor shared with them the menopause. It was interesting to note how the women in this study

dealt with the menopause vis a vis their own daughters. Some answered that in an effort to build a close and meaningful relationship with their daughters they did discuss their menopause with them. However, it seems that this did not go beyond mere information, again emphasizing the difficulties of delving into deeper and wider levels of this phenomenon. Remarks such as: "When I talk with my two daughters about my problems they get irritated", or "Your children are not interested in your problems, for them you are Mom - they have their own teenage problems", partially reflect the complexity of the mother-daughter relationship at this stage of their respective lives, when the one is menopausal and the other is an adolescent.

#### Summary

The menopause has lost its meaning as a symbolic event in the lives of the women in this sample. Only in exceptional cases where marital problems such as the husband's affair with a younger woman, were concerned did the menopause play a significant role, denoting the end of youth and attractiveness. Otherwise, its meaning was repressed and appeared through messages from the unconscious, as was the case of M. (Case 13), where she discovered the whole menopausal process through her poetry.

This loss of meaning can be attributed to the following:

- The medicalization of the menopause.
- The use of HRT.
- The double standards in regards to aging in Western youth-oriented society.

The above were cited by Bell (1987), Beyene (1986), Downing (1987a), Lock (1985), Mankowitz (1984), McCrea (1983), and Neugarten (1969), as contributing to the denial of the menopause and is part of a price that contemporary women pay to a society that denies death. Menopausal symptoms, being part of a wide range of symptoms connected with the various aspects of the transition into the second half of life, are camouflaged and make it difficult to reach a differential diagnosis.

The menopause is turned into a "secret" individual passage for each woman. The women of the sample did not communicate and share their experiences. On the contrary, they tended to deny and repress them. Thus, the end of an important developmental phase of femininity is consciously not mourned and becomes an incomplete process. Yet, similar to the findings of Mankowitz (1984) and Neugarten (1969), they were eager to talk and get more information when interviewed.

## CHAPTER 13

### RESULTS: DISCUSSION OF THE EMERGENT THEMES

This section deals with the themes that emerged whilst analyzing the data. It begins with a letter that one woman wrote to the participants of her group. Then follows themes that were clustered from the original 67 categories that emerged while interviewing the 79 women. Additional material from five discussion groups provided more data.

The themes are organized and presented in such a way as to give a certain structure to this chapter. No specific theme could have been identified as being a common denominator in precipitating the process of the transition to the second half of life. For some women the trigger would be the menopause, for others the empty nest syndrome, and so forth: other relating aspects would follow later. Other women seemed to have been confronted with all the issues simultaneously - a ripple effect. Accordingly, it is important to stress the need to look at this transitional period as:

- A process which undergoes change as it develops.
- A phase of which the universal aspects are influenced by historical and social events (Mercer et al., 1989).

#### A Letter about the Unknown Journey

The spirit of the following letter to participants in the same experience, and especially the metaphors used, describe the

essence of the unknown journey that women begin on reaching the transition to the second half of life.

We are travelling through a land that we never travelled before and we are doing it with no guide. We are walking into mines, we are falling into dungeons, and we are getting bitten by snakes because we don't know where they are or what they are.

I think we need to find our way through. We know what's behind us, but we don't know what is in front of us. How do we know when we will even finish? when will we get to the end of the journey?

I want to know that!

There must be a way!

And that is what worries me, because I want to be able not only to say for myself "I know how I am going to get through this stage". I want to say to my sisters who are coming after - "listen, this territory is here, you've got to go through it. I can't give you a map, but I can give you a guide-book how actually to get through."

#### Reactions to The Midlife Transition: Causative Factors

In view of the emerging themes it became clear that women reacted differently to various issues of this transitional phase. Some women reacted intensely while the others moved smoothly through the same transition. O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) coined this phenomenon as the "intensity of transition" and measured their subjects accordingly.

Stevens-Long (1988) was of the opinion that it is not the differences in the intensity of the events, but the interpretations given to them, that make the differences in reactions to midlife. Similarly, Kfir (1989), in a theoretical model for crisis intervention, developed especially for the Israeli army, defined a crisis as a reaction to a certain event and not the event itself. A person's reaction to a certain incident is a result of the way he\she interprets it. This subjective interpretation is changing the objective meaning of the event and explains why different people react differently to the same happening. The characteristics of this risk group, i.e. those who will react with a crisis are, according to Kfir:

- Centering one's life around one interest.
- Past unresolved traumas which were not dealt with properly.
- An extreme fear of any change in life.

Kfir's (1989) approach might explain the diversity found in women's reactions to the transition into the second half of life, as will be indicated in the following themes. The first and last categories in Kfir's (1989) model fit the description of the group of home-centered housewives who tended to interpret the departure of their children and the changing structure of their lives in terms of a traumatic event.

#### Theme 1: Women's Social Conditioning

An exploration of the values and moral systems that the women in this study were brought up with explains part of their lifestyles in the present. It highlights the unresolved issues that

the transition into the second half of life reactivated.

Developing a sense of independence and becoming a separate unique individual was difficult for this Second World War generation of women who, when married, moved from the sheltered parental home to their husbands' protection, "never really living on their own, never being without a paramount figure in their lives". As many of the interviewees commented, they moved from being "daddy's little girl" to be the "sweet, soft and dependent wife", saying that they: "Never had been their own person, never really took care of themselves, never made their own decisions, or did what they wanted to do, never being given the choice to bang their heads in error."

The myth of the "togetherness" (Gould, 1978) that they were brought up on, prevented them from developing separate interests or even friends. It led to such statements as: "My husband tells me: 'You could do whatever you like now that the kids do not need you'. But I cannot. Where am I supposed to go on my own? What am I supposed to do?"

This approach is characteristic of the housewives and working women, who in retrospect, understood why they have come to face the realities of life only at this stage.

The others, despite doing things on their own, admitted that deep down they were not independent. They still liked to rely on others, to know that "somebody is there for them". All the women in the sample, even those who "escaped" this role, admitted that: "The aim was to get married, have a home and produce children. That was your role in life." A late bloomer remembered that: "Everybody in my circle did the same. Nobody thought they should

work. The parents supported the young couple, and the ideal was to have a flat on the beach where you could walk with your kids."

The dilemmas that the present generation of young women are struggling with, such as the combining of career and motherhood, as well as the questioning of the entire concept of marriage and parenthood (Hewlett, 1987; Rossen-Cardozo, 1989; Suib-Cohen, 1989) were less openly dealt with by this particular generation.

Motherhood was the main goal, and life evolved around home. Most of the married women in this sample, i.e. all the housewives, most of the late bloomers and part of the group of working women, followed this pattern. They were, firstly, mothers who stayed at home and reared their children. Only at a later stage did the late bloomers and some of the working women start looking for a job in an attempt to fulfill themselves and gain a sense of independence.

The group of career women were similar to the above. They too, felt that home was always a priority. Primarily they were mothers and wives and their careers were secondary. They had to fit their professional lives around the needs of their families'. The spirit of the era is described in the words of a 44 year old housewife:

Two years after we got married and the first child was born, I gave up my work as a press officer of an academic institution because of pressure from my husband, my parents and in-laws. I felt confused, alone, with babies and women around me and nobody to communicate with. In retrospect, I see my fault. I should have said that I felt differently about staying home. But then it was not feminine to stand

up, you did not make waves and caused scenes - you agreed. I felt then that staying home was a retirement present. I felt mentally vegetated.

This pattern of development is the opposite of the current "sequencing" tendency, reported by Rossen-Cardozo (1989), where women initially develop their careers, have children at a later stage, and then return to work when children are older.

In reassessing and reviewing almost three decades, the women of this study appear to have changed their outlook on life. At present they are aware that:

Women's place in society needs improvement. Women need to be in charge of their lives instead of being frightened, in need of verbalization of all their frustrations, in need for self-education at this point in their lives.

The incipient awareness of feminism reported by these women is not always clear, nor is it necessarily based on a theoretical knowledge. Yet, it exists beneath the surface. This is illustrated in an anecdote related by a 47 year old housewife. Some years ago, when her gynecologist prescribed HRT she had not even asked what it was and why she should take it. She just thought that he, as a doctor, knew it all, and she should take it. However, in the last few years, through reading and group discussions she realized that she has "a right over my body and rights over everything".

#### Midlife as Viewed from the Perspective of Young Adulthood

It is interesting to examine at this point, the way these women had perceived middle age when they were younger and how they

now experience it.

The theme that commonly repeated itself was the belief that the middle years would be peaceful and free of obligation, so one could dedicate more time for self-exploration. This is heard in the words of a disillusioned career woman who said:

Having children, you look forward to the moment when those responsibilities lessen. You fancy all your working years that this magical moment will come and you'll be free to devote all attention to any given problem, but it never comes. This realization in itself is not a crisis but part of the maturing process.

These expectations were also shared by a housewife who said that: "The childrearing years are years of utter givenness. So midlife should be a time when things should get better. It must be a time of peace when you are free to be yourself."

### Summary

The participants of this study, being part of the Second World War generation, were brought up on the cultural message that women should stay at home and raise their children (Musgrave & Menzel, 1980; Narine & Smith, 1984). The depressive picture of housewives and some of the working women should be understood in the light of their background.

The realization that life had not turned out the way it was "promised" and expected is part of the process of the transition into the second half of life where demystification and disillusionment take place.

### Theme 2: Regrets

As you get older you look back more than you look forwards because you think "I should have done this or that", and you think "there is only so much time left".

(a participant)

A transition is a time of reassessment. It is also a time for regrets. The women in this sample were no exception. Their regrets varied and were bound to their marital, professional or general state of being. Listening to those regrets, through the interviews and group discussions, gave a better insight into these women's inner worlds and their "dreams" for the future.

On a group-differential basis, the regrets typical of the housewives were connected to their neglect "to do something with their lives". Investing in the family and supporting their husbands' careers resulted in their neglecting their own individualistic needs. They clearly saw it now, as a result of the departure of their children. One of the women said: "The biggest regret is that I should have done matric, and done something with my life. That is what I keep impressing upon my children and that's why I am over anxious all the time."

All of the married career women, those who moved ambitiously and consciously to the top, as well as the slow burners, regretted not achieving more, feeling they could have done so had they not been so committed to their families.

The tension in their lives arose from wanting to work and feeling guilty about leaving their children at home. As a result, the quality of their commitments, in both fields, was affected.

This was apparent in the case of the medical doctors who, being in such a demanding professional field, had to give up specializing in a particular area, feeling both the antagonism against them as women in a "masculine world" and the demands which motherhood put on them. The result was compromising on clinical work or becoming a general practitioner. Even this compromise did not erase the guilt, nor did it satisfy professionally. Their realization that "You can't have it both ways" echoes The Second Stage of feminism, described by Friedan (1982), Hewlett (1987) Rossen-Cardozo (1989), and Suib-Cohen (1989).

Regrets came also from the non-academic, non-married career women who regretted not graduating from university. Though successful in their work, they still perceived not graduating as their failure. Mercer et al. (1989) remarked that the present level of women's education is higher than that of the Second World War's generation of women; this situation tends to raise levels of aspiration but also levels of regret.

Choosing the wrong profession while young and not realizing its limitations was another source of regrets voiced by some career women. They felt they had missed pursuing their real interests and "dreams". This regret was illustrated by the social workers who really wanted to study medicine but compromised by choosing a "feminine" profession.

The single women in the sample had second thoughts about their singlehood. Some of the lesbians had regrets about their life-style, commenting that if they could have started it all over again, they would have liked to be "normal", having a man in their lives and raising a family.

On an individual-differential basis, women had regrets about the way they handled the last years of their parents' lives. Others regretted not having shared with their parents their later professional success.

It is interesting to note that another regret which emerged is that referred to by Erikson (1963) as generativity, the seventh stage of ego development. Some women regretted not helping others more, not becoming what they perceived as "more human". The issue of generativity as an emerging theme will be discussed further below.

### Conclusion

The examination of these regrets reflects the conflicting issues that these women are dealing with at present. The housewives struggle to become their "own person", while regrets of the career women who are mothers are associated with guilt for not spending enough time with their children, as well as for not pursuing higher career goals. A heightened sensitivity towards time running out brought with it a re-evaluation of women's relationships with their own parents, while regretting the ways it was handled.

### Theme 3: Weltanschauung

I feel different from a teenager. There the change that takes place is a dramatic one while mine is different because of the experience one accumulates over the years. It is more like a pregnancy slowly growing.

(a participant)

The first two themes provided a glimpse into the past. This section will deal with the women's present world view, i.e. their personal philosophy of life.

The first group to be discussed is the group of early retirees who are financially secure. They strongly feel that they deserve and want to enjoy life now, as opposed to previously, where they sought to prove themselves and meet challenges. Retirement was not a traumatic event for them. On the contrary, they found it a challenge, looking at what they missed in the years they were committed to work. They no longer feel the urge to excel. Shelving their career and/or parenting modes has made this stage in their lives better than any other transition.

Unlike the early retirees, most of the career women were still very ambitious. Work was perceived in a new light, it was an opportunity which could give them a chance to achieve goals that were now apparent. It was their last chance before stepping down. Their awareness of the shortage of time was heightened, knowing that they would never be able to do all the things they wanted, "because the more you do, the more you want to do. And if you lead a busy life you don't have time to savour the most important moments which becomes an ongoing conflict." These dynamic career women did not want to give up their involvement in professional life. They were in the prime of their careers. "I am in the right place now, on the right step of the ladder for my capacity." Experiencing life at its prime, they perceived it as a maturing period, where they were getting to know themselves, acknowledging and accepting their weaknesses and developing ways to deal with them. They were better skilled,

assertive and confident, more in control of their lives and work. These qualities, which were apparent outwardly but not integrated inwardly, were merging, bringing along a sense of freedom. They found life more interesting, their horizons broader and the released tension enabled them to do more things. "Feeling free within takes away the worry, what people think, and the need to be perfect."

Leadership, which was problematic for them in earlier stages of their careers, was enjoyable at this point. They saw leadership as a lever to help people and not just as an ego trip. They had confidence and skills to be efficient, and this made people listen to them in a different way. Thus, they did not feel patronizing any more, but instead experienced what Suib-Cohen (1989) coined "tender power". They were mellowing, tolerant, less dominant and dictatorial.

Their whole set of values have crystallized. Thus, beside their professional careers, some were politically aware, believing that the time for change in the country has come. They were ready to commit themselves to work towards that goal.

It seems that generativity (Erikson, 1963) is apparent in this group of career women more than in any other group. Unlike the working and housewives groups, these women had fulfilled their personal needs, and were in a powerful position that enabled them to turn to the next ego stage of development and to enlarge their scope of involvement in life. Some of the women acted politically by funding bursaries for gifted black children, others got their satisfaction through supervising students.

However, the career group was not homogenous. The younger

among them, those who were in their early or middle forties, were only at the early stages of the process described above. Though successful in their careers, they were still having doubts about themselves, questioning their whole way of life and having still "unfinished business". They saw themselves regressing to adolescence, as a single 46 years woman verbalized:

I am facing today the problems I had then, proving myself intellectually. "Am I bright? Am I attractive? Can I keep my weight balanced? What kind of people do I want to be around?" Yet, the perspective of these questions had changed. Whereas in my 29 and 30 I was concentrating more on external things without looking for insight, what provokes the crisis in the 40' is the insight that comes with experience.

Others in this group reacted in an opposite manner saying, in the words of one participant: "You are asking me a lot of questions which require a person who is inwardly thinking. But I try to be outwardly thinking, I don't want to dwell on myself" (which might have been the reason for this woman's disturbed pattern of sleep).

The working women and housewives disowned the strength the former groups have exhibited. Yet, they too had a strong feeling that something in their lives had come to an end; but they could not see their way through, still having fantasies about "waiting" for the great things to happen. It started to dawn on them that they were living in a "fool's paradise" all those past years, not really growing up, feeling: "I have done nothing in my life except having children, raise them and work. I am bored with my

existence, all the things I would have loved to do I did not do. If I am going to live like that I might as well commit suicide."

Or differently expressed:

I do not feel fulfilled, I was busy when I was a mother, now I am left with plenty of time, especially in the afternoons, which are the worst - lying on my bed asking myself: "What am I doing with my life? I am 44 and lying in bed like an old woman and on the other hand afraid to go out to work."

Another woman said: "I saw myself as a big sort of mama figure who carried everything on my shoulders and nobody understood me. The pillar of the house does not want to be so any more."

Living for so many years for their families, and perceiving it as being "incredibly unselfish", now they felt it was their time to look better after themselves, and bring more pleasure and fulfillment into their lives. However, they still struggled with the issue of selfishness which presented itself as a problem with these housewives who were obsessed with "the tyranny of niceness" (Becker, 1987).

These two groups found themselves in an ambivalent situation. On the one hand, they, like the others, felt the need for spiritual growth, accompanied by the realization that materialistic things did not matter that much any longer. On the other hand, they were lacking the financial security which the career women, the late bloomers and early retirees had. It was difficult for them to rise above the "trivia", as one housewife said. Instead they became more "bitchy" and bitter when things did not work out.

Physical symptoms, which the housewives and working women were more aware of, highlighted life's finitude and precipitated a sense of missing out on life.

### Summary

Though all the women were aware that an era in their life had come to an end, they differed significantly in their Weltanschauung.

The three groups: the early retirees, the career women and the late bloomers, got to know themselves better, realizing their limitations. It helped them to stop falling into the same traps. It heightened their awareness of the shortage of time and forced them to harbour their energy and apply it more strategically and specifically. Some felt that broadening their world-view made them aware of God; some started to practice religion.

Most interesting were reports of the housewives and working women, of a growing sense of power, on the one hand, and frustration, on the other. They felt they were taking more interest in themselves, becoming more confident and relaxed, saying that:

Things that usually made me feel guilty and responsible no longer do, now I don't relate it automatically to myself but can take it more objectively. Many things have sorted themselves out in a natural way, which excites me in its potential for growth.

This "paradox" supports Gutmann's (1975, 1985) findings of changes in post-parental women.

#### Theme 4: A New Sense and Relation to Time

Life is a journey. If you do not cross it, you are not going to get anywhere. The further I get over 50 the least chance I have about doing it.

(a participant)

Frankl (1967) expressed the view that, "It is the very transitoriness of human existence which constitutes man's responsibility - the essence of existence", and that "Only under the urge and pressure of life's transitoriness does it make sense to use the passing time" (p. 30). This theme was evident in the urgency with which this sample of middle aged women reacted when realizing that time was running out. Statements such as the following were common to all women:

- There are only so many more good years left, one should learn to use time more specifically and strategically.
- There are still so many things I want to do.

Unfortunately, the awareness of limited time is only a recent "acquisition", as expressed by a 50 year old late bloomer:

In the last year or two I realized that suddenly we are talking about someone who is 60, and you are not far away from it, and 70 is also only 20 years. So all the kind of proportion changes - when you are young it seems forever, you'll never be 50.

Referring to herself with a detached "you" reveals the difficulties this woman had in confronting the issue of time.

The feeling that time has passed so quickly, the sense of

wasting a lot of it, urges women to learn to use their time, because: "When you are 20 you have 50 years in front of you. When you are 50 you have only 20 years and you know how quickly those years are flying." The tendency to think in terms of how many more years, good years, are left characterizes women's reaction to experiencing their new sense of time.

This urgency is strongest among the ambitious career women who felt they had achieved a great deal in their careers. It dawned on them that they had spent too much time at work, and not enough time exploring "other things". The "other things" included reading, traveling, learning to play a musical instrument, and spending time with friends.

The "slow burner" career women, aware only recently of their strength and unused potentials, felt an urge to use the time in fulfilling these potentials. This was best expressed by a 49 years old recent divorcee, who felt that her career had been affected by her need to keep a dead marriage alive. At present she felt strongly that, "I want to be me, to do the sort of things I know I can do, to be seen as an individual, not just a piece of property."

The housewives felt that they needed now to take stock, moving out of the household and devoting time to themselves. Yet, some of them admitted still feeling like little girls, still dreaming and hoping for things to happen, even though it was quite clear they never would.

The single women varied. The youngest, in their middle forties, felt cheated, with no one to blame. Unmarried and alone, they felt that a certain part of life was over, a certain freedom

had gone. They became aware that they no longer were young. They suddenly realized that being on their own, they had to look after themselves in a caring way.

The exceptional ones were the majority of the "post-traumatic" women who were actually excited about their lives at present. They felt that their "slow down" had taken place at an earlier stage. They were regaining full equilibrium, coming to terms with "ghosts from the past" and feeling capable and in control, trying to enjoy what they had missed out.

#### Attitudes Towards Death

The sense of running out of time, the death of aging parents, the death of family members and friends all contributed to the fear of death. However, this fear was combined with a denial of fear, confirming Becker's (1975) opinions. The difficulties in going through this necessary phase, which Jung (1976) termed "the achievement of death", was apparent. Statements were commonly uttered, such as: "It scares me, I am in an age-group that can die even tomorrow", or "I don't want to die, I would like to live 200 years, for ever."

An exception to this pattern were the religious women. They were better prepared to face mortality, comforted in the belief of life after death and the hope that they would be in a state of grace. One of these women, an early retired, successful career woman admitted that she had had such a fulfilling life that if she would die the next day she could only say that she had had the most happy and wonderful life.

The unsatisfied and frustrated women, mostly made up of the

housewives and working women, denied the fear of death. However, concretizing this fear, they were obsessed with fears of cancer, heart-attacks and the aging process. They were already experiencing a symbolic death - the death of their meaning in life.

### Aging Parents

The middle years are the years when one's parents reach their last stage of life. Medicine today succeeds in lengthening life expectancy but not always its quality. Old, sick or senile parents and/or in-laws tended to depend on their daughters, requiring daily care, becoming a tremendous responsibility. "You acquire aging children", said one of the women, "and it becomes a maintenance job." Taking them around and doing their shopping consumed a lot of time and became "a burden", especially now when time was more available and the awareness of its finiteness was heightened. Part of the "waiting games" that the groups of housewives and working women were playing were waiting for parents to die. Guilt feelings were expressed especially by those women who lived apart from their parents, sometimes in different countries. They felt they should have been with their parents. Being an only daughter just complicated this sense of responsibility and guilt.

Watching one's own parent's physical and/or mental decline caused emotional stress and made the women contemplate their own prospects in future. Questions about whether it is worth living that long were expressed by one of the women, an early retiree: "I always said I wanted to live to be a 100. I changed

that idea after seeing my mother getting old. It was a shock to see the woman whom I had looked up to as being so strong, break down like that."

Watching parents deteriorate brought a relief to a sometimes stressful daughter-mother or mother in-law relationship. The fear of their own deterioration pushed women to provide a caring model so that their own children would be of help when the time would come.

In conclusion: The self-image of the woman, still as a child and a daughter, dies with the fading illusions of the "all-mighty parents" and stresses the notion that "we are next". Dependency needs can not be maintained any longer, alongside the realization that, "I am not a little girl any more."

### Planning the Future

Being brought up with Second World War values (Musgrave & Menell, 1980; Nairne & Smith, 1984), planning the future was difficult, especially for the groups of housewives and working women. They surprisingly admitted that they had never sat down and thought to plan their lives, as life was always "an ongoing thing surrounding home". Asking a working woman where would she be in five years time, she said: "It is the first time I have ever thought in those terms. I have never thought further than the end of the month." Chicago's (1977) opinion that women were raised to "never setting long-range goals or trying to do things that were far beyond their strength" (p. 107), was confirmed in this case.

The absorption in family life continued to make it difficult

even at present when children were leaving home. The mere thought that planning the future would not include the children anymore, but just the couple, caused anxiety. The self-image of "a big mama figure who carries everything on her shoulders" prevented these women from planning their individual lives, as "mamas" do not really have lives of their own.

A few, though not having clear plans for the future, thought that they should develop themselves creatively "in order not to feel inferior to their children". Again the pattern indicates developing oneself according to some meaningful other, instead of "becoming one's own person".

Despite the lack of planning, the inner urge to broaden their horizons, to extend themselves, to find an intellectual stimulation and use the freedom they recently have gained, was persistent. Unfortunately, this need was not strong enough to push the housewives and traditional workers to take steps actively. Instead they continued to play their "waiting games" - waiting for old parents to die, waiting for the last child to leave home, waiting for husbands to retire. The passivity, or "the Scarlet O'Hara syndrome - I will think about it tomorrow", was part of the characteristics of the housewives and working groups when coming to plan their future.

It is interesting to note in this regard that many housewives and working women mentioned their desire to travel as part of their vague plans for the future. This yearning, more than actual planning, could be a result of their passive monotonous lifestyle, and comes as an external compensation. Instead of travelling the inner path, it is projected outwardly, as part of

the ancient rituals that Downing mentioned (1987a).

The career women acted differently in the face of the time left. Some, reaching the top of the ladder and accustomed to decision making, already had clear plans for the next 15-20 good years left.

The early retirees were the ones who had resolved this problem, at least for the time being. They had already planned their retirement, enjoying every day as it came.

The widows, aware of the prospect of loneliness, felt the need to start planning their future concretely. The plans centered around changing their large homes which they found frightening when empty.

The preciousness of time awakened in most women a need to use time effectively.

### The Political Situation

Future planning became an objective obstacle and a source of worry for those women who were considering emigration. The current political situation, the unstable economy, the children's future and the loneliness experienced by those women whose children or other family members had already left the country, became a real concern in their lives. (When interviewed in 1988, the war in Angola was still on, and conscription had not yet been cut to only one year). This concern was enhanced in cases where husbands were not willing to emigrate for various reasons, thus leaving women feeling insecure.

It seems that this aspect of the women's lives was more openly discussed, perhaps because it did not concern only the

woman's future but that of her family as well.

#### Drawing: Full Blossoming - Myra's Collage

The shortage and urgency of time is illustrated in the collage in Figure 5 by a 50 year old working woman. She combined the fully blossoming sunflower, which carries her unique fingerprint - her individuality, with the images of stylized watches. The watches which dominate the collage depict the running out of time for one who is in her prime. There is also a butterfly which, according to Greek mythology, symbolizes the psyche and its immortality (Cooper, 1978).

#### Theme 5: The Bond of Silence

An old Jewish saying goes: "Ten measures of conversation came down to earth - women took nine". When analyzing the data it is evident that when it comes to issues concerning the transition into the second half of life there is a bond of silence surrounding the whole process. Women will talk, as most of the women of the sample pointed out, about children and housekeeping, they will exchange recipes but when it comes to the "nitty gritty" the silence can almost be heard. These findings support similar results by Downing (1987a), Gerdes (1980), Mankowitz (1984), and Neugarten (1969).

Regardless of group affiliation, the theme of the "bond of silence" is presented in the verbatim statements below, since it seems that the words the women used speak for themselves. Noticeable is the frequent use of the word "it", when referring to midlife; according to Webster's Dictionary, the word "it" is "A

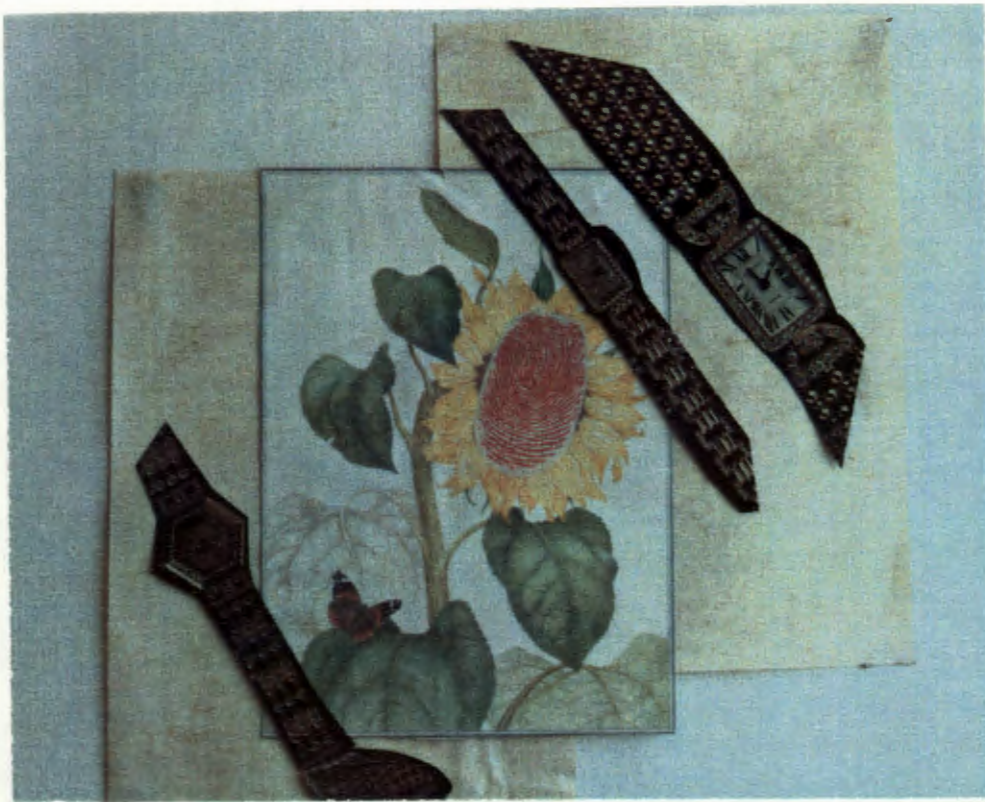


Figure 5. Full Blossoming: Myra's Collage

subject of an impersonal verb without reference to agent". (A similar phenomenon of detachment appeared when the topic of sex was discussed.)

- I have never discussed it with others. It is one of those things that you do not deal with until it happens.
- Because women do not talk about what happens to them, each one thinks she is alone and it happened only to her. And this causes insecurity, anxiety and the belief that one is weird.
- You talk rarely on that topic, and only with a friend who goes through the same process.
- I did not discuss it with anybody. I thought I was too young.
- I will make a joke about facelift to my husband. I will tell him he is overweight. We will talk about the vulnerabilities of middle age, of keeping fit. But it is not a real topic. It is not something we discuss, not even with friends.
- I will talk a little bit with colleagues who have been my friends for a long time. But the conversation is in a joking style, such as how shall we dress and what shall we eat in order to prevent hot flushes. Joking is a kind of coping out.
- I find women tend to talk more easily on subjects such as children and parents getting old, which is a more external aspect, but will talk less of the changes that take place inside.
- I do not want people, even my husband or children to know my problems. I feel very ashamed of it. I never heard other women talk about it.
- I see myself as a private person. I never talk about it with women-friends. It is like betraying my husband if I will talk

about what bothers me.

- I have no friends that I can talk with. They all deny having problems.
- I do not discuss it with friends, maybe because one pushes it to the subconscious, being afraid to face it.
- I spoke only to a friend of mine who is an older nurse. Most of my other friends are younger.

The following statements sum up women's attitudes:

- You do not talk about the subject before you reach it.
- Even then you only talk with people who are in the same process, older than you or in the right profession, but certainly not with your husband or children.
- In any case you do not talk - you just joke.

At the end of an interview a woman expressed the same theme differently, saying: "I told you more than I thought I will, which shows the need to talk." It also indicated the need to hide.

Middle-aged women fluctuate between the need to talk and the fear of admitting their feelings. On the one hand there is the need to find out about one's changing situation, while on the other hand social conditioning prevents women from expressing themselves. This "isolation" results in insecurity, loneliness and an inability to integrate the full meaning of the transition to the second half of life.

#### A Sharing Experience

The two drawings in Figures 6 and 7 were painted by a 46 year old working woman, whose reactions to the menopause and her husband's recent affair were discussed in Chapter 12. The woman,



Figure 6. The Broken Heart: A Self-portrait

a participant in one of the discussion groups expressed her emotional state by nonverbal means. Figure 6, her self-portrait, was drawn at the beginning of the group, whereas Figure 7 was drawn at the end of the group experience.

What is striking about the woman's self-portrait (Figure 6) is her bleeding heart. The heart is not only turned upside down, but is also removed from its normal left side. The two hands, painted in red, are in contrast with each other. According to Cooper (1978), the right side denotes reality and consciousness, while the left is the side of the unconscious. The right hand has a clenched fist holding back, yet aggressively ready to punch. The left hand has a flower symbolizing, according to Mankowitz (1984), a new potential for growth. Von Franz (1972, 1982) was of the opinion that a flower denotes the feelings; however, the flower is not yet being grasped but still lies in the woman's hand as a potential to be integrated. All the parts of the body are separated: the head, hands, body and heart, while the bottom part is missing. The woman's face is anxious, the lips are tight, resembling a wound, and the wide-open eyes stare into the distance. Yet, the woman's general appearance is one of softness and tenderness.

The second drawing (Figure 7) expresses the sharing experience that this woman had with group members. Each one of the participants is drawn in different colors, stressing their separateness and uniqueness, yet all are part of a circle of women engaged in a universal feminine ritual. They are part of the cycle of life. The circle is combined of two colors: yellow and green - heaven and earth. The upper layer of yellow, symbolizing



Figure 7. Women's Rituals: The Group Experience

their family's life and had been perceived as strong and competent women. They had difficulties in sharing their vulnerabilities.

Another development which threatened women was the undercurrent of struggle with the "homecoming" husbands (Gutmann, 1985). They felt that this "territory" which had always been theirs was being penetrated by husbands who "re-discovered" their children and were trying to establish an adult relationship with them, exclusive of their mothers. The women felt cheated and alienated saying: "You are doing it all and he is taking off the cream", stressing the feeling of "you are not good enough."

All of these women were aware of the need to find a new meaning in life. Some by preparing themselves for a career, or finding "something" so that "I would not be so involved with my children."

The group of career women did not feel lonely at present. Leading a busy life, they even felt the need at times to be alone in order to listen and to understand themselves better. However, they were aware of the realistic possibility of becoming lonely when reaching old age, acknowledging that there were not many solutions to this human condition. Planning retirement was one of the ways of preparing themselves.

The late bloomers, like the career women, were pursuing a new meaning in life. Their loneliness stemmed from difficulties in communication within their marital relationship, where husbands, threatened by their wives growing independence, blamed them for being too self-involved and neglecting the family. These

women could not share their enthusiasm and aspirations with their partners, resenting them while feeling guilty at the same time, yet unwilling to give up the new path. As one of them said: "I choose to walk alone instead of not walking at all."

Another source of loneliness was reported by those late bloomers who worked as free lancers and who felt that working from home they were missing a sense of belonging. The late bloomers needed to belong, to become part of a greater organization, to fill in what was perceived as having been missed during the years they stayed at home.

Paradoxically, the non-married women tended to compare their lives with those of married women, feeling that the latter had the benefit of being surrounded by families.

The youngest member of this subgroup became aware of her loneliness only the previous year, when she realized that all her boy friends were married; the situation had changed: from having been chased, she now felt deserted. At present she felt the need for friends, "not just men but women as well", realizing that relationships can extend beyond a sexual aspect. The older member of this subgroup had already come to terms with her condition. She was mixing with a variety of people, having a large circle of friends who were her age and who were not married, "which is a great advantage because married friends have commitments to their families". When interviewed, she gave the impression that the doors to her past were closed.

The single lesbians felt that leading a gay life was very lonely, filled with insecurities and lacking bonds such as children. They perceived their way of life as the reason for

their loneliness. The widows and divorcees still in the pre-departure state of their children, reported that they missed their companions, being aware of the danger in relying on their children to fulfill these needs.

This section reaffirms that relatedness is the core sense of being for most women (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1982, 1984; Gilligan, 1982; Suib-Cohen, 1989).

#### Theme 7: Aging

The intellectual recognition that aging is an unavoidable biological process was apparent when talking to the women of this sample. However, on the emotional level they had difficulties integrating it. The difficulties in accepting one's aging are best expressed in the words of those women who denied being affected by it. They verbalized feelings such as:

- Aging is nonsense, if you start to think that way you feel that way.
- I better think of my lovely dogs than about aging.
- I'd rather bring the guillotine down on thoughts that I don't like so I can go on living.

The same ambivalence is seen in Datan, Antonovsky, and Maoz's (1981) results, where 85% of the European women answered that they were not worried about growing older and 58% of them did not agree that a woman begins to age during "the change of life", yet, 40% of the women admitted that aging or death were the worst to accept amongst the various aspects of "the change of life".

### Age 50

In spite of its inevitability, it seems that aging comes as a "surprise", together with a sense of "creeping too quickly", or of life going too fast. It is the sudden realization close to the age of 50 that is rather "scary". According to one of the women, fifty is "almost half a century, and you know jolly well you are not going to complete the second half". Generally, the age of 50 was regarded by women as a landmark, a turning point, a rubicon, or a symbol of "the beginning of old age".

All women agreed that age 50 was a limiting factor in terms of men looking for younger women. The widows or divorcees acknowledged that they would have to find a man who would care for the person they were, the man who could look beyond the outer physical being.

Age 50 was regarded as a cut-off age in terms of one's career by those women who felt the need to make important career decisions. They felt it was their last chance to make any change, acknowledging that: "The limiting thing is that you can't do many things after 50. I don't mean I feel it, but you are stigmatized job-wise."

Age as a limiting factor caused anxiety in those women who were employed in the glamorous fields of advertising. These women were afraid to lose their jobs. Others, young late bloomers on the brink of a new career, or housewives ready to re-enter work were apprehensive to participate in preparation courses where they felt like "grannies" among the majority of younger people.

Correspondingly, women had difficulties in defining how old they felt. Most of them did not see themselves as old, dictated

by their chronological age, remarking: "I don't feel older within myself but I am aware that I am", or " You are as young as you feel". They compared their looks with other women of the same age as a means of checking their own appearance. At times, the image of an aging friend suddenly reflected their true aging transformation. Those women who looked younger than their age enjoyed being treated in a "flippant" way; it was flattering and helpful in preserving a certain feeling of youth and vanity.

#### Attitudes Towards Old People

The thought of aging caused anxiety which came through in a sentimental attitude toward old people, who suddenly became "real people", fragile and feeble, whereas before they had hardly been "noticed". This increased awareness could result from society's attitude towards aging and the burden which these women had of debilitated parents, factors which highlighted their own fears of becoming dependent.

#### Physical Changes

The changes associated with age were mainly in three areas: the first, a physical one, while the others were psychological in nature, but activated by the first. The three areas of change are:

- Physical deterioration of the body.
- A sense of missing out in achieving one's "dreams".
- A growing sense of power, confidence and need for spiritual expansion.

This theme will deal with the physical aspect of aging while the

other two are discussed throughout this chapter. Some women reported changes in only one area, whereas others were aware of changes in all areas.

Among the women who related to the physical decline of their aging bodies, were those who referred only to the changes in their looks and the loss of their sexual attractiveness and femininity. For them aging was connected with shame, that of getting old, of becoming a "smelly old lady", one who lost her womanhood and was not a sex object any longer. Their mirrors reflected the image of a middle-aged woman instead of the desired "girlish look", and the fear was of getting a "Dorian Grey's face". The presence of adolescent daughters at home and their critical remarks increased the sense of aging.

The emerging self-portrait of the middle-aged woman was of a woman who used to be thin and cute and who had changed into a grey slob, with her flesh "sagging and everything drooping". The usage of words such as "drooping" and "sagging" when describing their aging bodies was common to all women. The effort to follow the "perfect image", the constant struggle to loose extra pounds or to undergo face lifts, in order to maintain a "fashionable" feminine appearance, was criticized by these women as being signs of vanity, yet, vigorously pursued by them.

Other women perceived aging as a biological process which affects both sexes. They commented that from the point of view of appearance, aging never worried them, though they were aware of a decline in all bodily functions. What they disliked most was the sense of "body impediment" that came with age. They disapproved of the tendency to interpret aging as a loss of

femininity, and saw the problem as resting, not so much, in the middle-aged woman's looks as in middle-aged men's search for younger women.

All the women admitted to feeling "a sense of slowing down". The women felt they could not work as hard as they used to, they got tired sooner and their productivity was far less. The lack of stamina seemed, in some of the women, to be a reflection of a loss of self-confidence. All were sadly acknowledging that it was only going to get worse.

Some women, in the face of changes, were driven to prove that they were still young and physically fit. One 52 year old career woman, whose friends already stopped playing tennis, continued to play with her friends' children or even grandchildren. She admitted that it was a strange feeling, comparing herself to the youngsters, knowing that she was getting old, yet testing herself and finding she was still keeping up with them. Fitness, exercising and dieting were important for most women. Yet they sadly admitted that "I can't do more than what I am doing."

### Staying Youthful

Picasso's reasoning that living with someone young helped him to stay youthful (Stassinopoulos, 1989) was a means which some younger women in the sample used. They projected their needs to maintain their youth onto young lovers. However, it seems that turning to young lovers is more complicated than just the need to keep one's youth, as was illustrated by one woman's emotional involvement with a younger man. This was a relationship of

equality, as opposed to her dependent, child-like relationship with her husband: the husband wanted her to be "sweet and soft and dependent", whereas the lover was challenging and promoting her independence.

Working together with young colleagues, having young children at home or being around youngsters and invited to take part in their activities helped others to retain their youth.

### Positive Aspects of Aging

Some of the older women, those who were in their mid-fifties, were beginning to enjoy the positive aspects that came along with age. They reported they did not yearn to return to their twenties, when they had been less settled and confident. Others, however, were feeling that they had missed out on life and were angrily mourning their aging, unable to see its positive aspects.

### Aging and the Married Couple

Aging and its interrelatedness with the marital relationship will be discussed in further detail in Theme 9, dealing with the marital relationship. However, at this stage it is of interest to point out some reactions.

- Some women experienced relief when they looked at their husbands and realized that they, too, "paid the toll of aging".
- In the case where the husband was younger than the wife, her physical decline caused her anxiety, due to criticism from her husband.

- Tender love and a close emotional bond with her husband tended to ease a wife's aging process.

In terms of the occupational groups, career women, late bloomers and early retirees were less preoccupied with their aging than the working and housewives groups. Most of the women in the first three groups, who felt successful and fulfilled, did not feel that life had passed them or that youth had been extinguished.

#### Joan Collins Syndrome

Joan Collins, one of television's famous heroines, is seen in the collage presented in Figure 8 as the symbol of a middle-aged woman who, in spite of her advancing years (54 at the time of the study) is still attractive, daring and successful.

On various occasions, whether in interviews or in group discussion, Joan Collins's name was mentioned as an example of middle-aged women who need not be "doomed to death". She seems to be an identification symbol, serving to lift the low self-image of middle-aged women.

Amanda's Collage The collage in Figure 8 was made by a 50 year old housewife. She was afraid of becoming like the old lady what she wrote with reference to her collage:

My conclusions after much thought: When you are young, people give you flowers, wine and dine you, protect and take care of you. No matter what you do and however good you are you get in the collage, sitting in the distance in front of a closed gate (in the shape of a grave). The following section

the spiritual and masculine element of life, and the green lower layer representing the earthy element of life (Cooper, 1978).

According to Jaffe' (1974) and Cooper (1978), the circle symbolizes the Self, wholeness and the feminine. The circle as a symbol of wholeness is also found in the Eastern religions in the form of the mandala.

Breaking the silence and sharing her pain with others helped this woman to realize that she was going through a transformation, where a potential for growth existed.

#### Theme 6: Loneliness and Not Being Needed

I have never been without  
a paramount person.

Feeling needed makes me feel  
I am somebody.

(a participant)

Being needed as a mother and wife gives a sense of meaning in life to many women. The end of these roles brings a sense of emptiness and loneliness. These two themes are discussed together since they are interlinked.

The sense of lonesomeness, as an existential human condition (Becker, 1975), can be repressed as long as women are needed by their families. Feelings of loneliness welled up in many women in this study as a result of children's departure. Only a few sophisticated career women were aware of the differences and could differentiate between lonesomeness and feeling lonely.

Being raised on the myth of "togetherness" (Gould, 1978),

where marriage and motherhood were a central part of their lives, most of these women have never lived on their own. The departure of children, the prospect of a husband's early death, and the fear of being divorced (considering increasing divorce rates), were all mentioned as causes for anxiety in the face of prospective loneliness.

The large house, filled with sound, once the center of a woman's importance in life but now empty and quiet, became a symbol of loneliness and isolation mainly for housewives and working women. There was no longer any need to mother grown-up children to promote a husband's business, or to satisfy materialistic needs. A sense of "there is not much for me to do" was prevailing.

The sense of loneliness started to creep in long before the children actually left home, when mothers started feeling that their children had no time for them any more. They were not very interested in "mommy" and husbands were busy "and you are left out from his side as well". Active employment did not serve to fulfill working women who, similar to housewives, experienced the same feelings of emptiness and loneliness.

A sense of despair, shame, guilt, but also a rising strength, was heard when these women reported being surrounded by their family and still feeling lonely. The ambivalence was heard in the words of one working woman who said: "I should not feel lonely. In fact, there is so much going for me, that I am ashamed to admit these feelings. No, I am not ashamed, I am justified to feel it." The need to hide these "unjustified" feelings was strong especially in those housewives who had always been in control of



Figure 8. Amanda's Collage

recalls verbatim older and no amount of wishing can keep you young. You do however have choices. You can let yourself go and become a sweet kind little lady sitting on your own, waiting for other people to take you out. Or you can get up and go, change your image, your figure, think of yourself, be like Joan Collins and do!!!

I decided to go for the Joan Collins image. Everybody loved Joan Collins and what she stood for, but deep down we all envied her for her independence, her looking good at 54, her success, not caring about what people think, her writing a best seller book, her young men friends, and her money.

### Summary

As it appeared in other themes, being at the end of a process is certainly different from being in the middle of it. Thus the older women were less worried, accepting the facts of life and realizing the inevitability of it. The younger, being at the beginning of the process, were ambivalent: some used denial, others rationalization, while others were consciously worried.

### Theme 8: The Departure of Children

We are selfish, we want our children near us, and they want to fly away.

After 25 years of being a mother it's very hard to change.

I've accepted grey hair, lines, wearing glasses, but I find it difficult to accept my children leaving home.

(a participant)

The empty nest syndrome is a controversial issue (Bart, 1971; Krystal & Chiriboga, 1978; Oliver, 1977; Rubin, 1979). The phrase itself has also been criticized (Kaufert, 1985; McCullough, 1980; Oliver, 1977). Therefore a neutral expression - the departure of children - will be used.

The emotional fabric of this phase is woven with conflicting feelings, such as sadness and relief, loss and guilt, mixed with a sense of freedom and new beginnings.

Results of the present sample indicate that the departure of children should be seen, like the menopause, as a process of ongoing change that starts even before the actual departure and continues after it. Like the menopause, this process should be divided into three substages:

- The pre-departure stage: children are still home, but their departure is imminent.
- The peri-departure stage: children are in the process of leaving home, i.e. some have already left, while others are still at home.
- The post-departure stage: all children have left home.

#### Post-Departure Phase

Post-departure mothers, like post-menopausal women, distanced from the event itself, were able to look back in retrospect on their childbearing years. They evaluated their role as mothers, using the success or failure of their children as their yardstick. There appears to be an inverse correlation between the intensity of their reaction and the time that had lapsed since their children's departure, as was evident in J's case. Nine years ago

her son got married and left home to live elsewhere. At that time she was depressed, but since then she has adjusted, saying:

I have no feelings of regret. I am glad that my son is doing well, therefore I would not like him to come back to our town. I miss my grandchildren obviously, but you can't have it all, you have to carry on with your own life...if I want to get in the car and see them...it's not so far. It's now the future, it's me, I need to have something more.

The positive aspects reported by women in this phase were:

- A sense of relief that was related to the decrease in household chores and everyday worries. Women could make use of their free time.
- Freedom to pursue their own interests. an awareness that it was a time to assess their situation, explore new areas of interest and fulfil needs.
- The geographical distance diminished too frequent contact and tended to improve the parent/child relationship.
- In cases where children were a source of tension between parents, the departure of children was a relief.

Few women indicated that their husbands suffered the departure of their children even more than they had.

The departure of children was more openly discussed and shared between husband and wife, compared to other aspects of this transition. Yet, unlike childhood or adolescence, there is no preparation to help parents understand the experience better and to get through this period.

### Peri-Departure Phase

Examining the peri-departure group, various reactions were found:

- Some mothers felt anxious, wondering what their new role would be.
- Some felt that this was a time to assess their situation and tune into their need for fulfillment.
- Some tried to avoid the pain and dismiss the future.
- Some, more aware of the change, tried to enjoy the presence of their children at home for as long as possible.

### Pre-Departure Phase

The pre-departure mothers, like the pre-menopausal women, still at a distance from the event, reacted in various ways:

- Some were unaware of what was to come.
- Some were looking forward to it as a time of freedom.
- Those who were over-involved in their children's lives felt anxious and worried.
- Some, who in their middle 40's still had small children at home, would have preferred to have had their children at an earlier stage, feeling that their own needs for expansion could not be met at present.

Analyzing the data in terms of occupational groupings indicated that the career women and late bloomers reacted differently to the housewives and the traditional workers.

### Career Women and Late Bloomers

Having developed a meaningful life of their own, the career

women and late bloomers were able to help their children move out, while staying on friendly terms with them. They were able to differentiate between their own needs and those of their children, understanding that it was more important for them to see their children's happiness and success than to have their own gratification. Though painful, they saw this process as a growth experience. A career mother of four said:

When the children started to leave home it was terrible. Fortunately both of us realized that the children had to go. But I hated it. You know you have to be totally supportive, not holding on but warm and meaningful. They went into the unknown and it was difficult for them. I don't know for whom it was more difficult. I felt depressed, but took it as my responsibility to let them go.

Guilt feelings for being over-occupied with their careers and neglecting their role as mothers were found among the members of these two groups. A decrease in these feelings was linked to children's success. "It took a long time to realize and see how well they grew up, 50% of it belong to us as parents, so finally I learned to relax."

However, a sudden realization that their role as mothers was coming to an end while they were too occupied elsewhere, drove some of these mothers "back home" where they "re-discovered" their children. At times they had difficulties in letting their children go, trying to capture and prolong a sense of motherhood. However, their involvement in work helped them from over-reacting.

Enthusiastic about their career development, the late

bloomers felt at times, a sense of: "I feel too busy to worry about them leaving home. Occasionally I wish they had already gone...but then I feel it's cruel, and say to myself it will happen when it will happen."

### Housewives and Traditional Workers

Children's anticipated or actual departure raised anxiety in those women whose life was centered around their children, highlighting the existential void they experienced at present. The housewives and traditional workers had difficulties accepting reality - that their children were busy with their own lives - and mother was not in the limelight anymore. Being less needed at home, losing control and power over their families (Oliver, 1977) were expressed in the words of a housewife: "I am afraid that when she leaves, the emptiness will be great. A big house with just me and my husband with too much time on my hands. Children do fill the time." Some women interpreted their children's wish to live on their own as a rejection. One woman expressed it:

In a way, I resent it. I'll feel hurt when my daughter leaves. The resentment comes from what was instilled in me, that you should be at home until you get married. I was never on my own. I went from my parent's home to my husband's, and really never experienced life.

Yet, being aware of the changes in contemporary life-styles, she continued:

On the other hand, I would not mind her experiencing these things. I would like to give her the chance. You should

fill your life with other things.

In this context, too, for women of all occupational groups there was a feeling that a certain era in life had come to an end, an era that some still mourned, while others were already making use of the newly gained freedom.

### Status Symbol

The presence of children at home was regarded as a sign that parents were still young. It was a "status symbol" which "keeps you in touch with what is going on in the outer world, young people nourish young ideas."

### Emigration

Emigration, characteristic of whites in this country, was specifically evident in this cohort of middle-aged women. Of the 72 mothers in this sample, 26 (.36) had experienced one, more or all their children emigrating. Afraid of the political situation and the future of their children, parents encouraged them to leave, being fully aware that they might not come back. Pain, sadness and longing were not lessened by the fact that they consciously approved of their children leaving. Closer ties with the extended family, especially on holidays, frequent telephone calls, and frequent visits abroad, were some of the ways used to regain a sense of family and to keep close contacts with the children.

### Summary

Looking at the departure of children as a process divided

into subphases could explain controversial results in this field (Bart, 1971; Deykin, et al. 1966; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Oliver, 1977; Rubin, 1979). Post-departure mothers, at the end of the process, are psychologically and emotionally in a different state to that of pre- and peri-departure mothers. Each subphase highlights different aspects that eventually lead to a new recognition. Regarding these three subphases as one and treating them with no differentiation results in conflicting results. For instance, Gutmann's (1985) parental\post-parental division (see Chapters 2 and 8) confirms this and explains the depressive picture which the post-parental housewives and working women presented.

Results from the present study indicated that:

- The longer it takes children to leave home, the easier it was for the mothers.
- Housewives and working women reacted differently from career women and late bloomers.

It seems that stressing only the non-crisis, positive aspects of this phase as Rubin (1979) has done, overlooks the phenomenon of children's departure as a process. If women were to do so too, it would prevent them from dealing openly with painful feelings.

#### Theme 9: The Marital Relationship

Marriage is a habit. Better  
the devil you know than the  
one you don't.

(a participant)

Since this study only dealt with women, husbands' attitudes concerning the marital relationship during this transitional period, were reflected through their wives' eyes.

### The Marital Gap

The results of the present study highlighted the opinions of Golan (1986), O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) and Rollins (1989) that the married couple is at this phase of life at their most distant. Rollins and Feldman (1970) described the distance between partners as a U-shaped pattern, from great distance, through closeness, to great distance again.

Data analysis revealed that the middle-aged married woman was in the midst of a paradoxical process, where opposite forces were operating. On the one hand, she felt the need to reach out and get intimately closer to her husband, especially now when the children were leaving and time was running out. On the other hand, the inner drive to become "one's own person" (Levinson, 1978) heightened personal differences and acted as a major obstacle.

The process of integrating one's contra-sexual sides, one of the tasks of this transitional period (Bakan, 1966; Gutmann, 1985; Jung, 1933, 1976), was apparent in the women's behavior. Their growing assertiveness further complicated the marital relationship. However, from the women's reports, it seemed that there was little indication of husbands mellowing and developing their feminine, relatedness side, which confirmed Thurnher (1977) and Friedman's (1987) findings that the change in men takes place at a later stage, when they reach their retirement phase.

Marriages where children served as the main communicative channel, suffered from a "sudden silence" and heightened anxiety, especially among housewives and traditional workers. These low self-image women were afraid that their husbands would now discover their wives' "nothingness".

Wives felt that their particular vulnerability at this phase in their lives, their needs for support and reassurance were not met. The bond of silence surrounded the couple and caused distance. Partners might have joked about their "greying hair or falling chests", but in most cases they would not discuss relevant issues and share their feelings openly. It also came across that while women blamed husbands' insensitivity, they themselves were not knowledgeable and responsive to their husbands' transition and the problems it posed for them. The couple's different pace of change caused instability in the relationship.

### Closing the Gap

An increase in marital satisfaction was apparent in some of the older couples, as had been described by Friedman (1987) and Thurnher (1977) too. One of them, a career woman, said:

One always starts talking about the kids and then it branches off to other things for which there was no time or place before. We have to work on it, but we do find that suddenly we say the same things. One suddenly realizes that one has to use this opportunity to get closer because time is getting short. Time is precious now.

Having been busy in different worlds, husband and wife can now

talk about things they could not verbalize before. In certain cases the departure of children served as a trigger to find each other again. One housewife said:

The marriage was not always good, but it's better since my children have gone, because he wants all the attention and I never knew that. I know it today and I am prepared to give it to him. We have good communication and enjoy the quiet weekends together.

Tension was often released when the couple could no longer fight over a child who had already left home. It improved the marital relationship in cases where mothers could stop playing the negotiator between children and their father, while being accused by him of taking the children's side.

The career women, independent and confident showed a need to come "back home" and invest in their marital relationships as Leiblich has also described (1986). Unlike the housewives and traditional working women, having a sense of self helped them to express their needs better, without the fear of being rejected.

### Threatened Husbands

The growing sense of independence, a new phenomenon mostly with the late bloomers, was reported to threaten husbands' status and cause a power struggle. They interpreted their wives' new assertiveness and confidence as aggression, and they were afraid that their wives wanted to take over and change the status quo.

### Fear of Staying Alone

Differences in personal growth over the years reached a

crucial point, where some wives had second thoughts about staying in a marriage which was emotionally and intellectually no longer satisfying. Others, aware of the gap, were afraid to leave or to be left. The financial situation, whether a woman was dependent or independent financially, played a considerable role in the decision whether to stay in the marriage or not. These indications of reluctance confirmed Rubin's (1979) finding that 20% of her middle-aged subjects avoided confronting their husbands for fear of shaking the status quo. Thus, the subsistence of a marriage is not indicative of marital contentment (Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

The findings of Datan et al. (1981), that 50% of the middle-aged women in their sample were worried about their husbands' health, compared with only 25% who were concerned with their own health, indicate the insecurity and dependency that middle-aged women experience. Their sample was divided into ethnic groups so that it is difficult to compare their results with the present ones. However, women, mainly in the group of the housewives, voiced similar concerns. One housewife said:

I have a terrible fear of losing him... I hear instances of men who die of heart attacks, and I keep putting myself in that position, thinking if this happen to me I would not cope. I could not survive, I think I lean too much on him.

Fear of staying alone and the fact that time was not in their favor were further factors which kept women in their marriages. A 49 year old woman said: "If I were a younger person, I would have probably have left him and found somebody else. But I am married for 30 years and just feel I can't let my marriage break up now.

I don't feel safe at my age."

The decision to stay in the marriage was not, however, always based on fear and dependency needs. Some women, disillusioned, had consciously analyzed their situation and had come to the decision to stay with the "devil you already know". Such a decision was illustrated in the case of a 53 years old working woman who said:

My father died last year and left his house to me. I decided I wanted to renovate it and so I did. But it knocked out my husband. He became insecure because I used my own money for it. He realized that I will have a house of my own, a car, a job and enough money, and he gave me a very hard time and if ever I thought of walking out it was last year. Then I realized that I do not want hassles in my life. I do not want the responsibility of having my own house for the sake of having my own house. I want to do things that give me pleasure, not head-aches. I think to be on one's own can't be fun. I realized I have the best of both worlds.

Out of the eight divorcees in this sample, three walked out of their marriages during the previous two years, feeling that 50 was a crucial age in terms of making decisions. Two others had recently been left by their husbands in favor of younger women, whereas the other three were divorced at earlier stages of their marriage.

In terms of the occupational groupings, the housewives and traditional working women who were financially dependent on their husbands were not considering initiating a divorce. On the contrary, they were petrified that their husbands might leave

them. They started to fantasize that their husbands' saw them as mother figure: old, boring and unattractive.

### Attitudes Towards Money

Money seemed to be more of an issue with the late bloomers, working women and housewives than with the career women and early retirees. Whereas the latter two groups related to money as a source of income, the former's attitudes were emotionally loaded. It was part of the marital power struggle, where dependent/independent components were playing a role.

Late Bloomers Earning money was a new experience for the late bloomers. They tended to look back and compare themselves with their not-so-long-ago positions as housewives, a comparison which highlighted the dependency and frustration they had felt then.

Being professionally occupied was for them more important than the salary itself, as one of them said: "It did not matter if it was 5 or 500 Rands, it was important that I have the recognition of a worker." It was viewed as a kind of a reward, an acknowledgement of the effort which they had not received as housewives. That explains partly why none of the late bloomers became financially successful, but rather gained professional approval. These attitudes also confirmed findings by Guggenbuhl (1981) and Stark (1983), that middle aged women did not enter the labor force just for money.

Yet, they admitted that the sense of contribution to the family's budget was pleasant. Now they could enjoy the little

things that having money brings, such as buying a present for a husband without asking him on what account to put it. They could support, for instance, an old mother "with their own money." They could even start complaining and voice their dissatisfaction, a thing they did not allow themselves before.

Housewives and Traditional Workers The belief that "economics determines the power distribution in the marriage" (Rossen-Cardozo, 1989, p. 102) was apparent in the groups of housewives and the traditional workers (who were poorly paid). The housewives did not regard their contribution, as caretakers of the family, as a form of work that should be paid for. Instead, they saw the husband as the provider, and the money he earned as his money that they were "allowed" to spend. Their attitudes can best be summed up in the way they used and interpreted the word "spend". Whereas the use of this word is usually associated with money expenses, they stressed its "wasting" aspect. It was best expressed in the words of a housewife who felt guilty for asking for money that she did not earn and then perhaps spending it on things she did not deserve. The housewives tended to develop a "kingsize guilt complex" watching their husbands working hard and their children at university. One of their means to avoid these feelings was to ask their husbands to join them shopping so that the latter would become familiar with the high prices and the way their wives spent the money. Others would look for cheap bargains, whilst watching their husbands spending with no hesitation.

Running the house did not mean, in their case, that they were

familiar with the financial situation. It was difficult to determine what was causing their ignorance: their initial reluctance to take responsibility when first married, or their husbands' needs to control the situation, or the interplay between the two.

Husbands, it was reported, did not encourage their wives to re-enter work, dismissing the idea, saying they would have to pay higher taxes. Since these husbands were not the target of this research, it was difficult to judge whether this was the only reason.

Career Women The career women, married or single, were free of the considerations described above. The employed ones reached top positions, enjoyed a good salary, contributed to pension funds and felt financially secure. They felt that this sense of security had a strong effect on the quality of their attitudes and commitments to their jobs. The fact that they could walk out and still get a good pension enabled them, paradoxically, to stay in their jobs out of choice.

Money was not an issue with the self-employed career women. Most of them were lesbians who, being single, felt from a young age that earning money was their own responsibility. They were self-supporting even when living in a relationship. Accustomed to living on a high standard and realizing that getting older decreases one's earning power, they were carefully planning their future in the knowledge that there was no one to lean on.

### Summary

The transition to the second half of life is a vulnerable period in the life of the married couple. Both partners have their insecurities regarding the marriage and life in general. The marital relationship lacked effective communication and companionship, as described by Spanier and Lewis (1980). This lack of communication could be due to the bond of silence in which women and men are caught up. Yet, a tendency towards getting closer was apparent, mainly among the older couples. However, the couple's communicative skills need improvement to allow them to reconnect.

Friedman's (1987) results which indicated that married women develop their strength and self-esteem in the second half of life, whereas men develop their relatedness side, also began to emerge in the present study, although only a few women reported significant differences in their husbands' behavior. As Friedman (1987) and Thurnher (1977) found, changes in husbands' attitudes occurred at a later stage, about at the retirement phase. The integration of the masculine-feminine polarities, at least on the part of the women, was clearly seen in the groups of late bloomers, career women and early retired women, but it was also evolving among the housewives and traditional workers. In the latter groups was manifested by their frustration, anger and depression.

### Theme 10: The Sexual Response

The sexual needs are not as great as they were before.  
It's good, but not as exciting.

(a participant)

Masters and Johnson's (1966) observation that menopausal women are reluctant to participate in research on the sexual response was highlighted in this study. It was not that women refused to talk about their sexual relationships; on the contrary, when interviewed, they were willing to give information whenever asked. However, the intensity and urge concerning this aspect was dull, compared with the flow of conversation that they had displayed in regard to other areas of their lives. This tendency became even clearer in group discussions, and particularly in the session which dealt with the changes in male-female sexual responses during midlife.

#### Feeling Freer and Losing Sexual Drive

The data indicated that two opposite forces played a role in the sexual arena of women's transition to the second half of life. On the one hand, women reported feeling less inhibited and freer in expressing their sexuality, saying they enjoyed sex far more than when they were younger. On the other hand, they reported a decrease in sexual drive, or even its loss.

These women had missed the "sexual revolution" of the 1960's. They were looking forward, with expectation, to the time when they could safely enjoy sex. For them, the end of menstruation meant

sexual freedom. Often these expectations were not fulfilled, either on account of the declining libido of the women themselves or their husbands'. The aging process and change in body image were additional factors which affected women's sexual reactions, as one of them expressed it:

I feel better about sex. I was very inhibited and shy about my body and it took me a long time to untie. Two years ago I still felt desirable. But since then my breasts, my arms, my wrinkles, my weight...I don't like to undress in front of my husband. The sexual desire is there but my appearance holds me back.

Others expressed their shame by refusing certain coital positions, which they felt were inappropriate to their fat, aging bodies. The need for reassurance, that a woman was "still desired", that "somebody wants you, that you are special for somebody" were themes that appeared in interviews.

Differences in sexual response were found to be connected to biological, as well as psychosocial variables. They were influenced by:

- A woman's menopausal state, i.e. whether she was pre-, peri- or post-menopausal.
- Her psychosexual development.
- The marital status, and the nature of her relationship with her partner.
- A woman's place along the occupational distribution, i.e. whether she was a housewife, a traditional worker and so forth.

That physiological changes due to the menopause play a significant role in women's sexual response during midlife

(Kaplan, 1983; Masters & Johnson, 1966, 1970), was confirmed by the results of the present study. Differences emerged between the pre-, peri- and post- menopausal women.

Post-menopausal Women The post-menopausal group was the most homogeneous. All members of this subgroup reported a decrease in their sexual drive, feeling that their sexual needs were not as great as they were before. It took them longer, almost twice as long as before, to reach orgasm. Most of their physical complaints concerned dryness of the vagina. The uniformity of the post-menopausal symptoms tended to confirm the generality of the phenomenon of a decrease in sexual drive at this stage (Masters & Johnson, 1966, 1970; Weg, 1989).

Some of the post-menopausal women understood the libidinal decrease as part of the aging process. However, although they accepted it intellectually, emotionally they expressed anger and sadness, associating it with a loss of youth and vitality.

The question of whether to continue with sexual activity in the face of low libido and physical symptoms, caused anxiety in those women who associated sexual attractiveness with a sense of power over their husbands. When it came to their husbands' sexual difficulties, women did not communicate coherently: their reports left it unclear whether they preferred to leave the subject untouched, as a consideration towards their husbands' sensitivity, or whether it was an excuse for abstaining from a discussion of sex.

The decreasing interest in sex enabled women to relate to the opposite sex in a direct, adult way, as one woman commented:

"Once sex was more important than people. Today I am more relaxed and can distinguish between people not as sex objects but as human beings that I want to be around."

Peri-menopausal Women The peri-menopausal women were less homogeneous. They were in the middle of a process of change, having difficulties in accepting and adjusting to it. Similar to the process of menopause, the peri-menopausal women did not yet have the capacity to assess the change introspectively.

Some peri-menopausal women reported enjoying sex, whereas others did not even feel the need for it.

Weg's (1989) observation that it was difficult to differentiate between cause and effect regarding depression and declining sexual activity in middle-aged women, was seen in some of these peri-menopausal women too. They did not know whether to attribute their decreasing sexual drive to biological factors or to their deteriorating marriages. They tended to see their loss of attractiveness as being responsible for their husbands' lack of sexual interest in them. They were ashamed of their aging bodies and their night sweats. Those among them who used to initiate sex ceased to do so, being afraid of being rejected. Cutler, Garcia and McCoy's (1987) results, that there is a correlation between peri-menopausal women's educational levels and their sexual response, might explain the fact that more than half of the women who reported a decrease in sexual interest were housewives or traditional workers. These women were less educated than the college educated sample, studied by Cutler et al.

The other peri-menopausal women reported feeling sexually positive, as one of them said: "The more you learn about it, the better it is." Their sense of freedom was also enhanced in cases where children had already left home. As one woman put it: "You can be spontaneous, you can scream, you can shout and be freer."

These women could objectively acknowledge that their husbands were much slower and less enthusiastic about initiating sexual activity, but "once you started, it was no different from the past". Husbands' diminishing sexual demands now combined with the new sense of freedom that the women had acquired and which made sex far more enjoyable. In Weg's (1989) words, "sensuality" was replacing "sexuality". This difference in quality of sex was explained by one of the women: "In the past he was responding more to his physical needs and was very demanding sexually. Now he is more emotional, and I feel much more love from my husband than I used to feel 10 years ago, when I used to resent his demands."

Pre-menopausal Women Differences in the pre-menopausal group ranged from those who reported having more sexual needs than before, enjoying a better and freer sex life, to those women who reported a lack of sexual drive, at least with their husbands. They understood their sexual experiences as part of their problematic marital relationships. The fact that they were not yet experiencing the menopause also helped them to differentiate between biological and personal needs.

Long-term Unsatisfying Sexual Relationships Another distinguishable subgroup were those women who, for various

reasons, have never had a satisfying sexual relationship. At this stage they did not report any changes in their sexual patterns, but neither did they connect their problems with the loss of youth or attractiveness. However, those among them who used to initiate sex in order to keep it alive stopped doing so, "feeling fed up with it". Still others finally came to terms with the situation and tried to see other and more fulfilling aspects of their partners.

Single Women The single women of this sample, i.e. the widows, divorcees, singles and lesbians seemed to have problems maintaining sexual activity as they grew older. In addition to the physiological and psychological changes common to the married women, they found it difficult to find a sexual partner.

The widows reported that sex played a very small part in their lives, although they missed it. They seemed to confuse their sexual urge with their need to share intimacy.

The lesbians reported a decrease in sexual activity which was accompanied, in some cases, with re-evaluating their lesbianism. One couple filled with remorse and guilt, turned towards religion and restrained themselves from sexual activity. The conversion, they felt, brought a larger dimension to life. They found that the physical warmth and affection they gave each other were quite enough. The results of this small sample of lesbians did not agree with the findings of Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1986), that midlife is a relatively stable period for lesbians.

The two single, unmarried women varied in their reactions according to their ages. The younger woman, though "not really

missing it", was still looking for a partner, not so much for sexual needs as for a marital relationship. She was anxious to function adequately sexually and, having been given HRT, felt sexually aroused again. The other single woman was post-menopausal. For her sex "stopped being an issue", commenting that she had come to terms with it.

Those divorcees that had been rejected by their husbands for younger women felt degraded and sexually unattractive.

Growing Stronger The growing strength of women helped them to realize that unsatisfactory sexual relationships were not only their fault. They recognized that their husbands were also partly to blame, and refused to be sexually used. One woman said: "Maybe it has to do with the fact that we don't talk anymore, we are not affectionate, and I feel sexually used and then ignored." These findings confirmed Hite's (1987) similar results.

#### Summary

Changes in sexual responses were reported by all post-menopausal women and by some of the peri-menopausal ones. Lack of information regarding the male/female sexual response in midlife and the unmet needs for sensuality (Weg, 1989) contributed to women's maladjustment to this period. Certain marital problems could have been avoided had the couple had knowledge about changes in human sexual response in this phase in life. When the quality of the marriage, the companionship and communication were satisfactory, sexual inadequacies could easily

be resolved.

It was difficult to judge whether HRT was helpful in regaining the declining sexual drive. Some users felt that HRT increased their sexual drive and were relieved. While others felt no change in their sexual drive, they were able to respond physiologically as a result of HRT.

### The Core Variable

The 10 themes which covered various aspects of life, allowed a glimpse into the inner lives of the women of this sample.

Differences in personalities, life circumstances and the diversity of occupations contributed to shaping the wide range of responses regarding this phase in life. Differences were also due to the women's place along the continuum of the transition, which, as indicated by the results, is a process that takes some years to travel through.

However, transversing all differences and common to all, was the realization that a certain era in life had come to an end. An inner need for a new meaning in life, a new dimension of perception and relation to life was emerging. A change in values and attitudes occurred, which led the women to prioritize and concentrate on, what they felt, was life's most fundamental issues. A growing awareness of the need to use life purposefully in the face of time running out, was also evident.

In some women these needs were masked by depression. Others, aware of the needs, could not see a way to fulfil them. Still others, enthusiastically pursued a new meaning in their lives.

## CHAPTER 14

### CONCLUSIONS

The present exploratory study, based on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) "grounded theory", evolved into a study of five groups of middle-aged women: housewives, traditional workers, late bloomers, career women and early retired women.

The "constant comparative method of qualitative analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was utilized to compare, analyze and conceptualize similarities and differences in the way women, individuals as well as group-members, experienced the transition into the second half of life.

The sample, whose size and progression was unpredictable at the beginning, developed into its final form as a result of a decision taken at the end of the first stage, after interviewing 21 women. At that stage, the emerging themes pointed towards various directions of exploration. Apart from the emerging division into working status, a comparative study could have been conducted: comparing married and non-married women, divorcees and widows, lesbians and non-lesbians with respect to the way they experienced this transition. Furthermore, a comparison between women who have had hysterectomies and those who had had a natural menopause could have been undertaken. The decision to continue with the division along occupational lines was taken in order to explore whether the importance of work in women's lives was contributing to the way they experienced their transition into the second half of life. It was of interest to address the

question of whether working women were coping better than housewives while navigating the transition to the second half of life, and secondly, what the role of work was in their lives.

However, the tendency to divide women into workers and non-workers in relation to the way they experience midlife proved insufficient. Though it shed some light on the problem, it was found that career was too narrow a focus of study. Importantly, the results of this study indicate that work per se is not a solution to women's struggle for self-fulfillment, especially not in midlife, when the meaning of work itself becomes most important (Guggenbull-Craig, 1981). The transition to the second half of life is a process which encompasses various issues which a woman has to confront. Work, or more clearly defined, achievement, is only one of these issues. Unless all the issues are worked through, the beginning of a meaningful second half of life is postponed. Droege's (1982) conclusion that "there were happy and dissatisfied women in both groups" (p. 159) was confirmed in this study, but with a slight modification: there were struggling women in all groups. However, as women outgrow their "feminine" roles (Gould, 1978), broaden their horizons and learn to use other potentials, they become better equipped to confront the demands that the transition to the second half of life imposes. This explains the differences between the women - workers and housewives alike - who have found meaning in their work and those who did not. Yet this is not the determining factor of individual differences among the various women.

Neither the working women nor the housewives could escape feeling guilty: the former for not being a "good enough mother",

totally dedicated to their children, the latter for resenting the fact that they stayed home.

Moreover, middle-aged working women, as seen from the study, cannot be treated as a single entity. They comprised various groups who differed from each other in terms of period of work, their attitudes towards it, and the meaning that work played in their lives. The group of traditional workers, for example, resembled the group of housewives more than the other three working groups. The group of late bloomers was enthusiastic about work and the new meaning which it brought into their lives, whereas the career women, though not a homogenous group, enjoyed the power and leadership but were realistic about the meaning of work in their lives. An alternative group was comprised of housewives who thought that the reason for their diminishing status at home lay in their non-employment outside their home-environment. Finally, the early retired group, disillusioned about their past "dreams", discovered that there "was life beyond work".

The housewives and the traditional workers were having a more difficult transition than the career women, the late bloomers and the early retired women. Work appeared to facilitate a smoother transition, but all women, regardless of their working status, were inevitably confronted with the issues characteristic of this period.

The same applied to the menopausal status. Being pre-, peri- or postmenopausal highlighted the coming to an end of the fertility stage in a woman's life. However, as a result of the medicalization of the menopause (Bell, 1987; McCrea, 1983), this

stage had in most cases lost its meaning as a symbolic event in a woman's life.

The other emerging themes, the bond of silence, the departure of children and the changing structure of the family, the marital relationship, the new sense and relation to time and attitudes towards death, were all variables that applied to some but not all of the women and proved to be only part of a greater complex.

However, the continuous process of comparative analysis indicated that the emerging theory was organizing itself around a "core variable" (Glaser, 1978) which connected all the conceptualized data into an integrated body of theory. A "core variable", according to Glaser (1978), describes, in sequential stages, a certain piece of behavior along a period of time, and is marked by change along its continuum. In the present study, the core variable emerged as the strong feeling that a certain period in the women's lives had come to an end, and the predominant need for actualizing their potentials in the light of the time running out. All the women, married and non-married, mothers and non-mothers, career-oriented and housewives, indicated their awareness in reporting it. Various factors triggered this process: some women, mostly the housewives and the traditional workers, reacted to the departure of their children and the changing structure of the nuclear family, whereas others responded to the biological changes and/or the urgency of time running out.

The process confronted the women with the loss of their reproductive capacity, the loss of their youth, the ending of their mothering role and, perhaps most significantly, the loss of dreams and illusions which accompanied the acknowledgement of

imminent mortality.

The process was characterized by the women's tendency towards introspection and their need to take stock and sum up their lives. Many of questions arose, such as: Who am I? What is the meaning of my life? Where am I going now that certain roles in my life are coming to an end? Some women equated these questions with those arising during adolescence. However, it seems that there are significant differences between these two phases. Adolescence is a period controlled by the ego, and its goal lies in achievements in the external world (Jung, 1933, 1976). The target of the late forties and early fifties, as emerged in this study, is entirely different. It is directed intrapsychically, and is aimed at finding one's own real self and actualizing one's individuality. The timing of this transition coincides with the freedom that is obtained from having no biological obligations. It is nature (Gutmann, 1985) and society's lesser expectations which now enable a woman to discover her unfulfilled potential. It made all the women with "relational dreams" and those with "split dreams" (Roberts & Newton, 1987) realize that now was their last chance to re-organize and prioritize their goals and to develop greater meaning in their changing lives. It is not only the opening versus the closing down of the gates which Deutsch (1973) described, but rather a transition to a new stage in life, where the emphasis is on different interests and values.

Some women were consciously aware of the change, while others were not: the former were able to focus on their needs and to begin to self-actualize, whereas the latter experienced a

state of restlessness, wanting "something", but remaining unclear as to what this was. A sense of guilt for wanting "something" perceived as "selfish" was deep-seated in many of the women, especially the housewives and traditional workers. They had difficulties in perceiving themselves as separate entities. Yet, the inner urge was enhanced by strong feelings of regret which fed the fire of change. The growing sense of power, which was apparent among the early retired women and most of the career women and late bloomers, was at times hidden behind the depressing features that the housewives and traditional workers presented (Gutmann, 1985). Personal crystallization, leadership and generativity (Erikson, 1963), as well as feelings of not being needed, meaninglessness, powerlessness and depression were all part of the process and should all be looked at as points along a series of continua. Not all the middle-aged women were depressed, but neither were all of them cheerful and happy. The pace at which women resolved conflicting aspects of midlife dictated their state of mind.

The beginning of this transition might have started as early as the late thirties (Jung, 1933, 1976) with what Sheehy (1977) called the "deadline decade". This study did not cover such young people but the group of late bloomers and those working women who joined the work force in their late thirties or early forties illustrated this trend towards personal growth and expansion. However, a decade later, in the late forties and early fifties, with inevitable biological, familial and sociological changes, this transition reaches its peak. It forcefully confronts a woman with herself. This is the so-called "midlife crisis" about which

there is so much controversy.

### Midlife Crisis

"Midlife crisis", as a concept which claims to describe the reactions of middle-aged men or women's to this particular phase, is a controversial issue (Chiriboga, 1981, 1989; Golan, 1986; Gould, 1978; Hunter & Sundel, 1989; Jacques, 1965; Levinson, 1978; Neugarten, 1968a; Rubin, 1979). Researchers do not agree about the definition of crisis, and refer to it differently. Thus Erikson (1963, 1978), Gutmann (1975, 1985), Jung (1976), Levinson (1978), O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) and Riegel (1975), all perceived crisis as part of a developmental process, and did not attribute negative connotations to it, while others (Rubin, 1979) sought to prove the opposite. It seems that the tendency to deny midlife as a problematic stage is, according to Troll (1977), partly attributed to the leaders of the feminist movement of the 1960's who were then still young themselves. Their struggle for equality between the sexes pushed aside the universal aspect of aging and moving to the second half of life. The tendency was enhanced by others (Bell, 1987; McCrea, 1983) who protested against the medicalization of the menopause. The need to prove that women still have meaningful lives after their children leave home (Rubin, 1979) overshadowed other biological and psychological transformations.

When crisis is regarded neutrally, as an integral part of the transition to the second half of life, rather than as a traumatic, debilitating event, then the controversy around it can be settled. Moreover, the tendency to deny the "crisis", or

demystify it, by stressing only its positive aspects prevents women from seeking help when needed, and contributes to the bond of silence that surrounds this phase, thus, indirectly causing it to become the "neglected crisis".

It seems that there is a tendency to overlook the fact that the transition to the second half of life, as a developmental stage, is a universal phenomenon (Downing, 1987a; Jung, 1933, 1976; Jung & Kerenyi, 1985; Luke, 1981; Mankowitz, 1984). Unfortunately, the contemporary, Western, middle-aged woman has to deal with its universal aspects, as well as struggling with the cultural double standards surrounding it.

However, as there is as yet no theoretical body of knowledge with regard to adult development (Chiriboga, 1981, 1989; Hunter & Sundel, 1989; Levinson, 1978), it seems that less energy should be absorbed by debates on whether or not midlife constitutes a crisis and instead, the focus should shift to building a theory of adult development.

The moderate approach to midlife is expressed in Chiriboga (1989) words: "during the middle years, a heightened awareness of personal abilities and a solid grounding of self in society will tend to overcome a host of midlife problems resulting from physical and social stressors" (p. 116).

#### Suggestions for the Future

The second half of life can become a time for "renewal, regeneration and discovery" (Weg, 1989, p. 36). Yet, this cannot happen without confronting, experiencing and coming to terms with

the universal and cultural issues that are part of this transition. The existence of a bond of silence which affects the natural development of such a process was confirmed in this study. Living in a youth-oriented society that has a double standard about aging, made it difficult for the women of this study to deal openly with the issues with which this transition confronted them. It was difficult for them to abide by the rules of the "afternoon" of life (Jung, 1976) when the rules of the "morning" were so predominant. This inability to deal openly and to come to terms with the above dilemma resulted in denial, repression, anger, depression, and prolonged the phase, leaving the women feeling alone. A two-pronged approach can be proposed to overcome this sequence of problems, viz. education and research.

#### Educational Programs

Preventive educational programs are needed to break through this "neglected crisis" and prepare women, as well as men, to face their middle and late adult years. These programs, concerning the physiology and psychology of aging of both sexes should be geared towards both men and women, parents, couples and singles. Programs should offer knowledge of future changes in attitudes and values concerning marriage, departure of children, death of parents and the priority of actualizing inner needs in the face of the limited time left. Thus unrealistic expectations and frustrations can be prevented.

Group discussions and/or intensive day-workshops, where participants have the opportunity to question, share and discuss the various issues seem to be one method. Such rites of passage

will help to break the bond of silence and aloneness.

Family doctors, gynecologists, psychologists and other professional helpers should be exposed to and trained to assist those who seek help. The media, e.g. television, popular magazines and newspaper articles could be used as a channel of communication to inform and educate women. The menopause, especially, should be seen in its right context: as only one of other physiological, psychological and sociological aspects of a transition from one half of life to another.

#### Further Studies

Based on Glaser and Strauss's approach and aimed at broadening areas which still need exploration, this study makes no claim to be objective. The researcher was a participant observer in the process of generating theory. Furthermore, as Glaser and Strauss noted, the method and the wealth of data available, encouraged unlimited freedom and flexibility in ways the subject matter may be studied. This is also the reason, according to them, for the occasional differences in results reached by two workers in the same field. However, the constant analysis and comparison helped keeping the study under control. The emerging theory might not be "accurate", but it highlighted aspects of the area of women's transition to the second half of life. Again quoting Glaser and Strauss (1967): "the evidence may not necessarily be accurate beyond doubt, but the concept is undoubtedly a related abstraction about what is going on in the area studied" (p. 23). The two emerging issues for further study are:

- The need to develop a theory of women's adult development.
- The need to recognize the complexity of women's transition into the second half of life.

Filling the gaps to meet the demand for an integrated theory on women's adult development is no easy task and numerous studies can be undertaken in this area. Perhaps the best conclusion here would be to suggest a move away from the pathogenic approach which emphasizes lack of coping with the various transitions. The emphasis should rather fall on the characteristics of women who deal with transitions with some measure of success. This will enable those working in the helping professions to devise educational programs based on theoretical knowledge of existing competencies in women, to help those who have greater difficulty in dealing with transitions.

Furthermore, it should be recognized that the transition into the second half of life is a process rather than a structured change. The change occurs gradually for some and may be more marked for others. The fact remains that it is a complex process and there are no simplistic answers to the questions asked. Further studies should emphasize the ongoing process and should recognize its complexity. Rather than utilizing retrospective approaches, some longitudinal studies need to be done.

Another area to be investigated are the cross-cultural differences which may exist, particularly in the South African context. Studies using groups from different cultures would be invaluable for dealing with this society.

The present study served to piece together parts of the puzzle. Each of these pieces should now be investigated and confirmed.

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## APPENDIX

Table 14 contains biographical information on the women studied. The table reflects the five groups referred to in Chapter 11.

Career Women.

Early Retired.

Housewives.

Late Bloomers.

Working Women.

The legend for the used abbreviations is given on page 408.

No.	Group	Women's age	Marital Status	No. of Children	Children age	Children at home	Menopause	Women's Education	Women's Profession	Employment	Work History	Husband's age	Husband's Education	Husband's Profession
1	C	47	M	2	16-23	AI	PRE	UG	Teacher	Employed	AW	50	UG	Economist
2	C	52	S				POST	MP	Business	Self Emp	AW			
3	C	56	S				POST	UG	Soc. Wor.	Employed	AW			
4	C	58	M	5	25-33	AO	POST	UG	Med. Doc.	Employed	AW	59	UG	Scientist
5	C	61	M	4	23-29	AO	POST	UG	Med. Doc.	Employed	AW	62	UG	Lawyer
6	C	49	D	2	22-27	AO	HYS	UG	Matron	Employed	AW			
7	C	46	S				PERI	UG	Journalist	Employed	AW			
8	C	51	M	4	13-24	PD	PERI	UG	Business	Self Emp	AW	55	UG	Business
9	C	55	S				HYS	MP	Show Busi.	Employed	AW			
10	C	52	M	4	18-27	PD	PERI	UG	Med. Doc.	Self Emp	AW	61	UG	Med. Doc.
11	C	46	S				PRE	NMP	Business	Self Emp	AW			
12	C	52	M	3	22-29	AO	POST	UG	Writer	Employed	AW	52	UG	Journalist
13	C	51	Wi	2	18-24	PD	HYS	UG	Teacher	Employed	AW			
14	C	51	Wi	1	15	AI	POST	UG	U. Leactu.	Employed	AW			
15	C	45	S				PERI	UG	Designer	Employed	AW			
16	C	53	M	3	13-26	PD	PERI	SW	Business	Self Emp	AW	47	SW	Executive
17	C	42	M	2	7	AI	PRE	UG	Soc. Wor.	Employed	AW	44	UG	Accountant
18	ER	52	M	2	18-24	PD	PERI	UG	Teacher			59	UG	Engineer
19	ER	50	M	3	18-22	PD	HYS	UG	U. Leactu.			58	SW	Business
20	ER	54	S				POST	MP	Business					
21	ER	54	D	7	25-34	AO	POST	UG	Lawyer					
22	H	49	M	3	25-30	AO	PERI	SW				52	UG	Engineer
23	H	41	M	3	13-18	AI	PRE	NMP				43	SW	Business
24	H	45	M	3	19-24	AO	HYS	NMP				50	NMP	Business
25	H	48	M	3	23-28	AO	HYS	MP				53	SW	Business
26	H	49	M	4	21-26	PD	PERI	NMP				51	SW	Business
27	H	47	M	3	22-25	AO	HYS	NMP				48	UG	Real Est.
28	H	44	M	2	11-16	AI	POST	UG				45	UG	Lawyer
29	H	54	M	4	23-33	PD	POST	NMP				55	SW	Technician
30	H	51	M	4	24-30	AO	POST	SW				56	UG	Med. Doc.
31	H	54	M	4	24-33	AO	POST	NMP				60	MP	Real Est.
32	H	45	M	3	13-21	AI	PRE	UG				47	UG	Med. Doc.
33	H	50	M	1	18	AO	PERI	NMP				55	MP	Executive
34	H	58	M	1	34	AO	POST	NMP				64	MP	Manager
35	H	60	M	4	25-34	PD	HYS	NMP				60	SW	Designer
36	H	48	M	3	19-21	AI	POST	SW				53	UG	Accountant
37	H	49	M	3	22-26	PD	PERI	UG				53	UG	Lawyer

TABLE 14. Biographical Information on the Women Studied

(see Legend on p. 408)

No.	Group	Women's age	Marital Status	No. of Children	Children age	Children at home	Menopause	Women's Education	Women's Profession	Employment	Work History	Husband's age	Husband's Education	Husband's Profession
38	H	50	M	1	25	AO	PERI	NMP				51	SW	Technician
39	H	44	M	2	17-19	AI	PERI	MP				46	UG	Accountant
40	H	50	M	3	13-18	AI	HYS	MP				47	MP	Executive
41	H	50	M	3	25-30	AO	HYS	NMP				53	UG	Architect
42	H	50	M	2	17-22	PD	HYS	SW				52	UG	Engineer
43	H	49	M	2	24-26	PD	POST	SW				51	MP	Business
44	H	50	M	3	16-22	AI	PERI	UG				55	UG	Pharmacist
45	LB	60	M	3	31-36	AO	POST	UG	Soc. Wor.	Employed	LS	64	UG	Med. Doc.
46	LB	47	M	3	18-24	PD	PRE	UG	Soc. Wor.	Employed	LS	54	SW	Builder
47	LB	50	M	2	19-24	PD	PERI	UG	Soc. Wor.	Self Emp	LS	53	SW	Designer
48	LB	51	D	2	23-26	AO	POST	UG	Journalist	Self Emp	LS			
49	LB	48	M	4	13-22	PD	PERI	UG	Librarian	Employed	LS	49	UG	Accountant
50	LB	42	M	3	9-19	AI	PRE	UG	Business	Self Emp	LS	50	UG	Engineer
51	LB	48	M	3	22-25	AO	PERI	UG	Business	Self Emp	LS	49	MP	Business
52	LB	50	M	2	19-25	PD	POST	UG	Librarian	Employed	LS	52	UG	Accountant
53	LB	47	M	4	19-25	PD	PRE	UG	Soc. Wor.	Employed	LS	49	UG	Engineer
54	LB	59	D	3	29-34	AO	HYS	UG	Psycholo.	Self Emp	LS			
55	LB	44	D	4	16-19	AI	PRE	MP	Pub. Rel.	Self Emp	LS			
56	LB	43	M	2	12-16	AI	PRE	SW	Designer	Self Emp	LS	45	UG	Business
57	LB	54	Sep	3	25-30	AO	POST	UG	Librarian	Employed	LS			
58	LB	50	M	3	20-27	PD	POST	UG	Journalist	Self Emp	LS	53	UG	Lawyer
59	LB	54	M	3	17-23	PD	POST	UG	Soc. Wor.	Self Emp	LS	58	UG	Lawyer
60	LB	54	M	2	27-29	AO	POST	UG	Art Direc.	Self Emp	LS	60	SW	Artist
61	LB	48	M	2	20-23	PD	PRE	UG	Journalist	Self Emp	LS	56	UG	Architect
62	LB	57	M	3	19-28	AO	POST	UG	Soc. Wor.	Employed	LS	60	UG	Executive
63	W	48	Wi	4	16-23	PD	PRE	EG	Teacher	Employed	LS			
64	W	47	D	3	18-23	PD	PRE	UG	Pub. Rel.	Employed	LS			
65	W	49	M	2	20-29	PD	HYS	SW	Programing	Employed	AW	56	NMP	Manager
66	W	49	M	4	13-23	PD	PRE	EG	Teacher	Employed	AW	50	EG	Teacher
67	W	46	M	2	15-17	AI	PERI	SW	Drafting	Employed	AW	43	UG	Engineer
68	W	50	D	2	10-27	AI	PERI	SW	Secretary	Employed	AW			
69	W	44	M	3	16-20	AI	PERI	SW	Nurse	Employed	LS	45	SW	Captain
70	W	43	M	4	12-21	PD	PRE	MP	W/Husband	W/Husband	LS	54	NMP	Business
71	W	47	M	3	18-23	PD	HYS	NMP	W/Husband	W/Husband	AW	47	SW	Business
72	W	45	M	3	15-20	AI	PERI	SW	Secretary	Employed	LS	47	UG	Accountant

TABLE 14. Biographical Information on the Women Studied (cont.)

(see Legend on p. 408)

No. Group	Women's age	Marital Status	No. of Children	Children age	Children at home	Menopause	Women's Education	Women's Profession	Employment	Work History	Husband's age	Husband's Education	Husband's Profession
73	W	M	1	30	AO	PERI	SW	Secretary	Employed	LS	54	UG	Accountant
74	W	M	2	16-18	AI	HYS	MP	Secretary	Employed	AW	49	UG	Accountant
75	W	M	3	16-26	AI	HYS	MP	W/Husband	W/Husband	LS	52	MP	Business
76	W	M	3	16-23	AI	PRE	SW	Teacher	Employed	LS	51	UG	Accountant
77	W	M	6	13-23	PD	PRE	UG	Teacher	Employed	LS	58	UG	Architect
78	W	D	3	17-25	PD	PRE	UG	Teacher	Employed	LS			
79	W	M	2	18-21	PD	HYS	MP	W/Husband	W/Husband	AW	47	UG	Engineer

TABLE 14. Biographical Information on the Women Studied (cont.)

(see Legend below)

Legend for Table 14.

AI	All In	PRE	Pre menopause
AO	All Out	Psycholo.	Psychologist
Art Direc.	Art Director	Pub. Rel.	Public Relation
AW	Always Worked	Real Est.	Real Estate
C	Career woman	S	Single
D	Divorced	Self Emp.	Self Employed
EG	Education Graduate	Sep	Separated
ER	Early Retired	Show Busi.	Show Business
H	Housewife	Soc. Wor.	Social Worker
HYS	Hysterectomy	SW	Skilled Worker
LB	Late Bloomers	U. Leactu.	University Lecturer
LS	Lately Stared working	UG	University Graduate
M	Married	W	Working woman
Med. Doc.	Medical Doctor	W1	Widow
MP	Matriculated Person	W/Husband	With Husband
NMP	Non-Matriculated Person		
PD	Partial Departure		
PERI	PERI menopause		
POST	Post menopause		