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The adult developmental characteristics of women who postponed parenthood

Leser, Anne, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1989

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THE ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WHO POSTPONED PARENTHOOD

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

by

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* * * * *

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To My Mother
For without her love and understanding,
my sleeping gypsy would never have awaken.
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May you all find joy.
VITA

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CHAPTER I

Women interested in careers face the dilemma of choosing to "be a woman and therefore less of an achieving individual, or an achieving individual and therefore less of a woman."

Mead, 1935:301

INTRODUCTION

Women's lives are now, more than ever, ones of options. Women less and less feel that they must choose between a career and a family. Many women are now finding that they can have both. But, at the same time they are finding that these options necessitate making choices. Women can now choose not only when and whether to get married but also when and whether to have children. One of the most important options that women face is that of childbearing and the impact felt from this choice varies depending on the timing of parenthood (Walter, 1986; Stevens-Long, 1984; Bardwick, 1980; Daniels & Weingarten, 1980; Sheehy, 1974).

What impact the birth timing has and how it affects the personal development and sense of identity of women who choose to postpone parenthood and those
who do not, is still largely unknown. This study focused on the development of those women who chose to postpone parenthood.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the development of women who chose to postpone parenthood and to describe developmental characteristics that these women shared. The amount of developmental research that has utilized female participants is limited, particularly in studies of adult development. Today's prevalent theories were formulated by studying males; then attempts were made to accommodate the other half of the human population. However, the accommodation has not, in most instances, been positively accomplished. Because females did not 'fit' the predetermined mold of development, they were labeled as deviant (Gilligan, 1982; Bernard, 1975; Carlson, 1972). Therefore women's development became viewed as problematic. Carol Gilligan (1982) sees women's inability to fit the male models of development not as a deficiency of development but as a problem of representation. There is a "need to delineate 'in women's own terms' the experience of their adult life" (Gilligan, 1982:173).
Women who are members of the "baby boom" generation (i.e. those born between 1946 and 1964) have experienced both a traditional view of female adulthood and a nontraditional view of female adulthood. These two views at times conflict with one another. Female adulthood in the traditional sense is relationship oriented. Female identity then, is expressed in terms of the traditional female roles of a nurturing wife, mother, and caregiver (Gilligan, 1982; O'Connell, 1976; and Bardwick, 1971). The nontraditional view sees female adulthood not only in terms of women's nurturing role but also in terms of women's ability to be analytical, possess leadership capabilities, be independent, and have an interest in things as well as people (Varhely, 1984).

Both perspectives on female adulthood could be viewed as valid. In the 1980s, it is possible for women to experience a wider range of adult roles than previous generations of women. They can be wives, mothers, career professionals, or any combination of these roles and also experience each role for a varied length of time. This ability to chose among roles is an important variable in the discussion of female adult development.
The traditional and nontraditional views of female adult development appear to have emerged from an ability to choose roles. Carol Gilligan (1982) believes that when women describe themselves they define their identity in terms of their relationships and their ability to care. Yet, according to research by Walter (1986) women who had postponed parenthood but now have children, derive their identity "from their own achievements and consequent feelings of competency. They have developed the capacity to know themselves as women" (p. 15). These women see themselves as individuals separate from their relationships. These two contrasting views demonstrate the need to consider diverse perspectives on women and their role choices in the theory building of adult development (Gilligan, 1980).

**Rationale**

For years the belief has been that human development follows a single track and those not following this track are deviating from the expected norm (Gilligan, 1982; Bernard, 1975). Yet the lives of
men and women are inherently different. The experiences of each sex are different. Carol Gilligan in her book *In a Different Voice* states:

The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. By positing two different modes we arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognizes how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought. (p. 173-174)

When looking at the current definitions of adulthood it becomes evident that our present model of development is a masculine one. Terms such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and individualism are all viewed as positive characteristics of adulthood. However, these same characteristics are seen by many as negative attributes when found in women. It should be possible for women to possess these same characteristics and have them be viewed as positive. Women should not be "forced to choose between being a healthy adult or a healthy woman" (Wellington paper, cited in Varhely, 1984:12).

According to Knox (1977) "the self-images of men and women tend to differ both in their substantive
content and in the course of their development during adulthood" (p.348). Adult female identity changes to a greater extent over a lifetime than does male identity (Katz, 1979). These dramatic changes appear to be contingent on roles women choose. Yet a woman's identity is still linked to her nurturing ability (Gilligan, 1982; Katz, 1979; Sangiuliano, 1978). On the other hand, power and separation enable the man to achieve an identity through career successes (Gilligan, 1982; Katz, 1979).

Men are "groomed to do; women are taught to be" (Sangiuliano, 1978:23). Men also have a choice of roles. However, men's roles appear to emerge from their work identity; whereas women's roles shape their identity.

The roles of career, marriage and childbearing are viewed as important for females, and the interaction among them emerges as extremely important when studying adult development (Knaub, 1981; Michael, 1981; and Van Dusen & Sheldon, 1976). The family roles have been viewed as the most important for females, so much so, that the lives of women and the decisions they
make are in many respects influenced by their family roles. Women are just beginning to consider how these roles affect their total lives.

Even though these roles are seen as an integral part of women's lives, the choices that are made and the timetables that develop can create societal and personal pressures. There is the "potential to create role conflict because of the disparity between societal expectations and one's actual behavior" (Michael, 1981:30).

According to Goode (1960) role conflict is a "felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations" (p.484). As women face a greater variety of choice, they will also face greater role conflict. Most women who experience a variety of roles strive to fulfill all the roles, even though the roles (e.g. mother and worker) may at times be at odds (Michael, 1981; Knox, 1977; Bardwick & Douvan, 1972). Theories that purport to explain female adult development need to focus on the variety of roles women experience because these roles are integral parts of women's lives and provide an example of developmental interrelationships (Brooks, 1980; Knox, 1977; Bernard, 1975).
Role conflict may also be present when considering the traditional view of women and the nontraditional view of women. Women who are now in their 20s and 30s have witnessed the debating and redefining of traditional views. Because of these changing views, women can now develop a lifestyle that is traditional or one that is nontraditional or a lifestyle that blends aspects of both views (Bardwick, 1980).

Stewart (1977), in her study of the adult development of young women, found that it was more difficult for women than for men to establish a positive life structure. This occurred because of the problems women encountered when traditional expectations and values of society conflicted with their personal goals. Women who do not ascribe to traditional roles risk societal criticism. This is especially true for those women who do not immediately choose the roles of wife and mother. For these women, the early 30s are viewed as a critical period in their lifecycle because of the childbearing and career decisions which must be made (Michael, 1981; Brooks, 1980; and Stewart, 1977).

A woman who has chosen a traditional lifestyle is seen as family oriented. This woman sees the roles of
wife and mother as primary in her lifecycle. Even though this woman may work, her work is usually viewed more as a contribution to the family's economic health than as a career or a contribution to her own well-being. Her sense of identity becomes a reflection of the roles she chooses. However, recent research has noted that as these women reach their 30s, many are re-entering school and the job market. They have begun to view the work role as an important contribution to their self-esteem (Brooks, 1980; Stewart, 1977). These women as well as those who try to combine traditional and nontraditional life-styles are not as likely to feel a sense of personal identity until after their mother role has diminished (O'Connell, 1976).

Nontraditional women on the other hand have a positive self-concept and a strong sense of personal identity that persists throughout their life-cycle (Varhely, 1984; O'Connell, 1976). These nontraditional women see the work role as primary. They feel the need to develop their own identity rather than an identity that is a reflection of their nurturing capabilities. These women do not disassociate themselves from the roles of wife and mother; rather they approach them as simply another part of their lives. Walter (1986)
states that these women do not feel they are adopting a specific developmental model, but instead they are finding ways to integrate both family and career. These women realize that sometimes choosing one role may necessitate giving up another but feel that the choice is necessary for their own self-esteem (Bardwick, 1980).

A growing number of women are now choosing to postpone parenthood into their 30s. By the time most women reach 40, they have had at least one child (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983). Though most women will have children, the timing of these births has changed significantly. Demographers predict that within the next 10 years there will be a 46% increase in the number of women who will have their first child late in life ("Fertility rates", 1985; National Center for Health Statistics, 1980). In the 1960s there was a move from having children before age 25 to having them between the ages of 25 and 30. Then in the 1970s a significant number of women delayed childbearing until after age 30. By ages 30 to 34, the proportion of childless women drops from 25% to 14% and by ages 35 to 39 only 8% of ever married women in 1980 were still childless (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983).
This decision to postpone parenthood seems to be influenced by a variety of factors. These factors appear to fall into three general categories. The first category includes interpersonal factors, such as the intimate relationship with the spouse and the assurance of a stable marriage. Economic stability is the second category. Postponers have established careers, purchased homes and saved money. The third category involves developmental factors, both physiological and psychological. A woman might feel her biological clock ticking away or worry about the problems involved with a late pregnancy. Psychologically, women who postpone have established an identity and feel secure with that identity (Cohen, 1985; Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1985; Soloway, 1985; Babar, 1983; and Reading, 1982).

In the book Lifeprints, Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) discuss the idea of choices in women's lives and "the strong correlation between preferring the role you are in and well-being" (p. 47). Women who postpone are choosing the role they wish to assume and the timing of those roles. "Postponing parenthood provides women with the opportunity to develop lifestyles and personally gratifying interests and
activities which consume much time and energy and seriously compete with interest in the maternal" (Soloway, 1985:17).

Parenthood has always been an expected part of a woman's life-cycle and is seen as a central experience in women's lives. Women who postpone parenthood however, are offered little support by society. "Society may publicly say a woman has a right to choose but the exercise of the choice puts her in conflict with conventions of femininity" (Gilligan, 1982:70).

Therefore, the timing of childbearing does have long term implications. The choice of roles, once made is not easily changed and these choices in turn influence subsequent development (Walter, 1986; Brooks, 1980). One needs to step away from focusing on women and how they are different from men and begin to look at female adult development as a separate unique developmental pattern. One way this can be accomplished is by investigating the roles that women choose and the timing of these roles. These roles exert a powerful influence on what a woman becomes.
Importance to Adult Educators

Kidd (1973) sees "the impact of ... self upon learning and ... change in that self throughout life" (p.125) as issues about which the adult educator needs to be aware. Adult educators need to understand the mental, physical, emotional and social abilities and limitations of adults. To develop this understanding, a knowledge of the general patterns of development and the ways individuals differ within these patterns is essential. The small amount of research on adult female development limits adult education practitioners' knowledge base, which in turn may limit their ability to work effectively with all adults.

The choices a woman makes have an impact on her sense of identity and on her growth and development. The roles a woman chooses cause change within that woman and with each choice some type of learning occurs. An understanding of adult development and the transitions of adulthood will enable adult educators to better prepare to assist adults in all life situations.

The adult education practitioner needs to keep in touch with, and to learn from, those scholars who study adult development. Contributions need to be made to
the knowledge regarding adult development, especially regarding female adult development. Knowles (1980) discusses the link between adult development and learning. He sees them as impacting on one another and, in some aspects, as dependent on each other. Findings in the emerging study of adult female development can be viewed as important to researchers and educators. Knowledge regarding women's experiences is needed in order for theory to be developed regarding female development. This accumulated knowledge will then enable the adult education practitioners to better serve the entire adult population.

Definitions of Key Terms

**Adulthood** is a part of the human maturation process. It is the time when a person develops the skills necessary to handle the external world. During adulthood the individual refines his/her personality to meet the goal of social success. Also during this time an individual's capacity to care for others is broadened.

**Adult development** is the interaction of the internal processes of an individual and the social environment in which the individual lives (Soloway, 1985:13). It
is the behaviors or characteristics of an individual which demonstrate that person's striving for maturity. These behaviors are viewed as developing over time.

**Baby Boom** is the term used to refer to that group of people born between the years 1946-1964.

For the purposes of this study **postponed parenthood** is defined as the conscious choice of a woman to delay having children until after she is 30 years old.

**Traditional female roles** are those roles which involve the care and nurturing of others, such as the role of wife or mother.

**Traditional female adulthood** is achieved through the meeting of responsibilities that occur within relationships. Female identity becomes a reflection of the nurturing roles of wife, mother, and caregiver.

**Nontraditional female roles** are those roles which provide the female with the opportunity to develop as an individual separate from her family roles. These include such roles as worker or leader.
Nontraditional female adulthood views women not only in terms of their nurturing role but also in terms of their ability to establish independence and achievements outside the home.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

"Throughout the years of adulthood, there is an ever-increasing need to win permission from oneself to continue developing."

Gould, 1975:74

Introduction

The study of human development can be viewed as a stepwise progression. The development of children was the first to be investigated. Later scholars began to look at the issue of aging and still later at the idea of development as a lifelong process. It has only been recently that the years between childhood and old age have been studied as a separate area of human development.

Children were long considered to be nothing more than miniature adults (Papalia & Olds, 1981). However, in the seventeenth century, the concept of childhood as a time of development separate from adulthood began to take shape. The writings of John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean Rousseau (1712-1778) provide two of the earliest
views of the development of children. Locke viewed development as resulting from learning and repetition of experience. Rousseau, on the other hand, believed that there is an orderly sequence to human life and nature prompts the child to develop at different stages.

Adolescence was not considered a separate time of development until the early twentieth century (Papalia & Olds, 1981). G. Stanley Hall published his work Adolescence in 1904. This was the first work which dealt with adolescence as a specific stage of development.

The study of adults began in the nineteenth century. This initial work was really the study of aging and was first written about in 1835 by a Frenchman, Quetelet (Papalia & Olds, 1981). Later, in 1883, Sir Francis Galton published Inquiries into human faculty and its development in which he discussed his investigation of the relationship of individual differences to aging (Papalia & Olds, 1981). Then in 1922 G. Stanley Hall, who had earlier published Adolescence, published a work on aging titled

Senscence: The last half of life. Also around this time scholars at Stanford University began devoting time to the study of aging (Papalia & Olds, 1981).

These works and activities expanded the knowledge base regarding certain areas of development. Still little attention was being paid to those years between childhood and old age. Since the 1950s researchers have come to realize the importance of understanding the development that takes place throughout all the adult years. Much of this interest has been scholarly in nature (i.e. Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977; and Neugarten, 1976). The concept of adult development has also been noted in the popular press. Books such as Baruch et al.'s Lifeprints (1983), Mayer's The male mid-life crisis: Fresh starts after 40 (1978), and Sheehy's Passages (1974) are examples of the popular press's contribution to this subject.

Development

The term development suggests that over time some type of change has taken place (Jarvis, 1985; Daniels & Weingarten, 1980; Knox, 1977; and Austin, 1976). Researchers view development as something orderly and
sequential (Daniels & Weingarten, 1980 and Knox, 1977). Change, whether it is orderly, sequential or haphazard does take place in adults.

This change is caused by a variety of things and is not necessarily the same for everyone. Austin (1976) believes that adult developmental theories discuss the differences between children and adults and the differences between men and women. However, the differences are based on studies of men that have excluded women "from the critical theory building studies" (Gilligan, 1982:1). Not only have women been excluded from theory, building but also, conclusions regarding the adult development of women have not taken into account the experiences of women. Adult female development theories need to consider the interaction of the choices a women makes and the roles she assumes as well as chronological age and other factors (Michael, 1981; and Austin, 1976).

The context in which development takes place should be a consideration in the formulation of a theory. Context is emphasized more in the study of adult development than in the study of child development (Stevens-Long, 1984; Papalia & Olds, 1981; Brooks, 1980; and Knox, 1977). The individual roles in
which an adult engages contribute to the context because of the different patterns these roles bring to the developmental tasks of adulthood (Brooks, 1980; Knox, 1977; and Baltes & Schaie, 1973). The major context affecting the development of women deals with those concerns regarding the areas of family and career (Krupp, 1985; Brooks, 1980; Sanguiliano, 1978; and Knox, 1977). The impact of family and career is dependent on the extent to which these areas encourage developmental change (Knox, 1977).

**Theories**

There are three major models for the study of adulthood: 1) developmental, 2) age-stratification, and 3) role socialization (Stein & Etzkowitz, 1978). Developmental theory implies that development is sequential and cumulative with each part possessing distinctive qualities (Peck, 1986; Brooks, 1980; Stein and Etzkowitz, 1978; and Knox, 1977). Age-stratification locates individuals in a certain age group which possesses certain roles (Stein &
Socialization theory is based on the concept of how society influences development (Stein & Etzkowitz, 1978).

There is a wide range of adult developmental theories. A brief overview of eight commonly cited theories follow:

Freud

Freud's theory of development is not in itself an adult developmental theory. It is included in this review because his theory is the basis for other comprehensive psychosocial theories of development (Meade, 1980). Freud viewed human behavior as an attempt to maintain a balance within oneself. Man is always reacting to stimulus events and attempting to remove any unpleasant feelings in order to maintain a sense of internal balance (Crain, 1985; Meade, 1980). Three of Freud's stages, the oral, the anal and the phallic are centered around particular physical areas and the sensations associated with them. The fourth stage is the latency stage and is viewed as of lesser importance than the first three (Meade, 1980). If a child experiences problems in any one stage, he/she may develop a lasting preoccupation with the issues of that stage (Crain, 1985; Meade, 1980). According to Meade
(1980), Freud felt that a child's experiences in the first five to six years of life were important in determining adult personality. Personality is formed by how a child learns to handle the feelings associated with the four stages (Crain, 1985; Meade, 1980).

The four stages of Freud's theory are:

1. **Oral (birth - age 2):** An infant's pleasure is focused on activities that are centered around the mouth. The concept of sex in this theory is very broad and is seen as anything that produces bodily pleasure (Crain, 1985). Therefore, in this stage the sex drive is centered around eating and the pleasure that is derived from sucking. It is during this time that the child begins to form close relationships with another human (Meade, 1980).

2. **Anal (ages 2 - 3):** In this stage the child's pleasure seeking shifts from eating to control of bladder and bowel functions. When parents attempt to control these functions the child for the first time experiences a sense of limitation of pleasure (Meade, 1980).

3. **Phallic (ages 3 - 5):** During this stage the child discovers the sexual self. The penis or clitoris become the center of the child's pleasurable feelings.
It is during this stage that the differences between the sexes is discovered. This discovery is important to the child's relationships with his/her parents. A boy begins to have strong feelings for his mother and views his father as a rival for her affections. He sees this rivalry as a threat to his penis and fears castration by his father as punishment for these feelings (Meade, 1980). The boy, therefore, represses the feelings he has for his mother and begins to identify with his father (Crain, 1985; Meade, 1980). A girl experiences the same type of feelings for her opposite sex parent. She resolves these feelings in much the same way as a boy, but because she fears loss of parental love, not castration (Crain, 1985). A girl suppresses her attraction toward her father and begins to identify with her mother.

4. **Latency (age 6 - puberty):** During this time the sex drives are at a low. When puberty arrives the sex drive also does. From puberty onward the task is to establish a sense of identity which is separate from one's parents (Crain, 1985).

**Erikson**

Erikson's theory of development is also a developmental model. He views personality formation as
the progression of the ego through a series of interrelated stages. All stages exist in some form in all individuals but each stage has a critical period of development. A person moves through the stages whether the early stages have been completed successfully or not (Stevens-Long, 1984; and Erikson, 1963).

According to Stevens-Long (1984) Erikson emphasizes the importance of the mutual influences of biological, personal, cultural and historical factors on development. Conflict in these areas is important because growth comes from conflict (Erikson, 1963). However, an individual who experiences too much conflict is unlikely to obtain optimal development (Stevens-Long, 1984; and Crain, 1985).

Each stage contains an encounter between the individual's maturing ego and the social world (Stevens-Long, 1984). Erikson identified eight stages of development. The first four stages, Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt, and Industry vs. Inferiority, are critical to a person's personality development up to age twelve. The last four stages concern the development of the adult personality.
Erikson's last four stages are:

**Stage 5: "Identity vs. Role Confusion"** The goal during this stage is the development of an ego identity. If the adolescent succeeds in integrating roles in different situations to the point of experiencing continuity in the perception of self, identity develops (Biehler & Snowman, 1986). The adolescent must also begin to form an adult value system. A danger at this stage is role confusion. If an adolescent is unable to establish a sense of stability in various aspects of his/her life, this crisis will occur (Erikson 1963).

**Stage 6: "Intimacy vs. Isolation"** This stage occurs in young adulthood and refers to the need to establish positive relationships with others. Erikson (1963) sees intimacy as the capacity to join identity with another person without fear of losing something in the process. Failure to establish intimacy results in a sense of isolation.

**Stage 7: "Generativity vs. Stagnation"** This is the stage of middle age. The task in this stage involves the establishing and guiding the growth of the next generation (Erikson, 1963). Those unable to forge this sense of generativity become victims of stagnation and self-absorption.
Stage 8 "Integrity vs. Despair" Old age is the part of the life-cycle covered by this stage. During this time a person comes to accept his/her life in terms of what it is (Beihler & Snowman, 1986). A sense of integrity allows an individual to come to terms with death. Despair expresses itself in the feeling that time has run out and the life is too short to attempt to start another life in order to find an alternate road to integrity.

Levinson

Levinson's work, described in The season's of a man's life (1978), provides another approach to developmental theory. He presents a series of stages that consist of alternating periods of stability and change. Three major "era's" in the male life cycle were identified with each era lasting approximately 25 years. Levinson's major research thrust was in the midlife decade (ages 35-45). Here he found that maturation and adjustment depend on the individual's growth in the 17- to 33-year-old phase. Since Levinson's participants were all under age 45, his theories regarding the years after age 45 are provisional (Biehler & Hudson, 1986).
Levinson's eras and the stages within each are:

1. Young adulthood (17-40)

   o Early adult transition (ages 17-22). This is marked by separation from parents, career choice, and marriage.
   o Entering the adult world (ages 22-28). This is a stable period where the person strives to fulfill commitments.
   o Age thirty transition (ages 28-33). This is a period of change where an individual's life structure is reworked.
   o Settling down (ages 33-40). This is another period of stability.

2. Middle adulthood (ages 40-60)

   o Midlife transition (ages 40-45). This is a period of great change. An individual might evaluate what he has done with his life. He may seek to express desires that have not been fulfilled.
   o Entering middle adulthood (ages 45-50). During this period an individual makes a commitment to new tasks.
   o Age fifty transition (ages 50-55). This is a period of crisis, especially for those men who did not experience problems during the midlife transition.
   o Culmination of middle adulthood (ages 55-60). This period is a time of stability when earlier decisions are fulfilled.

3. Late Adulthood (ages 60+)

   o Late adulthood transition (ages 60-65). In this period of change. The man needs to find a balance between youth and age. He attempts to sustain youthfulness in a form appropriate to late adulthood.
   o Late adulthood (ages 65+). Here a man looks to find a new balance of involvement with society and self.
   o Late, late adulthood (ages 80+). This time involves the coming to terms with the process of dying.
Havighurst

Havighurst's theory of adult development is concerned with the need to master certain essential skills and acquire certain patterns of behavior at various ages during the life span (Hurlock, 1980). These patterns of behavior are called developmental tasks, and are useful in conceptualizing phases of the life span. The tasks of adulthood are seen as a way to function well in the adult role.

Havighurst (1972) views adult development as the interaction between age appropriate tasks and the social role. Developmental tasks arise as a result of three forces: 1) physical maturation; 2) cultural or societal expectations, and 3) personal values and the aspirations of the individual (Hurlock, 1980). According to Havighurst (1972), adult life has three phases each with specific social roles. The three phases and their tasks are:

Early adulthood (ages 18-35)

- Getting started in an occupation
- Selecting a mate
- Learning to live with a marriage partner
- Starting a family
- Rearing children
- Managing a home
- Taking on civic responsibility
- Finding a congenial social group
Middle age (ages 35-60)

- Achieving adult civic and social responsibility
- Assisting teen children in becoming responsible and happy adults
- Developing adult leisure time activities
- Relating oneself to one's spouse as a person
- Accepting and adjusting to the physiological changes of middle age
- Reaching and maintaining a satisfactory performance in one's occupational career
- Adjusting to aged parents

Later maturity (ages 60+) (may be divided into two parts: young old, ages 60-75; and old old, ages 75+)

- Adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health
- Adjusting to retirement and reduced income
- Adjusting to the death of a spouse
- Establishing an explicit affiliation with members of one's own age group
- Establishing satisfactory physical living arrangements
- Adapting to social roles in a flexible way

Gould

There are key events that force adults to see themselves as the creators of their own lives (Gould, 1978). Adults become creators when they let go of the values and programs of their parents' lives (Gould, 1978; 1975). Gould believes that growth is achieved when childish illusion and false assumptions are replaced by self-reliance and self-acceptance. "Adulthood is not a plateau; rather it is a dynamic and changing time for all of us" (Gould, 1978:14).
As a child, the individual forms a set of assumptions based on parental rules, ideas and assumptions. As the individual reaches adulthood, these assumptions are challenged. The adult finds that the reality of adulthood can not co-exist with the childhood consciousness. The childhood illusions need to be broken (Gould, 1978). Gould (1978) states that at certain times in an adult's life the individual is faced with false assumptions that must be overcome in order for growth to continue. Gould (1978) feels that a person's individual sense of time changes as he/she grows older and that this change in turn changes the view of him/herself and others. Stevens-Long (1984) divides Gould's theory of adult growth in this way:

- ages 16-18: Ambivalence
- ages 18-22: Leaving home; moving from family to peers
- ages 22-28: Establishing autonomy
- ages 29-32: 30s transition; a period of questioning
- ages 33-40: Adulthood
- ages 40-43: Midlife transition; a feeling that time is running out
- ages 43-55: Midlife; a feeling that the "die has been cast"
- ages 55+: Flowering; a decrease in negative feelings.

Vaillant (The Grant Study)

Vaillant's work focused on the adaptive responses that an individual uses when faced with a challenge or
a crisis. The defense mechanisms that an individual uses mature with age. The formation of these defenses depends on biological and cognitive maturation and the development of a mentoring relationship (Vaillant, 1977). To a large extent the human ego is seen as an outgrowth of the people it has experienced.

The defense mechanisms perform five functions in adult life. These five functions are: 1) to contain emotions within acceptable limits during times of extreme emotional stress, 2) to maintain stability by channeling biological drives, 3) to permit adjustments to the self-image following important changes, 4) to resolve conflicts within one's intimate circles, and 5) to rationalize major conflicts with the dictates of conscience (Vaillant, 1977). The defense mechanisms help the ego survive adversity. Vaillant (1977) feels that the ego grows not only in times of adversity but also in times of prosperity.

Neugarten

Neugarten (1976) states that changes in adult personality can be developmental in nature while others may be interpreted as the result of situational influences. Therefore, there is a need to ascertain which sequence of change in the adult life cycle is
developmental and which is situational (Neugarten & Datan, 1973). In order to understand the life cycle, it is important to understand the concept of time within the cycle. Neugarten and Datan (1973) discuss three types of time which affect human development.

These types of time are:

1) Life time (chronological age): This is a poor predictor of social and psychological behavior. Life time is a direct function of the social definition of time.

2) Social time (age graded system of a particular society): In this framework, culture determines the appropriate time for certain behavior.

3) Historical time: This time shapes the social system which in turn creates a changing set of age norms. These age norms shape the individual life cycle.

The social context of the individual is important to development within the life cycle. Other areas related to age norms and age appropriate behavior also contribute to development.

"Many of the major punctuation marks of the life cycle are not only orderly and sequential, but many are social rather than biological in nature, and their timing is socially regulated " (Neugarten & Datan,
1973:62). These concepts demonstrate that a social clock is as important as a biological clock when describing the life cycle.

Life spiral model

With the choice of roles available, adults are beginning to construct alternate plans for their life-cycles. Stein and Etzkowitz (1978) state that because of the prevalence of individual choice the stage-related developmental theories are inappropriate when attempting to study adults' lives. These alternate paths lead Stein and Etzkowitz (1978) to propose a different model with which to view adulthood.

This "life spiral model" provides the opportunity to study adulthood by viewing the varying patterns of roles that an adult may possess. "The life cycle encompasses only one pattern of adulthood, the life spiral encompasses several patterns of adulthood" (Stein & Etzkowitz, 1978:10). When adulthood is viewed as having several options, no one pattern need be viewed as deviant.

Issues which are viewed as stage related by developmental theories are viewed "as human needs that reoccur throughout the life course" by Stein and Etzkowitz (1978). These needs can be fulfilled through
whatever roles an adult might choose. All roles are considered valid, whether they fit a traditional or nontraditional scheme. The idea of a spiral implies that as roles change, so also, might the issues involved change. Issues that were previously resolved may again be viewed as a human need because of the choices an adult makes. The concept of a spiral then, allows for varying patterns of adulthood to emerge without the necessity of any fixed order.

**Men and Women: Views of Development**

Women who are now attempting to understand their own development through an understanding of present developmental theories need to be aware of the fact that what they are really doing is looking at themselves "through men's eyes" (Gilligan, 1979:432). Developmental theorists have tried to fit women into the male models they have formulated. This approach to understanding adult female development is now being met with growing criticism (Peck, 1986; Baruch et al., 1983; Gilligan, 1982; Michael, 1981; and Bernard, 1975). The male models of development do not take into account the roles and role combinations women experience that are different from those of men (Peck,
1986; Baruch et al., 1983; and Michael, 1981). Women rarely deal with the same issues at the same ages as men (Krupp, 1985; Baruch et al., 1983; Gilligan, 1982; Bernard, 1981; and Levinson, 1978).

The adult development of women appears to be a much more complex task than the adult development of men (Michael, 1981; Stewart, 1977). In fact, some research has demonstrated that the forming of self is a totally different process for women than it is for men (Michael, 1981; and Sangiuliano, 1978). A study by Stewart, 1977 (cited in Michael, 1981) attributes this difference to "the disparity between traditional expectations and goals for women and the value which society places on these goals and expectations" (p. 2).

Identity development is dependent on the societal context in which it occurs. Society expects women to be nurturing but places little value on this ability. Rather, occupational achievement and independence is valued in society. When women choose roles that society views as non-nurturant in nature, women, in many instances, experience a sense of role conflict. Although society may publicly acknowledge a woman's
right to choose roles, the woman receives little support for those roles (Gilligan, 1980; Knox, 1977; and Sheehy, 1974).

"The penchant of developmental theorist to project a masculine image, and one that appears frightening to women, goes back at least to Freud" (Gilligan, 1979:432). According to Bardwick (1971) Freud saw penis envy as the major motivating concept of female development and this wish for a penis was eventually replaced by the wish for a child. The bearing of children therefore became a woman's greatest fulfillment (Bardwick, 1971). In psychoanalytic theory women's superego (i.e. one that is dependent on the external world) is not as independent as men's and Freud saw this as women's failure to develop (Gilligan, 1979; Chodorow, 1978; Bardwick, 1971).

Erikson's theory states that the development of identity precedes the development of intimacy and generativity. A male's identity is viewed as formed through separation from his parents and his relationship to the world, whereas a female's identity is seen in terms of her relationships with others (Krupp, 1985; Babar, 1983; Morgan & Farber, 1982; Brooks, 1980; Gilligan, 1979; Chodorow, 1978; and
Male development is viewed as linear in form. Males establish identity, then work on the issues involved with intimacy and then the issues of generativity. However for females, these three stages appear to be fused (Gilligan, 1982; Brooks, 1980; O'Connell, 1976; and Krupp, 1985). This fusion of stages evolves from the female's relationship orientation (Gilligan, 1982; O'Connell, 1976; and Krupp, 1985).

Erikson sees this relationship orientation as a dependency and believes that a woman's identity is not fully formed until she unites with a man (Gilligan, 1982; Michael, 1981; Katz, 1979; O'Connell, 1976; and Bernard, 1975). Women who choose the traditional lifestyle of wife and mother establish a sense of identity that is a reflection of those roles. However, because nontraditional women's career choices appear to contribute to their identity, the formation of their identity may be viewed as similar to that of men (O'Connell, 1976). Studies by Michael (1981) and Katz (1979) reject Eriksonian theory regarding the formation of female identity. They state that marriage and childbearing are not prerequisites for identity. There appears to be a need to reevaluate Erikson's model of
development "when one considers the profound changes in values regarding the appropriate roles for men and women within our society" (Morgan & Farber, 1982:203).

Bardwick (1980) sees Levinson's theory of adult development as "archtypically American" (p.39). The American sense of development is viewed as a concept of doing, not one of being. As long as development is viewed in light of the doing concept, women will never fully develop (Gilligan, 1982; and Bardwick, 1980). The idea of doing not being as portrayed in Levinson (1977) is articulated when Levinson discusses relationships as a means to an end. For men the end is the realization of their dreams and Levinson (1977) defines women not by what they are becoming but by the role they play in helping men realize these dreams.

The works of Vaillant (1977), Neugarten (1976), Gould (1975), and Havighurst (1972) have not received the same scholarly scrutiny regarding male and female developmental differences as have other theories. The issue of gender was not really addressed in these theories. For example, Havighurst's developmental tasks may be viewed as rather generic in nature and
appropriate for both males and females. Also, there are no specific gender references in Gould's listed developmental tasks.

Vaillant's work is based on the study of men. His discussion of adaptation does include references to a close relationship with a benign individual who can serve as a positive object of identification but he does not specifically mention women (Vaillant, 1977).

By examining both men's and women's life histories, Gould established adult developmental characteristics. His characteristics could therefore be viewed as applicable to both sexes. Gould (1975) talks of "adulthood as a dynamic and changing time for all of us" (P.14).

Lastly Neugarten discusses a socially prescribed timetable for all major life events. Both men and women are expected to follow this timetable. However, "there is a greater consensus regarding age-appropriate behavior for women than for men" (Neugarten & Datan, 1973:62).

Role Conflicts: Impact on Adult Development

"Lives cannot be reduced to making this or that choice unto perpetuity. The choice we make in our
20's...can not be the lifetime choice of our 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's." (Sangiuliano, 1978:19) Women are continually faced with a succession of roles and changing role constellations (Neugarten & Datan, 1973). There are more options than ever before from which women may choose. However, there are very limited criteria available that make the choice a more informed one (Baruch et al., 1983; and Bardwick & Douvan, 1972). This role freedom provides young women with an especially difficult burden. When choices are made "it is very difficult to know whether one has achieved womanhood or has dangerously jeopardized it" (Bardwick & Douvan, 1972:57)

Angrist (1969) discusses the multiple roles a person fills as an implication of a person's social adjustment. The more roles a person plays, the better his/her social adjustment becomes (Angrist, 1969). Bates (1956) feels that there is an integration of adult roles but that certain roles are dominant and others are latent. He sees age and sex roles as dominant and uses the example of the dominant male role influencing the roles of father, husband and worker. On the other hand, women's roles traditionally are seen as dominated by the nurturing role. According to
Bardwick and Douvan (1972), "women tend not to participate in roles, or seek goals that threaten their important affiliative relationships because in those relationships, they find most of their feeling of self-esteem and identity" (p. 56). The growing recognition of the impact of changing sex roles on the development of women is seen as an important part of the choices women are making (Morgan & Farber, 1982; and Michael, 1981). Women are now finding feelings of self-esteem outside the traditional relationship sphere (Baruch et al., 1983; Brooks, 1980; and Knox, 1977).

The Impact on Postponed Parenthood

Parenthood is an expected part of any adult's life cycle. Walter (1982) suggests that it is "more difficult to adjust to parenthood than marriage or job change" (p.2). It is felt that parenthood is the greatest developmental crisis an adult faces (Bardwick, 1971). Change occurs regardless of the chronological age at which parenthood arrives (Stevens-Long, 1984). The meaning of parenthood is different for each person
depending on that person's specific developmental stage and chronological age (Walter, 1986; Bardwick, 1980; Mikus, 1980; Katz, 1979; Levinson, 1978; and Sheehy, 1974).

The very concept of parenthood and its effect on development is seldom mentioned in the study of adulthood, because men's lives have been the focus of the studies and it is the lives of women that are most affected by parenthood (Daniels & Weingarten, 1980). The parental role is largely irreversible and active parenting (i.e., parenting when children are between birth and 18-years-old) only takes up a small portion of a woman's lifespan (Daniels & Weingarten, 1980; and Mikus, 1980). Yet it has an impact on the woman's well-being that is farther reaching than most other roles she may assume (Baruch et al., 1983; Bardwick, 1980; and Mikus, 1980). It should also be noted that little is known about the adult development of women who choose not to parent.

Women are forced to make a choice between the larger world and the need for relationships (Michael, 1981; Daniels & Weingarten, 1980; Rubin, 1979; and Bardwick, 1971). Those women who choose to postpone parenthood have made a conscious decision to
participate in other activities that will promote self-esteem (Knaub, 1981; Rindfuss & Bumpass, 1976). These women gain a sense of satisfaction from their other roles, particularly the work role, and this appears to alleviate the stress of role conflict as it relates to identity (Coady, 1982; and Brooks, 1980). The worker role becomes the primary role for nontraditional women. These women in a sense became "providers before they were nurturers" (Daniels & Weingarten, 1980:77)

Research suggests that those women who postpone parenthood have established a sense of identity that is similar to that experienced by adolescent boys and that work "plays an important role in defining the self" (O'Connell, 1976:676). It should be noted that most nontraditional women see their identity as developed by the time of parenthood (Daniels & Weingarten, 1980; and O'Connell, 1976).
CHAPTER III
Methodology

Introduction
The purpose of this study was to investigate the development of women who choose to postpone parenthood and to describe developmental characteristics that these women share. This chapter contains the following topics: rationale, sampling, data collection, data analysis, and the establishment of trustworthiness.

Rationale
The design of any research project should be determined by the questions to be answered. The quantitative researcher attempts to produce knowledge from observable data only. In quantitative research the researcher is expected to know what he/she is looking for and must anticipate any problems that may arise while conducting the research. However, a priori knowledge appears to be a poor assumption when investigating a person's thoughts and feelings. Therefore, qualitative methods were considered appropriate for this research.
Human beings are not privy to another's thoughts without some form of communication. Therefore, a person cannot know another's thoughts before any communication has taken place. This research was interested in women's thoughts and experiences. The use of qualitative methods was necessary because the respondents' possible answers were not known beforehand. Exploratory questions provided the opportunity for each woman to express her feelings and thoughts without being bound by the confines of the researcher's own ideas.

In addition to the concept of prior knowledge, Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss two other conditions that need to be addressed when deciding whether qualitative methods are appropriate. The first condition is the flexibility of the design. The researcher needs to deal with multiple realities, all of which may be valid and of importance to the research. Flexibility enables the researcher to adapt these realities to the specific research by pursuing ideas generated by the participants themselves. The use of a timeline enabled the researcher to be flexible because questions were generated by each participant's own experiences. Sensitivity to the values of the
participants and the ability to address the complexity of the issues involved is also important in qualitative research. It seems, then, that when investigating complex issues such as postponed parenthood, an indepth look at a few cases may yield more interesting and useful information than a superficial look at a large group.

A researcher may also understand basic concepts that are being studied but be unable to express this knowledge in language form. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this type of knowledge "tacit knowledge." Tacit knowledge can be used as a base on which to build insights gained through interaction. The qualitative methods employed within the naturalistic paradigm provide an appropriate utilization of this knowledge.

Although there are some identifiable methods in this type of inquiry, for example, the constant comparative method, qualitative research does not require the specific a priori procedural steps that a quantitative study would need. Instead, naturalistic research possesses an overall framework with which to guide the work and is then interpreted by the researcher. This framework, however, need not be followed in a step by step linear progression.
The research design for a naturalistic inquiry is constantly emerging. The data produced by the investigation are continually analyzed so that each component's design is contingent on all previous components. Each component may produce even more questions so that in reality, naturalistic inquiry could continue indefinitely.

Just as the research design emerges from the data, so, too, does theory emerge. Grounded theory is the theory that develops from the data collected, and not from a priori assertions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A priori reasoning is part of empirical research and assumes that the investigator already has some notion of what will be found. In this particular study, it is not possible to determine before the interviews take place what information found will be relevant; therefore, grounded theory is appropriate.

**Sampling**

The purpose of sampling in qualitative research is to gather as much information as possible. The researcher wants to discover as many specifics as possible because the research deals more with context
than generalizations. Another purpose of sampling stated in Lincoln and Guba (1985) is that a sample provides information that can become the basis for the emergent design and grounded theory.

Purposeful sampling, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) has four characteristics. The first is the concern that the sample can not be drawn in advance. The researcher has no way of knowing a priori conditions of the sample. The second concern is the concept of serial selection of samples. In order to achieve a wide variety, each participant should be selected only after the previous participant's data have been analyzed. By doing this, the gaps in information can be filled and other information can be extended. Selection of further participants should be dependent on the need to extend or fill gaps in the information. The third characteristic of purposeful sampling concerns the ability to focus the sample on that information that appears to be most relevant. Sampling stops when no new information is acquired. This decision to stop is based on informal considerations determined by the researcher.

This research used purposeful sampling. An initial accessible population of 20 women who had made a
conscious decision to postpone parenthood was identified. From these 20, an initial group of five were randomly selected by drawing names from a hat. The quality of the data collected from these five determined that more interviews were needed. Additional respondents were drawn one at a time until a total of ten women were interviewed. After completion of the analysis of the data from these ten women, the responses of four women were eliminated because of inconsistencies regarding either their qualifications or the data itself. An additional four women were interviewed. Data collection then ceased because the amount of new information or data produced was small compared to the amount of effort used to obtain it. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this situation occurs when the point of saturation has been reached.

According to research by Walter (1986) and Babar (1983), women who postpone parenthood appear to comprise a very homogeneous group. The women interviewed were similar in a variety of areas (i.e., education level, income level, and level of labor force participation). The definition of women who postpone parenthood used in this research further limited the amount of variation that was found among the subjects.
Initially an obstetrician, specializing in high risk pregnancies was contacted. This contact provided the initial group of 20. However, as the research continued, the size of this initial group became smaller. Therefore, a La Leche group was contacted to obtain additional respondents.

The participants had given birth to their first child after age 30. They had been married by age 30 and were married at the time of the child's birth. Their child was less than 18 months old. The researcher felt that the greater the lapse of time from the birth, the more likely the answers would be based on selective memories rather than on facts. The women stated that they had made a conscious decision to postpone childbearing until after age 30. This decision was made either early in the marriage or prior to the marriage.

**Data Collection**

The interview was the basic form of data collection used in this research. The interview was supplemented by a simple survey instrument which collected demographic data. After possible participants were identified, the researcher sent a
letter to each. The letter contained an overview of the research problem and an overview of what was expected of the participants. Each letter was personalized so that the women were aware of who had suggested their participation. This letter was followed by a telephone contact. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix A.

The actual field time for the interviews was four weeks. Each participant was interviewed a minimum of two times. The first interview was structured in nature. During this period, a more indepth explanation of the research was given and demographic data were collected. The concept of a lifeline was explored and the participant was asked to create her own lifeline before the next interview. For the purposes of this research, a lifeline was described as a visual representation of the events in a person's life. This lifeline was used as a starting point for the second interview. The second interview consisted of open-ended questions; it was more unstructured than the first interview. This interview had no definite stopping point, in order to provide the indepth investigation that the researcher viewed as necessary. When appropriate a third interview was conducted by
telephone. During the third interview, the women expanded on specific areas that the researcher felt were not fully covered in the first two interviews.

Two women requested that both interviews be completed on the same date. This was done. However, the researcher feels that because there was no time between the formulating of a timeline and its discussion, the women were sometimes stifled in expressing feelings. The women appeared to not have the time necessary to reflect on their lives before they were asked to discuss them.

All interviews were tape recorded for later transcription. Through the use of a recorder, the researcher needed to take only minimal notes. The researcher and the participant were then able to establish a more intimate rapport; this helped to provide insights into the participants thoughts and feelings.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) discuss the term prolonged engagement, the spending of sufficient time in the field to justify the conclusions that are reached. This time enables the researcher and participant to build trust and eliminate any distortion of data. The researcher feels that by not limiting the
interview time frame and allowing for a free-flowing exchange of ideas during the interview process, prolonged engagement was achieved.

Dexter (1970) sees the interview as a conversation with a purpose. An interview is used when the researcher wishes "to understand a person's present as well as past realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:268). Interviews can be further defined by their structure, degree of openness, and the quality of the relationship (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An interview may be structured or unstructured. "The structured interview format is the mode of choice when the interviewer knows what he or she does not know and can therefore frame appropriate questions to find out" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:269). The interviews, although using open-ended questions had a semi-structured format. Some of the questions were formulated before the interviews began, while others emerged from the data. Another consideration was the degree of openness. The interviews were entirely overt. The participants were fully aware of the purpose of the interviews, because the purpose was discussed during the first interview
with each subject. The participants also received a summary of the research results and will be invited to make comments to the researcher regarding the results.

The researcher was the only interviewer and was qualified to conduct this study. She has been involved in adult education as her major area of academic work. This work has included studies in adult development and research methodology. Coursework was also completed in family dynamics and development. This researcher has also worked with parents in the past and has previously conducted research interviews.

The researcher conducted practice interviews with women who fit the guidelines established for the participants. These interviews allowed the researcher to refine her interview skills. These interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, allowing the researcher to review the techniques used and to adapt these to benefit the actual data collection process.

The second interview consisted of questions which emerged from each participant's lifeline and from previous interviews with other participants. These questions were different for each participant because they depended on that participant's lifeline and interviews with the other participants. Other
questions, which were the same for all respondents, come from the book *Lifeprints* by Baruch et al. (1983) and from the researcher. The interview and the lifeline forms can be found in Appendix B.

**Data Analysis**

In naturalistic inquiry data analysis is an ongoing process. The analysis is not postponed until after all the interviews have been completed. Instead, it starts immediately at the beginning of the data collection process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This ongoing analysis is an integral part of the emergent design. Because of the nature of the emergent design (i.e., the formulating of questions from the data gathered), ongoing analysis is necessary. Without this ongoing analysis, the research methodology would stagnate and incomplete or irrelevant conclusions could be reached.

The nature of naturalistic inquiry calls for data to be analyzed inductively. This inductive analysis is similar to a content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Content analysis contains two basic steps, coding and categorizing. The data collected from the interviews underwent both of these processes.
At its conclusion, each interview was transcribed and coded. Coding is a process used by the researcher to separate the statements into general groups (e.g. identity statements). These groups were initially developed from data received during the pilot interviews but as certain factors or relationships become more evident, groups also evolved from the data itself. Any single part of an interview be it a word, sentence, paragraph or observation could become part of a group.

Once all the interviews were coded, categories were developed. These categories provided a basic description about the characteristics possessed by each coded group. As these categories accumulated data, a provisional statement about each category was made. The groups were sorted according to what specific category statement they "fit". This entire process is called the constant comparative method and was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and outlined in Lincoln and Guba (1985).

A case study format was employed for the reporting of the data and development of conclusions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that a case study improves "the reader's level of understanding of whatever the report
deals with..." (p. 358) The case study was viewed as the culmination of all the data received and categorized. In a case study, the researcher showed the relationships and interplay between him/herself and the participants. A case study also provided the "thick descriptions" necessary for the development of trustworthiness and understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

An important consideration at this point (although it will be stressed throughout the research) is concern for confidentiality. From the onset, the respondents were assured of as much confidentiality as is possible. Names and addresses were not used in the final report. However, the very nature of the research requires that statements, incidents, occupations and some background information be used. These are the very issues that enabled the researcher to draw conclusions. Case studies were reported for each participant. These case studies provided the opportunity for thick descriptions. Specific quotes were used in the establishment of the thick descriptions in the case studies. These descriptions enable others to apply these findings to their own settings. Background information needed for analysis was also provided by
thick descriptions. These case studies helped in interpreting and identifying commonalities and provided a way of stating information from the participants point of view.

Establishment of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the ability to demonstrate that the conclusions reached are credible, dependable, and confirmable. It is important that a researcher show that the findings of a study are worth attention. Quantitative research uses such criteria as internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity to demonstrate the appropriateness of its findings. However, these specifics are inappropriate for judging naturalistic research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) "criteria defined from one perspective may not be appropriate for judging actions taken from another perspective." (p. 293) They do discuss ways in which credibility, dependability, and confirmability can be obtained for naturalistic research. These criteria were met in this study in a variety of ways.

There were several activities that demonstrated that the research findings were credible. The first activity was that of prolonged engagement. Not only
did prolonged engagement help build trust but it also
provided the researcher with the opportunity to learn
more about the context in which each respondent lived.
This enabled the researcher to recognize and deal with
any misinformation which may have been given by a
participant. Prolonged engagement provided scope to
the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The second activity used was the technique of
triangulation: different and multiple sources, methods,
and investigators, all confirming the data obtained.
For this research, multiple sources were be used for
triangulation. The information received during
interviews was checked against previous information
already received from other interviews with the same
participant.

The use of member checks was another way in which
credibility was established. A summary of the
interview was shared with any respondent who expressed
the desire to do so. They then commented and provided
additional reactions. As the emerging design
indicates, further questions or comments developed from
previous interviews were used in future interviews. By
employing this checking system, the researcher was able
to do a number of things. She could correct errors immediately, summarize the interview, and assess the overall adequacy of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability and confirmability were also established through the use of an audit. This type of audit is similar to a fiscal audit. An independent auditor reviewed the process of the research and examined the product. By examining the process and attesting to its acceptability, the auditor established the research's dependability. A copy of the audit can be found in the appendix. Confirmability is demonstrated when the conclusions are found to be supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The model developed by Halpern (1983) was used to develop the audit trail. Six categories of raw data are kept for the auditor's later perusal. The six consist of: (1) the actual raw data, (2) data reduction and analysis products, (3) data reconstruction and synthesis products, (4) process notes; (5) intentions and depositions, and (6) instrument development (Halpern, 1983). This material was shared with the auditor who proceeded to conduct the audit. The audit
was completed by Dr. Gary Dean, Assistant Professor of Adult Education at Pennsylvania's Indiana University, who has experience in qualitative research methods. This report may be found in Appendix C.

The completion of these steps established the necessary checks for credibility, dependability and confirmability of the research. It should be noted here that according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in naturalistic inquiry the criteria for transferability do not lie with the researcher. Instead each individual who wishes to transfer these findings needs to establish that the situations described are compatible with what he/she wishes to study. Naturalistic research provides only the data base with which to make these judgments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
CHAPTER IV

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

The time I spend with my husband and my children is rewarding. Also the time I spend at work. They are all tied together. It wouldn't all be as rewarding if I didn't have all three. I feel fulfilled as a wife and mother and I also work.

Laurie, 1989

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe developmental characteristics of women who postpone parenthood. The data were collected by interviewing women who had made a conscious choice to postpone parenthood. The findings are reported in two ways. First, case studies of ten women are presented. By presenting information about the women in this manner, the reader is provided with thick descriptions which provide better understanding of the women. The second method of presenting the findings is by discussing the commonalities these women share.
Background

The interviews themselves were an attempt to help the women describe their own sense of self. Women in many respects still accept the sex-role stereotypes that our society places on them. The women in this study have, however, stepped away from this stereotyping somewhat, in that the path for postponing parenthood is different than the one ascribed to women in our society.

In many respects, these women still view themselves in terms of their ability to nurture and meet society's standards. While at the same time, the roles they choose also contribute to their sense of identity. This seems to indicate that the woman's definition of self is derived from others as well as from her chosen roles.

The women interviewed are in a state of flux. They are beginning to establish their own sense of self separate from the definitions others have given them; but this break is not clearly defined. In many respects, they find themselves unable to articulate this new sense of who they are. These women are still attempting to find ways to communicate a self that for
so long had been hidden from view (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldburger and Farule, 1986). The words of the women in this study need to be viewed in this light.

The Women

A total of fourteen women were interviewed but, for purposes of this study, only ten interviews were used. Two interviews are not presented because these women had personal extenuating circumstances that made their responses and choices inappropriate for use here, and two women did not meet all the research requirements.

The ten women interviewed were between the ages of 32-years-old and 43-years-old and had been married an average of eight years. One woman holds an Associate degree, and six of the women hold Bachelor's degrees. One is an RN, one has a Master's degree and one holds a PhD. Before their children were born, all but one of the women were employed fulltime. Six returned to work after the birth of their child, and one returned to school fulltime. Of the remaining three, one took a year's leave of absence from her job, one plans to return to work when her child begins school, and one has no plans to return to work.
Amy

Amy is 33-years-old and expecting her second child. She has a Bachelor's degree in education and had taught for eight years. At the present time, she is at home full time. She plans to return to work once her children are in school. Amy and her husband were married for four years before the birth of their first child. They are now expecting their second child.

Amy's first child was thirteen months old at the time of the interview. She has always wanted more than one child and realized that the longer she waited to have another child the longer her return to work would be delayed. This feeling led to her decision to have a second child at this time.

Even with the rush to have more children, once the first child was born, Amy was more than satisfied with her decision to postpone parenthood until after age 30. Most of Amy's decisions and limitations have been self-imposed and were deliberate choices. Amy talks about her decision in this way:

I think that's a good decision. I think that having children under certain conditions...should be thought out. I don't mean to the very specific-today, let's do it-although I know people who do it. I'm not into that, but I do think waiting and that option was available to me. The reason I say
that is that when I was 18 I had a boyfriend that I was very much in love with... and never considered marrying him at that time because I was going to go to college. That was number one and the only thing important about (I) did turn out pregnant, like shortly after dating him... as a definite option opted to terminate the pregnancy. I never considered anything else. I just think that there is so much time in your life to have children, especially today with the life expectancy being what it is. You have so much time. It's no longer unusual to be 40 and having children, I don't think. And I just think that there is so much to do and my personal opinion is having children is not only important to you. I think it is so critical that I think that we personally sacrificed a lot of financial gains. We have sacrificed a lot of social things because my husband and I are of the opinion that children are first and foremost in our lives and I think for those rare exceptions... young kids generally don't see that.

They're first. It's me, and that includes the pregnancy and that includes the life they're after. But they grow up and you have them forever after and I think that's a hard concept for young people in general to conceive of and when I think about dedicating five years or thereabouts completely to their lives... I can't imagine an 18 year old saying five years. When you think it is so important.

Amy views parenting as a time of personal sacrifice. The choice of options allowed her to decide that she needed to discover who she was before she could devote all her time to her child. Having a fulltime career and raising a family at the same time
was never an option for Amy. She felt that to do each properly one option needed to be chosen over another.

Here Amy discusses why:

So that I never have to say I wish that I had. That doesn't mean that you can't have children; someone would say why can't you have children and go to school and yes you can. I'm sure you can. I've seen people do it but it is such a hassle. It is so hard to do that I think why put yourself through that when you can wait ten years and then completely say now I'm ready to have my kids and I can feel good about it because I've done what I wanted to do and then you never have those regrets or wish that I had, why didn't I, kind of questions. I think the one thing that I feel good about is that I don't question that. I can't say because I had these kids they stopped me from doing and they haven't at all. I give them all, completely...

I just think it's (parenthood) wonderful. Maturity has a big part, something I was thinking about after you left last time was that if I had had children in my early 20's; if that had been the case, and I wanted to have children, I believe that I would have been the typical career mom. I would not have interrupted my career. They would have been in a baby sitting or day care type of situation and I would have kept on working. Children were something that I wanted but were not priority. My career was priority at that time in my life, as it should have been, I think, and had I had children that would have happened and I think they would have played second. That doesn't mean that they wouldn't have been loved and cared for but they would have played a significant second, I think, to what my career goals were and now because I've got ten years of my career under my belt and still pretty satisfied with that, I can't believe I'm home, staying as a fulltime
mother. Sometimes I think that can't be me doing that. That just doesn't fit me. It doesn't seem and it suits me well, just real well. We talked about that as you were leaving. As a matter of fact people will say, "So you work?". People have got to stop that. They have got to stop that.

Although the establishment of a career was a major factor in Amy's decision to postpone, she also felt that there were other issues that were just as important and contributed to her decision to postpone. Establishing a stable marital relationship was a consideration in making the decision to postpone. Amy states this about the marital relationship and the decision:

Being a little older when you make those decisions. Hopefully giving that much more chance to succeed. Being able to make a commitment that is meaningful, hopefully. Having a little bit more sense to pick somebody more suitable because you're older and more mature. That's the basic, I always wanted to get married...

Just having that person who is more comparable to you, just in communication and as far as a husband goes, fulfilling emotional, sexual needs and those kind of things. I don't think children can fill my emotional needs like that. It's different. I think loving children and having their love is a whole lot different that loving your husband...It is completely different.
For Amy the establishment of the marital relationship and the decision making process concerning postponing parenthood were not accomplished at the same time. She says:

It was a choice to wait before I met him. I wanted to get my career under way first and for him it was real good because he happened to be younger so it was a real good decision. He said that there wasn't any real problem. He really wanted to wait, definitely...It was more my decision to go ahead because I had had enough career background. I was ready to go on so that I could go back to it.

Amy had other reasons for postponing but these did not appear as firm as those involving career and marital stability. Amy states:

I would say that I set up my life so that I had goals that I wanted to accomplish and (children) would have gotten in the way of those goals.

I would say feelings of inadequacy as far as having a child in my 20s. I did not think I was mature enough and yet here I was in the teaching profession and that was a funny thing for a teacher to say. I didn't think I could handle it emotionally... Along with finances. I didn't even include that but there was that thought at that time early on when I was going to college, that you would be more financially ready, which didn't turn out but there was that thought.

For Amy the decision to postpone parenthood was a very positive one. After the birth of her child, Amy
sensed a new awareness of herself. She experienced a change in her own attitudes toward children, parenting and life. She said:

I think there is a maturity factor just in being older, because I think that I always was able to love. I think I got into this profession because I loved children, those kind of things. But I think age does promote that sense of one knowing who you are and feeling good about that and then also being able to love. And when it comes to kids I can't imagine, I know that I could not as an eighteen year old have loved a child as much, they're really hard. It's not hard when you love them and they're wanted and everything is great. That makes it easy, but they don't care about you a whole lot. They really don't. For the first year of their lives they are completely centered on themselves and I think when you are eighteen and twenty years old. A year, just think about that. Because for nine months you've got to carry them. Two years right off the bat where you will have to be completely giving and not get a whole lot back...

It's just now, a little over a year and he's starting to get cute back at me and (husband) and I sit and say, "Look what he's doing". But I would say the first six months is a drag in a lot of ways. I think if you don't have that, six months to an eighteen year old is a long time.

I have control over all of my life now that I never felt like I had. I'd say that's the biggest thing that I lacked for so much of it. The feeling of controlling my own life and I'd say now that's the biggest thing I've got, I can control it. And realize, I think it takes a long time to realize that you make your own happiness and that it's not someone else's job to do that for you. I think I'm flexible, real flexible. I think that's a real good quality trait that I have and I think that I am a more nurturing
parent. I think I'm the obvious, just looking at the two of us (Amy and her husband), I think that I am the more nurturing. It seems to be very natural for me.

I feel pretty good about it (life) Pretty much at least in control enough of my life now. I think what has made me feel real good about my life is that it doesn't always have to be crammed. At one time in my life I believed that you had to plan everything. I no longer feel that it has to be so planned, so rigid. I'm looking forward to my future with my children because it is totally linked with that, and this is off the subject and yet on the subject; I think one of the things that I have learned about my life in general is that when it comes to my children, just because I want something to happen doesn't mean because I want it for them, that we're going to have it. I think that was a mistake that my father made and I think that I have learned that my parents were "wrong" and that's ok too. I probably will be too and that's all right.

Barb

Barb is 32-years-old and a registered nurse. Barb has been married for three years. During the past year she and her husband have moved to the midwest from the west coast, bought a house and had their first child. They would like to someday have another child.

Barb feels very satisfied with her role as a parent. She sees her decision to postpone as a contributing factor to her satisfaction. She stated:
For me I really had to think; here I am a person who is fairly newly married. We really enjoy our marriage and we spend a lot of time together and we basically get up and go when we want. It's going to completely change and you're going to have to be totally unselfish now because this other person can't do for himself and I think at 21 I wouldn't have been ready to be so unselfish and now it's very easy...

(The satisfaction) must have been more from my age. I think if I had had my own child at 21 I wouldn't have made a good mother because I was still so much exploring because I didn't have a job. I hadn't gone to school and hadn't finished any sort of education that would have allowed me to get a job and all of that leads to self-esteem, I think. So it all went together but now that I know I have a good job that I can go back to if I need it...

I guess the thing that most strikes me is that when I took care of my nephew for a year while I was living in the east, I was 21 years old and what I remember is how difficult it was...I guess (having a baby) scared me so much. Because I felt partly out of control and that's a phrase I use when I'm at work and I work with sick babies and control is a big thing at work and the parent (of the sick child) feels out of control. They're in an environment and their child is sick and everything that they had hoped for is just flying out the window. Anyway, I think I really felt out of control when I was taking care of my nephew, just like those parents, even though he was a healthy baby. I had my brother and sister-in-law there when they came home from work. It just was a crying baby and no place to go...I know the whole nine months wasn't like that but that's what sticks out in my mind so that when we knew we were pregnant and we were going to have a baby, that kind of like residual feeling, am I going to be able to enjoy this? Am I going to be able to control this situation? What kind of a parent am I going
to be? Well for the last seven weeks I have felt incredibly comfortable and felt really good that I can handle it.

Barb did not get married until she was 30 years old. The time before marriage provided Barb with the opportunity to establish a career which would provide her with the options she wanted as part of her life. She spent part of this time examining career options until she decided on nursing. This final career choice allowed Barb to develop flexible work options once her child was born. As Barb put it:

I see that it is possible to have them (career and home) together. I would always want to have a career option and by that I mean not working fulltime. Sort of mixed dialogue, but I like my job so well that I would never want to give it up totally...In California I was able to survive quite nicely on three or four days a week and so that kind of set the tone...

I'm ready to go back to work. I'm looking forward to it.

During the time Barb was struggling with her career choice she was also searching for her own identity. This search was punctuated by rebellion from parental authority and movement around the country. Barb talks about this time:

After high school I moved around quite a bit. I moved back east twice and then I moved to
the Bay Area. I think at that time in the 70's, it was kind of almost expected for young people to move around. It was like everybody was taking off for Europe and having all these experiences and mine was sort of here in the U. S....

During high school I didn't have any boyfriends so I always from that assumed that I wouldn't get married...but I did think about children and I thought of adoption but there again I wasn't real aggressive...So I just kind of wandered around a lot because I hadn't decided and I just didn't know.

It was also during this time that Barb established a relationship with a woman who she would later identify as a mentor. She talked about this relationship in these terms:

(She) was quite influential in my life and she sort of set the tone for that period in my life. Had I not done that I'm sure I would have been different...it was a growth experience for me and she had a big influence in it. She became someone to speak to and confide in.

Overall this was a critical time for Barb. She was attempting to establish herself as separate from her parents. She states:

For example when I moved to LA, I moved there with a girlfriend who was quite influential in my life and she sort of set the tone for that period in my life and had I not done that I'm sure I would have been different. I don't know how but at that time I just kind of followed her around and did what she did...Although it was a growth experience for me and she had a big influence on my life, it
was in a way a bad influence also because it was sort of like I turned my back on my family, but maybe that's just a normal part of growing up. I don't know. In hindsight it just felt like I made kind of like a cut with my family that was a little too hard. It was too hurtful in some ways. I was sort of like a model child growing up and when I hit my late teens I wasn't real rebellious but this was sort of like my time to be rebellious...I think it was bad on the relationship between myself and my parents. They didn't totally understand why I had to go to LA. They thought I was relying too much on my friends and I think they felt maybe a little threatened.

Another experience that Barb considered as critical was when she became a Christian. She said:

When I became a Christian, that was a critical point because that definitely steered me to people who were going to be my family. That was a time that allowed me to begin to make up with my family.

These two critical events had positive affects on Barb. She now sees herself as having control of her life and she feels a sense of stability and contentment in her familial relationships. She says:

Having moved away (from California) I think that has really helped. I was in too close a proximity to them (her parents) and I needed to feel that separateness. But now it has come to the point that they're getting older and I'm more mature and settled and they see me as an adult and those old feelings shouldn't come into play, the resentments and
angers...I think it was because I counted so much on this other friend for her friendship, for supplying me with entertainment. Here now I don't, I don't have to count on anyone. It's not like I feel like self-reliance is so great but I don't have to rely on somebody also for my being and now I feel more in control.

Barb also, now feels a real sense of satisfaction with her life. She enjoys her roles of wife and mother and sees her decision to postpone and the changes it brought about as important in her life. She states:

I am actually pretty satisfied with my life. In most places in it I was happy...I think I'm a good wife and (my husband) seems happy. He seems to enjoy me, being around me. I am very happy with my marriage. In fact, having a baby now and looking back, the changes it has made, it's real obvious that it is important to wait. I think I'm more altruistic now. But somehow it would have been different had it been forced upon me day after day at 21. I think that's the biggest change.

Being in a marriage and looking—should I have a kid now or not? For me, that was harder to gauge, whether it was important to wait.

Irene

Irene is a 35-year-old psychologist in private practice with her husband. They met in graduate school in 1981 and were married a year later. Thirteen months
ago Irene gave birth to her first child. They would like to have another child but are still unsure about the timing.

Before she met her husband, Irene had decided she did not want to have children until her career had been established. She felt that the time involved in finishing her Ph.D. and establishing a private practice would leave little time for her to devote to parenthood. She stated:

My decision to wait was very personal. I knew what kind of mother I wanted to be and until I found the right man and finished school I had trouble picturing also being a mother. So, I just decided to wait until I felt I was ready...

I think one of the biggest (reasons) is if I had (a child) before I finished school it would be harder for me to do it (finish school). By getting school out of the way I can also enjoy life and not worry about it (school). Because once I had children it was going to be much harder, and my life was going to change more than I was ready for while I was still in school.

Another concern which contributed to her decision to wait was the issue of financial security. Irene said:

I want my children to have a very stable and permanent home life and to get that I really need to feel that I won't have any money worries. Financial security, to me, is part
of a stable home life and I don't want my kids to have less. When we finally decided that we wanted to begin our family (husband) and I discussed at great lengths whether we were ready. We knew we were ready but we wanted to make sure we could afford a child. Once we had decided we could then we stopped using birth control. It took about a year but we finally got pregnant and felt good that we had planned everything out.

A stable and permanent home life was a significant theme in Irene's life. Irene is the daughter of two Air Force physicians who have been stationed all over the world. Because of her parents' careers, Irene lived overseas for most of her childhood and adolescence. During her school years, she attended seven different school before she graduated from high school. Irene feels that the most stable period of her life is now. This feeling of stability began to form when she started college. She talked about stability in this way:

You know, I never really had a best friend when I was growing up. It was kind of hard because we were always moving. Sometimes it seemed like we never even unpacked. All the other kids I knew were in the same boat... we never really knew anything else. We had our groups of friends at each base but never got really close, because someone was always leaving. Don't get me wrong, living in all those places was great, now that I look back on it. I got to see so much. But making
friends was always hard especially when you were the one who moved. You always seemed to think "why bother"...

I decided to come here to go to school because it is where my parents met and they would always tell us about it. It being so nice and all. Anyway, my first year was hard. The only consistency I ever had was in Japan (family) so it was pretty hard to go home for a weekend. I was pretty much here by myself. It got better after awhile, because everyone else I knew was away from their families for the first time too. I don't really remember when, but I started to get real close with two girls in my dorm and then we joined the same sorority together. Then when I was a sophomore we lived in the (sorority) house, and, it sounds kind of stupid now, but it became home. It was like I knew that the house would be there and would never move...I guess I discovered what a stable home was like...That's when I began to realize that that's what I wanted. So when I met my husband I made real sure he thought how I did about home type things. I think that is why we stayed here to open our practice. This is where I found consistency.

Irene's family provided her with some stability in her life but she felt that relationships outside her family were not as stable. One aspect of Irene's childhood that seemed to help her handle the instability she experienced because of her family's constant moving was her reliance on other adults outside her family. She stated:

Teachers will always be real important people to me. I guess you could say they are significant. They were always there for my brothers and I. I think it takes a special
kind of person to work with Air Force brats, because we were always coming into a classroom and the next month we could be gone. But at each base there was always one teacher who went out of her way to help me get settled. I doubt I could have made it without them sometimes.

With Irene's emphasis on stability it is not surprising that she felt more content with her life after the birth of her child than at any other time in her life. She now had a career and family that enabled her to further establish the permanent roots she felt she had missed as a child. She discussed her feelings about contentment in these terms:

I'd say the past thirteen months since I had my baby made me content. I changed how I felt about my whole life. Now, it's not only me that I have to look out for, I also have to look out for a family and make sure they feel secure. So it like changes it (life) and makes it bigger, more responsibility. I'm very satisfied being a parent.

Everything is on schedule and that makes me feel good. I planned it, I did it and I'm happy with the consequences. So far it has worked out well. My son's healthy, my husband's happy, our practice is going well so I am really satisfied and content with what I have now and I can't imagine it any other way.

Another aspect which seemed to contribute to Irene's sense of satisfaction was her career. As a psychologist in private practice with her office in her
home, Irene has never had to deal with leaving her child to return to work. She feels that her career and motherhood have not conflicted. She said:

I only took two months off and that was mostly because I had a C-section. I didn't like the idea of leaving my patients for much longer. I enjoy working with them and really missed it. My husband saw some but he has his own so that didn't work out real well.

With the office right here I can just roll his crib into. It's great. I don't have to worry about packing him off some place. It's nice to have this setup because we would like to have another child. We will probably hire a nanny later so the children would still be with us in the house but right now we want to do it ourselves.

I really have the best of two worlds. I don't think I could be just a mother or just have a career. I'm active and I think the two complement each other. So I'll just keep doing it this way.

Irene's feelings of contentment and sense of career satisfaction have both contributed to her feelings about parenthood. She said:

Since (child) was born I've been on a continual high. Everything has been so great. Oh yea, we have the normal problems but we can handle them. I think I'm a good psychologist and wife and since those are okay it's easy to be a good mom.
Debbie

Debbie is a housewife who has no desire to return to work. She states that her husband wants her at home and this attitude is fine with her. She enjoys being at home with her 17-month-old child and considers homemaking her career. Because of her age, Debbie feels that this will be her only child.

When Debbie was married, she and her husband made the decision to wait to have children. There were several reasons this decision was made. This was her husband's second marriage and he had custody of his two children. Debbie and her husband felt that at the time of their marriage the two children needed to experience some emotional consistency and the addition of another child at that time might jeopardize its formation.

Other considerations in the decision to postpone were the establishing of a strong marriage and financial security. They felt that the other children had suffered because the first marriage was not strong, and they did not want any child of their's to experience similar feelings. Also, until their financial situation improved, they felt they could not afford another child.
As Debbie neared her 39th birthday, these issues were no longer of concern and because Debbie felt her biological clock, they decided to have a child of their own. She discussed her decision in this way:

(The stepchildren) were 22 and 18 and out on their own. I loved them a lot but still wanted my own...Once we made the decision we began to try right away. I wanted it so badly that I thought I was pregnant the very first month, but I wasn't. So we kept at it and I finally became pregnant about three years later.

Thinking about it I'm glad I waited. He is really OUR child and with the Lord's help I'll do a good job with him.

Debbie views her choice of roles as an extension of her upbringing. She is 43-years-old and has been married for thirteen years. She considers herself a product of the 1950s rather than of the 1960s. About these times she stated:

I was expected to be a little lady. I was the only daughter and the only granddaughter. My grandmother was forever taking me places in my little skirt and my little white gloves and I was expected to sit with my hands in my lap and your legs crossed at your ankles and you were polite and basically I went along with it because I was kind of like that. I don't really remember ever wanting to get dirty. Had I been like my stepdaughter, she's a true tomboy. That child, you could never get her in a dress, but me, I kind of went with it because I was sort of complacent for the most part. That's basically what it was. I was expected to be a lady and ladies
grew up, even into the 50 and 60s I think it carried over. There were even certain things that were more suited for women.

Basically I was just a good kid. I didn't hop into bed with anybody. I just was a nice girl and there were only a few and we just happened to be friends. We were like average students, B and C. We weren't spectacularly brilliant or we weren't nerds and we weren't what used to be called bad girls. That was just basically what it was...I'd say I'm probably the 'nice girl' now, simply because I want to be. Back then I felt like there was parental pressure to be. And my parents opinion was important to me. I didn't run around and do something that they wouldn't like. Now I feel that to have pre-marital or extramarital, I feel that that is wrong and I would never do it simply because I feel it is wrong now. So I guess maybe I finally internalized what my parents always thought.

During her late 20s, Debbie became a Born Again Christian. Religion had been part of her life but this event changed her. Debbie believes that her rebirth as a Christian was responsible for her pregnancy and the subsequent birth of her son. This occurrence has profoundly affected Debbie's life and her sense of who she is. Every thing in her life from her definition of self, to her daily routine was now bound up in her Pentecostal beliefs. Debbie discussed her faith in this way:

I think my focus is different. Well, immediately after being born again I became pregnant. So there I was focused in on the
pregnancy and the baby and I think you lose yourself in that because there's a lot of things going on...

But as far as being born again, when I came out of that and wasn't totally focused on the baby it was like I started looking around. When you're born again you start as a spiritual baby, but it doesn't mean you're perfect or anything but you have to start growing spiritually and eventually begin to have patience with the foibles of other people. You begin to overlook what might have infuriated you before and you begin to have patience, which was hard for me to learn. Then you begin to actually love the person no matter what they do. Of course I'm not there yet that I can love everybody. I know I'm suppose to but I'm certainly not there yet and it's like a growing process and I begin to think more in terms of beyond what other people might want. What helps the other person. I don't immediately take offense at either real or imagined insults. I don't automatically turn snotty at the sales clerk who has had a bad day and snaps at me. Whereas before I might have thought I didn't deserve that and snapped right back. I don't automatically do it. If I've had a bad day I might go "oohl". I still do that which I know I shouldn't but you're still human.

I think that's basically how it has changed. I think more in terms of other people. I don't get as mad when people forget to put dishes in the dishwasher. Little things, pick up the socks, why can't you remember to do that? It's like we all forget things. I find myself more along those lines. I consider that a spiritual growth. I don't sweat the details I guess...I just feel that everything is fine. One of the things I heard you should do is you should ask yourself if you can very quick mentally when a situation comes up, you say what would Jesus do? That helps. If I remember to. And there are times when I'm
really down, monthly cycles. The laundry isn't caught up. The kid is screaming, the dog is barking all that.

I think, oh, heaven is going to be so beautiful. Now I know I'm assured of going...I think so many times that people try to, at least people who have some moral upbringing feel that they have to. "What can I do that's good? How can I work at doing good? I'm basically a good person." You'll hear that a lot. There will be people, but you still have your moments where oh, well, I don't really like that person or I gossip about this person or I do that. It was important to me to know that all sin was sin. There's no degrees. Murder and a little white lie are the same in the eyes of the Lord since he was perfect and that was almost a great relief to know. To finally realize that. That all sin was sin and to ask for forgiveness and have him come into my life because then I knew; I'm positive now that there is a place called heaven and a place called hell and hell is where I don't want to go. It is none of those cutie little jokes that people say, "Well I'm going to hell because all my friends are going to be there." It is going to be very, very unpleasant and eternity is a long, long time. So it just made me aware, before you can be born again you have to know that you're a sinner. A lot of people will not admit that they're sinners and it became much easier after the events of the last nine years to figure that out and then to know that there was a remedy for it. That Christ paid the price for it and it's not easy. I just know that I have to keep asking forgiveness, life is hard, but once you realize it's hard then it really isn't as hard. You know it's hard. You expect it and so you just live each day and that's basically how it changed me. It gave me a whole different perspective. But I feel I have an advantage over people who are not a Christian because I can turn to my Bible and I can pray and even if I've had less sleep that night I can make it through a day because of the strength that I get, and I
know I can't do it on my own and I think that is the fallacy with people who try to do it on their own because they can't. They may think they're doing it but they can't. I think it just depends on whether a person accepts the basic premise- Is there a God and did he send his son to redeem mankind?

Debbie also feels that she is a better mother now than she would have been in her 20s and she feels satisfied with what has happened in her life. She contributes most of these feelings to her belief in God. She talked about parenting:

I'm much more patient, although there are times when everybody around here doubts that, but I really am much more patient and I can take an awful lot. Whereas 20 years ago I wouldn't. Now maybe if this were ten years ago I would have more energy. At 43 I feel worn out a lot. At 32 I might have had more energy and a little more patience. Maybe 32 would have been the better age but that's not how it worked out and I'm going to try to start doing exercises and build myself up because I have a hard time keeping up with him. He's just so active and there are days when I'm dragging along and between the child and the dog it's like I can't keep up. But other than that I wouldn't have wanted it. This is good.

I still feel that I want to teach him Christian values and leading to the Lord at as early an age as possible, but I feel that in the Lord there is a lot of freedom. Men are taught to be compassionate. The Lord wasn't a wimp. He had the power and the strength but he chose not to use it. He chose to be compassionate and love people no matter what they did to him and I don't believe in saying, You can't tell a child to
turn the other cheek constantly because children are noted with being vicious to each other. And so there's a little bit of leeway there but eventually I expect him to learn that type of behavior.

Boys, I think, from conception are different than girls and I think the Lord made them that way. They are more aggressive, they just are, and (my son) would rather take something and pretend like he is shooting somebody down and at first it bothered me and I thought well westerns were big when I was growing up in the 50's and I had my guns and my cowgirl skirt and stuff and I played cowboys and Indians and shoot them dead and all of that and I didn't turn into a homicidal manic that wanted to go out and shoot people. So basically I'm relaxed a lot about stuff like that...There is a Christian psychologist named Dobson who says that you don't have to be perfect. You only have to be good enough.

Ellen

Ellen is 32-years-old and has been married for four years. She received a Bachelor's degree in education, but after college, she obtained her Professional Golfers Association (PGA) card. She now manages a university golf course. At the time of the interview, her child was five months old and she is now expecting her second child. Ellen and her husband decided to postpone parenthood when they were married. The decision to postpone was mutual and made for a variety of reasons. She said:
We didn't want to have a baby right away because we wanted to get some financial security and save some money and also just have some time alone before we started a family.

I figured once I had the baby my career wouldn't be as important as it was before and if my husband gets a head job I don't know whether I'll continue in this career so I thought we had to pack it in.

Ellen's parents played an important part in her life. Her mother had always worked in the family business, and Ellen felt that this provided her with a strong role model. Ellen viewed her father as her mentor. He also was a golf professional and owned a private golf course. She talked about her father in this way, "I liked the way he dealt with people and his charisma and he was smart...He influenced me in all areas of my life".

Her father died in an automobile accident when Ellen was a senior. She viewed his death as one of the most critical times in her life. It was the first time she had experienced the death of someone close to her. She said:

It was just such a feeling of loss. I wandered around for awhile like there was a big chunk out of my life...For awhile I was cynical. Small events that everybody was complaining about didn't get to me like them. I just wondered, so what.
Ellen's career has played a unique role in her life. She spent four years in college preparing to be a teacher but realized in her senior year that teaching was not an appropriate choice. She spent time searching for what she wanted to do, eventually deciding to pursue a career of some kind in the golfing profession. She achieved this goal and is now a golf professional and manager of a university golf course. In discussing her career choice she said:

It wasn't bad in some ways but I didn't start my career until I was 25, so I was searching from 21 to 25 and I could have been productive and started something. I had worked different places and not gotten a permanent type job that I could move up in for those four years...Now I look back and I don't really regret it but if I were to put my life in order and work toward something, those four years didn't really move me up and yet they were good experiences and I chose what I did as a result of that.

My career search stabilized and one winter I worked for Golf Digest. I never could have done what I'm doing now had I not done some of those things because my golf game wasn't to the point that I did do what I'm doing now until I worked for Golf Digest that one winter. That made me realize that I could do this because we had to pass a trainability test which I couldn't have passed in college...I started with the LPGA and when my game got better, that was the only thing keeping me from a PGA card, and it got good enough that I could pass that test. When I started I decided that's what my goal was, to get that (the PGA card).

If I had it to do again I would have tried to decide on a career when I was in
high school and not gone to school for the career which I ended up not doing. I thought I had a career though. I would like to change, that but I don't know if I went back, I don't know if I would still know. I was a late bloomer and I had to go through it all.

Ellen's decision to postpone parenthood and her career met when the decision was finally made to have a child. Her career goals had been reached and she felt her age necessitated beginning a family. At this time she sensed a change in her attitude about her work. She talked about the change in this way:

I was 30 and I've been working since I was 20. Maybe the number of years had something to do with that, but mainly that I'm not the second in command (at work). I'm the first person in command and even though it's a university setting, it's a good job for me and it's a head job. If I didn't have a head job I might feel differently. Even if I was at a bigger place and was the second person I might still have that desire to be...I think as I got older, after I got married, all of a sudden the career wasn't everything, I wanted a family more than a career.

I think my age had a lot to do with it and I was worried that I probably would put it off until I was too old so I felt I'd better get going if I wanted to have a few children before the biological clock took over.

We saved money and I worked another year. I don't know that my career has gone up that year I waited. It stayed the same. I got to a level when we got married, I got my PGA card and that was my goal to get before I married.
Even with this feeling of having accomplished career goals Ellen saw herself as always working in some capacity. The birth of her child had caused her to reevaluate what her career would entail. She was very content with her career achievements. With the birth of her son she began to explore other directions for her career. Ellen began thinking in terms of the more parttime aspects of golf, for example giving lessons. She said:

I hope to stay in it parttime wherever I am, teach lessons. But I would pursue a job with this much responsibility at the next course we go and if we stay here I'll probably keep this job. I wrestle with whether to quit because it is hard to give up my good job and the salary but on the other hand its hard to leave him with somebody else. I don't think he'll suffer from it this year but its hard for me not to be seeing everything that goes on.

I couldn't quit now. The only way I could probably justify quitting is if my husband got another job or if I had another baby right away and just couldn't swing it but I couldn't give it up right now. If I wasn't going back I might feel a little frustrated, and yes, it did make me feel good.

The change in Ellen's attitude toward her career is not the only change she saw in her life since the birth of her child. She said:
My husband says I'm more at peace since I've been pregnant. Last summer was better than before. I don't know if it is because I am becoming a complacent person. It's probably not good for the job but it's good for my personality.

Because I was always a restless person wanting to do this and that and go places and reach certain goals and all of a sudden I've become probably more at ease.

I love being a parent. I keep waiting for the novelty to wear off and it hasn't.

Josie

Josie is 37-years-old and has been married since 1980. She has a Bachelor's degree in accounting. She took a one year leave of absence from her job with the financial aid department of a major university when her child was born three months ago. Because Josie feels she is too old to have another child, this will be her only child.

Even though she has decided not to have any more children, Josie is confident she made the right decision when she decided to wait. She discussed postponing parenthood in these terms:

I think the big reason was my career. I wanted to finish school and begin earning good money in a good job. I wanted to be able to afford a child...

I made the decision (to postpone) before I got married, before I even knew my husband. I let him know that I didn't want children right away. I thought that his opinion
really depended on what he felt about our relationship. The same thing happened when I finally decided to have a child. It was at a point in my life when I said, "I'm ready and I want a child because my career is going well and everything else is settled and I had better do it now before I get too old." I heard that clock ticking.

Josie's attitudes toward career and family are the crux of how she feels about herself as a woman and are bound by her cultural heritage. She is Spanish and feels that she has to constantly wage a battle with her heritage. She stated:

If I hadn't left the confining culture (of my childhood) I wouldn't be like I am now. The few women who do (have careers and delay parenthood) are like outcasts from family and friends and I don't know if I'm strong enough for that. So I had to leave the culture to be able to do what I wanted to do not what my family wanted me to do. I think here I can be Spanish but also be myself. It's important to me to have a family and my job and in any other place I couldn't do both.

Josie moved to this country when she was ten but still senses that her Spanish heritage influenced how she felt about the roles she had chosen. She further discussed the influence of being Spanish in this way:

I'm Spanish and a girl, and there are certain things you don't do or say. (You) stay home with kids and then (I) came to this country, and it's not like that. So I had to turn around and do some things completely
different. First of all, I had to get my mother used to the idea that I wasn't staying home and I'm not raising my (child) like I was. Also when you go out to work people look at you as a woman and as Spanish. So you are kind of handicapped right there. At first this had an affect on the way I did things. It made me less confident and insecure, and I let people walk on me. All of a sudden I realized that I had to get a lot tougher with people. I learned to stand up for myself. I worried that my family may resent me because I looked out for myself. But there's nothing you can do sometimes. It is really up to the individual.

I can't stand to be at home. I need to feel good about myself away from home. It makes me feel like I'm a person, a human being. It's what I like to do, and I show the family that I need both. I'm not like most good little Spanish girls...I will raise my daughter to know that she is equal because if not, she will be in the same boat that I was.

Josie viewed her late teens and early 20s as the most critical times in her life. It was during this time that the responsibilities of adulthood became part of her everyday life. She said:

Things changed. I used to think that when you grew up things got more settled in life. Career, marriage, children, like, all fell into place. But they didn't. It was harder than I ever thought it would be. I always wanted more time. I wasn't a kid anymore. I suddenly had responsibilities and problems. I had to figure out what to do. I didn't have enough time to enjoy life and still handle the responsibilities I had...Being Spanish at a very white school didn't help either. I really felt out of it a lot of the time.
Josie felt fortunate that she found a mentor who was able to help her work through the problems she had during college and while looking for a job. She stated:

I was really lucky. One of my accounting professors was a woman whose family came to this country right before the second world war. She recognized that I was having trouble and sort of took me under her wing. She helped me see that I could do it and that cultural background had nothing to do with it. She wrote me a great recommendation that I think helped me get my job. I think without her I probably would have quit school, and had babies. She listened and helped me decided what I wanted to do. I sometimes still think about her when I'm working on a problem.

She also felt that her mentor helped her overcome the residual feelings she had regarding the roles she had chosen, particularly those involving career and marriage. Josie had always wanted a career but her family pressured her to remain at home where she belonged. By listening to Josie, her mentor provided Josie with an outlet for her feelings and enabled her to establish positive feelings about her decision. She said, "(Mentor) helped me realize that what I wanted was important and should override what others said I wanted".
Now that Josie has had a child, she senses a feeling of contentment that she had not known before.

She said:

Life is more settled because I waited. I am better able to cope with all the problems...because I have a lot more knowledge about things because I'm older...I get such rewards from my daughter and husband and my work relationships...At the end of the day when I'm driving home and I think about what I've done I feel good about it.

Gail

Gail is 32-years-old and was married one week after she graduated from college. During her 20s she established herself in business. After her daughter was born last year, she opened her own real estate business. Having waited eleven years to have her first child, Gail and her husband are now talking of having another child. She describes herself in these terms:

I feel like I'm a pretty good person. I think people can depend on me. I'm real happy, real content. I feel like I've got the world in my pocket or whatever. It seems pretty nice.

I feel like I'm honest. I'm competent in most ways. I think I'm smart and make good business decisions. When it comes to making business decisions, even though my husband is making more money than I am, I take care of all the funds and any time it is time to make an investment I make the decision.
When was in her 20s, she discovered that she had cancer. Although she is now cancer free, she saw this period as a very critical time in her life. She said, "I suddenly realized that there is so much I wanted to do and I'd better get going". It was during this time that Gail joined a cancer patient support group. A function of this group was to provide a support system for its members. Gail found one woman who was recovering from the same type of cancer that she had. This woman became a support for Gail, so much so that Gail considered her a mentor. She said:

I don't think I could have gotten through it without (her). She was always there when I needed to talk. My husband was great but I couldn't talk to him about some of the stuff that was happening so it was nice to have someone else...We are both survivors so I think even though I don't see her any more we'll always have that bond.

Gail saw most other facets of life in terms of how they related to her professional business abilities. All her relationships were viewed in some way as an extension of her work. Gail also related her work to her needs for relaxation. Work was viewed as a means to the end, and the end for Gail was having a good time.
Gail expressed her feelings about her work in these terms:

In the last few years after college and stuff, my goals and objectives quite often are like, made money in the stock market or invest and try to increase the net worth, that kind of thing. Like I wrote in there [time line], this year we're buying a farm. I've been trying to buy a farm for the last two years but I wouldn't buy anything unless it is going to make sense...My husband won't actually go out and farm it. We'll farm it by pencil, have somebody else do the actual work, but we'll get it paid for so that in 20 years if my husband isn't working it will be a good extra income. Just building a base. Diversity.

My job gives me a lot of confidence because I know if anything happened with my husband and my relationship I'd always have my daughter and I have the capacity to take care of her. I could go out and I could get a really good career going. I feel real confident where I am.

Gail's feelings about relationships were bound in her sense of self and what she expects from others and from work.

I think they're intertwined. I like treating people right and I expect that back. That's probably where I get frustrated. If I don't get back what I'm trying to put, out then it bothers me.

Gail's quest for leisure is also part of her work ethic. She said:
I just had a certain level. In selling property I don't really go out to make money. It seems like it's more of a hobby where I can make money to do my other hobbies. I always like to have fun every day. Get aggravated on the golf course. Golf isn't always that big but it seems like I have a lot of fun with friends and stuff.

This pursuit of leisure was a major reason Gail and her husband made the decision to postpone parenthood. But also, this time of postponement enabled Gail and her husband to establish a much closer relationship. She stated:

I just enjoy going out and doing different things and seeing different things. I was counting them up and I've been to Florida twelve times. It was time we spent together by ourselves.

It was kind of nice when we first moved away (from parents) and were on our own, right after we got married. We just had a ball. We went out to dinner all the time... Making money and spending it. We didn't have that many friends, so it was probably the events going on that helped us become that much closer.

More than anything else Gail feels that the birth of her daughter had changed her life. Gail talked about the experience in these terms:

Like I've already done a lot of things and it's a nice compliment to my life. I think I'm more dependable and more consistent. I'm satisfied. I more or less take each day as it goes. I'm not trying to be the
model mother because, if I worried about everything I could probably drive myself crazy. You just can't do that.

Sometimes I feel guilty but I think that was more or less because I didn't have good child care. I didn't really like taking her, packing her up and taking her to somebody's house. I felt like she was more like a piece of luggage. It is just kind of nice that she's here at home now and that I've found somebody.

It seems like my daughter is getting to be a lot more fun. It's hard to really get into, for me, little babies. I couldn't really associated with that, motherhood thing. This is kind of well, feed the baby. She's hungry. I didn't associate with that baby as a person until probably the last couple of months when she actually is getting a personality. So that is becoming more fun and I find myself thinking about her, and when I'm thinking about her I'm smiling about it.

Hanna

Hanna is 34-years-old and in graduate school. She and her husband have been married for seven years and are now both finishing their degrees in administration. Hanna also works fulltime and does volunteer work for the American Red Cross. She had always worked, at least parttime, since she was fourteen years old. Hanna is extremely busy but views being busy in the broader scope of career advancement.

Hanna's child was born six months ago and Hanna returned to work three weeks after the birth. She does
not feel that her busy lifestyle will impinge on her parenting. In fact one reason for her decision to postpone was so that she would be better prepared for parenthood. Hanna stated:

Prior to our marriage we decided to wait to have children. We both wanted to further our educations and become settled both financially and emotionally. Actually, I became pregnant on the pill. So I'm not sure how or when the decision to actually have a child would have been made. It probably would have been after completing my degree.

In fact it was probably good that I got pregnant the way I did. I'm kind of a strange person, I'm best when it's something out of the blue or uncertain rather than planned. I'm not good at planning personal things and doing them. I'm not good at taking vacations. I'm not good at leaving stability. So I think it might have been better for me that it happened this way.

There might be a certain amount of guilt involved from the standpoint of I've never be absolutely certain that I would have planned it and done it (have a child). But I really believe that its kind of a higher power's way of making sure that it happened and making it easier on me.

Hanna viewed her life as having changed because of the birth of her daughter. Here she talked about the changes:

Really the only thing that changed a whole lot was during the pregnancy, I have always been very physically active and I had some problems with early labor. So I had to reduce physical activity but as far as life decisions, not a lot of impact.
I'm much more selfless than I was when I was younger. I'm much more mature. I'm a much stronger individual than I would have been in early child rearing days. I had a lot to get out of my system...I no longer jump out of airplanes and do things that could end up in death. I started thinking more for survival, long survival than not being concerned at all with it.

Hanna was very concerned with herself. Although she viewed her grandmother as a mentor, when she constructed her time line, Hanna noted that the most significant person in her life was herself. She said:

I think I probably have a strong reliance on self, self-centeredness. I just think that's what being an only child does to a lot of people. It doesn't necessarily have to but its kind of a natural process of being an only child.

Regarding her grandmother she said:

She was my confidant. The person who listened to me. And it's odd, but I hope my daughter has the same relationship with my mother.

This self-centeredness has made Hanna very critical of herself. She said:

I'm just never really satisfied. Never self-satisfied. I'm satisfied with aspects of my life. I'm satisfied with my child. I'm dissatisfied with just about everything else,
but that's not bad. I really believe that that's part of why I'm here, and part of why I'm doing what I'm doing. It's not an unhappy dissatisfaction. It is kind of a static, stable... I never really feel like I've done as well as I could do. That's something I'm never real satisfied with. That's part of the reason on other questions that I have difficulty. Disappointment with people, because not only do I think I can do a better job I think other people could do a better job too. I am dissatisfied but not as a result of childbearing or family relations. It's more a lack of success which I have never met before and while I don't feel that I was doing any more or anything different, other people's expectations of me wouldn't allow me to be involved in a number of things I am.

But I am excited about the future because dissatisfied people can always work toward satisfaction in the future and once you're satisfied there isn't anything more.

Hanna has been involved in a sexual harassment suit for the past several years. She stated, "It's been devastating. I wish we could settle and get on with our lives". She feels that this suit is not only critical to her but also to all women. "We have to be willing to say, enough. We want to be seen as competent not as bimbos."

The view of self that Hanna possesses had some impact on how she planned to raise her daughter and on her decision to some day have another child. Her views appear to be bound by in her own development, her
career and the continually changing ideas regarding women in our society. Hanna talked about her views this way:

Overall I don't see my choices as having an adverse affect on my child. In fact, I'm not totally convinced that there is a need for me to spend more time with my child. And only time will tell that, and even at that, time doesn't necessarily indicate that that was the problem. I know that if my child at a later point has difficulties then I'm going to feel somewhat as though maybe a different approach during childhood could have circumvented that.

I'm pretty much bringing up my daughter the way my parents brought me up and I sought a spouse with the same type of facilitating approach to women. Hopefully she'll fit in better than I did. The way has been paved somewhat. They'll, I hope, keep improving women's roles in society.

Karen

Karen is 32-years-old and has been married for eleven years. She has an Associate degree in Early Childhood Education and was a day care administrator before her child was born thirteen months ago. Karen recently returned to school fulltime and completing is coursework for a Bachelor's degree in Education.

When she and her husband were married, they decided that Karen would work until her husband completed his dental training and setup a practice. At
this time they also decided that they would like to have two children, but would postpone pregnancy until the dental practice was established and they felt financially secure. Karen also planned to finish work on her Bachelor's degree before she had children but when she reached 30 she did not want to wait any longer. Karen talked about this decision in these terms:

A child was always part of my plan. I just figured school would be finished first...I knew that with a child it would be a little harder because you have to work around them but (husband) and I figured we could handle it all. Both (the child and school) are important to me. But you must feel good about yourself and I like to do a lot of different things. I'm a complete person when I'm at school or working. I have a lot to offer there and it (school) makes a big difference at home too. I spend a lot of good time with my family. A lot of the other students have children too, so we help each other...It has all given me a good balance.

The past two years has been one of changes for Karen. Even though she stated that school enables her to feel good about herself, she sometimes feels overwhelmed by all the roles she has assumed. She stated:

Things change when you have a child. Your thinking...You have to think of the ones who are depending on you. The child sometimes
becomes the focus. Then after awhile she (the daughter) starts to drive me crazy. I'm a creative person and I have to be doing something for myself and I've tried staying home fulltime. For awhile it was okay but then I started to go crazy.

I think I'm a better mother because I'm out of the house. If I was there all the time I'd get upset. It's not that I'm a wicked person, it's just that I have to be doing something. It's easier to enjoy my family because I've been away for part of the day.

I usually try to do my best with everything but I'm not a super mom. I just try to do my best but I don't think I'll ever really accomplish it. I think it would be too much for me to be perfect. I just do my best with what I can. My husband is very supportive and will work with me and I think that's what really keeps me from going crazy.

Karen feels that many different people have contributed to her development as an individual. She said:

Different people came into my life...and made a difference. They were different for different times. I'd analyze them. I'm the type of person who watches people and I don't like a prejudice point of view of anything. I like to see all kinds of people. I try to look for the best kinds of things in people and everybody has faults but I like to pick the good things out of people and try and stay with that. I think that's what these people did for me. They helped me accept other people by helping me when I had problems and it didn't matter that we were different.
Karen also discussed her parents in terms of their influence on her life. In particular her mother who she considered a mentor. She said:

There's a critical point when you have a choice to follow your parents or not. By the time you're sixteen you think you know it all and a lot of times you get the peer pressure, and it is a critical point, because if you follow your friends and they're into pretty messed up stuff, that could ruin your life. But if you follow your parents you can take their advice and you can put it into the person that you are. That's the way I would think of it...To consider their advice but I wouldn't take it totally. It helps you become you...

I think my mother was my mentor. She has helped me the most. She wasn't overpowering. She wasn't too much. She let me go, she would also suggest rather than tell advice and I would usually take it, because most of the time she was right. She was a great role model. She would always say why and I would see as result of that how things worked with my older sister. I'd watch and mom was right with her so I figured she would be right with me too.

With all the roles Karen has assumed she still feels very satisfied with her life. She said:

As far as bringing up my son I think I do a pretty good job because I think I follow what my mother use to do and suggest about how to deal with my son. One thing I would like to do, that I think I'm lacking in, is that I am rush, rush with school and I feel that sometimes a little bit guilty that I don't give enough time. I mean, the time I do
spend with him is quality time but I sometimes wish I could get out more with them. And yet with all that, I am really satisfied with what is happening. I can't imagine it any other way. Maybe I'm satisfied because I can feel all different kinds of ways and it's okay.

It's hard to picture the future. I have plans that I'd like to do and see and I think they will only add to the goodness that I feel about my life.

Laurie

Laurie is a 34-year-old social worker who has been married for six years. Seven months ago she gave birth to twins and is now home with them on a part-time basis. Since they had wanted only two children, Laurie and her husband feel that their family is now complete.

When Laurie and her husband were married they made the decision to wait to have children. Laurie stated:

We needed to get our lives in order and learn to live with each other before we added a third person to our lives. When we first got married we got a lot of pressure to have children. People had a hard time understanding our wanting to just be a couple for awhile. After a few years I think it got easier because most of the people just got tired of asking. Of course at family gettogethers our family always brought it up.

Even though, waiting was because we wanted to be together, and financial security became a big part of it too. We were able to buy and do things we wanted and decided to do all that before we got pregnant. We wanted
to be sure we were both stable in our jobs and we had enough money to raise kids. We wanted to have some disposable income after paying our bills. 

My husband is very goal oriented and so we set certain goals and then figure out how to reach them. It was sort of like that when we decided to finally have a child. I was in my early 30s and other goals had been reached so we just sort of decided it was time. We have been very lucky. Everything just fell into place for us.

Even with all the goal setting and planning that is part of her life, Laurie felt that childbirth was a critical time for her. Very late in her pregnancy Laurie discovered that she was going to have twins. Much of the careful planning they had completed was no longer feasible. Laurie said:

It was quite a shock. During an ultrasound the doctor said, "hold on I think there's another one". I could have died right there. No wonder I had felt so full. (My husband's) eyes got real big and I thought he'd faint. You could see the color draining from his face. It was a real surprise to everyone, even the doctor. He said the second was probably up under my ribs and that's why it didn't show up until now...After we calmed down, reality set in and we realized we only had one of everything and we later learned that the baby sitter we had set up wouldn't take two. We suddenly had to rearrange everything.

I was really worried about handling one and suddenly there were two. Need I tell you it was pretty scary.
There were a lot of changes in Laurie's plans because of her twins. She only went back to work part-time and put off her plans to go back to school. She also discovered she was not able to nurse two babies and that was a disappointment to her. "I always thought I'd nurse and it took some short term counseling to adjust to the fact that they would still bond without it."

Most of these changes Laurie viewed more in terms of priorities rather than simply changes. Her idea of responsibility also changed. She discussed the changes in this way:

Having twins changed me in terms of priority in far as time at home versus time at work...Also when it comes to my kids making certain decisions is important. I now don't plan as much because when something comes up, changes need to be made because of the kids. Part of me wanted to stay home with the twins. But sometimes its hard to drop them off at the sitter's after being together for a weekend. I enjoy work and I was lucky I could go back parttime. Besides I need the break from them and it gives me a continued sense of myself. It also will let my kids see me in another role.
Laurie feels that her support system has enabled her to handle this change in her life. Her mother is a major part of this support. Laurie talks about her mother in these terms:

I think I've role modeled my parenting after my mother. She is always so calm and she's taught me not to panic, which isn't easy to do with two seven month olds. I first thought it would be easy to incorporate a child into our lifestyle instead of the other way around. But with twins that is nearly impossible. Mom really helped me handle it and when she left I didn't feel so overwhelmed. She helped me get a schedule started which we try to follow. All though on some days it goes out the window. But I know that she is only a phone call away and that makes things a lot easier.

Laurie feels fortunate with all the things that have happened in her life. She views the time she spends with her husband and children as rewarding. However, she also views the time she spends at work as important. She emphasizes that all these aspects of her life are bound together and influence how she views herself. "I think I'm well rounded because I have all three (husband, children, work) and all are very rewarding to me."
Not only does Laurie see her life as rewarding but she is also very satisfied with her role as a parent. She said:

I'm very satisfied. I don't think that I'm not paying much attention to them. In fact going back to work doesn't seem like a problem. I think its quality time not the amount of time spent. I had no qualms about returning to work. I think I'm a better parent not only because I didn't have them until later but also because I am still working. I'm enjoying life so much now. I feel like I've got it all and its wonderful.

Commonalities

All ten of these women were unique individuals. One woman was an only child while another was part of a large family. Several of the women went to college immediately after high school, but one waited for several years. Each of the women had different experiences growing up. Yet for all the uniqueness and individuality, there were certain ideas and concerns that they shared. They experienced life through many different avenues and yet, in many cases, they reached the same conclusions or had the same outcomes.
In reviewing the interviews and case studies of each of these women, a number of shared commonalties were observed. They shared experiences and issues that occurred during different phases of their lives. For purposes of this study, these phases were pre-childbirth and post childbirth. The types of issues shared are not unique to women who postpone parenthood but are found to some degree in all adults, although not necessarily within the same time frames. What makes them important to this population is that they occurred in the context of their decision to postpone parenthood.

Each woman's adaptation and perception of the experiences influenced who she became. Her interpretation and validation of each experience depended on the events in her past.

For purposes of discussion the commonalities were divided into two general areas: experiences before the
birth of the child and experiences after the birth of the child. Some of the commonalities shared among these women before childbirth were:

- family background
- educational background
- career issues
- reasons for postponing parenthood
- self-identity
- mentors
- critical events
- reasons for ending the postponement.

Commonalities shared after childbirth included:

- career issues
- change
- contentment
- control.

**Before Childbirth**

**Family Background**

One commonality that these women shared involved their participation in their family of orientation. Six of the women's parents were in their 30s when she was born. The women were also more likely to be a middle child than a first born. The age of their parents seemed to affect the women in a variety of ways. They felt that their parents were more flexible
than their friends' parents. They felt they were allowed to challenge traditional ways and grow up as individual's much more readily than if they had been born when their parents were younger. One woman discusses her parents in this way:

I think I was raised by some visionary parents and I think their change came too fast for me. I grew up believing that things were a lot better than they really were...I think they would do well raising children right now as far as liberation in society. I think because they had me later in life they had all these ideas formed before I was even born.

The women also felt that their mothers were strong individuals. Not only did their mothers work while they were growing up, but also a majority of the mothers had baccalaureate degrees. Therefore, early in their lives, the women had a positive role model of the working mother. The image of role model was illustrated by what one woman said:

Oh, I think it definitely gave me a role model that all through life I thought about wanting children and a family. I always knew that I was going to work at the same time. I really felt good about the way my mom handled it where she was home for the preschool years.
The women also viewed their mothers' strength in other ways. These women saw their mothers as a force in their own right. The mothers were not relegated to second class status in the home but instead were seen as an integral part of the family— a person whose input was valued. They were seen by their daughters as individuals as well as mothers.

The women said that they planned to raise their children in a similar fashion in which they were raised and credited their mothers with providing a stable model. One woman expressed herself this way:

You always say oh, there is this and that you'll never do, but basically I can hear me when I say stuff. Then after I say it I go, that wasn't me, that was my mother talking. It just comes out and I turned out all right. So will he I'm sure.

Educational Background

All the women in this study had some kind of post-secondary education. One women was a Registered Nurse. One woman had her Master's degree and another her Ph.D.. Six of the women had baccalaureate degrees and one had an Associate's degree.. Most of the women's degrees related directly to their careers. One woman who was a golf professional had a Bachelor's degree in
education. Of the other women, four were educators; two had business degrees; one had a degree in social work and one was a licensed psychologist.

**Career Issues**

Career was very much a part of these women's lives. They exhibited strong feelings about career and its relationship to their new role as a parent. The women had worked since they had completed their education. All had worked for a minimum of seven years.

The career paths of these women were similar. Although there was some diversity in the type of career, most of the women worked with people in some capacity.

Some of the women had chosen careers that were highly people centered. Interaction with others was the primary focus of these careers. The roles of nurse, teacher, psychologist and social worker are inherently helper occupations and involve a level of nurturing that is more intense than that found in other careers. The jobs of nurse, teacher and social worker
have traditionally been considered appropriate work for women because of the interaction with others and the high degree of nurturing involved.

Two of the women whose careers are not typically viewed as nurturant felt that they brought some sense of nurturing to their careers. The realtor talked about her work in relation to the people she worked with and her customers. Both were viewed as very important to her and her career. For her it was very important to be treated fairly by co-workers and to treat her customers the same way. She said:

I've got a real good friend who is working in a real estate office and she's a real fireball. It seems like she doesn't really care about what other people think in her own office and she will cut throat and she doesn't seem to care about what anybody else thinks and she's actually one of my best friends and I'm about ready to wring her neck. We've been working on office policies and she's been trying to swipe clients and prospects.

It bothers me more that she doesn't respect my opinion and never asks me for it. She just runs me over. It's terrible. Because I wouldn't do that to her for anything.

The golf professional's work involved not only management responsibilities but also giving lessons and
meeting the public. She, therefore, also considered her job to be people oriented. Only the accountant did not see her job as nurturant in nature.

Nurturing then, was often present in the work roles of the women. This finding supports Baruch et al (1983) who discussed the "nurturant imperative" that women take with them to their careers. Nurturing becomes part of the way they function at work. "Women find ways to fit their wish to 'care for others' into the job description" (1983:149).

This ability to be nurturant in the work place appeared to contribute to the women's decisions to postpone parenthood. They all stated that the advancement of career was an important factor in the decision to postpone. The women viewed their careers as an important part of who they were, separate from their husbands and parents. Yet the type of career chosen appeared to fulfill the female desire to nurture. Carol Gilligan stated, "Thus women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care" (1979:440).

It is possible that by choosing a career that involved interaction with other people ample
opportunity to be nurturant was provided. The women did not appear to experience the need to have a child during their 20s when they were establishing their careers. They seemed instead, able to expand and utilize their nurturant abilities through their work relationships. Only later, when their careers were established and their sense of a separate self was formed, were these women ready to focus their nurturing abilities on a child of their own. The women expressed the feeling that, because they felt comfortable with who they were, they would be better able to more fully nurture a child. One woman said, "Now that I feel like a real person I can help my child grow up to feel this way too. I don't think I could have done it sooner".

It appears, therefore, that by choosing a career that provided an outlet for nurturing before they had a child, the women were better able to form a sense of self. By developing this sense, the women were able to accept and understand themselves. Then they felt better able to fully enjoy the role of mother. It can be speculated that these women never denied their nurturant self. They simply found alternative paths for nurturing until they decided to have a child.
Career advancement was continually cited as a reason for making the decision to postpone parenthood. The women seemed to value the nurturing aspects of their careers. This seemed to enable them to postpone parenthood because they were still able to develop all aspects of themselves including nurturing without having a child. It may be possible that for these women postponing parenthood allowed other areas of self to develop without the women feeling divided between the roles of worker and mother. By postponing parenthood, the women could concentrate on their worker role and define themselves within it. Then, when they became mothers they felt better prepared and better able to concentrate on parenting.

The women viewed their careers as something distinctly theirs. The women exhibited a sense of private ownership about their careers. Whatever kind of work it entailed, their performance was something uniquely their own.

Relationships were viewed as an aspect of themselves that was shared with and dependent on another person. The career, however, was a part of their identity that need not be shared with anyone. The career might be theorized to have in large measure,
contributed to what the women thought of themselves. This seems to lend support to both Brooks' (1980) and Bernard's (1975) theses concerning the worker role as a vital source of personal identity, and the importance of viewing women in terms of more than just their mother role.

**Reasons for postponing parenthood**

There were a variety of reasons given by the women for making the decision to postpone parenting. Each women's reasoning was specific to her but all the reasons fell into three categories that are consistently mentioned by other researchers.

The first reason was to establish themselves in a career. The women wanted the opportunity to concentrate on reaching certain career goals without having the process interrupted by the birth of a child. By postponing having children, the women felt they could reach the goals they had set for themselves. One women put it this way, "I would say that I set up my life so that I had goals that I wanted to accomplish and that (having a child) would have gotten in the way of those goals".
One woman decided to have a child even though she had not achieved her career goals. She said:

I compromised. It would have been perfect if everything was reached but when I got in my 30s I really wanted a child. We had everything but my degree and figured I could do that with a baby. So we went ahead. The goal is still there— the timing just changed.

The second reason centered around the women's desire to spend time with their husbands as part of a couple. The number of years the women spent in the couple dyad before they had children ranged from one to thirteen years with the median number of years being seven and one half years. The women realized that they wanted children, but they and their husbands made the decision to wait to start a family and two women made the decision before they met their husbands. The idea of having a child before they felt secure in the marital relationship was inconceivable to them. As one women said, "It (postponing) allowed our marriage to get a lot stronger. We're much better at communication with one other than we would have been had we started a family three years age".

The desire to postpone parenthood in order to establish the marital relationship was seen by them as
a way to ensure that when a child was born, it would enhance an already strong relationship. This time as a couple was seen as a time to get to know more about one another and to develop the communication skills each couple felt were necessary to strength their marital commitment. During this time the women felt that they had grown in terms of not only their individual identities but also in terms of their identity as a couple. One of the women summed it up this way:

It was kind of nice when we first got married and moved away and were on our own. We just had a ball. We went out to dinner all the time and just really got to know each other.

These women felt that by developing a base for communication their relationship would be a more equal one.

The last reason expressed by the women for the postponement was establishing a sense of financial stability. Although each had her own definition of stability, all the women felt it was important to a certain degree. Its importance was not always based on the idea of the ability to care for a child once it was born. Rather, they felt that the ability to finance the child's care was an inherent part of establishing
financial security. Most of the women were concerned more with the acquisition of material things before the child was born. Several had doubts that once a child entered the picture, material possessions might not be as easily within grasp. Many of the things acquired were those possessions most people already associated with the family unit. They purchased homes and cars and in some instances paid off school loans. Some of the couples traveled and others used the time as an opportunity to finish advanced degrees.

Even with the concerns of financial stability, this reason for postponing was the least articulated by the women. A review of the comments indicate that on balance, financial reasons were not paramount in the decision to postpone parenthood. A mix of motives was evident with emphasis varying from couple to couple. One woman summed up the decision this way:

We didn't want to have a baby right away because we wanted to get some financial security and have some money and also just have some time alone before we started a family.
Self Identity

Another aspect common in the lives of the women was how they felt about themselves. Part of this commonal tyre was an inability to describe who they were. They discussed many of their experiences as something that was part of them rather than something they did. How the experience helped or hindered who they became was difficult for them to discuss. The experiences were different for each woman because of the way she perceived it. This appears to support what Austin (1976) states in that adults passively accommodate their experiences. There is little thought given to the effects of experiences.

The women tended to view themselves in terms of their relationships. Family and friends were mentioned most often. These relationships were viewed not just in terms of the nurturing they gave, but also in terms of the nurturing they received. All of the women felt that at least on some level, they were people oriented. People were seen as giving satisfaction and pleasure to their lives. It was important for the women to establish positive relationships with others. The forming of relationships was viewed by the women as important to their development as adults.
Parental relationships were viewed as having consequences for self identity. One woman said:

I'd say I'm probably the nice girl now simply because I want to be. Back then, I felt like there was parental pressure to be that way and my parents opinion was important enough to me that I didn't run around and do something that they wouldn't like...I guess maybe I finally internalized what my parents always thought.

Friends were also mentioned in terms of how they related to the identity development of the women. The women saw their friendships as contributing to their own feelings of contentment. One woman said:

I'm content most of the time and it would have to be probably (because of) friends. I guess it would have to be in general people give me pleasure...it doesn't exactly mesh with what I was saying about liking to be alone but people are somehow the most pleasurable and I wouldn't want to be here all by myself. So what gives me pleasure? I guess to do for others.

Another woman said:

Friends were something I really missed. We just moved too much and after while it just got to be too much hassle. I guess my mom was my best friend growing up. But I couldn't share everything...I was lucky when I went to college.
I see it now in my work. Just how important those kinds of things are. Without a friend, someone to share with a person can have trouble relating on any level.

Relationships with spouses were cited by all the women as critical to their self concept. One woman summed up how the relationship made her feel when she said:

I think I've become a lot more secure and happy with myself now that I've found someone who supports me no matter what. I know he's there and so it has given me more confidence and therefore I've been able to show what I feel.

Perhaps these women follow some male identity patterns such as the formation of independence and separation, while the importance of defining themselves by their relationships is still a major factor in their lives. Erikson (1963) discusses independence and separation as components of male identity formation but not as a separate part of female identity formation. The women in this study did attain independence through their ability to make choices, as well as, through the career options that were available to them. This lends support to Brooks' (1980) contention that women find their careers as a way to establish independence.
These women's careers also enhanced their sense of self. The women talked of their careers as being fulfilling and giving them a sense of self. It was something they need not share with anyone else.

One woman talked about how her college degree and later her career choice affected her:

Number one! The most rewarding thing in my life is my college degree...I am more proud of that, I almost have to say than my own child, but I think so, because it is kind of easy to have children. It is a lot easier to have children than it is to graduate from college. Graduating from college was the toughest thing I've ever had to do...

College was something I did on my own. Nobody can take it away from me. I think that's why my work is important to me. It is really a part of me. It's all something of my very own.

Another woman who planned to stay home for a year talked about the influence of work even though she was not currently working. She stated:

Work is a part of my life that I always want to be there. I took a year off but will definitely go back. I like to tell people I'm a supervisor. They seem to look at me differently than if I was just a mother. And I like that.
The issue of postponing was also bound to the sense of self the women felt through their work role. According to one woman:

I think if I'd had my child at 21 I wouldn't have made a good mother because I was still so much exploring, because I didn't have a job. I hadn't gone to school and hadn't finished any sort of education that would have allowed me to get a job and all of that leads to self esteem I think, so it all went together but now that I have a good job that I can go back to I feel more together.

All of the women studied expressed the idea that work contributed to their sense of self. However, when asked to express their inner feelings about their careers they were stymied. They could say things like "I like it;" "It makes me feel good." They knew it had affected them but struggled to find the words to describe the effect.

Belenky et al (1988) also discuss some women's inability to describe themselves. The women in this study followed this pattern. They saw themselves as their experiences. They seemed unable to grasp the idea that the experience was something they had. The women seemed to be able to look only outward from themselves rather than inward at themselves. It
appears that the women in this study seemed to intrinsically know that their careers affected their sense of self. They just did not know how.

**Mentors**

The term mentor is usually used in a very narrow sense, meaning advisor or sponsor. Levinson (1974) discusses mentors in terms of that person's ability to provide counsel and moral support. He also states:

It (a mentor relationship) may also evolve informally, when the mentor is a friend, neighbor or relative. Mentoring is defined not in terms of formal roles but in terms of the character of the relationship and the function it serves...We have to examine a relationship closely to discover the amount and kind of mentoring it provides. (1974:98)

Most of the women in this study took a broad view of the mentoring relationship. They saw the mentors in their lives as a friend or confidant who was able to provide support and counsel during times of stress. Their mentor relationships occurred, in most cases, on a personal level. The selection of a mentor was an unconscious one. The concept of mentor was only
identified after the women reflected on the relationship and began to understand the relationship's importance.

Each woman had a very personal definition of their mentor relationship. A few of the women felt that they had a mentor for each of the important experiences in their lives. One woman said: "In each year there could be people out of each year that I could name (as a mentor) but not one for the whole span". All but one of the mentors mentioned were women. Evidently, this enabled a much more empathic relationship to form because the mentor had also experienced many of the same issues.

Some mentors however, had more impact than others, depending on the situation in which the women found themselves. One woman had someone she considered a mentor who helped her through her bout with cancer by acting as a sounding board for her feelings about her illness and its effects on her life. Another woman had a mentor who provided guidance when she was making the decision to become a Christian. This mentor acted as a spiritual guide.

Among the women there was no discernible pattern of when a mentoring relationship would form. Instead
the relationship evolved situationally. The women seemed to sense that in certain situations they needed another person to act as a sounding board. Therefore, they became much more in tune to others and open to establishing the type of mentor relationship they needed.

One woman describes her mentoring relationship in these terms:

There was a woman who used to live next door to me that I would consider a mentor. She was a confidant. (We) shared. Kind of a shared vision for things. (We have) the same philosophical basis in a lot of things. But she helped me see things in a more objective way, a different perspective on things. She was generous and she's still around. She's about as fiesty as you can get and I don't see her much now but I think about her.

Five of the women stated that a relative was, in a sense, a mentor to them. These were people they wanted to emulate and please, and who at the same time, provided a role model for the woman. One woman said of this relationship, "Her influence was to make sure I got it done. She didn't actually choose the role but once chosen she was determined I was going to get it".
Another woman stated, "I think she helped me the most. She never overpowered me instead she guided, and helped me with whatever the decision was".

A father was mentioned by one woman as her mentor. She discussed his influence in these terms:

My dad was pretty critical of a lot of things, but I learned from it all. I don't think I'd be as strong if it wasn't for him...He taught me to hang on... I liked the way he dealt with people. I think I learned how to work with people by watching him...

One woman did have a mentor who fit the more traditional definition. Her mentor guided her through the difficult adjustment to college life and later helped her establish herself within her profession. The woman talked about her mentor relationship in these terms:

I think if it hadn't been for that professor I wouldn't be where I am now. I can't imagine ever finishing school without her support. I suppose I was lucky she found me. I don't think any of my other professors really understood.

The experience of the mentor relationship was an aspect of the women's lives that they all shared.
These relationships served a purpose for all the women. The women respected and shared a level of affection with their mentors that was similar to their other relationships. This contributed to the women's growth as individuals because it helped them confirm their own feelings about themselves. At the same time it also helped the women move closer to their goals. This relationship was not viewed as a friendship in the true sense of the word, rather it was a bond formed from shared experiences. It is interesting to note that the more traditional mentor relationship involved the one woman in the study who did not consider her career to be nurturant in nature.

**Critical Event**

All of the women experienced at least one event in their lives which they considered to be critical to the shaping of their lives. The events were identified as critical by the women themselves. Each woman brought her own perceptions to the event and then made a judgement regarding its impact. Events were viewed as critical if the women's lives were somehow changed by the event or its aftermath. Some of the women identified more than one event. The women spoke of how
events over which they had no control affected the paths their lives took, what they thought of themselves as individuals and eventually who they were to become.

Each event was unique to each woman. Yet there were some definite similarities among the events. The most striking was that all the critical events involved relationships with other people. For three of the women it was the death of a loved one.

Death was seen as a critical event in people's lives, but its impact was different depending on the individual. One woman experienced the death of a loved one when she was in her late twenties. Her experiences during this time seemed to have affected what she thought of life and mortality. Her relationships were also affected. She said:

I didn't have anybody I was related to pass away until I was 28 years old. So all of a sudden it seemed like I was 28 and I had thought maybe everybody was immortal, and all of a sudden when you're in there at the funeral and you look at the body and you think what if that's dad or mom? That seemed to sink in a lot more... it just seemed like all of a sudden - people do die...

Losing people who were very special was significant. It was a very difficult adjustment in learning how to accept what was happening as a result of a death that hit me very personally.
Mortality and the fragility of life were made very personal to one woman when she found out she had cancer. The aftermath of that discovery and subsequent treatment affected her feelings about herself. She discovered how important life was to her and realized that it was her responsibility to make the most of life. She achieved an appreciation for being in charge of her life. This crisis also strengthened the bond with her husband. They learned to communicate on a more positive level and discovered how important their relationship really was to them.

Another woman's critical event involved participation in a sexual harassment suit. She stated:

Nobody told me I was female. I just never got the idea that there was a difference...in society. I never got the idea that there were such drastic differences so maybe what I'm taking real hard right now is something that has been absolutely horrendous in the past and it is better that I was able to sublimate it and not have to deal with it. That I didn't know what was going on, as hard as it has been on me the past couple of years. If I had taken it any harder (I'd) burned my bra and killed men Probably. I just hope it paves the way somewhat that women's roles in society will keep improving so my daughter doesn't have to go through this too.
Other critical events involved parental divorce and the continual moving of a family. The women involved in these situations felt a sense of isolation and a lack of stability in their early lives. Throughout their youth they struggled with these feelings. As they got older these women formed a variety of coping skills. They learned to be alone and acquired the communication skills necessary to establish friendships easily. It is possible that these skills then enabled them to form some sense of stability in their lives.

For two women a religious conversion provided the critical event that greatly shaped their lives. These two women considered themselves Born-again Christians. They viewed their conversion as giving their lives focus. Before they became Christians they felt they were just drifting through life. One of the woman talked about the event in this way:

When I became a Christian it was a critical point (for me) because that definitely steered me to people who were going to be my family. It was a time that allowed me to begin to make up with my family...When I became a Christian (I developed) a focus. It's sort of like you have little guidelines to go by and that helps you make your decisions more easily.
One woman's critical event involved the struggle she felt when her Spanish heritage clashed with the culture in which she was now living. In particular, the ideas regarding women's roles in the two cultures seemed to conflict. This conflict caused the woman to question her own career goals. With a mentor's help, she was able to resolve the conflict and now feels positively about her career. She does, however, sense that the conflict of cultures is again becoming a part of her life. She is now experiencing a clash regarding her role as a parent.

In summary, the critical events experienced by the women had positive consequences. Their lives were given impetus and direction that enriched them.

Reasons for Ending the Postponement

As these women achieved the goals they had set for themselves regarding career, relationships and financial security, they and their husbands began to think about ending the postponement of parenthood and having a child. In many instances, goals had been achieved. The golf professional reached the level she had set for herself. Another woman felt that she had
finally found the type of relationship she wanted. In other cases, goals were modified or compromises were made when other issues come into play.

All of the women mentioned the "ticking of their biological clocks" as a factor prompting their decision to have a child. Even the woman who became pregnant while taking birth control pills ultimately decided not to terminate the pregnancy. She felt physically it was probably better for her to have the child at that time rather than to wait any longer. Once the women had reached their 30s they began to wrestle with the concerns involved with their decision to postpone and its relationship to their physiological and emotional well-being. During the time they were deciding to postpone, these concerns were not an issue. Instead the concerns were seen as something that would be of importance later on, after they had achieved other goals.

The women used the term biological clock to identify the time at which the safety of childbirth becomes an issue. Physiological and emotional concerns for both the mother and the child are part of this concept. The medical community usually identifies pregnancies occurring after age 35 as being high risk.
There were several major concerns involving the biological clock. Because physicians consider women over 30 who are pregnant to be high risk, several of the women who wanted the option of having more children felt it was necessary to have children before the risks to both themselves and the child became too great. For the women who were 37- to 42-years-old, the danger involved in a high-risk pregnancy was the major concern.

For the woman who were 30- to 33-years-old, when safe pregnancy was not as much of an issue, the idea of still being young enough to have additional children and be able to enjoy all their children was an issue. One comment was:

I don't want to be asked if I'm my child's grandmother. I was afraid that as my child got older I would too and I couldn't enjoy all that I can. I remember when I was in high school and my best friend's parents were in their...late 50s. And the things my parents said and did were so different from her's and I think now it was probably because of their age. I just didn't want that for my child or me.

Another concern involved in the decision to have a child was the idea that the women wanted children and realized that they wanted to time a career interruption
so that career advancement was not hampered. These were the same women who could not envision themselves as staying home fulltime. They felt that for the well-being of themselves, their relationships, and the child, they needed to feel fulfilled and at least part of that fulfillment came from their work role. The research by Baruch et al (1983) and Coady (1982) found a strong correlation between preferring the role you are in and well-being. This sense of well-being seems to also affect the woman's ability to care. It can be speculated that the mother's well-being affects the child. This understanding of self and well-being did not change after the childbirth. The women were still anxious to return to the workplace.

**Summary of Commonalities before Childbirth**

The women made the decision to postpone parenthood until they had reached at least their 30th birthday. All ten of the women cited at least three reasons for postponing: the achievement of career goals, the establishment of a marital relationship and the establishment of financial security. The women shared commonalities that contributed to their own personal growth during the years of postponement. All ten had
postsecondary education, and seven of the ten chose careers that have been traditionally viewed as nurturing in nature. The parents of the women were mostly in their 30s when the women were born, and the women viewed their mothers as having been strong individuals.

The views they shared in regard to their careers were also similar. Most viewed their careers to be people oriented in some form and all received a great deal of satisfaction from them. Only one of the women planned not to eventually return to work. The other nine stated that they would return to work although the time frame varied with each individual woman.

A critical event that changed either their life or their view of life was another commonality among these women. The type of event was unimportant, rather it was the woman's interpretation of the event that defined it as critical.

The women also had similar experiences with a mentor relationship. For all but one of these women, this relationship was more of an informal one. It was defined in terms of its character and function. It was seen as a personal relationship rather than the more
traditional professional relationship. In this research it appears that the mentor relationship fostered the woman's development and growth.

A feeling of identity was another commonality in the women's lives. They all had difficulty expressing the effect experiences had on them. The idea that there was an effect was realized but the specific effect was not. Relationships appeared to play the largest role in the establishment of a sense of self for these women. Even the independence achieved through the work role seemed to be bound by the personal relationships within the career.

The decision to have a child was also a commonality among these women. All felt that they had reached some level of accomplishment with regards to the goals they had established in their 20s. The biological clock was the reason cited by all ten women as the final determinant in the decision to have a child. Although they had difficulty elaborating on who they were the ten women reported feeling a solid and positive sense of self by the time they had decided to have a child.
After Childbirth

Career Issues

The sometimes ambiguous feelings about career versus parenthood were shared by all the women. They had worked from the time they finished their education until the birth of their child. Most stated a preference for staying home with the child for at least three months after the birth. All but one of the women felt they could not give up their careers totally and become fulltime mothers. The idea that the career was an option they possessed was continually repeated and reinforced. This option took many different forms. Three of the women returned to work fulltime almost immediately, usually after a three month maternity leave. Three returned to a parttime position. One chose the option of staying home while her child was preschool age and one made the decision to stay home for one year. One woman decided to make parenting her career and stay home fulltime. One woman did not return to work instead she went back to school fulltime.

The nine women who had returned to work, planned to return to work or returned to school all voiced
similar concerns involving their careers. They expressed such feelings as being bored and out of touch when they stayed home. One woman talked about staying home versus going back to work in these terms:

I wasn't sure whether I wanted to work after (child) was born but the longer I stay home the angrier I get. Don't get me wrong I love being home but sometimes...It's like, if I ever have to change another messy diaper I'll scream. It's not that I don't want to, I just want to do something else sometimes. My job gives me that something else.

I want to talk to another adult. When I'm home I talk to the TV. I need more interaction than that.

A career was seen by the women in this study as work which provides fulfillment and a sense of satisfaction. These women felt that fulfillment both before and after childbirth. A sense of personal growth was achieved through their careers. As one women put it:

I think just to keep up with what's going on. My husband is going to be out in the world and I want to be out there too. I don't want to become isolated from that. I feel more like a fulfilled person and have people to talk with...I can do what I want to do. I have that freedom. It's funny, because the job I just took I do some clerical things and that used to really bug me. I always would think, I can't do this, I'm not a secretary. I'm not a clerical person and there's more to my job than just that right now. I'm kind of an intake person and so I have that, and when
I'm asked to do the clerical thing it doesn't bother me anymore. So I know that I'm more content in who I am and what I'm doing and I'm not feeling like I've got to do this. I'm happy in what I'm doing.

Other women talked of the return to work in terms of how it affected them. One woman, when talking about how she felt, said:

It's hard to leave him. But when I see him after work it makes up for being away and I enjoy him so much after work. That's his time and I've had mine. So I can give more. It's all together. It would be as rewarding if I didn't have all three but (I do). I feel fulfilled as a wife and mother and I also work. I think it makes me better at everything.

This kind of response was echoed over and over by others. The idea that a career helped the women maintain a sense of stability about who they were, was continually demonstrated. One women said:

I see work as important to who I am but maybe that's because I'm going back. If I wasn't going I might feel a little frustrated, and yes it does make me feel good. We were in Boston and I met some of my husband's friends, and they didn't know me from Adam. He told them that I ran a golf course and they were impressed because I had the baby and they thought I didn't do anything. It made me feel good that I did do something.
Not only did the women feel that their careers helped them identify who they were, but this insight into self enabled them to be able to offer more to their child. One woman felt that by knowing herself she was then better able to understand her child, offer her child more and enjoy her child more.

Another factor that contributed to the women's feelings about career and leaving their children to return to work was the quality of the care available for their children while they worked. The women who returned to work, expressed the idea that because they were satisfied and happy with their day care arrangements they felt better able to concentrate on the career without the added worry concerning their child. All of the women felt that the cost of quality care was well worth the expense because of the peace of mind it provided them. One woman put the concerns this way:

Sometimes I feel guilty, but I think that was more or less because I didn't have good child care. I didn't really like taking her, packing her up and taking her to somebody's house. I felt like she was more like a piece of luggage. It is just kind of nice that she's here at home and that I've found somebody (to care for her).
Two of the women were able to have the care provided by a family member. One worked part-time and her husband was able to be home and care for the child while she worked. Another woman's mother took care of her child. One woman hired a day nanny who came to her home during the hours she worked. A daycare center was the primary caregiver for one child and two children whose mothers returned to work were cared for in a homecare setting. One woman who worked in her home felt she and her husband could share the caregiving without outside help.

The women in this study shared very positive feelings about their careers and its affects on their lives. Before childbirth career was viewed as a way to establish a sense of identity. After childbirth career also became a stabilizing force in their lives.

**Change**

Another experience common to all ten women was the sense of change that occurred after childbirth. There were the external changes involving work and relationships and the internal changes involving their sense of self. It was interesting that only one of the women viewed childbirth as a critical event. She had
twins and felt that the births were critical because she was not prepared for two children and needed time to adjust but lacked the actual time to do so. The other women felt that childbirth had enormous impact on their lives but was not critical. Perhaps, they were still too close to the event to realize its full impact on their lives. Instead, they saw the event as redefining who they were. For all, childbirth attested to their nurturant nature but was not mentioned as a factor when describing the change in self they felt occurred after the birth of their child. It maybe possible that nurturing had always been a part of their identity so that a change here was not as dramatic.

In a broader sense there was change in the way the women felt about themselves and their lives and in their views of parenting. During this time they also formed a more universal view of life and refined their views on women in society. They seemed to acquire a sense of shaping the future and contributing to society. This seems to indicate that the women were experiencing aspects of Erikson's (1963) Generativity versus Stagnation Stage.
The change in their lives that these women experienced was something they had not really imagined would happen. One woman states:

We really enjoy our marriage and we spend a lot of time together. It's completely changed since our son was born. Our time together now seems to revolve around (our son) and I suppose that's not all bad but I wasn't really ready for the overwhelming time involved... And you're going to have to be totally unselfish now because this other person can't do for himself and I think at 21 I wouldn't have been ready to be so unselfish and now it is easy.

This woman knew that her attitude and approach toward life changed with the birth of her child. Another woman was not as specific about her change. "Reality has set in. I guess that's one reason that this will be a lot different than what I would have expected when I was seventeen".

The women's view of themselves changed after the birth. When describing themselves after childbirth, they all used very similar words. "I am more patient." "I've grown up a lot." "Having responsibility for some one else was good for me." "I'm more consistent." "I'm a better parent now than I would have been had I had my child sooner." What is interesting about all these comments is that most of the women prefaced them
by saying "People (or my husband) have told me..." The change may have been so subtle that the women did not realize it was taking place. This change was not consciously experienced.

When asked if they felt they are better mothers for having waited, the overwhelming response was affirmative. The parental role was an area about themselves they could easily describe. One woman describes her ability this way:

I know a lot more about myself and I'm a lot more secure within myself. I'm better able to cope with the kinds of pressures and conflicts that are a part of raising a child. I also know a lot more about children. Just some of the things that I've learned in working with people and in my own education and world would be a part of that also... The first thing that comes to mind is that I'm more relaxed to play with him rather than feeling like I have to prove that I can do everything right.

Another viewed her role as a parent in these terms:

I think I'm a better parent now than I would have been in the early 20s because I'm a little more patient. I don't have the other agenda going on like I would have in my 20s. "Like, what's going on, what am I missing". I'm content to pretty well hang around here and take care of him.
Another major change which occurred in the women's lives was an overwhelming sense of contentment. Even those women who were experiencing difficulties felt content because they felt able to handle different situations. All the women felt that this sense of contentment was because of their relationships and the satisfaction they derived from them. They also felt a sense of being settled with their lives. One woman said:

I was always a restless person, wanted to do this and that and go places and reach certain goals and all of a sudden I've become complacent. Nothing bad has happened for a while. I'm happily married and have a child. So I think the people around me have helped me be content.

All of the women felt that this feeling of contentment was a new part of their lives. Not that they were not content before, but rather, now they felt comfortable with the entire scope of their lives, not just bits and pieces. They were content in all the roles they had chosen. One woman said, "Our lives are
in order and we have time to enjoy our son more than younger parents, who don't have everything together. We can relax and enjoy it all".

This feeling of contentment was one of those areas that the women had difficulty articulating. They could say that they were content because they were happy and enjoying life but were unable to explain how the change had been achieved. This lends support to the psychoanalytic view of women's fulfillment and mothering. Psychoanalytic theory states, "...people (engage) in mental activity which (affects) their physical activities and feelings but (is) not available to their conscious self" (Chodrow, 1978:41). These same feelings are also part of Belenky et al's (1986) thesis regarding women's development of voice. This paradigm also includes the concept of women's interests enhancing their mothering and this study appears to support that contention.

Control

A sense of control over their own lives was another feeling the women experienced after childbirth. Several of the women felt that the relationship they had with their parents was important to their feeling
of control. The better the relationship the more likely the women were to form a more positive sense of control over their lives.

After childbirth the women expressed a sense of a loss of freedom. Once the child was born, life involved more planning; things could not be done on a whim. Everything seemed to revolve around the child. And yet even with this loss of freedom, the women felt that they had more control over their lives than ever before. Baruch et al. (1983) discussed the fact that "while a woman doesn't have much control over what kind of child she is going to have, she may have a choice about what kind of parent she is going to be" (p. 109). This feeling of control seemed to help the women crystalize the feeling of control they possessed over their lives. When talking about control one woman said:

Within the last few years a marriage, a child, a new job and I'm thinking, why am I doing all of this? So I'm still in turmoil but it seems like its more of a positive turmoil and I seem to be getting more positives out of it that I did ten years ago.

Another woman when talking about her feelings expressed the importance of control. She said, "I
don't have to count on anyone. It's not like I feel like self-reliance is so great but I don't have to rely on somebody else for my being and now I feel more in control".

This feeling of having some control over one's life was also an important factor in the decision regarding whether or not to have more children. Control did not involve the decision-making but rather it provided the women with the knowledge that they possessed a grasp on their lives; no matter what the decision, they would still have control.

The decision to have more children was also part of this issue of control. Seven of the women wanted more children. (Since the interviews were completed two of the women have become pregnant.) Two women expressed no desire to have more children. Both felt that they were too old to handle the added responsibility of another child. Whatever the decision, it was the woman's, and that was seen as another indicator of having control of her life.

This sense of control also played a part in the women's decisions regarding their careers after their child was born. The choices involved whether to return to work or to stay home with their child. Whatever
choice was made, the feelings about it were positive. The women made their choice based on what they felt would provide the most positive impact for themselves and their child.

Nine of the women decided to return to either work or school. Some of the women chose to modify the work role in some form by returning only parttime or returning after the child's preschool years. Even with the decision to return to work there was change in their priorities. One woman summed it up this way:

Having lived both (working and not) I can now make my choice and my choice is to be not so concerned with career right now. To be a wife and mother that's important to me but to always have a foothold on my career...I would always want to have a career option and by that I mean not necessarily working full time. Sort of mixed dialogue but I do like my job so well that I would never want to give it up totally.

The decision to return to work or not to return was a difficult one for the women because they were still receiving very mixed messages culturally regarding working mothers. Those who chose to stay home were in a sense, shifting to the mother role that society, influenced by the women's movement, had told the women was inappropriate. So some of the women felt
as this one woman: "I sometimes feel like now I should want to go back to work. I sometimes feel a little bit guilty about wanting so desperately to just stay home and be a mom for a while". Another woman said: "I wonder if it's a women's lib issue or if it's the necessity, the reality of the world where people don't always want to go back to work but have to?".

However even with these concerns they still expressed a desire to return to their careers. It is possible that their sense of self was tied to their career at least at some level, and they received satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment from it as well as from relationships outside the career setting. This appears to support Mischel and Fuhr (1988) who state that work may be a source of well-being for women. The women shared certain aspects of the decision to return to work. They were coping with trying to fit the two roles together so that both could provide satisfaction and fulfillment to all involved. This lends support to Baruch et al. (1983) contention that a woman's well-being is dependent on her ability to develop "mastery" over the roles she chooses.
Summary of Commonalities after Childbirth

For these women the timing of childbirth impacted their development and sense of identity. These women changed after childbirth. New issues began to emerge regarding their return to work. They still wanted the career but the nurturing role began to take priority. Those women who returned to work saw the return as a part of their nurturing ability because they felt it enabled them to give the child more during the time they did spend with them. They recognized the fact that their child's well-being was contingent on their own. Only one woman planned to stay at home fulltime. The others had returned or planned to return to work or school at some future point.

Other changes involved a feeling of having finally gained control of their lives. Along these same lines were the changes they experienced in themselves. They felt they now were flexible, patient, consistent and grown-up.

They also saw themselves as better parents now than they would have been had they not made the decision to postpone. Contentment was the last
commonality. All of the women felt a new sense of contentment with their lives after the birth of their child.

And what of the future? One woman summed it up best when she said:

It is scary. So I wouldn't be being honest with myself if I said there were never any qualms or fears about the future but basically I know somebody out there loves me and I didn't do anything to earn what I have now and it's all really good and it is going to be OKay!!
CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions and Suggestions

I seem to learn something new everyday. It's really sort of scary. But I guess I wouldn't change anything I had done. It's working out.

Karen, 1989

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify developmental characteristics of women who postponed parenthood. By investigating the lives of ten women, this study provided an opportunity to discover factors which contributed to the women's development as adults. Most studies of adult development have focused on men's experiences with little accommodation being made for women's experiences. The different kinds of experiences of men and women, make it difficult for one developmental model to fit both sexes. The variety of roles available to women appears to enable them to realize a wider variety of paths through adulthood than
men. This study provides an initial examination of one of these paths and its effect on the women's development.

Although generalizations to all women who postpone parenthood is not intended, the findings of this study can help enhance the knowledge being acquired regarding women's choices and their subsequent development. This knowledge can then be used by those who work with adults. Educational program planners can use the knowledge in determining the types of programs and materials that might be produced to work with this segment of the population. Also, those professionals who work directly with women can utilize the findings to help improve the services they provide.

Findings

A summary of the findings is reported here. The differences in developmental factors before and after childbirth are also discussed.

Family Background/Demographics

The women in this study range in age from 32-to 43-years-old, with an average age of 34.4-years-old. All were married at age 30 and most had been married
for at least four years before they decided to have a child.

More than half of the women's parents were in their 30s when the women were born. One woman was an only child, while the others had at least one brother or sister. The women were also more likely to be a middle child. Seven of the women's mothers worked while their daughters were growing up.

Educational Background

All the women had some form of postsecondary education. Their degrees ranged from an RN to a PhD. Eight of the women held at least a Bachelor's degree. Three women planned to or were attending school at the time of the interviews. One woman was working on her Baccalaureate degree. One was working on a Masters degree, while another was working on a doctorate.

Career Issues

The women in this study had all been employed for at least seven years. Career advancement was one of the reasons cited by the women as a reason to postpone parenthood. This postponement allowed the women to
concentrate on their worker role. They used the worker role to help develop their sense of identity and give them a feeling of fulfillment.

Most of the careers involved interaction with people. This interaction seem to allow nurturing to become part of the way the women functioned at work. It appears that this nurturant side exhibited by the women in the workplace, contributed to their decision to postpone parenthood. Their careers appeared to fulfill the women's desire to nurture, while also providing them with the opportunity to have something that was their own. The women also had time to become comfortable with themselves before they had a child. By doing so they felt they could enjoy the role of mother more fully.

Only one of the women gave up her career entirely once her child was born. The other nine women planned to or had returned at least on a part time basis to work or school after childbirth. The women who returned expressed the idea that career helped them maintain an aspect of their sense of identity and added stability to their lives. A contributing factor to the desire to return to work was the availability of quality child care. This availability provided the women with peace
of mind regarding their child's care. They were then able to concentrate on the worker role while they were away from home.

Reasons for Postponing Parenthood

These women consistently mentioned three reasons for postponing parenthood. The first reason was to establish a career. The women wanted to attain certain career goals before having a child. By postponing parenthood, the career process would not be interrupted by the birth of a child. The second reason was that the women wanted to form a stable marital relationship. They wanted to explore marriage and get to know their husbands before a new personality joined them. By strengthening their marital commitment before childbirth, the women felt that the child would then enhance an already stable relationship. The third reason cited involved financial security. All expressed a desire to obtain a variety of material goods before the child was born. The ability to care for the child was not strongly articulated as a reason to reach financial security.
Self Identity

The women in this study had difficulty describing themselves. They tended to see themselves as their experiences rather than as a person who had experiences. The women paid little attention to the effects of their experiences. For example, only one of the woman viewed childbirth as a critical event. All the women saw it all important, but the extent to which they changed because of it, was not immediately evident to them. They were unable to step back and critically evaluated the experience and its relationship to their lives.

The women's self identity seemed to have been formed in two ways. The first, was in terms of their relationships. The formation of positive relationships was important to the women's development as adults. Relationships with parents, friends and spouses gave the women a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure in their lives. The formation of a positive relationships allowed the women to cultivate a more positive self-concept. The women also defined themselves in terms of their independence. A sense of independence appeared to be attained through the women's ability to make choices regarding the career options available to them.
The women were able to express feelings that work contributed to their identity. They were not, however, able to articulate how this was achieved.

Mentors

All the women in this study felt that at some point in their lives they had a mentor. For nine of the women, the mentor relationship evolved without a conscious choice. The women had a very broad view of what a mentor relationship entailed. They felt that this relationship was a personal one in which the mentor was a confidant providing support during a certain time in the women's lives. Each woman's definition of mentor was personal and dependent on the interactions within each relationships. Mentoring varied from helping a woman through a bout with cancer to acting as a spiritual guide.

One woman did have a mentor relationship that fit the more traditional definition. This mentor helped her adjust to college life and establish herself in her profession.

These mentor relationships provided the women with the opportunity to grow as individuals and to confirm
their feelings about themselves. The bond they felt with their mentors was formed in sharing and successfully negotiating a specific experience.

**Critical Event**

All the women in this study at some time in their lives experienced an event that they considered to be critical. The event was critical, if the woman perceived her life as somehow changed because of it. The death of a loved one was an event that several women viewed as critical. These deaths appeared to affect the women's feelings regarding life and mortality. Two women's critical events concerned the evolving nature of women in our society. One woman was involved in a sexual harassment suit and another was struggling with the clash of two different culture's views on the roles of women.

Two women saw their religious conversion as a critical event. They felt that becoming Born-Again Christians changed their lives. It gave their lives focus. Other critical events included a bout with cancer, parental divorce and the constant moving of the childhood family unit.
Reasons for Ending the Postponement

The decision to end the postponement took several forms. The reason mentioned most often was the "ticking of the biological clock". When these women reached their 30s, they began to be more concerned about their physiological and emotional well-being. They realized their risk of having a problem pregnancy became higher longer they waited to conceive. For those women in their late 30s, this was a major concern. For the women in their early 30s the concern centered on the idea of being young enough to have more than one child and enjoy all the children they might have.

Career advancement was a major goal for these women. They felt that they wanted to time their pregnancies so that career advancement was not hindered. When they reached their 30s, the women felt that they were established in their careers and that a pregnancy would not adversely affect the career. Many of the women felt that they had achieved most of the goals they had set for themselves. The reasons they had originally made the decision to postpone had been achieved. In several cases compromises were made because of other issues involved.
Change

All the women in this study experienced some sense of change after childbirth. They felt that childbirth while contributing to their nurturant side also refined their sense of identity. They now derived identity from the three major roles in their lives: mother, wife and worker.

After childbirth, they saw themselves as more patient and consistent and as having a more unselfish outlook towards life. All felt that they would be better mothers because they had waited. By feeling more secure with themselves, they felt better able to address the pressures of raising a child.

The women seemed to be experiencing aspects of Erikson's Generativity versus Stagnation Stage. They began to form a more global view of life and women's roles in society. They exhibited interest in the future and in contributing to society.

Contentment

After childbirth these women felt a sense of contentment. The ability to handle a variety of difficult situations was part of this contentment.
They were comfortable with the entire scope of their lives.

Control over their lives also appeared to contribute to their sense of contentment. They felt that even with the loss of freedom brought about by the birth of their children, they were still in control. This feeling of control helped the women with their decision regarding whether to have more children. They felt that, no matter what the decision, they would be in control of what happened in their lives.

The choices concerning whether to return to work provided the women with another aspect of control. This appeared to be one area of their lives that the women felt able control. Whether they decided to return to work or not, the women felt positive about the decision. A major part of the decision was the women's attempts to fit the parenting and working roles together so that both would provide satisfaction and fulfillment in their lives.

**Development**

Most models of adult development are not flexible enough to accommodate the variety of roles adult women now have available to them. In order to begin to
formulate a theory of adult development which encompasses the breadth of choices a woman can make, a positive view of women's experiences needs to be presented in order to understand the reality of women's lives.

The findings in this study do not support the contention that female development can easily fit into already existing developmental or age-stratification theories of adult development. These findings do not demonstrate women's development as being sequential and cumulative. Certain aspects of the women's development did appear to fit components of different developmental theories. Evidence of Erikson's Generativity versus Stagnation stage can been seen in the women's concern for the future, and Levinson's contention regarding the importance of mentors to adult development can be seen in the women's formation of a mentor relationship.

When viewed in the light of developmental theories these women did not develop in a orderly sequence. They seemed to have blended Erikson's (1963) identity, intimacy and generativity stages. These stages were not viewed as separate and sequential but as
interrelated in the women's lives. Instead, issues seemed to rely more on the context of the events than on their sequence.

The delaying of parenthood demonstrates the inappropriateness of viewing the development of these women in terms of any age-stratification model. Although Neugarten (1976) does discuss off-time occurrences, the implication of off-time as being different from the norm does not provide the opportunity for choice at any age to be viewed as appropriate. According to Neugarten (1976), commonly accepted age expectations are important to the development of self concept. Yet the decision to postpone, made by the women in this study, was important to the development of their self concept. Age-stratification theories also, assume a predictable and orderly succession of roles. The women's roles in this study did not follow such a pattern. Women's developmental tasks can therefore, not, be placed within phases guided by certain age or social restrictions.

The roles chosen by the women in this study influenced their development. The women's choices fulfilled needs within each individual woman's life.
The choices made, allowed the women to discover the paths that were most appropriate for them. Roles chosen by these women were nontraditional in the sense that they provided the women with the ability to view themselves in terms of achievements, as well as through their nurturing ability.

These findings suggest that the developmental patterns of these women fit Stein and Etzkowitz's (1978) life spiral model of adult development. This model takes into account the roles available to adults, and the effects choices have on the path each adult follows through adulthood. This model is individualistic in that it accepts all paths through adulthood as appropriate and dependent on individual choice. As choices are made throughout adulthood, issues that emerge may be different for each woman depending on her age. The spiral theory accommodates the variety of options women possess. The women in this study chose the worker role, then a parent role and then, the worker role, again. The worker role however changed because of the choice made to parent. After childbirth, concerns regarding career were different than those before childbirth. After childbirth some of the same issues regarding career,
the women had dealt with in their 20s, again needed to be dealt with in their 30s. However, the outcome may be entirely different because of choices made during the intervening years. The women's lives, then, could be placed within a spiral where similar issues reappear at different times throughout adulthood.

Understanding the development of these ten women enables researchers to begin to understand the options available to women, and how these options fit into the life spiral model of development. The women in this study demonstrated that their identity development during the postponement of parenthood was influenced by their perceptions of two major facets of their lives: career and relationships. These facets continued to reappear depending on the needs of the women. For example, after childbirth, identity was enhanced by another facet of the women's lives: motherhood. Postponement thus allowed these women time to discover who they were before adding a third personality to their lives.

The choices a woman makes, the reasons behind her choices and the age at which she makes the choices, all affect how the woman feels about herself, and where she
fits in the spiral model of development. Therefore, there is a need to understand women's options to clearly understand their experiences.

The women in this study are women in transition. They are nontraditional in that they have derived part of their identity from roles other than those considered to be traditional woman's roles. These women achieved through both, their work role and through their relationships, a feeling of self worth and identity, before they made the decision to have a child. By allowing the women to accept responsibility for themselves, these aspects of identity formation enable the women to form a sense of independence and personal control over their lives. This feeling of being in control provided the women with the opportunity of choice.

Opportunity of choice is the ability to choose from a wide range of options and experiences that then provide freedom for each woman to find her own pathway through adulthood. The options available to women who have a feeling of control are more varied than those of women who do not feel they have control. Opportunity
of choice provides women who choose to postpone parenthood with the option of deciding when a child best fits into their lives.

Work also, provided the women in this study with a way to establish their sense of identity. During postponement, the women experienced a commitment and a sense of responsibility that was different than that which they experienced after childbirth. Before childbirth, establishing independence was part of the work experience.

This feeling of independence was balanced by the relationships the women had within their careers. Nurturing was considered part of their careers. With nurturing and independence as career components the woman were able to define themselves in terms of both separation and their ability to care. This formation of a positive sense of identity enabled the women to bring to the new role of mother a feeling of maturity, control, nurturing and a wealth of experience.

Not only does opportunity of choice provide options and a sense of control before childbirth, it also provides the woman with options and a sense of control after childbirth. For example, the women in
this study chose to devote time to career during the postponement, and then after childbirth several made the decision to return to work.

The opportunity of choice provided for the change these women felt in their lives because of childbirth. The women felt that the nurturant part of their identity became more pronounced after childbirth. Before childbirth, the women felt competent in their work role but were unsure of their ability to mother. The control that the opportunity of choice gave the women helped them make the decision to have a child when it best fit into their lives. Then the birth of their child allowed the women to expand their ability to care and live with the choices they had made. The women discovered they possessed the ability to mother.

The experience of ending the postponement and having a child was an adjustment for all the women. The control they felt in their lives before childbirth took on a new dimension. There was the loss of freedom that comes with the added responsibility of a child, but the women in this study viewed it as a change in direction, rather than a loss. The women's goals
changed as they adjusted to the new personality in their sphere of influence. They began to wonder how their choices would affect the future.

Parenthood was viewed as a source of satisfaction for the women. Each woman experienced the transition to parenthood differently. These differences were dependent on their perceptions of past experiences and of the transition itself.

With the birth of the child, the women assumed a new role. They now viewed themselves as worker, wife and mother. The new role brought to these women's lives another opportunity of choice. The rigors of performing all three roles caused the women to realize that the roles could not receive equal attention at all times. Instead, the women needed to reconcile the three roles and realize that the new role of motherhood opened new vistas of growth.

The women's experiences blended into one another and strengthened the woman's sense of self. The women formed an independent sense of self through experiences that provided them with a feeling of responsibility and control over their lives. Setting goals and striving to achieve them before having children also contributed
to this independent sense of self. Through relationships and motherhood, nurturing became part of the women's sense of self.

By viewing the women's options and their outcomes as appropriate, the life spiral model provides the opportunity for all the paths a woman might choose to be accepted as valid.

### Education

An understanding of human development has always been a part of education. However, as Carol Shakeshaft (1988) states, "The curriculum (of schools) has been constructed to mirror the development of males"(p.462). Because schools were originally formed to educate males, there was no problem in using a male developmental model to formulate instruction. Competition became the primary technique used in education. Gilligan (1982) notes that competition is not the best environment for learning for females. Her research shows that females prefer connection. Shakeshaft when discussing Gilligan's theories and schooling states:
Schools are primarily organized around the ethics of rights—a morality more often comfortable for males rather than for females. The female morality of response and care is not highly valued nor is it the basis of many teaching and learning strategies (p.463).

What education researchers and policy makers are just now realizing is that what is good for males is not necessarily good for females. For optimum learning at any level an understanding of the development of the learner is essential. Educators and program planners in schools and elsewhere must begin to understand that decisions regarding instruction need to be based on the developmental patterns of both males and females. For adult educators and program planners there needs to be formulated an understanding of how all adults develop and how their development affects learning.

This research contributes to the understanding of adult female development. It identifies factors about women of which educators need to be aware. A few examples are that the choice of role combinations a woman possesses affect her sense of identity and the time at which certain roles are attained is significant in how a woman develops. In order to serve all adults and avoid conflicts caused by male/female
developmental differences adult education practitioners need to become knowledgeable about these differences in development. Such issues as the importance of nurturing in a woman's development need to be recognized. The more that is known about adult women, their roles and experiences, the better practitioners will be able to establish guidelines that will provide meaningful learning experiences for women. Women are a unique population in that the complexities of the roles they can assume are varied and the age at which the roles are assumed adds to differences among women.

Women's identity development can be defined in terms of their roles and experiences. The different roles and experiences affect the way women learn. Connection and cooperation are two aspects of a woman's learning ability. And yet, they also typify all adult learners because they have reasons for learning and recognize the benefits they derive from the learning.

It is important that a woman's educational program be able to meet her developmental needs. The different knowledge and skills a woman requires are dependent on her stage in the life cycle. An adult education practitioner not only must be concerned with the learner's stage of development but also with the
subject matter that is important to that particular stage of development. At various times in a woman's development, programs that address the issue of when to have a child are important. When a woman is in her 20s the issue may be how long to wait, or whether to have children. If the woman decides to wait, then, the issue may become whether or not to end the postponement. No matter what the subject matter, educators need to be able to assist adults in coping with the future, particularly developmental changes.

Merriam (1984) states that adult education participation affects development. In terms of helping women, education can support them in developing talents and skills. It also can give the women an opportunity to examine changes that are occurring in their lives. By providing these learning opportunities for women, education can help them understand the options available to them. Education for women who are making decisions will enable them to make more informed choices. Women who choose to postpone parenthood might utilize learning opportunities regarding financial concerns. Programs for postponing couples on forming strong marital bonds could also be part of this
educating for options. By initiating these types of programs, adult educators can help women feel responsible for their decisions and change can occur.

Adult education practitioners and researchers need to continue to investigate the many options open to women and the effect these options have on women's development. This continued search into development must be a major factor in forming programs aimed at assisting adults in handling developmental tasks. These programs can only help women continue to feel in control and satisfied with their lives.

By utilizing newly acquired knowledge regarding adult development, such as is found in this research, education can provide opportunities for learning to those adults at specific stages in their development. Parent education programs can utilize this knowledge in meeting the needs of older first time parents. The parenting issues and concerns these women have are similar to those of other parents. The age of the woman may, however, influence her approach to parenting. Perhaps parent education programs should utilize a mixture of parental ages. The expertise and outlook of each age has much to offer that could be shared. This in turn, would encourage growth for all
involved. Therefore, in order to provide appropriate learning experiences the concerns of all parents need to be understood.

Other programs involving parenting also depend on knowledge regarding development. Childbirth heralds the beginning of change in a woman's life. Education can provide new mothers with an understanding of these changes and with coping strategies to handle the changes. Programs could address time management for women with who choose several roles.

Education can also address concerns regarding childbirth for women over age 35. Women who give birth after age 35 are considered high risk and the more education these women obtain the better able they will be to understand and accommodate the risks involved.

Career issues are also important to women who postpone parenthood, and education can provide opportunities for growth. For those women who return to work immediately after childbirth, programs on choosing day care providers would be appropriate. For women who stay home for several years then re-enter the
workplace problems encountered in re-entry can also be addressed through education. For all working mothers, courses on stress management and time management would be of value.

Specific research on female development will enable the adult education practitioner to link women's needs with available resources such as existing parenting classes and different types of support groups. It can also assist the women in obtaining an understanding of their own identity and options through discussion groups. Practitioners can formulate programs for adults of the next generation of women who chose the option to postpone. No matter what type of program a recognition of gender differences needs to become part of education at all levels in order for the needs of both sexes to be met.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are many aspects of adult female development that require further research. The aspects discussed here are drawn from the observations in this study. The first is the further investigation of adult female development. This study is only a small portion of
what needs to be done. Research similar to this study that looks at the broad range of women who postpone parenthood needs to be completed. By utilizing the information found in this study a survey instrument might be developed to further explore women's lives. Particularly, it could investigate postponing parenthood and its effects on adult development. Other aspects of the decision to postpone also need to be investigated. What was it in the lives of women that influenced their decision to postpone? The women in this study expressed the idea that their mothers were strong women. How their mothers influenced their decision to postpone is a topic that needs to be explored. Other issues regarding the family's influence on the decision to postpone that need to be investigated are: the age of the postponer's parents and her birth order. Both of these aspects were mentioned by the women in this study.

The husband's part in the decision to postpone, also needs to be investigated. If the woman made the decision to postpone before marriage, in what ways was the husband's influence different than when the decision is made jointly after marriage? How does the
decision to postpone effect the adult development of the husband? Does he also feel more in control and content with his life because of the postponement?

Other issues to investigate might be, women who postpone but have a child before age 30, women who postpone and then decide not to have children, and women who postpone, but then discover they can not have children. Also decisions regarding career and postponement and how they effect each other need to be studied further.

Research involving other areas of female development also need to be instigated. Women have such a wide variety of roles from which to chose that any theory development must be based on a thorough investigation of all of women's options and combinations of options that might form. Also, at issue are the possible similarities and differences between women of different races. This type of research needs to be expanded to include all women.

A third area which needs attention is the area involving the use of knowledge about female development by educators. In order to improve education, female development needs to be studied in terms of how it affects both the learning and the teaching that happens
in the schools. The majority of teachers in schools are women, yet they are teaching from a male model of development to all students. How does this fact affect what happens in the classroom and in the offices of the schools?

Another area of concern is how the research in adult female development affects materials that adult education practitioners develop. How will this knowledge affect the types of programs available? Will there be enough available resources or will new resources be needed? How will gender differences affect programs in adult education?

Many other questions can be formulated. Researchers and practitioners need to re-evaluate how they look at women and men. No matter what type of program, a recognition of gender similarities and differences needs to become part of its development. So that, education at all levels meets the needs of both sexes.
Dear ______________,

My name is Anne Leser and I am a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University. I am conducting research in Adult Female Development. Specifically I am investigating the experiences of those women who made a conscious decision to postpone parenthood. Your name as a possible participant was given to me by Dr. Rosemary Reiss, MD (Mrs. Mary Ross).

The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of women who postponed parenthood until after their 30th birthday. The effect these experiences had on their development as an adult is a major thrust of the research.

Your participation will consist of two personal interviews. Both interviews will take a total of one and one half to two hours. The interview will be arranged at your convenience. We can meet at your home, my office at the university or any other place you would like. I will be calling you in a few days to arrange the time and place for the first interview.

Your participation in this study is important. There is very little known about the adult development of women. What is known about adult development is based on studies of men. Women's voices need to be heard!

I look forward to talking with you in the near future. If you have any questions regarding the study or your participation please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Anne Leser
065 Ramseyer Hall
29 W. Woodruff Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43210
292-1280
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW AND LIFELINE
FIRST INTERVIEW

I. YOUR BACKGROUND

Name _________________________________

Birthdate ____________________________

Educational Background:

Highest educational level_______________
Year of completion___________
If it was not a steady process, what was the reason for the disruption?

Year of Marriage ______________________
Age at Time of Marriage_______________
Have you been married more than once? ___

Your Husband:

Age_____________________
Age at Time of Marriage_____________
Educational Background_______________
Occupation________________________

Children (list only sex and age):

____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________

Employment:

Are you now employed? _______ For how long? __________
Volunteer work_______________________

____________________________________
Memberships (community and professional)

Are there others living in the household? _____ If yes, please list age and relationship.

II. FAMILY BACKGROUND

Your father
Is he living? ____ working? ____ retired? ____
What is (was) his occupation?

What is (was) his highest level of education? ____

Your mother
Is she living? ____ working? ____ retired? ____
What is (was) her occupation?

What is (was) her highest level of education? ____

How old were your parents when you were born?
Father _____ Mother _____

Did your mother work while you were growing up? ____
How did you feel about that? _________________

Siblings
Brothers (how many) _______ occupations

Sisters (how many) _______ occupations

Your birth order (first born, second, etc.) ______

III. POSTPONING

At what time in your marriage did you make the decision to postpone? Was it made before your marriage?
Was it a mutual decision? If not, why not? How did your spouse react?

What were the reasons that led you to this decision?

Do you feel the reasons had an affect on your life or your spouse's life, your marriage?

Did the postponement have a definite ending time? (In other words did you say we will have a child when I reach such and such an age?) How was that time agreed upon?

If the postponement had no definite ending time how was the decision made when to have children? Was the decision mutual?

Had the reasons for postponement been accomplished or were they no longer necessary at the time of the child's birth? If not, how was that change in plans resolved? handled?

Is there any other pertinent information about your background which you feel is important?
YOUR LIFELINE

This is your opportunity to explore your life, by depicting the events of your life in a more visual form. To construct your lifeline you may use the format on the attached page or on a separate sheet of paper develop your own way to depict your lifeline.

Whatever format you use, your lifeline should include:

- your present age
- events in your life that impacted on you both positively and negatively
- your age at the time of the event

Some examples of events you might want to include are:

- academic degrees
- death
- children
- major purchases
- marriage
- people/friends
- career
- mistakes
- health

You might start by thinking about changes in your life and what was it about yourself that helped you relate either positively or negatively to that change. What affects did the change have on your life. Think about when you were content and when you were under stress.

*********************************************************
BE CREATIVE
*********************************************************
SECOND INTERVIEW

A. The following are representative questions that may be asked regarding the lifeline. These will change and expand depending on the actual timeline and any previous interviews.

1. Looking at your lifeline, what event is your most memorable? Why did you choose that event? Would you want the event to be repeated or would you change it in some way?

2. During what times were you most content? Why—people? things? or the actual event?

3. What times would you consider the most critical? Why—people? things? or the actual event?

4. If you could relive one event what would it be? Why? How old were you at that time?

5. When constructing the timeline was there any one person who stuck out as significant? Who? Why?

B. The following are the specific questions that will be asked of each participant.

1. All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your role as a parent?

2. Do you think your mother influenced the decisions you have made regarding your life? (career? parenting?)

3. Was there anyone in your life who might be considered a mentor?

4. How often do the things you do add up to being just too much?

5. Some women feel they are not doing as good a job as they should in one or more areas. Do you ever feel this way? About what areas?
6. When you were 17 or 18, what kinds of expectations or goals, if any, did you have for your adult life?

7. Are you doing now what you thought you would be doing? What would you rather be doing?

8. Thinking of your life as a whole, what things are the most rewarding—what gives you the most pleasure?

9. If you could change one thing in your life as it is now, what would it be?

10. If you could live your whole life over, what one thing would you most like to change?

11. Do you see your life as having had any major turning points—events that changed your life so that it was different afterwards? If so, what were they? How was your life different afterwards?

12. All things considered would you say that, these days, you are happy?

13. Right now what issues, if any, are there in your life that you are dealing with—things you have to make a decision about, or settle, or make peace with, or you think about quite about?

14. How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?

15. When you think about the future, how do you usually feel?

16. Some people's ideas about what is okay for women have changed quite a bit in the last few years. How would you say you have been affected by these ideas?

17. These new ideas have affected how some women bring up their children. How about you?

18. Consider your experiences growing up female. How did those events impacted on who you are now?
APPENDIX C

AUDITOR'S REPORT
May 25, 1989

Ms. Anne Leser
627 Buckeye Drive
Attica, Ohio 44807

Dear Anne,

It was a pleasure to hear from you. I am pleased that you are going to defend your dissertation. Enclosed please find a copy of the audit report for your dissertation. As I conducted the audit I noted that your dissertation was completed in the most professional manner.

The audit report addresses two specific areas. These are the methodology and the findings of your dissertation. In the methodology section the subject selection, data collection, and data analysis processes were reviewed. In the findings section the case studies and the commonalities were reviewed.

In all these areas I found that your dissertation was conducted and reported in such a manner to provide the reader with every confidence in your findings. Your dissertation appears to be based on sound research decisions, systematic data collection processes, and thorough data analysis. In addition, your findings are reported in a way which clearly communicates the results of your research.

I wish you luck in your defense. I have every confidence that it will go well.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gary J. Dean, PhD.
Assistant Professor and Coordinator
Adult and Community Education
Audit Report for
THE ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WHO POSTPONED PARENTHOOD

The purpose of an audit report of qualitative research is to help establish the consistency of the research findings. There are two primary targets for such an audit. First, the auditor is to review the process of the research method to determine that it represents a logical and systematic approach to data collection and analysis. Second, the auditor should confirm that the findings of the research report follow logically from the process. In this audit report each of these two concerns will be examined.

The purpose of this dissertation was "to investigate the development of women who chose to postpone parenthood and to describe the developmental characteristics that these women shared." Given the state of the research base on developmental issues in general, the lack of research on women, and the complex nature of the topic, a qualitative approach to this investigation was entirely appropriate.

The author supplied the auditor with the following materials for the purpose of the audit:
1. tapes of interviews with the subjects;
2. transcripts of taped interviews;
3. lifelines of the subjects;
4. interview protocol for the first interview;
5. interview protocol for the second interview;
6. instructions for the lifeline activity; and
7. the completed dissertation.

In addition, the author and the auditor had several in-depth conversations regarding the process of data collection and analysis, and the findings of the research.

The auditor took the following steps to complete the audit of the dissertation.

1. Discussed with the author the process of data collection and analysis and the findings of the study.
2. Read the completed dissertation.
3. Reviewed the interview protocols.
4. Reviewed the lifeline activity.
5. Listened to the taped interviews and compared them to the transcripts.
6. Reviewed the lifelines of the subjects.
7. Discussed with the author the major decision points in the methodology.

8. Reviewed the findings to determine their compatibility with the raw data.

Data Collection and Analysis

Sample selection and data collection were accomplished in the following manner. The author used a serial process to select subjects, collect data, and analyze the data. The process for each subject was to identify them, contact them, conduct the first interview, give the subject the lifeline to complete, and then to conduct the second interview. She completed this process with each subject before starting the process with the next subject. This is consistent with the constant comparative method of data collection and analysis and is appropriate for this type of study.

The author conducted several practice interviews before actually beginning data collection. The author initially interviewed five subjects for data collection. Because of the need for additional data she interviewed another five subjects. The need for
additional data was determined because there was insufficient data to substantiate the commonalities among the codes which were beginning to appear.

Four subjects were disqualified from the data collection process. The decision to disqualify the subjects was based on whether the women met the criteria for subject selection. Two subjects did not make the delay of parenting a conscious decision and one subject was married too late in life to qualify for the study. A fourth subject was disqualified because the interview process could not be completed. These decisions appear to have been made systematically. The author conducted a total of fourteen interviews, ten of which are included in the study.

During the interviews the author used a semi-structured approach with open-ended questions. Her interviewing style was appropriate. She allowed the subjects to express themselves adequately. She guided the flow of the discussion without directing the responses of the subjects.

Data analysis was accomplished through the constant comparative method. This method calls for the development of codes and categories which emerge from
the data. The coding and categorizing process used by the author was appropriate for the study. The author stated that the codes and categories emerged from the data. This process of emergence was accomplished in the following manner. Following the interviews the author reviewed the transcribed tapes. She then began to identify topics which were discussed in each interview. The topics were assigned a code. The codes were then reviewed to determine the commonalities among the subjects.

Findings

The method of reporting the data was appropriate for the study. Two methods to report the data were used. These were case studies of the ten subjects and a synthesis of the commonalities among the ten subjects.

The case studies are written well. They incorporate thick descriptions, that is, they portray the subject's perspectives. In the case studies the liberal use of quotes from the subjects enhances the reader's understanding of the subjects and their perspectives.
The development of codes and categories appears to have been a systematic process. The resulting categories of family, education, career, parenthood, self-identity, mentors, and critical life events make sense from two perspectives. The first is that they represent major divisions of life discussed by other developmental theorists. While each of the categories overlap and are interactive, there is value in discussing them separately for the sake of clarity and emphasizing the dynamics within each category. Second, the categories flow from the raw data. While it is clear that the data reflect the interview questions, and hence, the orientation of the author, the categories also appear to reflect the subject's perspectives of themselves and their world. This is evident by the ways in which the women responded to the questions, being readily able to incorporate them into their own frame of reference.

Conclusions

After reviewing this dissertation it is the auditor's opinion that this study was well conceived and executed in a thorough, systematic, and professional manner. The auditor recommends that the
The research methods are appropriate for the research problem identified. The data collection process was well thought out and systematic. Data analysis was conducted in a thorough manner. The findings and recommendations of the author appear to follow logically from the supporting data.
REFERENCES


