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An Investigation of Identity and Self-Esteem in Traditional Married Women during their Middle Years, and the Impact of the Life Planning Seminar

Susan E. Ellett

College of Humanities and Sciences
Virginia Commonwealth University

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Susan E. Ellett entitled An Investigation of Identity and Self-Esteem in Traditional Married Women during their Middle Years, and the Impact of the Life Planning Seminar has been approved by her committee as satisfactory completion of the dissertation requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology.

[redacted]

Thomas V. McGovern, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology

[redacted]

Jane H. Hopkins, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Women's Studies

[redacted]

Barbara J. Myers, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Psychology

[redacted]

Ralph G. Wiggins, Jr., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Psychology

[redacted]

Ann M. Woodlief, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of English

[redacted]

William S. Ray, Ph.D.
Chairman, Department of Psychology

[redacted]

Elske v.P. Smith, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences

August 19, 1981
Date

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by

Susan E. Ellett

B.A., Mary Baldwin College, 1972

M.S., Virginia Commonwealth University, 1979

Director: Dr. Thomas V. McGovern

Associate Professor of Psychology

Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond, Virginia

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GROWING PAINS

"She's" been tucked 'way for many years.
I'd other things to do...
Raise the children, be a wife
And I've forgotten who
"She" started out to be--
The "She" who once was me.

My family finds it strange indeed
That I at forty four
Now feel the need to search for "She"
And learn of her once more.
To find out if "She" did survive,
To know her (if she's still alive).

At eighteen when "She" looked at life
Her options were exciting.
Her life was opening like a flower,
Her future so inviting.
Life is not always what it seems...
I faced reality, "She" clung to dreams.

My years rushed by
With babies and a husband's busy career.
I held "IT" all together.
"She" began to disappear.
Sometimes I'd hear her crying.
Sometimes I'd think, "'She's' dying."

And now as I turn forty four
The children have all grown.
I find there's now time in my life
To think of things my own.
And so, I'm searching back for "She,"
To bring her back once more with me.

June S. Dean

LPS participant

October 18, 1979

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Abstract

AN INVESTIGATION OF IDENTITY AND SELF-ESTEEM IN TRADITIONAL MARRIED WOMEN DURING THEIR MIDDLE YEARS, AND THE IMPACT OF THE LIFE PLANNING SEMINAR

Susan E. Ellett, Ph.D.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 1981

Major Director: Dr. Thomas V. McGovern

There is contradictory evidence as to whether the middle years are problematic for women. The research indicates that the middle years, particularly the empty nest period, are traumatic for some women, but for others a time of relief. More recent research suggests that for women who do find the middle years problematic, certain types of group experiences may be helpful. The purpose of this study was to investigate this time of life for a specific population of women, traditional married women who have devoted their time primarily to raising a family. This study examined identity and self-esteem in these women during their middle years, as well as one group experience, the Life Planning Seminar (LPS), for its effect on identity and self-esteem.

Results indicated that for the traditional married women in this study, the middle years, particularly the empty nest period, were indeed problematic. All of the participants experienced some sort of identity crisis during these years, and for most the crisis was related to the empty nest. The empty nest was experienced by these

women as a time of loss and confusion about who they were and the roles they were playing. For most of the women in this study, the loss of maternal role and resulting identity crisis were accompanied by a loss in self-esteem. Results also indicated that for the women in this study, identity and self-esteem were significantly stronger following participation in the LPS. There was also a significant change in sense of identity for participants from before to after the LPS, with identity before the LPS largely reflected, and after the LPS predominantly personal.

The results of this study suggest that at least for some traditional married women, the middle years, particularly the departure of children during this time are problematic. Apparently for these women, the loss or reduction of the maternal role precipitated an idenitity crisis which was accompanied by a loss of self-esteem. Results also suggest that for such women, a group experience such as the LPS can be beneficial in resolving the crisis which occurs, and in restoring self-esteem, by helping women to redefine themselves and plan a new direction for the future.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, much attention has been given to the idea of the mid-life crisis. Sales (1979) describes the characteristics of this crisis according to some of the prominent theorists, Levinson et al. (1974), Gould (1972), and Vaillant and McArthur (1972): For many, this crisis involves the realization that time is running out, that one is no longer young or as physically capable as one used to be. It is a time when one becomes sharply aware of the disparities between one's early expectations and current realities, and when work and family roles may need to be reevaluated.

However, this general description of the mid-life crisis is based on the results of research dealing primarily with adult males. While this research itself is limited, theoretical work on women in the middle years "...is in its infancy and empirical findings tend to be scattered and noncumulative" (Barnett and Baruch, 1979, p. 479). Lidz (1980) also maintains that it is hard to make generalizations about middle-aged women because their life patterns during these years are so variant.

Research findings seem to center around two conflicting viewpoints (Bart, 1972; Lidz, 1980; Maracek, 1978). The first maintains that the middle years, particularly the empty nest period, are a time of relief which is welcomed by the woman because of a greater sense of freedom. The second

viewpoint is that the empty nest period is traumatic for middle-aged women and negatively affects their psychological well-being.

In spite of these different viewpoints, statistics of mental health suggest that the middle years are indeed problematic for a large number of women. Chesler (1972) found two-thirds of the patients in community mental health centers and psychotherapeutic treatment to be adult women, largely between the ages of 30 and 55. Marmor (1974) also reports that in the middle years of life, women manifest psychiatric disorders three to four times as frequently as men do. Maracek (1978) points out that married women are more likely to seek psychological help than married men, and that in fact, married women, especially those in their late thirties and forties, form the most heavily represented group in psychiatric treatment, using both hospitalization and private psychotherapy more than any other.

Recent careful re-analysis of mental health data suggest that if all forms of mental illness are considered, women are no more disturbed than men, but that they do suffer more from such specific disabilities as depression, neurotic disorders, and functional psychoses. This finding is not due to artifacts of reporting, women's greater willingness to admit symptoms, nor to biases of mental health professionals, but appear to reflect actual differences (Barnett and Baruch, 1979).

The feelings and behaviors prevalent among these women in treatment are typically depression, feelings of inadequacy

and inferiority, and excessive guilt, which may be generally described as a turning against the self (Maracek, 1978). Gove and Tudor (1973) report that there is considerable evidence that women as a group have a more negative image of themselves, and are more likely to become depressed than men. According to Chesler (1972) depression rather than aggression is the female response to disappointment or loss. The hostility that could be directed outward in response to the loss is turned inwards towards the self.

The age at which women appear to be highly vulnerable to depression provides a clue as to what experiences might be particularly stressful. The middle years of a woman's life are generally the time when she experiences the departure of the children from the home. Women suffering from clinical depressions often report this loss to be a major source of stress (Maracek, 1978). Deykin et al. (1966) observed that there was often a temporal, although not necessarily a causal, relationship between the termination of child-rearing and clinical depression. In a study of middle-aged women who were first admissions to mental hospitals, Bart (1972) found that 63 percent of women who had experienced some degree of maternal role loss were depressed.

Brooks (1976) points out that while it is tempting to view these depressed, middle-aged women as having deep-seated neurotic problems, a more plausible hypothesis is that they are in a transitional stage. Having failed to develop an individual identity apart from or in addition to the roles of

wife and mother, many women now need to find new avenues for gaining a sense of achievement and fulfillment. Women who have assumed the traditional role, whose lives have been centered around their children, seem to be the most vulnerable to severe depression when their children leave home. For these women, the departure of children may constitute a crisis in which their identity and self-esteem are threatened (Resnick, 1979; Riley et al., 1972).

The purpose of this study is to examine the issues of identity and self-esteem in traditional married women during their middle years. There is contradictory evidence as to whether the middle years are a problem for women. This investigation will hopefully add further evidence and contribute to a better understanding of this stage of women's adult development.

In recent years research evidence has begun to indicate that for women who do experience problems during their middle years, certain types of experiences which provide support and opportunity for self-exploration may facilitate resolution of those problems. However, the evidence is thus far limited. This study will attempt to investigate and evaluate one intervention program, the Life Planning Seminar, particularly its usefulness in helping traditional married women resolve issues of identity and self-esteem. It is hoped that such an investigation will provide useful information to those interested in helping women with their life-planning and other problems of their adult development.

The review of the literature will cover the topics of women's identity, the middle years, the relationship between identity and self-esteem, the need for a redefinition of identity at mid-life, the need for life-planning, and a description of various intervention programs, especially the Life Planning Seminar.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I. Identity

One of the major theorists of adult development, Erik Erikson (1950, 1959), sees identity formation as the major task of adolescence. Identity formation is a process of establishing from all of one's childhood experiences an individual sense of self, a certain continuity of personal character and an inner solidarity with the ideals and identity of the group of one's significant others (Erikson, 1959). An optimal sense of identity is experienced as a sense of psychosocial well-being, a feeling of being at home in one's body, of knowing where one is going, and of inner assuredness that one will be recognized by those who matter (Erikson, 1968). While recognizing that identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence, Erikson (1959) maintains that the adolescent, during the final stage of his identity formation will suffer more deeply than he ever did before (or ever will again) from a diffusion of roles.

The appropriateness of this conceptualization of identity formation for women's development is questionable. Bernard (1975) points out that for women there is little of the "inner sameness" and "continuity" that Erikson's definition of ego identity specifies, and that there is rather a series of discontinuities which subject women to a series of identity crises. Erikson's comments directed specifically towards women's development are contradictory and at best confusing. He writes in 1965 that while "...something in the

young woman's identity must keep itself open for the peculiarities of the man to be joined and of the children to be brought up, ...much of a young woman's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and in the selectivity of her search for the man (or men) by whom she wishes to be sought" (Erikson, 1965, p. 19). He goes on to point out that this is only the psychosexual aspect of her identity, and that she may postpone its closure while training herself as a worker and citizen and developing herself as a person within the role possibilities of her time. However, he later writes that "...the stage of life crucial for the emergence of an integrated female identity is the step from youth to maturity, the state when the young woman, whatever her work career, relinquishes the care received from the parental family in order to commit herself to the love of a stranger and to the care to be given to his and her offspring" (Erikson, 1968, p. 265).

Therefore, while Erikson recognizes that women may develop and participate in various roles, he sees their crucial tasks as becoming wives and mothers, tasks which are essential before women can completely form their identity. Bernard (1975) and Weisstein (1971) have criticized Erikson and others for this view, which seems to represent a cultural consensus asserting not only that a woman is defined by her ability to attract men, but that there are no alternative definitions. Barnett and Baruch (1979) point out the ominous implications of Erikson's theory. If women can re-

solve their identity crisis only after their choice of a mate, then delaying marriage means non-maturity, and not marrying implies never establishing one's identity.

In spite of such implications, the majority of the research does indicate that the primary identity for women tends to be that of wife and mother, and that many women actually do refrain from defining themselves in any other terms. Rubin (1979) points to the crucial life-shaping difference between boys and girls. For girls, unlike boys, marriage and parenthood are something to dream about, and their dominant dream in fact. Marriage and motherhood are what define a woman, what locate her in the world, what ground her in social identity. While the male is expected to develop a strong, differentiated, independent sense of self, to become a competent, masterful person who stands as a psychologically bounded entity, the female is not expected to develop a bounded and well-integrated sense of self, but to exchange her dependence on parents for dependence on a husband at the earliest opportunity.

Sales (1978) cites various studies which point to the tentativeness of young women in their quest for personal identity, as they wait until marriage provides a defining context for their lives. In an extensive study of adolescent boys and girls, Douvan and Adelson (1966) found that while adolescent boys express their identity in occupational terms, the adolescent girl's identity is defined through her attachments to others, specifically being a wife and mother. Much

of the content of being a wife and mother depends on who the girl marries, and therefore must be filled in at some later date. This tentativeness continues to characterize women's choices, as described in more recent studies (Lowenthal et al., 1975; Angrist and Almquist, 1975).

Bardwick et al. (1970) maintain that the dating ritual creates new conflicts for the adolescent girl, since it specifically obstructs the sense of continuity that Erikson puts at the center of the identity task. Rather, the girl is encouraged to remain fluid and ambiguous in her self-definition, and to look externally for her sense of self, for cues in making judgments, and for acceptance to anchor her self-esteem.

Identity formation is especially difficult for adolescent girls because of the ambiguities in feminine role definition (Seward, 1964). Seward maintains that the overt offer of equality alongside the covert expectation that girls will decline instrumental roles in favor of expressive ones is a case of "cultural discontinuity in which preparation for adult participation in society is followed by regression to dependency on husband and children" (Seward, 1964, p. 130).

It is women's socialization that has emphasized marriage as their central adult role, with other activities subordinate to, and contingent on their future family functions (Sales, 1978). Russo (1976) refers to the centrality of motherhood to the definition of the adult female as the "motherhood mandate." The consensus of society seems to be that the major

goal of a woman's life is to raise well-adjusted achildren, that motherhood is her raison d'etre.

In fact, given a thorough socialization experience, a woman may never consider roles other than the traditional ones (Parsons et al., 1976). Friedan (1963) maintains that the feminine mystique permits, even encourages women to ignore the question of their identity, by answering the question "Who am I?" with "Jim's wife", "Mary's mother." In a comprehensive study, only 19% of actual fathers and only 29% of the husbands described themselves as such, compared to 54% of actual mothers and 41% of wives, suggesting that both the parent and marriage roles are more salient for a woman's self-conceptualization than for a man's (Stoll, 1974). In a study of first and second graders, Looft (cited in Wirtenberg and Nakamura, 1976), found that to the question "What will you be when you grow up?" several girls responded that they would be mothers, whereas not one boy said he would be a father.

Even before adolescence, sex role becomes a source of identity for the individual (Polk and Stein, 1972). For a woman in particular, gender determines to a large degree her future roles in life, dictating limitations on the options for her development, regardless of her intellect, activity level, or physical and emotional capacity (Brodsky, 1973). According to Cohen (1966) there is considerable incompatibility between society's traditional definition of the person's sexual role and the optimal development of his/her assets as a person. More specifically, sex role researchers Bem and Bem (1970)

point out that many women end up as full-time nomemakers because of their socialization, to the exclusion of the particular woman's talent, education, ability, interests, and motivations. The woman's unique identity has been rendered irrelevant, determining only the periphery of her life rather than its central core.

Inherent in this socialization process, according to Berger (1977) is the expectation that women will play a supportive role as marriage partner rather than a self-supporting role as achiever in the marketplace. A primary relationship is seen by many women as the center of their world, with the result that they direct their efforts almost exclusively to enhancing and facilitating that relationship rather than seeking opportunities for self-enhancement through their own achievements (Halas and Matteson, 1978). Papanek (1973) points out that the "two-person single career," in which the woman receives vicarious achievement through her husband's job, is "fully congruent with the stereotype of the wife as supporter, comforter, backstage manager, home maintainer, and main rearer of children" (p. 91).

Bennett and Cohen (1959) found that while masculine thinking is associated more with a desire for personal achievement and accomplishment, feminine thinking is associated more with a desire for social love and friendship. In a later study Carlson (1971) found that males tend to experience and represent the self in individualistic terms whereas females tend to experience and represent themselves in terms of interpersonal relatedness.

For women, affiliation may actually be seen as achievement and an affirmation of the self (O'Leary, 1974). Women are taught that their main goal in life is to serve others. If carried to its "perfection" of total selflessness, the result may be just that, a loss of self or identity (Miller, 1976).

The ideal of domesticity, along with its prescription of management of the home and care of children as the defining qualities of female life, is relatively new. Before the Industrial Revolution, women participated in economic activities in and around the home, in agriculture, and in the early cottage industries (Weitz, 1977). With the onset of the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century, women gave up working in the shop and took on as their primary responsibility the housekeeping and childrearing tasks. Initially this responsibility involved a large part of a woman's life, as the nineteenth century home became larger and fewer children died in childbirth or infancy (Rose, 1951).

Gradually, however, housework became simplified, fewer children were born, and the schools took over part of the task of raising and educating them. Such losses of function transpired so slowly over the last 100 years that most women did not realize they were occurring. Even those childrearing functions which remained began to decline when the children started school, and usually disappeared completely before the average woman reached the age of 45 (Rose, 1951).

In 1956, Myrdal and Klein wrote that the average housewife could be considered to be employed full-time on tasks

which are necessary for homemaking only during a quarter to one-third of her normal adult life. Rossi (1972) pointed out that by the 1970s, maternity had become a very small part of the adult woman's life, with about two-thirds of her adult years spent either alone or living with a husband but with no children under the age of 18. Whereas the nest used to empty when the woman was in her mid-fifties, the historical trend has been toward a quickening of events through the family cycle, so that the nest now empties when the woman is in her late forties (Neugarten, 1977). In fact, Glick (1977) points out that the much longer empty nest period may be the most dramatic change which has occurred in the pattern of the typical family life cycle over the last 80 years.

In the light of such data, the soundness and practicality of limiting one's lifelong identity to the roles of wife and mother seems uncertain. Rossi (1965) states that it is no longer necessary for women to confine their life expectations to marriage and parenthood, because "...the traditional mother role simply does not occupy a sufficient portion of a woman's life span to constitute any longer the exclusive adult role for which a young woman should be prepared" (p. 105). The following section will review the research describing the middle years of women who have chosen to pursue this traditional mother role.

II. The Middle Years

Lidz (1980) notes that women's life patterns during these years are so variant that generalizations are hard to make. For many women, especially the traditional housewife and mother,

it is a time of transition, as the demands of the family are less time-consuming, as the children are about to be or have been launched into independence, and as the husband is often at the height of his career and productivity (Klass and Redfern, 1977). According to Lopata's (1966) life cycle of the housewife, traditional women during the middle years would be somewhere in the stages of the "Full House" plateau, which begins when the children start leaving home, and the "Shrinking Circle," beginning when the first child is married or has left home. During these years, the woman's functional role as mother and wife assumes less importance, as the children become less dependent and the husband less attentive (Marmor, 1974).

There is much contradictory evidence as to whether this time of life is actually a problem for women. Deutscher (1969) maintains that for both men and women, the clinical impressions of the post-parental period appear to be polarized around two major points of view; first, that post-parental life is generally difficult, and second, that post-parental life tends to be a time of relief. For women in particular, the research also indicates that this time tends to be characterized by either a sense of loss and depression or a sense of relief and greater freedom (Fuchs, 1977; Klass and Redfern, 1977; Lidz, 1980; Maracek, 1978).

Neugarten (1968) found that the most conspicuous characteristic of middle age in the women she interviewed was the sense of increased freedom. For these women, middle age marked

the beginning of a period in which latent talents and capacities could be put to use in new directions, bringing a satisfying change in self-concept.

Deutscher (1968), in a study of middle-class post-parental couples, found the overwhelming majority defined their situation favorably, although serious problems did present themselves for a small minority. A larger percentage of wives were found to evaluate the postparental period more favorably as well as more unfavorably than husbands. This suggests that this is a crucial time of life for the woman, which is being clearly resolved one way or the other for her.

In a study of middle-class males and females approaching the empty-nest stage of parenthood, Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) found that the empty-nest period was perceived as promising for women. However, the women did tend to have a somewhat more negative and pessimistic orientation, suggesting either a lifelong difference between men and women or the possibility of a "crisis" that may become manifest after the child has actually left home.

Data from six national surveys provided convincing, although not conclusive evidence that children's departure from home does not typically lead to an enduring decline in the psychological well-being of middle-aged mothers (Glenn, 1975). Glenn concludes that the effects seem to be "moderately positive," although problems during this period may be prevalent enough to warrant public concern and corrective action.

In another study Neugarten (1977) found that rather than being a stressful period for women, the empty-nest stage was

associated with a somewhat higher level of life satisfaction than is found among other women. She concluded that it is the unanticipated life event, not the anticipated, which is likely to be traumatic.

Harkins (1978) found the empty-nest not to be a particularly stressful period in women's lives, having essentially no effect on the physical well-being of mothers, and at most, a rather slight and transitory effect on their psychological well-being.

The consensus of the preceding studies is that the middle years and the empty-nest period are experienced by most women as a time of increased opportunity and freedom, and of relief from the stresses of childrearing. However, in none of these studies were the results reported for different groups of women. The women studied were selected only on the basis of age and life-stage, with no distinction made according to the women's roles or activities. In her study of middle-age, Neugarten (1968) based her results on interviews with both single and married women. In Lowenthal's (1972) study, half of the women worked and had worked outside the home much of their adult lives. However, in these and the other studies, results are presented only for the group as a whole, with no distinctions between specific groups. It seems likely that the middle years, and the empty-nest period in particular, would be experienced in different ways by different groups of women. Specifically, the middle years would be experienced differently by single women, traditional married women, and married wom-

en who work outside the home, with the differences reflecting differences in their life roles.

In a more recent study, Rubin (1979) focused on a specific population of middle-aged women. She interviewed 160 women between the ages of 35 and 54, who had all given up whatever job or careers they may have had, to devote themselves to full-time mothering and housewifery for at least ten years after their first child was born. According to Rubin, almost all of these women responded to the departure of their children, whether actual or impending, with a decided sense of relief. However, Rubin points out that this does not mean that there are no problems at this life transition, only that the problems have to do with anxieties about the future, with contemplation and confrontation of the next stage of life, rather than with nostalgia about the past.

This stage of life for many adults may be compared to adolescence. Poland (1974) describes adolescence as "years of turmoil, a time of unrest, a hurricane season, a period of conflict and contention," with most concerns centering around a theme of developing a sense of identity, of answering the question "Who am I ?" (p. 74). Adults may experience an identity crisis later in life, especially around the age of 40 (Hill, 1968). Pikunas (1976) describes the early forties for the majority of adults as a time of temporary upheaval when the person is reevaluating the self-concept.

Neugarten (1968) points to the changes in self-concept and changes in identity as some of the salient issues of adulthood. For traditional women who have devoted their lives

to raising families, these issues are especially relevant. In an earlier study, Neugarten (1961) points out that the typical middle-aged woman faces a major reorganization of role patterns, and along with it, a reexamination of self and structuring of sex-role and ego-identity.

There is a particular abruptness in the changes that take place for the traditional woman in the middle years. According to Rubin (1979), at 40 or 45, her job is done, not out of some failure of her own, but because "motherhood self-destructs in 20 years" (p. 159). Bardwick (1971) maintains that while mothering is the single most demanding and rewarding aspect of the traditional role, it is a role which when done best, atrophies. Mead (1967) agrees, pointing out that the more faithfully the mother obeys the injunctions to not spoil her children, to let them lead their own lives and be independent and self-sufficient, the more she works herself out of a job. Then, her main justification, the work for which she gave up everything, is gone. Ironically, while women are primarily valued for their mothering role, they are expected to terminate this role abruptly when the children reach a certain age (Resnick, 1979). Rossi (1964) concludes that full-time motherhood is not sufficiently absorbing to the woman, nor beneficial to the child to justify it as a woman's exclusive occupation, and that women have to face the question sooner or later, of who they are besides their children's mother.

For many women, the departure of the children during their middle years constitutes such an identity crisis, in which they

are forced to ask themselves who they are besides wife and mother (Astin, 1976; Bardwick, 1971; Bernard, 1975; Brodsky, 1973; Brooks, 1976; Klass and Redfern, 1977; Letchworth, 1970; Myrdal and Klein, 1956; Neugarten, 1961). As Harris (1975) puts it, "We have lived at least four decades--structured lives, for the most part, in which we knew what we wanted, and what was expected of us. And now, suddenly, with the beginnings of the middle years, we face an identity crisis for which nothing in our past has prepared us and for which nothing in our society can provide guidelines" (p. 11).

Rubin (1979) also describes this predicament. No one tells women that they will be mothers for only a part of their lifetime, and the questions they did not ask at adolescence haunt them at midlife. Issues of identity are now brought to center stage, and women whose central life task has been to bear and raise children, urgently ask "What am I going to do with the next thirty years of my life?"

In middle age, men carry on in their occupations as usual, while the traditional woman's functions are removed or reduced (Rose, 1965). For these women, the core of personal identity still rests with others. They still define themselves vicariously, unlike men, whose personal identity still rests on their own life and what they have done with it (Rubin, 1979).

O'Connell (1976) makes the distinction between a personal and reflected sense of identity. A personal sense of identity is defined as an awareness of and empnasis on one's talents and capabilities, involving the capacity to see one's self as

a separate entity who can function autonomously, with self-esteem and feelings of worth being derived from one's unique qualities. A reflected sense of identity emphasizes significant others rather than one's personal characteristics, with self-esteem and feelings of worth derived from participation in the lives of these significant others, in a sort of identity by association.

In a study of middle-class college-educated women, O'Connell (1976) examined the differences in the conception of a personal sense of identity in married women pursuing three different life styles: traditional, nontraditional, and neotraditional. Traditional women included those who were and intended to remain full-time homemakers; neotraditional women were those who returned to paid employment after a period of childrearing; and nontraditional women were those who simultaneously combined a career with marriage and childrearing. Results of the study indicated that traditional and neotraditional women conceive of their sense of identity as significantly stronger and in more personal terms at the school children stage than at earlier stages of their life cycle, while nontraditional women conceive of their identity as comparatively strong and personal at all stages of the life cycle. While nontraditional women report a strong sense of personal identity which grows stronger with succeeding stages of the life cycle, most traditional and neotraditional women do not indicate a strong and definitive sense of personal identity until childrearing duties diminish. Apparently

traditional and neotraditional women undergo a moratorium in personal identity synthesis which begins in adolescence and lasts until their childrearing duties have been reduced. Contrary to Erikson's (1965) idea that motherhood and childrearing bring closure in identity for women, for the traditional and neotraditional woman, a sense of personal identity becomes a crucial issue after she has fulfilled the wife and mother cultural prescription of the feminine role (O'Connell, 1976).

Several studies indicate that it is the woman whose life has completely centered on her children for whom the empty-nest period is particularly traumatic (Bart, 1972; Notman, 1980; Resnick, 1979; Riley et al., 1972). Birnbaum (1975) in a study of women during the middle years, found that homemakers, compared to married or single professional women, expressed most concern over self-identity issues. Artson (1979) also found homemakers to be more conflicted over identity issues than volunteers and professional women, during the middle years.

Livson (1976) however, found a different pattern in her longitudinal study of twenty-four women from adolescence to age fifty. These women were predominantly upper-middle class, Protestant with education slightly beyond high school, having an average family size of from two to three children, and all psychologically healthy at age 50. Two groups of women were identified: traditionals, who were all married and primarily housewives; and independents, who had full-time jobs. Two-

thirds of this group were married and one-third widowed or divorced. Traditionals are described as gregarious, feminine, conventional and sociable. They tend to cope with conflicted feelings by conformity and repression, and are interested in social activities, with their main satisfaction coming from attachments to others. The qualities these women possess are well suited to the traditional roles of wife and mother.

Independents in contrast, are ambitious, achievement-oriented, skeptical, introspective, and unconventional. They rely on their intellect to cope with the world and tend to be more autonomous than traditionals and more in touch with their inner life. They cope with conflicting feelings by insight and direct expression, are interested in skill-oriented activities, and derive their main satisfaction from developing their "selves" (Livson, 1976).

Livson (1976) found that by late adolescence. traditionals are popular, sociable young women who are successful in their femininity and in perfecting their social skills, and in this way are establishing their ego identity. By age forty these women are still primarily characterized by their gregariousness, but they have moved beyond the popularity of adolescence into more mature relationships with others and are well into the stage of intimacy. These women do not seem to experience any aging crisis during their forties, and by age fifty have moved into the stage of generativity, with their gregariousness having evolved into nurturance.

Independents by late adolescence are developing a consistent adaptive personality style, centered around their intel-

lectuality, and seem to be progressing toward a firm identity. By age forty however, independents have become depressed, irritable and conflicted, and identity seems to have regressed. By age fifty the crisis is resolved, with independents reviving the identities, centered around intellectuality, they were developing in adolescence. Having resolved this identity crisis, they are now giving, warm, sympathetic and open in their feelings, and are able to move into the stage of intimacy (Livson, 1976).

By age fifty, both groups of women have evolved a self consistent with their earlier characteristics, but with different courses and different timing. While traditionals show steady personality growth from adolescence to middle age, independents interrupt their development in the middle adult years, but leap forward by age fifty. Livson (1976) explains this difference as the fit between a woman's life style and personality. The personalities of traditional women fit conventional feminine roles, allowing these women to live out valued aspects of themselves with their children and later others, so that they are not motivated to change at middle age.

Independents, however, do not fit the conventional definitions of femininity. For these women who were less conventionally feminine, traditional roles were restricting. Having suppressed their intellectual competence to assume the mothering role, they were removed from a workable identity. The identity crisis seemed to be resolved when these women

were able to disengage from the mothering role and revive their more assertive goal-oriented skills.

An additional factor which may account for some of the differences in the age forty transition is the difference in marital status between the two groups. Livson (1976) points out that all traditionals were married at age 50, while one-third of the independents were divorced or widowed, although she does not state when these events occurred. It is conceivable that if such events occurred during or just prior to the age 40 transition, this might in itself explain a large part of the crisis experienced by independents during these years.

While the research is too limited to indicate the specific trends of women in the middle years, it does provide clear indications that during this time, many women do experience problems. One major problem seems to be an identity crisis precipitated by the loss or reduction of the maternal role.

III. Identity and Self-Esteem

The loss of maternal role and the resulting identity crisis is inevitably accompanied by a loss in self-esteem. In a study of middle-class males and females, Lowenthal et al. (1975) found that middle-aged women facing the empty nest were in a state of identity diffusion, if not outright crisis, and were the least sure of themselves of all groups studied. While these women had more altruistic goals than the younger women, they felt uneasy about their ability and

motivation to realize them, and generally felt out of control. Birnbaum (1975) in a study of middle-aged, family-oriented and career-committed women, found unequivocally that in addition to expressing the most concern over self-identity issues, homemakers were the ones with the lowest self-esteem and the lowest sense of personal competence, even including child care and social skills. Birnbaum reports that the middle-aged homemaker, who has bowed out on both competition and self-assertion in general, and whose identity rests in large part on a role whose functions are diminishing, is experiencing considerable psychic turmoil, a depressed sense of emotional well-being, and low self-esteem.

Various studies reiterate the description of the married adult woman who comes for help to wrestle with problems of self-confidence and low self-esteem, brought on by diminishing family responsibilities (Brooks, 1976; Halas,1973; Katz and Knapp, 1974; Matthews, 1969; Mueller, 1966). Snishkoff (1973) notes that a personality characteristic often found in the middle-aged, middle-class women with adolescent children who comprise the clientele of one women's center is poor self-image, a drain of self-confidence.

According to Bardwick (1971), self-esteem is a function of how well one performs in each of the roles one participates in and the extent to which the range of roles and one's performance in them utilizes one's perceived capacity. The loss of one's major role is accompanied by a loss of identity and self-esteem.

For women in our society, the most important roles are wife and mother (Bart, 1972). These roles are basic to a woman's self-concept and self-esteem, and the loss of them can create feelings of worthlessness and uselessness (Al-Issa, 1980). When children grow up and leave home, many women whose identity depended on the children feel the immediate bewildering sense of role loss along with a loss of their self-esteem (Halas and Matteson, 1978).

Self-concept stems from one's roles, and in our society, women lose one of their most important identity-giving roles, that of mother, resulting in what has been referred to as a "mutilated self" (Rose, 1962, cited in Bart, 1969). According to Bart, depressions in middle-aged women are due to their lack of important roles and subsequent loss of self-esteem. She points out that if a woman's sense of worth comes from other people rather than from one's own accomplishments, then this sense of worth is lost when such people depart.

IV. Need for New Identity

For women whose major source of identity and self-worth has been the maternal role for twenty or more years, the loss of this role can precipitate a severe psychological crisis (Maracek, 1978). For both men and women, the loss of important sources of self-esteem and criteria for identity must be replaced and new tasks evolved if one is to experience a feeling of growing and living (Bardwick, 1971). Deutscher (1969) points to one dimension of transitions through the life cycle

as the process of abandoning segments of an older identity and picking up a new self-image as the individual moves through sequential roles. Various situations in life may necessitate such major redefinitions of the self, and the individual must try to maintain a sense of self-sameness in spite of this continuous change (Paranjpe, 1975).

For both men and women, success in dealing with the stresses of middle-age depends upon the person's capacity for flexible adaptation, the nature of his/her interpersonal relationships, his/her sense of continuing usefulness, and the breadth of his/her interests in the outside world (Marmor, 1974). For the traditional woman, the psychological work of middle motherhood is going to be achieving a new identity of her own, including lowered dependency on her husband and greater freedom from the demands of her children (Bernard, 1975). Sex role self-concept in particular reflects fluctuating attributions from specific life situations, with certain life situations requiring more or less stereotypically masculine or feminine behaviors (Abrahams et al., 1978). After childbearing years, when confronted with new demands, it is necessary for such women, who have repressed their assertive, aggressive impulses and have developed their personality along traditional lines, to attempt a major reorganization of self and to create a new identity synthesis (Bernstein, 1979).

It is women who hold diverse roles, both inside and outside the home, who appear to have the easiest readjustment

period when their children leave home (Maracek, 1978). In one study, Lowenthal (1975) found that all but one of the women who reported themselves to be happier after their youngest child had left home had initiated changes in their lives--new training, new jobs, new houses, new husbands, new male friends, or lengthy trips abroad.

Lowenthal et al. (1975) found that of the middle-aged women facing the empty-nest period, those richest in family resources, as reflected by number of familial roles, expected the fewest problems. For these women, apparently the more relatives available as objects of attention, the less threatening the future stage would be. Bart (1969), in a cross-cultural study, also found the kinship group, in societies having an extended family system, to be a major buffer to women's stress in middle age. In our society, in which women emphasize the maternal role within a nuclear family system, middle-age is a difficult stage in the life cycle. Rather than a return to an extended family system or a kin-dominated society, Bart advocates that society have more significant roles for middle-aged women, particularly the occupational role.

Letchworth (1970) points out that returning to college permits many middle-class, middle-aged homemakers to acquire a new sense of identity, to pursue their personal interests actively and genuinely and to resolve their integrity crisis. Astin (1976) reports that women returning to college invariably feel increased self-awareness and self-esteem, are more

confident, and more open to new ideas and to a variety of new people. In another study, Amstey (1977) found that continuing education was a significant predictor of life satisfaction and attitude toward self, with women who had returned to college during the middle years scoring more positively than women who remained traditional housewives.

Rose (1965), in a study of middle-class, middle-aged parents of college age children, found verification for his hypothesis that the life satisfaction of women as they enter middle age is a function of the degree to which they are able to assume another central role to substitute for their declining role as homemakers. He found that women employed outside the home report greater life satisfaction than homemakers. The difference in satisfaction appears to be related to the fact that employed women have taken on an additional role, that of income earner, while homemakers are trying to hold on to a social role which has partly disappeared as the children have grown up.

In a study of women college graduates, Hall and Gordon (1973) found that while full-time employees experience more role conflicts and time pressure than part-time employees or housewives, they also reported greater life satisfaction.

Birnbaum (1975) found that married and single working professional women, by the middle adult years, were more satisfied and had higher self-esteem than did women who lived out the traditional role pattern.

Segre (1978) in contrast, in a study of middle-aged educated women who had either remained as housewives or (re)entered

the occupational world, found no significant differences in overall satisfaction between the two groups. She concluded that attempting to define happiness by work category alone is too simplistic.

However, much of the research does suggest that returning to work after the childbearing years provides intangible benefits to the traditional woman, such as improved morale and personal status (Harbeson, 1971). Cox (1970) found that for such women, having a work experience provided an emotional savings account, a support against the threat of self-esteem. Women who work have at least the beginning of another identity at mid-life, which brings with it a profoundly different sense of self--the unaccustomed sense of freedom, independence, competence, confidence, and the heightened sense of one's own value (Rubin, 1979).

Whatever additional roles the traditional woman decides to pursue at midlife, it is becoming increasingly necessary to have sources other than marriage and children for feelings of self-worth, achievement and satisfaction (Baruch, 1976). While women whose entire reason for living has been the children may experience their departure as traumatic, many women who have always worked and had interests outside the home may find this departure delightful (Fuchs, 1977). In fact, Fuchs maintains that if women continue to have experience with far more than the mother role, the empty-nest syndrome is likely to become an anachronism.

A concept that seems especially relevant here is that of the "life cycle," the sequence of statuses and roles, ex-

pectations and relationships constituting in the broadest sense of the word, an individual's career (Van Dusen and Sheldon, 1976). Salomone and Palmer (1978) maintain that a career reflects one's total life style, incorporating various patterns of choice, such as education, work, community service, personal affiliation, or avocational activities, at any given time. Richardson (1979) advocates that the term "career" be redefined to adequately reflect the realities of women's lives. Whereas Super (1957) earlier defined career as the sequence of occupations in the life of an individual, he now defines career as "the sequence of major positions occupied by persons throughout life; it includes work-related positions and roles as student, employee, and pensioner, together with coordinate avocational, familial, and civic roles" (Super, 1975, cited in Richardson, 1979, p. 35).

The family role for the traditional woman may be viewed as a large part of her career. As this role diminishes, other roles are needed to take its place. Lowenthal (1975) describes transitional stages as either incremental, involving role gains, or decremental, involving role loss, with adaptation to these transitions requiring that the individual maintain a sense of equilibrium between the two. One task that seems crucial, particularly for traditional women's transitions, is planning.

V. Need for Life Planning

Salamone and Palmer (1978) address the need for attention to the career pattern as a lifetime, developmental growth pro-

cess, one which is broad enough to include one's total life style and incorporate the various roles of the individual. This idea of life planning has been new to many women, but one which demands consideration (Fleck, 1968). Rossi (1964) points out that young unmarried women as well as mature women with children entering high school give little or no thought to and no preparation for their life over forty years of age. Myrdal and Klein (1956) question why women do not prepare for careers beyond the age of forty, when their work involvement during national emergencies has testified to their capabilities as breadwinners. Lowenthal (1975) recommends that a kind of life course orientation in all social, educational, and economic institutions be introduced at least at the secondary level.

However, this type of orientation has only begun to take place in recent years, and most middle-aged women obviously missed out on it. While many of these women at the empty-nest stage seek out new roles in career, education, and community affairs, there have not been many orderly and well-established channels for such a transition (Neugarten, 1961). Increasingly, these women need assistance in planning (Fitzgerald, 1973).

Katz and Knapp (1974) enumerate the types of assistance the evolving housewife needs. She wants help in sorting her options, in ordering her priorities, in setting goals, and in attaining these goals. She needs support to boost her confidence, advice on how to successfully combine new roles

with family responsibilities, and exposure to role models, women who have already accomplisned these tasks. Also, many of these women will be seeking employment, and will need information about the world of work, new attitudes and concepts about women's roles in the world, and exercise in self-appraisal (Mueller, 1966).

A project sponsored by the American Association of University Women determined that the type of counseling appropriate for the mature traditional woman is basic counseling by one person with adequate knowledge of adult female psychology and family problems, up-to-date information about educational resources available and the local job market, and techniques of counseling limited to adults (Bolan, 1966).

Matthews (1969) presents a model for vocational counseling with women who are involved in a resyntnesis of identity in mid-life. This model proposes eight phases of vocational counseling which would take the adult woman client from preparation to decision making to becoming a resource for other women considering reentry to education or work.

In one women's center, volunteers are trained to help such women investigate their educational and vocational aptitudes and goals, to give them information and encouragement plus suggestions for implementing their goals (Shishkoff, 1973).

While such individual counseling seems to be fairly effective, the recommended mode of treatment is a group experience with other women in which counseling with specific objectives and structured activities may be supplemented with

individual sessions (Brooks, 1976). The reentry woman is in a transitional stage in which she is considering potential role changes. In this stage role questioning is healthy, and can be facilitated by a group experience with other women sharing similar concerns. According to Katz and Knapp (1974) these women may get a great deal of support in knowing that they are not alone in attempting to depart from a traditional role. Brodsky (1973) and Halas (1973) also advocate all-women's groups, in which women can more easily examine their uniqueness apart from their roles toward others, such as wife, mother, or secretary, and can benefit from the role models provided by other members.

Effective counseling for reentry women is aimed at helping them choose a life style, and as such, focuses on current problems, is reality based, is supportive, and encourages realistic appraisal (Brooks, 1976; Katz and Knapp, 1974). In the life style approach to counseling, the counselor assists each client in learning how to make choices throughout the life span rather than selecting a single course of action (Eason, 1972). Eason reports that in counseling mature women, the life style approach appears to bring considerable clarification and satisfaction to those who have previously felt themselves floundering and drifting from one involvement to another, giving a unifying meaning to whatever endeavors are undertaken.

Katz and Knapp (1974) report that various agencies are being established across the country to provide such group experiences, which combine sharing similar problems and solu-

tions with helping individuals work through self-appraisal and goal setting. The goals of these groups are to help the participants learn who they are and what they want, how to achieve their goals, and gain the self-confidence necessary to know what responsibilities they should undertake and which to leave to others.

One of the earliest such groups, "Economic and Social Opportunities for Women," was designed by Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, California, to guide the full-time homemaker who wishes to resume her education or seek full or part-time employment (Hiltunen, 1968). This group counseling class provided interest, aptitude, and values testing, information about educational and vocational opportunities in the community, and help with job application, writing resumes, and interviewing techniques, with optional individual counseling. An informal survey of participants showed that the majority of women did return to school or to work, suggesting that this type of class does meet the needs of a mature woman who is interested in returning to campus or to work.

Manis and Mochizuki (1972) describe a similar program, Search for Fulfillment, initiated in 1970 by the Western Michigan University Counseling Center. The typical participant of the program was 38 years old, married with two or three children, the youngest about nine years old, having some college education. The program, which uses small group interaction, testing, and homework assignments, has two phases,

the first directed at removing psychological obstacles that keep women from the choices they need to make to change life styles, and the second at helping them assess reality, their own skills and abilities, and the opportunities available to them in their community. An evaluation of the program indicated that it was successful in giving support, decreasing isolation, sharing concerns, improving interpersonal relations, and helped participants to clarify goals and improved self-concepts.

Resources for Women, a project sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania, offers group counseling in which the group members together and individually are able to analyze and assess their experiences, goals, interests, abilities, options, motivations, and commitments (Katz and Knapp, 1974). Women are helped to resolve their ambivalence about wanting to combine family and career or school, and are given advice, helped to plan, and provided with information to assist them in decision making.

Another program, "Three-To-Get-Ready," sponsored by the University of Utah, seeks to provide a supportive climate in which women can expand their knowledge of themselves in relation to the job market, education, and volunteer activity; to provide a positive experience in an academic setting, and to provide a foundation from which participants can feel more secure about moving from homemaking into other activities (Klass and Redfern, 1977). Specifically, the class provides information for self-exploration, an opportunity to experience

taking psychological tests, guidance in preparing resumes and analyzing specific job opportunities, and vocational, educational, and volunteer information. An evaluation of the program indicated that overall, it met a need for the middle-aged housewife searching for some affirmation of her identity and worth as a human being. Participants reported increased self-awareness and self-confidence, which helped many to make further strides toward self-fulfilling and enhancing activities, particularly in education. The class apparently helped these women focus on untapped strengths within themselves, and there was a clear absence of the questioning and searching for self-identity which had initially characterized their goals.

VI. Life Planning Seminar

This study examined and evaluated one program, the Life Planning Seminar, initiated in the spring of 1975 at the Women's Resource Center of the University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia. The program was designed by Phyllis C. Brown, to help women discover their mission in life, their special interests and aptitudes, and explore options for their future.

The Life Planning Seminar combines experiential learning, psychological testing and individual counseling, and provides an opportunity for self-discovery, personal growth, and career development. Within a nonthreatening supportive environment, the individual woman is helped to explore her identity, personal resources, motivations, goals, and values, and to determine future alternatives.

The seminar is a 12-week course, meeting 2½ hours weekly, and is offered three times a year. Both a morning and an evening session are offered for each of the fall, winter, and spring enrollments, with 12 participants in each. A follow-up evaluation of the seminar indicated that of the 84 women who responded, the age range of participants is 21 to 60 years old, with a mean age of 39. The largest group of these participants, 53.6%, were born between the years 1940 and 1949.

Specifically, the seminar includes:

A. Focus on identity, personal needs and self-image; evaluation of personality variables and strengths through a test battery including an interest inventory, values questionnaire, aptitude and ability tests, and personality inventories. (A list of tests administered is found in Appendix A.)

B. Exercises to determine values, life goals and priorities.

C. Exploration of career development, both paid and unpaid work.

D. Insight-oriented exercises that facilitate self-growth.

E. Strategies for decision making to enable the participant to make sound choices.

F. Discussion of resume writing, the job campaign, and interviewing techniques.

G. Interpretation of test results in an individual counseling session.

An outline of the twelve sessions of the Life Planning Seminar is found in Appendix B.

VII. Summary and Statement of Problem

Summary. There is contradictory evidence as to whether the middle years are problematic for women. The research indicates that the middle years, particularly the empty nest period, are traumatic for some women, but for others a time of relief. More recent research suggests that for women who do find the middle years problematic, certain types of group experiences may be helpful.

Statement of Problem. The purpose of this study was to investigate this time of life for a specific population of women, traditional married women who have devoted their time primarily to raising a family. This study examined the issues of identity and self-esteem in these women during their middle years. This study also examined and evaluated one group experience, the Life Planning Seminar, for its effect on identity and self-esteem in these women. It is hoped that such an investigation will contribute to a better understanding of women's adult development and to the theory and practice of counseling with this population.

Middle Years. There is no consensus as to what constitutes middle age. Some of the major theorists (Erikson, 1959; Levinson, 1978; Levinson et al., 1976) argue for an age-related definition, based on the concept that adult development proceeds linearly through a series of stages which take place at certain ages or within age ranges. However, this approach is questionable, particularly for women, because it fails to take into account the varying role patterns a woman may occupy.

Specifically, the stage of family development, in relation to the age and presence of children, is an important determinant of a woman's own life stages (Barnett and Baruch, 1979; Notman, 1980).

Because of varying role patterns and the increasing spread in the age at which a woman's first child is born, the stages of parenthood correspond less to a fixed chronological age of the mother, so that age alone cannot determine the various life stages. Critical family events seem to be more important for women in defining their different life stages. One critical family event, the exit of the first or last child, may be viewed as marking the beginning of mid-life for women (Notman, 1980).

Neugarten (1968) maintains that for married women, middle age is closely tied to the launching of children into the adult world. Rossi (1968) defines middle age as beginning with the end of parenting at the marriage of one's children. Rubin (1979) agrees that for women, mid-life is not a stage tied to a chronological age, but that it belongs to that point in the life cycle of the family when children are grown and gone, or nearly so. The women she interviewed for a study of mid-life were between the ages of 35 and 54, all having children in varying stages of leaving the family home.

Harkins (1978) points out that women differ considerably in their ideas of what constitutes the children "leaving home." The criterion seems to be the point at which the mother decides that the child has become successfully independent. Ac-

cording to Harkins, this point ranges from nigh school graduation to being married with a family, with most previous research marking the empty nest as tne graduation of the youngest child from nign school.

In her own study, Harkins (1978) uses nign school graduation of tne youngest child as an objective indicator of empty nest. Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) and Lowentnal et al. (1975) also use this criterion for tneir definition of tne empty nest or postparental stage.

Glick (1977) points to tne marriage of tne last child as the beginning of the empty nest period. Neugarten (1961) describes the empty nest as the point when the last cnild nas gone off to college or has married.

According to Neugarten (1961, 1977) this generally happens when the woman is in her middle or late forties, unless she married young and bore her children early and close together. Others (Glenn, 1975; Lidz, 1980) also conceptualize the empty nest period and start of middle age as beginning in the forties.

While most women do face a more complete loss of their maternal role in their forties, Sales (1978) points out tnat the mothering role begins to diminish when the cnildren enter school, usually during tne woman's thirties. Earlier, Rose (1951) described how childrearing functions begin to decline when children start school, usually disappearing completely when the average woman reacnes 45. In an updated view of the family life cycle, Glick (1977) reports tnat the median age

of mothers at the birth of their last child has declined over the last eighty years from 32.9 to 29.6, with the average age of 31.3 at the birth of the last child. The average number of children borne by each of these mothers for the eighty year period is 3.2.

Based on these figures the average age of women when their last child enters school would be approximately 36 or 37 if the child starts school at the traditional age of 6 or 7. It is possible that for many women, the age at which their last child enters school may be even lower, if they had less children than the 3.2 average, and/or had their last child at an earlier age than the 31.3 year average.

Because of the various role patterns which women occupy, age alone is not appropriate as a determinant of life stages. For traditional women, whose primary roles are wife and mother, the stage of the family life cycle is more important as a determinant of the woman's own life stages. Even for these women, who have stable role patterns of wife and mother, age cannot predict the stage of the family life cycle, because of the increasing diversity in the age at which children are born.

For the purposes of this study, both age and stage of the family life cycle were used to determine a woman's placement in the middle years and the empty nest period. Specifically, a woman was considered to be in her middle years, and in some stage of the empty nest period, if she was between 30 and 55 years of age with all her children in grade school or beyond.

Identity. Considerable variety exists as to definitions and assessment of Erikson's (1950, 1956) concept of identity. Bourne (1978) points out that in the last 15 years, approximately 50 empirical studies have sought to operationalize the concept of identity and investigate its personality and behavioral components, most all of them proceeding on the basis of a particular formulation of Erikson's concept.

Bourne (1978) discusses several different theoretical contexts in which the concept of identity appears, four usages of the term compatible with psychoanalytic theory, and three additional uses outside of classical psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalytic perspectives include:

1. Genetic. Identity is described as a "developmental product or outcome incorporating the individual's experiences over the first five stages of the life cycle."
2. Adaptive. Identity is understood as the "adaptation of the individual's special skills, capacities, and strengths to the prevailing role structure of the society in which he lives."
3. Structural. Identity refers to a synthesis of intrapsychic properties which provide the individual with a stable frame of reference.
4. Dynamic. Identity circumscribes the changing social reality of the individual, the selection and assimilation of one's self-images within society (Bourne, 1978).

Additional perspectives include:

1. Subjective or experiential. Identity refers to "the subjective experience of the individual," including a sense of continuity, with respect to

connectedness between past and present, as well as "among various ascribed and achieved social roles."

2. Psychosocial reciprocity. Identity implies a "mutual relationship," or reconciliation of the "individual's conception of himself with his community's recognition of him."

3. Existential. "Identity has to do with how one establishes one's place in the world," ...(with) "one of the most important indications of identity (being) the individual's basic life commitments" (Bourne, 1978).

Generally, attempts to operationalize identity have used one of three types of procedures: 1) self-descriptive Q sorts, using adjectives or phrases, 2) self-report questionnaires, or 3) semi-structured interviews (Bourne, 1978). The semi-structured interview procedure, specifically Marcia's (1966) Identity Status Interview, has dominated the empirical study of identity.

The Identity Status Interview is based on Marcia's (1966) interpretation of Erikson, specifically defining identity in terms of crisis and commitment. The interview is divided into three sections which attempt to ascertain the individual's previous or present experience of crisis and resulting commitments regarding personal vocation as well as political and religious ideology. The interview protocol is coded by two or three judges, using a scoring manual, into one of four identity statuses which may be viewed as different degrees along a continuum ending in identity formation (Bourne, 1978).

A few studies have used self-descriptive Q-sort procedures to assess identity. Block (1961) used an adjective sorting procedure to assess the construct role variability, which he assumed to be an important part of identity. Gruen (1960) used a real-ideal Q-sort discrepancy score to operationalize the concept of identity. Bourne (1978) however, suggests that these procedures are more indications of consistency of self-image than valid measures of identity.

Several other studies have employed self-report questionnaires. Dignan (1965) developed the Ego-Identity Scale to measure the dimensions of personality that seemed relevant and implied by Erikson's definition of ego identity. These personality dimensions include sense of self, uniqueness, self-acceptance, interpersonal role expectations, stability, goal-directedness, and interpersonal relations.

Hershenson (1967) used a role-consistency technique to assess congruence between self-image and expectations of others' image, and a self-report questionnaire to measure degree of commitment to a consistent occupational role.

Simmons (1970) developed the Identity Achievement Scale (IAS) based on Marcia's (1964) original work. The IAS provides a single score which indicates the overall level of identity achievement status. It demonstrates good psychometric qualities, and was significantly related to interview-based ratings of identity crisis and commitment (Bourne, 1978).

The complexity and inclusiveness of the concept of identity is evident, and Bourne (1978) maintains that it is futile

to attempt to arrive at a simple definition. The validity of investigators' attempts to operationalize the concept of identity must, then, depend in part on the investigators' interpretations of its meaning.

For this study, the existential perspective of identity seems most meaningful. According to this stance, identity has to do with how one establishes his/her place in the world, and with questions such as "what is the meaning of my life?" One of the most important indications of identity would be basic life commitments. Commitments may be viewed by the individual as those matters which he/she characteristically values or cares most about, or by the outsider as those domains in which he/she appears to be most engaged. These commitments are socially significant and provide the individual with a definition of him/herself. The importance of a commitment might be gauged by the degree to which the individual would feel impoverished by the loss of its object. One way to investigate identity would be to inquire about basic life commitments. Identity would be achieved to the degree that the individual has invested him/herself in a relatively stable set of commitments. To the extent that the individual lacks or is unable to make such commitments, he/she would lack identity (Bourne, 1978).

While some of the instruments reviewed above relate to the commitment aspect of identity, all were developed for use with adolescent developmental research. For the traditional married woman in her middle years, the aspect of iden-

tity which seems most relevant is this issue of life commitment and definition of self. However, it seems that the nature of the commitments experienced by these women would differ considerably from that of the commitments experienced by most adolescents. Specifically, the nature of the commitments would seem to center around the issue of self versus other direction. The instruments used in this study to assess identity, the Sense of Identity Inventory (O'Connell, 1974) and the Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1964), were selected on the basis of the degree to which they reflect the issue of self versus other direction for this population of women.

The Sense of Identity Inventory (O'Connell, 1974) assesses the strength of identity as well as the sense of identity, specifically as personal and/or reflected. The inventory consists of Likert-type scale questions, which are used to assess strength of identity, and open-ended questions, which are coded into categories of single focus of identity, personal or reflected; or double focus, personal and reflected. A personal sense of identity emphasizes one's own unique talents and capabilities as the source of one's self-esteem and feelings of worth, and involves the capacity to see one's self as a separate entity who can function autonomously in the world. A reflected sense of identity, however, emphasizes participation in the lives of significant others as the source of one's self-esteem, rather than one's own personal characteristics.

The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) (Shostrom, 1964) consists of 150 two-choice comparative values and behaviors considered important in the development of self-actualization. Some of these values and behaviors are particularly relevant to the issue of identity, specifically self-direction and sensitivity to one's own needs and feelings. The Inner-Directedness scale (I) assesses the degree of self-direction, and the Feeling Reactivity scale (Fr) the degree of sensitivity to one's own needs and feelings.

Self-Esteem. The concept of self-esteem is also one for which many descriptions and definitions exist. Silber and Tippett (1965) consider self-esteem to be the feelings of satisfaction a person has about himself which reflect the relationship between the self-image and the ideal self-image. Bardwick (1971) conceives of self-esteem as a function of how well one performs in each of the roles one participates in and the extent to which the range of roles and one's performances in them utilizes one's perceived capacity. Coppersmith (1967) defines self-esteem in this way:

> "By self-esteem we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself. It is a subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal report and other overt expressive behavior" (p. 4-5).

Shaver (Robinson and Shaver, 1969) points out that the state of theoretical development in the area of self-esteem does not allow for concise presentation of alternative theories and associated research. He describes certain criteria on which measures of self-esteem have been based, such as overall self-descriptions; broad clinical and social conceptions of self-description and self-esteem; general social psychological conceptions of self-esteem; and the constructs labelled internal-control, ego-strength, and personal competence.

In any case, after many years of conceptual prominence and utilization in research, the self-esteem variable has been difficult to operationalize well (Robinson and Shaver, 1969). Some of the methods used to assess self-esteem include actual-ideal discrepancy scores, Q-sorts, semantic differential scales, Likert-type scales, check lists, projective and open-ended measures, forced-choice measures, and measures of self-consistency. Measurement problems are inherent in all these methods, resulting from a combination of factors, such as the various definitions of self-esteem, the multi-dimensional nature of the concept, as well as validity and reliability concerns. The lack of information on test-retest reliability is a particularly serious problem in studies where a change in self-esteem over time is predicted, especially when hypotheses are not supported, since it is difficult to tell whether the predictions were unconfirmed or the scale was unreliable (Robinson and Shaver, 1969).

The Self-Esteem Inventory (Coppersmith, 1967) measures the evaluation which the individual makes about himself, specifically the attitude of approval or disapproval, and the extent to which he/she believes in his/her own worth. The inventory was developed for use with school children 8-10 years old, and is concerned with self-attitudes in the areas of peers, parents, school, and personal interests.

The Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was designed to measure an individual's overall feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with self, and is based on the author's conception of self-esteem as the degree to which an individual respects himself and considers himself worthy. The scale was developed for use with high school students, although Shaver (Robinson and Shaver, 1969) suggests that the scale items are quite general and seem appropriate for use with adults.

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) (Fitts, 1965) measures self-concept across many sub-areas, providing both an overall self-esteem score and a complex self-concept profile. The TSCS was designed for use with individuals over 12 years old having at least a sixth-grade reading level. However, the instrument is somewhat confusing in its administration and cumbersome to score.

For the purpose of this study, the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) (Shostrom, 1964), described previously, was selected to assess self-esteem. The POI was designed for use with adults, and provides a precise measure of two important

components of self-esteem, self-regard and self-acceptance. The Self-Regard scale (Sr) assesses the ability to like one's self because of one's strength as a person. The Self-acceptance scale (Sa) assesses the ability to accept one's self in spite of one's weaknessess or deficiencies.

One of the major problems of the POI has to do with its susceptibility to impression management. Various studies indicate that individuals who are knowledgeable about the concepts of self-actualization or about the POI itself are able to create a favorable or unfavorable impression when asked to do so (Abbott and Harris, 1973; Braun, 1966; Prescott et al., 1977; Rowe, 1973). The POI demonstrates test-retest reliability and concurrent validity comparable to other self-esteem measures, and is more exact in terms of assessing specific components of self-esteem. If interpreted by an adequately trained professional, and used in conjunction with other information known about the examinee, the POI seems to be an acceptable research tool.

Case Study Method. Goldman (1976) concludes that the majority of published research in counseling has generally been of little value to practitioners. He maintains that counseling researchers have often futilely pursued the goals of precision and control, while the major objects of study, counselees and the counseling process, do not lend themselves to such precise measurement. He suggests several research approaches which might be of more value to practicing counselors, one using the individual as the unit of study.

Whereas group research designs tell us about "average" performance before and after some treatment, single case strategies focus on the individual's response to an intervention and employ a more complete analysis of an individual's life (Frey, 1978). Case study methods utilize a broad data collection strategy, relying on such sources as interviews, school or clinical records, observations, autobiographies, teacher or therapist reactions. The hard part is arranging the pieces of data into a pattern that can be validated and used to gain knowledge about the client. Yet the most powerful advantage of the case study method is its concentrated focus, which allows for greater precision on a narrower spectrum of the population. Likewise, Vaillant (1977) points out that choosing a relatively homogeneous group greatly facilitates intragroup comparison.

The case study method was used for this investigation. Sources of data included LPS records, psychological tests, questionnaires, and a personal interview. The sample for the study was drawn from a sample of 84 out of 158 graduates of the LPS who had participated in a follow-up evaluation. A group of 25 participants were selected on the basis of criteria designed to make the group as homogeneous as possible.

In a systematic series of studies on the measurement of group participant change, Howard has introduced an alternative methodology, called retrospective pretests, to the traditional pre/post self-report measures (Howard, Ralph, Gulanick, Maxwell, Nance, and Gerber, 1979; Howard and Dailey, 1979;

Howard, Schmeck and Bray, 1979; Howard, Dailey and Gulanick, 1979; Howard, 1980). These studies found that self-report measures given before and after a treatment intervention are subject to an instrumentation-related source of contamination known as response-shift bias. In effect, the group participants may phenomenologically shift their perspective about the dimensions being measured by the instrument. Howard and Dailey (1979) provide the following example to illustrate this shift:

> "A workshop participant might feel at pretest that she is an 'average' leader. The intervention changes her understanding of the many skills involved in being a leader. Consequently, after the workshop she understands that her level of functioning was really below average at pretest. Suppose our participant improved her leadership skills as a result of the intervention and moved from below average with respect to her new understanding of leadership. Her ratings at pretest and posttest would both, then, be 'average'." (p. 145)

Such a shift, therefore, would often result in the experimenter's findings of nonsignificant effects.

Howard (1980) therefore recommends, based upon a careful evaluation of both the instrument effects and the participants' shifts in perspective, that at posttest the subjects be asked to respond to each item on the self-report measure twice. First, the subject reports how they perceive themselves, at present, after the group experience. They then respond to the same item again, but in reference to "how they now perceive themselves to have been just before the workshop was conducted. This new assessment has been labeled the "Then" measure,"

(p. 64-65). The experimenter thus has three sources of data: pretest, traditional posttest, and retrospective "then" test. To date, in no study comparing Then/Post methods with the Pre/Post self-report method was the latter, traditional methodology superior or even equivalent to the Then/Post approach in reflecting even behavioral indices of change (Howard, 1980).

All the participants in this study had completed the POI (Shostrom, 1964) as part of a test battery administered during the actual sessions of the LPS. This administration of the POI was used for a traditional pretest measure of self-esteem and identity. For a traditional posttest measure, participants were asked to complete the POI on the basis of how they perceived themselves presently (1 to 4 years after the LPS). Participants were then asked to complete the POI on the basis of how they now perceive themselves to have been just before the LPS. This administration of the POI was used for the retrospective then test.

For this study, participants were also asked to complete the Sense of Identity Inventory (O'Connell, 1974). Responses to questions about strength of identity before the seminar were used for retrospective then ratings. Responses to questions about strength of identity since the seminar were used for traditional posttest ratings.

METHOD

Participants

Table 1 presents a description of the participants (N=25) in this study. Participants were middle to upper-middle class, college educated women who participated in the LPS from 1975 to 1980. The mean age of participants at the time of the LPS was 42.32, with a range of 31 to 54 years. At the time of the LPS all of these women were married, with a stable marriage history, and had child(ren) all in grade school or beyond. None of the participants were employed outside the home at the time of the LPS, and most had had no significant employment experience with the exception of one woman who had taught school for two years.

Table 2 presents a summary of descriptive information drawn from the results of standardized tests administered during the LPS. Data from the SRA Verbal and the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory was available for all 25 participants. Data from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was available for 24 participants, and from the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values for 23 women.

The mean percentile score for combined quantitative and verbal ability on the SRA Verbal was 80.06, with a range of 43 to 97. This indicates that the women in this sample had above average ability compared to the norm group of college women.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics

Number of years since LPS	
1	9 (36%)
2	9 (36%)
3	5 (20%)
4	2 (8%)
Mean age of participants at time of LPS	M = 42.32
Age categories at time of LPS	
30's	7 (28%)
40's	15 (60%)
50's	3 (12%)
Married with stable marriage history at time of LPS	25 (100%)
Children in grade school or beyond at time of LPS	25 (100%)
College degree or college experience	25 (100%)
Not employed outside home at time of LPS	25 (100%)

Note. N = 25.

Table 2

Participant Data from Standardized Tests Taken During the LPS

Test	Mean
SRA Verbal[a]	80.06 above average
Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory[b]	
Artistic	54.16 average
Enterprising	51.56 moderately high
Social	50.40 average
Investigative	44.08 average
Realistic	41.64 average
Conventional	48.16 average
Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values[c]	
Theoretical	34.58 average
Economic	37.58 average
Aesthetic	46.17 average
Social	38.21 average
Political	40.23 average
Religious	41.80 average
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[d]	Frequency & Percentage
Extraverted thinking	1 (4%)
Extraverted feeling	7 (29%)
Extraverted intuitive	4 (17%)
Introverted feeling	4 (17%)
Introverted sensing	6 (25%)
Introverted intuitive	2 (8%)

[a] *Note.* N = 25.

[b] *Note.* N = 25.

[c] *Note.* N = 23.

[d] *Note.* N = 24.

On the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, the mean scores for the Artistic (M = 54.16), Social (M = 50.40), Investigative (M = 44.08), Realistic (M = 41.64), and Conventional (M = 48.16) occupational themes were in the average range compared to women in general. The mean score for the Enterprising (M = 51.56) theme was moderately higher than scores for women in general. This suggests that as a group, women in this sample may be described as "Enterprising." According to Campbell and Hansen (1981),

> Persons of this type have strong verbal skills suited to selling, dominating, and leading; are strong leaders; have a strong drive to attain organizational goals or economic aims; tend to avoid work situations requiring long periods of intellectual effort; differ from conventional types in having a greater preference for ambiguous social tasks and an even greater concern for power, status, and leadership; see themselves as aggressive, popular, self-confident, cheerful, and sociable; generally have a high energy level; and show an aversion to scientific activities. (p. 30)

On the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values, mean scores on the Theoretical (M = 34.58), Economic (M = 37.58), Aesthetic (M = 46.17), Social (M = 38.21), Political (M = 40.23), and Religious (M = 41.80) values were all in the average range for women. This suggests that at least for this test, the women in this sample are typical of the general population of women.

On the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, 12 (50%) of the participants were characterized as extraverts, whose main interests are in the outer world of people and things, and 12 (50%) as introverts, whose main interests are in the inner world of concepts and ideas. Six (25%) were characterized as sensing, or perceiving things directly through the five senses, and 6 (25%) as intuitive, or perceiving things indirectly through the unconscious. Eleven (44%) were characterized as feeling, or judging through a subjective process of appreciation, and 1 (4%) as thinking, or judging through an impersonal, objective process. In terms of actual types, 1 (4%) were characterized as extraverted thinking; 7 (29%) as extraverted feeling; 4 (17%) as introverted feeling; 6 (25%) as introverted sensing; 4 (17%) as extraverted intuitive; and 2 (8%) as introverted intuitive (Myers, 1962).

Assessment Instruments

The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) (Shostrom, 1964) was used to measure self-esteem and identity. The instrument consists of 150 two-choice comparative value and behavior judgments which are scored twice, first for two basic scales of personal orientation, inner directed support (127 items) and time competence (23 items), and then for ten subscales which measure values and behaviors considered to be important in the development of self-actualization. Raw scores are plotted on a profile sheet and are converted into standard scores for comparison with

scores of normal as well as self-actualized individuals. The Self-Regard (Sr) and Self-Acceptance (Sa) scales were used to assess self-esteem. The Inner-Directedness (I) and Feeling Reactivity (Fr) scales were used to assess identity.

Shostrom (1974) reports reliability coefficients of .71 and .77 for the two major scales, and a range of .52 to .82 for the subscales, with a test-retest interval of one week, and a range of .32 to .74 for all scales when measured over a one-year period. Concurrent validity studies based on correlations with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, the Sixteen Personality Factor Scale, the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey, and the Eyesenck Personality Inventory show results in the expected direction (Shostrom, 1974).

An adaptation of the Sense of Identity Inventory (O'Connell, 1974; Appendix C) was used to measure the strength of identity as well as the sense of identity as personal and/or reflected. The adaptation essentially involved deleting questions not applicable to the population under investigation, and adding questions about identity since the LPS. The adapted instrument consists of both open-ended and Likert-type scale questions. Responses to the open-ended sense of identity items are categorized as either single focus of identity, personal or reflected; or double focus, personal and reflected. A 9-point scale, ranging from 1 ("Weak") to 9 ("Strong") is used to rate strength of identity.

Test-retest reliability coefficients for scale items of the Sense of Identity Inventory for 32 middle-class women retested after a four-week interval are adolescence, r = .96; first-married, r = .79; first child, r = .86; preschoolers, r = .83; and school children, r = .87. Test-retest percentages of same category responses to open-ended items are adolescence, 78 percent; first married, 69 percent; first child, 75 percent; preschoolers, 69 percent; and school children, 75 percent (O'Connell, 1976).

O'Connell (1976) reports that support for the validity of the Sense of Identity Inventory is found in a) similar conceptions of identity by 32 female subjects in late adolescence and by 32 middle-class women retrospectively viewing their identity at the adolescent stage; and b) the expected significant correlations between strength of identity ratings of middle-class wives and mothers and various scales of the California Psychological Inventory.

A personal interview (Appendix D) with each participant was used to gain additional information about identity and self-esteem. Specifically, interview questions were selected to assess strength of identity, sense of identity, self-directedness, sensitivity to one's own needs and feelings, self-acceptance, and self-regard. Questions were constructed using items from the Sense of Identity Inventory and the POI scales of Inner-Directedness (I), Feeling Reactivity (Fr), Self-Acceptance (Sa), and Self-Regard (Sr), to determine the salient features of these areas.

Raters

Interviews were rated by two female undergraduate students. The two raters were trained to rate responses to questions about self-esteem and strength of identity on a 9-point Likert-type scale, and to code responses to questions about sense of identity into designated categories. The interrater reliability for their ratings of scaled items was $r = .87$ ($p < .001$). Agreement on open-ended items was initially 60%. Because responses to open-ended items had to be coded into discrete categories, the raters were instructed to discuss the codings on which they differed, and to come to 100% agreement, in order to determine the frequency of responses in each category. (See Appendix G).

Procedure

In the fall of 1979, a team of investigators conducted a pilot study with 84 graduates of the LPS. Of these graduates, 22 women who met the requirements for age, marital status, school status of child(ren), educational and employment status, who had also completed the POI as part of the LPS, were initially selected as participants for this study. Of these 22, 14 of those who could be reached by telephone agreed to participate. One of these women declined participation because of lack of time.

In order to increase the sample size, the names of women who had participated in the LPS since the pilot study and who also met the above criteria, were obtained. Of those women who could be reached by telephone, 15 agreed to

participate, for a total of 29. Four women declined to participate for lack of time.

The informed consent form (Appendix E), instructions (Appendix F), and research instruments were mailed and a personal interview scheduled and conducted with each of the 29 women. The interviews were audiotaped after discussion about confidentiality with the participant, and the tapes were erased after obtaining the necessary data from them.

In the process of interviewing, it was discovered that two of the participants did not have a college background, thereby not meeting the educational criterion. Two other participants did not have a stable marriage history (one was separated at the time of the LPS, and one was in her second marriage), thereby not meeting the marital status criterion. Therefore, the data for these four participants was not used in this study, although their interview tapes were used in training the raters. Also, one of the interviews for the 25 remaining women did not record, so the data from that interview was not used in the study.

Data Analysis

A repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to evaluate differences between pretest, posttest, and retrospective pretest performance on the POI scales of Inner-Directedness (I), Feeling Reactivity (Fr), Self-Regard (Sr), and Self-Acceptance (Sa). To determine where differences occurred, Bonferroni *t* tests, which approximat

alpha divided by the number of *t* tests performed, were computed.

A Bonferroni *t* test for paired samples was computed to evaluate differences between pretest and posttest scores on each of the four POI scales. A second set of Bonferroni *t* tests was also computed for differences between pretest and retrospective pretest scores, and for differences between posttest and retrospective pretest scores on each of these scales.

A Bonferroni *t* test for paired samples was computed to evaluate differences between retrospective then ratings and posttest ratings of strength of identity on the Sense of Identity Inventory. Retrospective then ratings included ratings of strength of personal identity before the LPS. Posttest ratings included ratings of strength of personal identity at present and for each year since participation in the LPS.

The personal interviews were analyzed by two trained raters. Responses to questions about self-acceptance, self-regard, inner-directedness, feeling reactivity, and strength of identity before and after the LPS were given posttest and retrospective pretest ratings using a 9-point Likert-type scale. A Bonferroni *t* test for paired samples was computed to evaluate differences between the posttest and retrospective pretest ratings in each of these areas.

Responses to open-ended questions on the Sense of Identity Inventory, regarding sense of identity before and after

the LPS were coded into the following categories of identity:

A. Personal, single focus, positive or neutral

B. Personal, single focus, negative

C. Personal, double focus, positive personal, positive reflected

D. Personal, double focus, positive personal, negative reflected

E. Reflected, single focus, positive or neutral

F. Reflected, single focus, negative

G. Reflected, double focus, positive reflected, negative personal

H. Reflected, double focus, negative reflected, negative personal

I. Reflected, double focus, positive reflected, positive personal (O'Connell, 1976) (See Appendix G).

Responses for each participant were examined for any categorical differences in identity before and after the LPS.

Responses to interview questions regarding sense of identity before and after the LPS were also coded into the above categories of identity and examined for any categorical differences in identity before and after the LPS.

RESULTS

Table 3 presents the means and *F* values of pretest, posttest, and retrospective pretest scores on the POI scales of Inner-Directedness (I), Feeling Reactivity (Fr), Self-Regard (Sr), and Self-Acceptance (Sa). Significant differences between pretest, posttest, and retrospective pretest scores were found for all of these scales ($p < .005$). To determine where the differences occurred, Bonferroni *t* tests were computed between pretest and posttest scores, between pretest and retrospective pretest scores, and between posttest and retrospective pretest scores for each scale.

Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, and paired comparisons *t* values of pretest and posttest scores on each of the four POI scales. Significant differences between pretest and posttest performance were found on the Inner-Directedness (I), Self-Regard (Sr), and Self-Acceptance (Sa) scales, with all posttest scores significantly higher than pretest scores. The difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Feeling Reactivity (Fr) scale was not significant.

Table 5 presents the means, standard deviations, and paired comparisons *t* values of pretest and retrospective pretest scores on each of the four POI scales. Significant differences between pretest and retrospective pretest performance were found on the Inner-Directedness (I), Feeling

Table 3

Comparison of Pretest, Retrospective Pretest, and Posttest Scores on POI Scales

POI Scale	Pre M	Now M	Then M	F df 2,40
Inner-Directedness (I)	82.23	89.38	64.95	38.249*
Feeling-Reactivity (Fr)	14.80	15.80	10.85	24.834*
Self-Regard (Sr)	12.14	13.57	8.47	38.207*
Self-Acceptance (Sa)	14.19	16.85	11.71	22.154*

Note. N = 21.

*$p < .0005$

Table 4

Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores on POI Scales

POI	Pretest		Posttest		t
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	df 20
Inner-Directedness (I)	82.23	10.37	89.38	11.09	-4.49*
Feeling-Reactivity (Fr)	14.80	2.62	15.80	3.60	-1.52
Self-Regard (Sr)	12.14	2.74	13.57	2.06	-4.02*
Self-Acceptance (Sa)	14.19	3.28	16.85	3.41	-3.70*

Note. N = 21.

*p < .05, two-tailed test.

**p < .01, two-tailed test.

Table 5

Comparison of Pretest and Retrospective Pretest Scores on POI Scales

POI Scale	Pretest		Retrospective Pretest		t
	M	SD	M	SD	df 20
Inner-Directedness (I)	82.23	10.37	64.95	17.92	5.58*
Feeling-Reactivity (Fr)	14.80	2.62	10.85	4.00	5.22*
Self-Regard (Sr)	12.14	2.74	8.47	3.81	5.18*
Self-Acceptance (Sa)	14.19	3.28	11.71	4.28	3.43

Note. N = 21.

*p < .01, two-tailed test.

Reactivity (Fr), and Self-Regard (Sr) scales, with retrospective pretest scores significantly lower than pretest scores. The difference between pretest and retrospective pretest scores on the Self-Acceptance (Sa) scale was not significant.

Table 6 presents the means, standard deviations, and paired-comparisons *t* values of posttest and retrospective pretest scores on each of the four POI scales. Significant differences between posttest and retrospective pretest performance were found on all four scales, with posttest scores significantly higher than retrospective pretest scores.

Bonferroni *t* tests for paired samples were also used to evaluate differences between retrospective then and posttest ratings of strength of identity on the Sense of Identity Inventory. Table 7 presents the means, standard deviations, and paired-comparisons *t* values of ratings of strength of identity before the LPS; during the first, second, third, and fourth year since the LPS; and at present. Significant differences were found between retrospective then ratings and posttest ratings for the first year since the LPS, second year since the LPS, and at present, with posttest ratings significantly higher than retrospective then ratings. No significant differences were found between retrospective then ratings and ratings for the third and fourth years since the LPS; however, there were only seven and two participants, respectively, for these comparisons.

Table 6

Comparison of Posttest and Retrospective Pretest Scores on POI Scales

POI Scale	Retrospective Pretest		Posttest		t
	M	SD	M	SD	df 20
Inner-Directedness (I)	65.13	17.31	89.17	10.60	7.31*
Feeling-Reactivity (Fr)	10.86	3.86	15.60	3.52	6.32*
Self-Regard (Sr)	8.30	3.71	13.39	2.06	8.22*
Self-Acceptance (Sa)	11.78	4.08	16.82	3.25	6.37*

Note. N = 23.

*$p < .01$, two-tailed test.

Table 7

Comparison of Posttest and Retrospective Then Ratings of Strength of Identity on the Sense of Identity Inventory

		Posttest		Retrospective Then		
	N	M	SD	M	SD	t
First year since LPS	23	5.56	1.83	3.82	1.80	-5.21*
Second year since LPS	16	6.81	1.27	4.06	1.94	-5.13*
Third year since LPS	7	7.14	1.06	5.00	2.23	-2.68
Fourth year since LPS	2	8.50	.70	7.50	2.12	-1.00
At present	18	7.55	.85	3.94	1.95	-9.09*

*$p < .01$, two-tailed test.

Bonferroni *t* tests for paired samples were used to evaluate differences between retrospective pretest and posttest interview ratings of strength of identity, inner-directedness, feeling reactivity, self-acceptance, and self-regard. Table 8 presents the means, standard deviations, and paired comparisons *t* values of retrospective pretest and posttest interview ratings for each of these scales. Significant differences between retrospective pretest and posttest ratings were found for strength of identity, inner-directedness, feeling-reactivity, self-acceptance, and self-regard.

Responses to open-ended questions on the Sense of Identity Inventory regarding sense of identity before and after the LPS were coded into the previously designated categories of identity. The frequency and percentage of responses in each category of identity for before and after the LPS can be seen in Table 9. Table 10 presents the percentages of before and after responses categorized overall as personal, reflected, positive, and negative. Forty percent of the before responses were categorized as personal, and 60% as reflected. Seventy-eight percent of these responses were categorized as negative, and 22% as positive. In contrast, 100% of the after responses were categorized as both personal and positive.

Responses to the audiotaped interview questions regarding sense of identity before and after the LPS were also coded into the designated categories of identity. The fre-

Table 8

Comparison of Retrospective Pretest and Posttest Interview Ratings

	Retrospective Then		Posttest		t
	M	SD	M	SD	df 23
Strength of identity	3.31	2.37	7.00	1.40	-8.30*
Inner-directedness	2.39	1.98	6.52	1.79	-9.50*
Feeling-reactivity	2.97	2.13	7.10	1.61	-7.78*
Self-acceptance	3.06	1.95	7.27	1.31	-9.96*
Self-regard	3.27	2.24	7.41	1.34	-8.92*

Note. N = 24.

*p < .01, two-tailed test.

Table 9

Comparison of Sense of Identity Before and After LPS According to Sense of Identity Inventory Ratings

	Before	After
Personal, single focus, positive positive or neutral	3 (13%)	16 (70%)
Personal, single focus, negative	5 (22%)	0 (0%)
Personal, double focus, positive personal, positive reflected	0 (0%)	7 (30%)
Personal, double focus, positive personal, negative reflected	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
Reflected, single focus, positive or neutral	2 (9%)	0 (0%)
Reflected, single focus, negative	5 (22%)	0 (0%)
Reflected, double focus, positive reflected, negative personal	3 (13%)	0 (0%)
Reflected, double focus, negative reflected, negative personal	4 (17%)	0 (0%)
Reflected, double focus, positive reflected, positive personal	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Note. N = 23.

Table 10

Summary of Sense of Identity Before and After LPS According to Sense of Identity Inventory Ratings

	Before	After
Personal	9 (40%)	23 (100%)
Reflected	14 (60%)	0 (0%)
Positive	5 (22%)	23 (100%)
Negative	18 (78%)	0 (0%)

Note. *N* = 23.

quency and percentage of responses in each category of identity for before and after the LPS can be seen in Table 11. Table 12 presents the percentages of before and after responses categorized overall as personal, reflected, positive, and negative. Eight percent of the before responses were categorized as personal, and 92% as reflected. Sixty-three percent of these responses were categorized as negative, and 37% as positive. Of the after responses, 50% were categorized as personal, and 50% as reflected. However, of these 50% reflected responses, 46% were categorized as double focus, which includes a personal component. In other words, 96% of the after responses were categorized as either personal or involving a personal component; 12.5% of the after responses were categorized as negative, and 87.5% as positive.

Table 13 presents a comparison of the percentages of before and after responses categorized as personal, reflected, positive, and negative for both the Sense of Identity Inventory (SIDI) and interviews. Forty percent of SIDI before and 100% of SIDI after responses were categorized as personal, compared to 8% and 50% for the interviews. Sixty percent of SIDI before and 0% of SIDI after responses were categorized as reflected, compared to 92% and 50%, with 46% of the 50% including a personal component, for the interviews. Seventy-eight percent of SIDI before and 0% of SIDI after responses were categorized as negative, compared to 63% and 12.5% for the interviews. Twenty-two percent of

Table 11

Comparison of Sense of Identity Before and After LPS According to Interview Ratings

	Before	After
Personal, single focus, positive or neutral	0 (0%)	4 (17%)
Personal, single focus, negative	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Personal, double focus, positive personal, positive reflected	2 (8%)	8 (33.5%)
Personal, double focus, positive personal, negative reflected	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Reflected, single focus, positive or neutral	6 (25%)	1 (4%)
Reflected, single focus, negative	10 (42%)	0 (0%)
Reflected, double focus, positive reflected, negative personal	5 (21%)	1 (4%)
Reflected, double focus, negative reflected, negative personal	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Reflected, double focus, positive reflected, positive personal	1 (4%)	8 (33.5%)

Note. N = 24.

Table 12

Summary of Sense of Identity Before and After LPS According to Interview Ratings

	Before	After
Personal	2 (8%)	12 (50%)
Reflected	22 (92%)	12 (50%, with 46% including personal component)
Positive	9 (37%)	21 (87.5%)
Negative	15 (63%)	3 (12.5%)

Note. *N* = 24.

Table 13

Comparison of Sense of Identity Inventory and Interview Ratings for Sense of Identity Before and After LPS

	Before	After
Personal		
SIDI[a]	40%	100%
Interview[b]	8%	50%
Reflected		
SIDI	60%	0%
Interview	92%	50%(46% includes personal component)
Positive		
SIDI	22%	100%
Interview	37%	87.5%
Negative		
SIDI	78%	0%
Interview	63%	12.5%

[a] $\underline{N} = 23$.

[b] $\underline{N} = 24$.

SIDI before and 100% of SIDI after responses were categorized as positive, compared to 37% and 87.5% for the interviews.

POST HOC ANALYSIS

In order to gain a better understanding of the results of this study, post hoc analyses of the interview audiotapes were performed. The tapes were reviewed to identify any major events occurring in participants' lives during the middle years, and to determine participants' reasons for taking the LPS and their perceptions of what happened for them during the LPS and why.

Table 14 presents the participants' reasons for enrolling in the LPS. All 24 (100%) participants for whom interview tapes existed reported experiencing some sort of identity crisis preceding the LPS, characterized by a confusion about who they were, what abilities they posessed, and what they were going to do with their lives. For 19 (79%) of these women, the identity crisis was reported to be directly related to the empty nest, with children growing up or being away in school all day, leaving them with time on their hands and nothing to do with it. For 3 of these women, the empty nest was compounded with personal illness; for 3 with a move; for 2 with peer pressure to be more than "just a housewife;" and for 1 woman with a move and peer pressure. Comments such as the following were typical:

> "My job left me."
>
> "I was finding that I didn't have enough to do to keep busy and I didn't know whether I wanted to go back to school or get a job or just what I wanted to do."
>
> "I was just feeling very, very sad, empty, and unhappy and I couldn't, I just didn't know what was the matter.

Table 14

Reasons for Taking LPS

Identity Crisis	24 (100%)
Empty Nest	19 (79%)
Just Empty Nest	9 (37.5%)
Empty Nest + Personal Illness	4 (17%)
Empty Nest + Family Illness	1 (4%)
Empty Nest + Move	3 (12.5%)
Empty Nest + Peer Pressure	2 (8%)
Empty Nest + Move + Peer Pressure	1 (4%)
Family Illness	2 (8.5%)
Marital Problems	2 (8.5%)
Move	1 (4%)

Note. N = 24.

> I was doing everything I'd always been doing, but I just wasn't being fulfilled by it. All the roles I was playing were just not enough anymore."
>
> "I had come to a developmental stage in my life where I needed to do something for me."
>
> "So much of who I was and my life had been tied up with husband and three very active young men, sons, that I knew I had to find another outlet, and I didn't know what it was going to be."

For the other 5 (21%), the identity crisis resulted directly from other family events: for 2 (8.5%) participants, from family illness; for 2 (8.5%), from marital problems; and for 1 (4%), from a move. However, for these women as well, the crisis seemed to uncover a disillusionment with the wife and mother role, and an uncertainty about who they were apart from these roles.

Table 15 presents the participants' perceptions of the outcome of the LPS for themselves. Twenty (83.3%) reported gaining better understanding of themselves, in terms of knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, personality, or personal needs. Fifteen (62.5%) reported acquiring a clearer sense of direction and awareness of new options. Eight (33.3%) reported gaining more confidence, and 3 (12.5%) more control over their life. Six (25%) reported an improved family life, and 4 (16.7%) that their choice of the homemaking role was reinforced. Three (12.5%) reported unresolved conflict in their marriages as a result of positive changes in themselves. Comments such as the following were typical:

> "It opened a lot of doors in my mind."

Table 15

Participants' Perceptions of LPS Outcomes

Self-understanding	20 (83%)
Direction	15 (62.5%)
Confidence	8 (33%)
Improved Family Life	6 (25%)
Reinforced Homemaking	4 (17%)
Control Over Life	3 (12.5%)
Unresolved Marital Conflict	3 (12.5%)
New Conflict	1 (4%)
Increased Old Conflict	2 (8%)

Note. N = 24.

"Really helped me to identify my needs, find out about myself, what my talents are."

"The seminar made me very much aware of ideas like goal-setting, values."

"It was exciting to discover that there was more for women than I had thought."

"It made me do some introspection, and started me in the direction I wanted to go in."

"The main difference is that now I am in control--before I was manipulated."

Table 16 presents the participants' perceptions of what in the LPS was helpful to them. Thirteen (54%) participants reported the support of other women to be a crucial factor. Eleven (46%) reported the testing, and 1 (4%) the career counseling specifically, to have been very helpful. Four (17%) reported that Phyllis had been very helpful as a role model. Reactions to these components of the LPS are illustrated in the following comments made by participants:

"I found out I wasn't weird."

"I realized that there are other people with the same problems...it gave me the courage to go on."

"It was comforting to know other women were going through the same things."

"It was refreshing to see others who had experienced both the good and the bad."

"I found out I'm not so dumb!"

"Testing was a confirmation of things I knew about myself."

"The aptitude tests gave me the push, the confidence... the interest and security to pursue new roles."

"I found out that I hadn't lost all my brain cells, that I was still functioning pretty well."

Table 16

Components of LPS Perceived as Helpful

Support of Other Women	13 (54%)
Testing	11 (46%)
Phyllis as Role Model, Support	4 (17%)
Career Counseling	1 (4%)

Note. N = 24.

"Testing reinforced very strongly what I thought were my skills and abilities."

"Phyllis told me to take a chance!"

"I was pleased with Phyllis--she's what she called a 'soft feminist'...provided a role model for us."

"In the final session, Phyllis pointed out that I needed some support, and encouraged me to talk to someone."

Table 17 presents a description of the types of activities in which participants have been involved since the LPS. Eleven (46%) have taken new jobs; 10 (42%) have returned to school; 3 (12.5%) have taken self-improvement classes such as assertion training or stress control; 6 (25%) considered themselves to be still planning for the future; 4 (17%) reported feeling more comfortable in the homemaking role; and 1 (4%) had a new baby.

Table 18 presents a description of other types of interventions which participants described as being of help to them in their crises. Nine (37%) women were involved in some type of counseling or self-improvement classes either before or after the LPS, with 3 (12.5%) of these women participating in both.

Table 17

Participant Activities Since LPS

New Job	11 (46%)
Return to School	10 (42%)
Self-Improvement Classes	3 (12.5%)
Still Planning for Future	6 (25%)
More Comfortable in Homemaking Role	4 (17%)
New Baby	1 (4%)

Note. N = 24.

Table 18

Other Helpful Interventions

Counseling Before LPS	2 (8%)
Counseling After LPS	1 (4%)
Self-Improvement Classes Before LPS	2 (8%)
Self-Improvement Classes After LPS	1 (4%)
Counseling Before and Self-Improvement Classes After LPS	1 (4%)
Self-Improvement Classes Before and Counseling After LPS	1 (4%)
Counseling and Self-Improvement Classes After LPS	1 (4%)
Total	9 (37%)

DISCUSSION

The data indicate that for the traditional married women in this study, the middle years were indeed problematic. All of the women reported experiencing some sort of identity crisis during their middle years, which was the reason for enrolling in the LPS. For most of these women, the crisis was directly related to what they perceived as the empty nest period. For some, the empty nest was compounded with other factors such as a move or personal illness, but the empty nest seemed to be most salient in precipitating the crisis. Perceptions of what constituted the empty nest period ranged from children starting school to children getting married, with most women pointing to the children being away at school as its beginning. This is consistent with Sales (1978), who points out that

e mothering role begins to diminish when children enter school, usually during the woman's thirties.

Regardless of the particular stage, the empty nest was experienced by these women as a time of loss and confusion about who they were and the roles they were playing. They had time on their hands, but nothing to do with it. This finding is consistent with the results of earlier studies which indicate that for many women, the departure of the children during the middle years constitutes an identity crisis in which they are forced to ask themselves who they are besides wife and mother (Astin, 1976; Bard-

wick, 1971; Bernard, 1975; Brodsky, 1973; Brooks, 1976; Klass and Redfern, 1977; Letchworth, 1970; Myrdal and Klein, 1956; Neugarten, 1961).

While the prevailing attitude toward the emptying nest seemed to be one of discontentment, boredom, emptiness and disappointment, several women did anticipate the empty nest to be a time of relief and increased freedom. However, as Rubin (1979) so clearly found in her study of middle-aged women, this does not mean that there are no problems with this life transition, only that the problems have to do with anxieties about the future, with contemplation and confrontation of the next stage of life rather than with nostalgia about the past. Even for the women whose identity crises were precipitated by events other than the empty nest, discontentment and disillusionment with the wife and mother role were forced to the surface, along with questions about who they really were and where they were going. Indeed, for all the women in this study, there was a desperate need for a sense of direction, a plan for what to do with the rest of their lives. For those who were sad about the emptying nest, as well as for those who look forward to it, there was a concern and fear about how to fill the gap left by the loss or reduction of the maternal role.

Results indicate that for most of the women in this study, identity before the LPS was defined primarily by the wife and mother roles, and may be described as reflect-

ed, or emphasizing the significant others in one's life rather than one's own personal characteristics, with self-esteem and feelings of worth deriving from participation in these significant others' lives. This finding suggests themes such as affiliation, vicarious achievement, and selflessness. O'Leary (1974) maintains that for women, affiliation may actually be seen as achievement and an affirmation of the self. Miller (1976) points out that women are taught that their main goal in life is to serve others, which when carried to the perfection of total selflessness, results in just that, a loss of self or identity. Comments such as the following made by participants attest to this phenomenon:

> "I learned when I was growing up that you're (women) supposed to live more for others rather than yourself, to the point where you lose yourself, and resent yourself for not being able to say no. I was too much into women's role--I did everything for them and nothing for myself."

> "I wasn't a self, I was a servant, I was a mother to my children, I was a wife to my husband, I was a daughter to my mother, and I was always doing for other people, and I wasn't, I didn't feel like I had the right to expect anything from myself, and I really didn't like myself very much but I didn't think much about that."

In light of this phenomenon, it makes sense that the women in this study would experience an identity crisis at the departure of children. This finding parallels the outcome of studies which have found that it is the woman whose life has completely centered on her children for whom the empty nest period is particularly traumatic (Artson, 1979;

Bart, 1972; Birnbaum, 1975; Notman, 1980; Resnick, 1979; Riley et al., 1972).

For most of the women in this study, the loss of maternal role and resulting identity crisis was accompanied by a loss in self-esteem. Many of the women were feeling insecure and inadequate, doubting their own ability. Comments such as "I questioned what I could do besides mopping" and "I took the seminar to find out if I was intelligent enough to do something else" illustrate such doubts. This finding is consistent with studies which indicate that when children grow up and leave home, many women whose identity depended on the children feel the immediate sense of role loss along with a loss of their self-esteem (Al Issa, 1980; Bart, 1969, 1972; Halas and Matteson, 1978).

Overall, the data indicate several differences in both identity and self-esteem before and after the LPS. Actual test performance, as well as interview ratings of self-regard and self-acceptance before and after the LPS reflect that self-esteem was significantly higher after the LPS. Interview ratings of strength of identity, inner-directedness and feeling-reactivity, as well as test scores for strength of identity and inner-directedness before and after the LPS reveal that identity was significantly stronger after the LPS. These findings are consistent with the research indicating that certain types of group experiences which provide support and an opportunity for self-exploration may facilitate resolution of the problems experienced

by women in their middle years (Brooks, 1976; Eason, 1972; Katz and Knapp, 1974; Klass and Redfern, 1977; Manis and Mochizuki, 1972).

No difference in test scores of feeling reactivity before and after the LPS was found, suggesting that participants experienced no change in sensitivity to their needs and feelings. This finding is surprising in light of the data from other measures which strongly suggest the idea that participants became more attuned to their own needs. However, the test items used to measure feeling reactivity seem to be more discriminating in terms of focusing more specifically on feelings, rather than a more global awareness of needs, which could explain this difference. Also, it is possible that cognitions about the feelings have changed, while the feelings themselves have remained the same.

Nor was any difference found for strength of identity before the LPS and for the third and fourth years since the LPS. Apparently those women who took the LPS three years ago (5), and four years ago (2), perceived no difference in strength of identity during the third and fourth years since the LPS. However, seven and 2 participants are rather small samples on which to base comparisons, and for the group as a whole, identity was found to be stronger at present, as well as for the first and second years since the LPS.

The data also indicate significant differences in participants' perceptions of identity and self-esteem before the LPS compared to afterwards. Participants perceived their self-esteem and identity to have been weaker before the LPS, in terms of self-regard, self-acceptance, inner-directedness, and feeling reactivity. Apparently, for the women in this study, their subjective experience was that of improving in identity and self-esteem from before to after the LPS.

Furthermore, participants perceived their inner-directedness, feeling-reactivity, and self-regard to have been weaker before the LPS than they actually were, according to pretest performance. This is consistent with studies finding that self-report measures given before and after a treatment intervention are subject to an instrumentation related source of contamination known as response-shift bias, in which participants may phenomenologically shift their perspective about the dimensions being measured by the instrument (Howard, Ralph, Gulanick, Maxwell, Nance, and Gerber, 1979; Howard and Dailey, 1979; Howard, Schmeck and Bray, 1979; Howard, Dailey and Gulanick, 1979; Howard, 1980). The process of the LPS, which focused on issues surrounding identity and self-esteem, may have enlightened participants to possibilities of which they were previously unaware, which could account for their more critical retrospective perceptions of themselves before the LPS. This is consistent with the comments of many of the par-

ticipants in this study who reported that before the LPS, they never thought in terms of the types of questions asked them in the interview--questions about self-definition, feelings of self-worth. Thinking in terms of "self" was new for many of them.

Also, the Personal Orientation Inventory used as the pretest measure, was actually given around the tenth session of the LPS, rather than before. It is understandable that identity and self-esteem would be stronger at this point than before the LPS. This may account for much of the discrepancey between participants' perceptions of inner-directedness, feeling-reactivity, and self-regard before the LPS, and actual performance, since the "before" performance really occurred during the LPS.

Participants did not perceive self-acceptance before the LPS to have been weaker than it was. Apparently, participants saw this characteristic as not changing from before the LPS to afterwards. This finding is interesting, since it did change in terms of actual performance, with self-acceptance being significantly higher after the LPS. Perhaps participants believed self-acceptance to be a more stable characteristic than the others measured.

Results also indicate a significant change in sense of identity from before to after the LPS. Whereas identity before the LPS was largely reflected, identity after the LPS was predominantly personal or a combination of reflected and personal. A personal sense of identity emphasizes

one's own unique talents and abilities as the source of one's self-esteem, and involves the capacity to see one's self as a separate autonomous being. This personal sense of identity is illustrated by the large number of new roles, in addition to wife and mother, such as employee and student, taken on by participants since the LPS.

The majority of participants did attribute much of their change in identity and self-esteem to the LPS. For most of the women, the LPS helped in self-exploration, giving them a better understanding of themselves and a clearer sense of direction. Several women attributed changes to their having confidence and more control over their lives. Several felt more pleased with their family life and several more pleased with the homemaking role. Even the few who reported marital conflict as a result of the LPS attributed the conflict to positive changes in themselves such as being more assertive and the husband not liking it.

More than half of the women pointed to the support of other women in the LPS as a crucial factor in helping them change. Another large portion of women emphasized the testing as helpful in terms of identifying their talents and abilities and understanding themselves. Several women pointed to the group leader, Phyllis, as a significant role model or source of encouragement and support. All of these factors have been emphasized in earlier research as being useful in helping women resolve some of the crises of their middle years (Brooks, 1976; Katz and Knapp, 1974; Klass and

Redfern, 1977; Manis and Mochizuki, 1972). The LPS seems to have been equally as successful in helping the traditional married women in this study resolve their issues of identity and self-esteem.

It would be naive and certainly erroneous to assume that all of the reported changes are the result of the LPS. Many of the participants themselves reported that while the LPS was responsible for getting them started in the right direction, much of the change occurred as a result of their activities since the LPS. Achieving outside the home, receiving a paycheck, getting involved in other than wife and mothering roles all had a substantial effect on identity and self-esteem. Several women had been receiving other types of help before the LPS, such as counseling, and several sought additional help since the LPS, and these activities certainly played an important role. Other obvious factors such as age and maturity, the passage of time, and adjustment to moves or life transitions certainly cannot be neglected as sources of change.

In spite of these extraneous variables, the value of the LPS experience should not be ignored. For most of the women, at least, it did get them started. Many of the other activities may not have taken place, or at least not so soon, without the help of the LPS in showing new options and clarifying direction. And for those whom it did not get started, it seemed to accelerate or at least reinforce the plans and ideas already set in motion. For the traditional married

women in this study, the LPS provided help when help was needed. It helped not only with life planning, but with the process of life planning, which has enabled participants to make the kinds of changes in their lives which may continue to strengthen their identity and self-esteem.

FUTURE RESEARCH ISSUES

Additional Variables

Based on the results of this study, it is evident that further research is needed to investigate the factors which determine the nature of the middle years for women. There has been much contradictory evidence as to whether these years are problematic for women. This study investigated this time of life for a specific population of women, traditional married women who have devoted their lives primarily to raising a family. While the results of this study indicate that the middle years were indeed problematic for these women, further research is necessary to determine whether this finding is true for traditional married women as a whole. One of the primary weaknesses of this study is that it used no control group, making it hard to generalize the findings beyond this specific group.

More research is also needed to investigate this time of life for other women. Most of the previous research has studied groups of women without making distinctions between populations. It is understandable that results from such studies have been contradictory and confusing, since no allowance was made for differences within the group. It seems that the logical direction for research to proceed is to investigate specific populations of women, such as single women, married women without children, employed married women, etc. It is hoped that doing so would help to clarify the nature of the middle years for different types of women.

Even for specific populations of women, further research needs to include ways of measuring differences within the populations. While this study attempted to make the sample as homogeneous as possible, without a control group, there was no way of comparing possible differences within the group to another group of traditional married women. One interesting finding in this study was the group's high scores on the Enterprising theme of the SCII. This could reflect a difference in the group of traditional married women in this study from traditional married women as a whole. More research along the lines of Livson's (1976) study, which identified two types of women, traditionals and independents, is necessary. It seems possible that personality differences between individuals between specific populations could also account for different types of experiences in the middle years.

Better Measures

It is possible that better measures could be used to evaluate the variables investigated in this study. The two inventories and interviews used are all self-report measures, which are subject to inaccuracy. Many of the questions required recall, in some cases about events several years in the past, which could also increase inaccuracy.

One particular weakness was the difference in results obtained from the SIDI and the interviews for the same variable, sense of identity. It is not known whether this dif-

ference reflects differences in the measures themselves, or differences in the raters used to code each measure. The information obtained from the Sense of Identity Inventory was not nearly as complete as that obtained in the interviews, which could account for some of the difference. With such a paucity of information, it was difficult to make decisions about categories of identity. However, the inventory items were coded by the author, whereas the interviews were coded by the two raters, which may explain the difference. For future research, a better instrument should be used to assess sense of identity, or the same raters used to code both measures.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING/EDUCATION

The results of this study suggest that at least for some traditional married women, the middle years, particularly the departure of children during this time, are problematic. Apparently for these women, the loss or reduction of the maternal role precipitated an identity crisis which was accompanied by a loss of self-esteem. Results also suggest that for such women, a group experience such as the LPS can be beneficial in resolving the crisis which occurs, by helping women to redefine themselves and plan a new direction for their lives.

These findings suggest several implications for the counseling and education of women. For women who are experiencing and will experience such a mid-life identity crisis, the value of groups such as the LPS cannot be underestimated. While individual counseling with these women can be effective, it falls short in one area regarded extremely important by a majority of women in this study--support of other women. The opportunity to interact with other women experiencing the same problems seemed to be a major factor in helping these women resolve their crises. In addition to support, testing was emphasized as beneficial in helping participants to gain a better understanding of themselves and a better sense of direction. Therefore, for women experiencing crises in their middle years, a group experience combining structured activities such as testing and other self-exploration exercises with the sup-

port of other women, would seem to be the recommended form of treatment.

Another important implication of the results of this study for counseling and education, has to do with prevention. Knowing that some women do experience identity crises and loss of self-esteem with the departure of children during the middle years, it is essential that women plan for this event. According to Neugarten (1977), it is the unanticipated rather than the expected event which constitutes a crisis. If women were taught to expect and to prepare for this natural event of children's departure and independence, it is likely that such crises could be managed with more positive consequences.

As Rossi (1965) so clearly points out, "...the traditional mother role simply does not occupy a sufficient portion of a woman's life span to constitute any longer the exclusive adult role for which a young woman should be prepared" (p. 105). This message communicated almost twenty years ago has obviously not been heard or heeded by many of today's women, and needs to be communicated again. What is needed at both a personal and institutional level is life planning. Women must recognize that the choice to bear and to raise children is only a choice about part of their lifetime, and a relatively small part at that, as the statistics point out. It seems more appropriate to think and to educate in terms of a sequence of careers. Motherhood may be planned as one career, but other careers need to be

planned for as well. This idea is consistent with Super's (1975) new definition of career as "the sequence of major positions occupied by persons throughout life; it includes work-related positions and roles as student, employee, and pensioner, together with coordinate avocational, familial, and civic roles" (cited in Richardson, 1979, p. 35).

In summary, for those women who did not or will not have the opportunity to benefit from planning for the years beyond childbearing, groups such as the LPS serve a therapeutic and developmental function. For those women who have not yet experienced the empty nest, there is still time to plan. To help both these groups of women, counselors and educators have a responsibility and a challenge, and interventions such as the LPS may provide a vehicle through which this help can be given, in terms of both remedy and prevention.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Tests Administered During LPS

Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory

Allport-Vernon-Linzay Study of Values

SRA Verbal

Watson-Glaser Test of Critical Thinking

FACT Ingenuity

Minnesota Paper Form Board

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Personal Orientation Inventory

Specific aptitude tests ..... Graves Design Judgment
Computer Aptitude Battery
FACT Judgment & Comprehension
FACT Expression
FACT Scales

APPENDIX B

Outline of LPS Sessions

I. At the beginning of this session the women are asked to complete a form which helps them to identify their needs and expectations of the LPS. Later, each woman has an opportunity to introduce herself to the group, summarizing where she is in her life at that point and stating her personal goals for the course. A brief lecture contrasts the "adjustment" theory of personality development with the personal growth model. Abraham Maslow's concept of self-actualization is described with special emphasis on the uniqueness of each individual and on the potentiality for fulfilling a unique purpose in life. Each participant begins work on a SELF BOX, a three-dimensional representation of herself in symbolic terms. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is administered.

II. A looseleaf journal is given to each woman, and suggestions are offered for a disciplined use of the journal-keeping method during the process of the "inner journey." The lecture for this session focuses on communication as a tool of growth and self-actualization. Self-disclosure and feedback are illustrated with the Johari Communication Window, and guidelines for constructive use of these concepts are presented. Following the lecture, the participants work in dyads on an experiential exercise, WHO ARE YOU? A suggested reading list is offered to the class, along with the instructor's annotations. The Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory is administered.

II. This session begins with formal aptitude testing...S-R-A Verbal Form (timed) and Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (untimed). A lecture on C.G. Jung's theory of personality types presents the subject in layman's terms as a background for the participant's understanding of her own type classification of four fundamental psychological functions: thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition (indicated by the Myers-Briggs). A print-out on her own typology is given each class member, and discussion is encouraged. Allport's Study of Values is assigned as homework.

IV. Further aptitude testing involves the Flanagan Aptitude Classification Test, Ingenuity, and the Minnesota Paper Form Board (both timed). A chart relating Jungian types to occupational fields is interpreted. The lecture for this session describes the differing time orientations of the various Jungian types. The participants are guided through a series of fantasy exercises in which each woman imagines her ideal family, her ideal environment, and her favorite activities. As homework, she is assigned the task of designing a perfect day (for her) five years in the future. A homework assignment is a time log (to be completed by each participant) adapted from Bolles' The Three Boxes.

V. Session V begins with the administration of the BEM test for androgyny, which is then set aside temporarily. The lecture addresses the concept of identification and recon-

ciliation of opposites within the psyche, and focuses on the particular opposites, Masculinity and Femininity. Sex role stereotypic behavior is discussed by the total group. From outer adaptation to roles attention is shifted to the inner experience of opposites. A Jungian analyst's writing on the subject of "Individuation through Marriage" is read and discussed. Androgyny as a model for mental health is described, and the BEM is scored by the participants. Some specific positive Animus behaviors are identified. The group then divides into dyads and works with a sample program of behavioral self-management, contracting for desired changes in stereotypic patterns.

VI. Motivation, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Simon's criteria for the identification of values form the basis for lecture and discussion in this session on values clarification. Several strategies developed by Simon are used in the total group and in dyads. Further clarifying exercises are assigned as homework. The thrust of the session is individual choice, commitment, and responsibility.

VII. The group is encouraged to visualize TIME in spatial dimensions. After some discussion in the group, women separate to begin work on a LIFELINE, a graphic representation of their past, present, and future. There follows some discussion of the way in which choice and decision affects the shape of a lifeline. The instructor reads the story of Polly Williams, a woman who drifts through life unaware of

choice or decision. The participants split into two groups of six to respond to the story and to discuss the question: Is this all that is demanded of me? Is this all I can demand of my world? Is this, then, enough? The homework assigned at the close of this session focuses on goal-setting and the identification of functional skills.

VIII. The first half of the eighth session is devoted to interpretation of the aptitude testing. There is a didactic presentation of information relating to definition of the terms--general mental ability, verbal skills, quantitative skills, analytical thinking, spatial relations, and creativity--and interpretation of special factors, such as speed of performance, flexibility of mental set, eye fatigue, etc. as they relate to test performance. The women are cautioned to view their test profiles privately, non-competitively, and to concentrate on their individual inter-test variability as indicative of their relative strengths and weaknesses. Functional skills, as researched through the previous homework assignment, are then analyzed for patterns relevant to specific occupational fields. The second half of the session is used for the interpretation of vocational preferences as measured by the Strong-Campbell. Holland's theory is outlined. And the individual computer printout results are given to the participants.

IX. Guidelines for goal-setting are described, with an emphasis on the strategy of reducing long-range goals into smaller and more immediately attainable units. In dyads, the women

help each other abstract from their goals a TOUCHSTONE or emotional core. Each woman also tries to identify a role model who had achieved a goal similar to the one the woman has selected as her prime target. In the second half of the ninth session a model for decision making is presented and then worked through.

X. In this session the participants are led, step by step, through the task of writing a resume. The homework assigned the previous week has helped them synthesize their self-assessment, goals, priorities, and possible alternatives. Now they select a real or hypothetical job target and proceed to tailor a resume that will be relevant to it. They develop a personal biography, analyze it for achievements, and learn to write accomplishment phrases which advertise their experience. Formats are studied; sample resumes are examined; and structured resume worksheets are used to complete the first draft. In addition, cover letters are discussed, and a sample is offered as a guide.

XI. A summary review of the LPS takes place through the use of newsprint charts and/or quotations that illustrate the essential learning or focus of each of the previous ten sessions. Interviewing skills are developed first, through the sharing of information on technique and then, through practice with electronic recording devices. (Each participant has an opportunity to record her responses to typical interview questions and to hear and evaluate her effective-

ness.) A mental health model for women is presented in this final session.

XII. In lieu of a group meeting, the twelftn session becomes an individual counseling session for each participant. In this private hour each woman has an opportunity to synthesize and integrate her personal insignts and evaluative data.

APPENDIX C

Sense of Identity Inventory

I. Identity is defined as a sense of personal self. In that framework, what was your self-perception

a. Before the Life Planning Seminar?_____

b. During the first year since the seminar?_____

c. During the second year since the seminar?_____

d. During the third year since the seminar?_____

e. During the fourth year since the seminar?_____

II. How would you describe the sense of your personal identity at present? How do you see yourself?_____

_____

_____

_____

III. How would you rate the sense of your personal identity:

Before the seminar?	9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1	
	Strong	Weak
During second year since seminar?	9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1	
	Strong	Weak
During third year since seminar?	9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1	
	Strong	Weak
During fourth year since seminar?	9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1	
	Strong	Weak
At present?	9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1	
	Strong	Weak

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

1. How would you define yourself? What do you see as your important roles, goals, commitments?
   Before the seminar?
2. How strong is your self-definition? How important is it for you to pursue these roles, goals, commitments?
   Before the seminar?
3. How free do you feel to pursue these roles, goals, commitments? Are there any limitations?
   Before the seminar?
4. Where do you derive your feelings of self-worth?
   Before the seminar?
5. How would you describe your feelings of self-worth?
   Before the seminar?
6. How do you feel about your ability to pursue these roles, goals, commitments?
   Before the seminar?
7. How do you feel about your ability to cope with situations in your life?
   Before the seminar?
8. How secure do you feel about yourself?
   Before the seminar?
9. How secure do you feel in your relationships with others?
   Before the seminar?

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

"Self-Concept and the Life Planning Seminar"

by

Susan E. Ellett

As per our telephone conversation, I am a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology, and this research is for my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to investigate issues of self-concept in women who have participated in the Life Planning Seminar.

You will be asked to complete two questionnaires, one of them twice. You will also be asked for a one hour personal interview with the investigator, which will be audiotaped. Your answers to the questionnaires as well as the interview will be completely confidential. The audiotape of the interview will be erased after the necessary information has been obtained from it.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and if at any time you would like to withdraw your participation, you are free to do so. If you have any questions, please call Jane Hopkins at the Women's Resource Center, [redacted]

* * *

I understand the purpose and the procedure of this research and I am willing to participate.

_____ _____

Signature Date

APPENDIX F

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Please sign and date the informed consent form.
2. Complete the Sense of Identity Inventory.
3. Complete the Personal Orientation Inventory, answering the questions on the basis of how you see yourself NOW. Please mark your answers on the answersheet marked NOW.
4. Complete the Personal Orientation Inventory again, this time answering questions on the basis of how you perceive yourself to have been just BEFORE the Life Planning Seminar. Please mark your answers on the answersheet marked THEN.

If you have any questions, please call me at [redacted], or Jane Hopkins at [redacted]. I will pick up these materials when we get together for our interview. Thank you.

[redacted]

Susan E. Ellett

APPENDIX G

Instructions

You will be asked to code each taped interview into six categories:

Sense of Identity	1, 4
Strength of Identity	2, 3
Inner-Directedness	1, 3
Feeling Reactivity	3, 1, 2
Self-Acceptance	8, 7, 6, 9
Self-Regard	5, 6, 7, 9

While some questions are more directly related to specific areas than others, feel free to use any responses in the interview if applicable to a particular area. Use one coding sheet for each interview.

I. Sense of Identity

While sense of identity is conceived as being both personal and reflected, the emergence of one aspect as the major focus distinguishes a predominantly personal from a predominantly reflected identity.

Personal sense of identity - An awareness of, and emphasis upon, one's talents, endowments, capabilities, and needs; its focus is on one's unique qualities from which one's self-esteem and feelings of worth are derived. A sense of personal identity involves the capacity to see one's self as a separate entity in the world, to know one's self as a being who can function autonomously.

Reflected sense of identity - Emphasizes the significant others in one's life rather than one's own personal characteristics; its focus is external. Self-esteem and feelings of worth are derived from one's participation in the lives of significant others.

You will be asked to rate sense of identity before and after the LPS according to the following categories:

1. Personal Identity, Single Focus - Positive or neutral ex. " Much freer and more confident, feelings about myself starting to grow."

2. Personal Identity, Single Focus - Negative. ex. "One who was overwhelmed with responsibility for meals and my own house."

3. Personal Identity, Double Focus - (Emphasizing personal, but also reflected). Positive or neutral personal and positive or neutral reflected. ex. "I felt fulfilled from my roles of wife, mother, and worker."

4. Personal Identity, Double Focus - (Emphasizing personal, but also reflected). Positive or neutral personal and negative reflected. ex. "Very able and aggressive academically, rather shy and inadequate socially."

5. Reflected Identity, Single Focus - Positive or neutral. ex. "Role of mother is intoxicating. My identity was really wrapped up in that."

6. Reflected Identity, Single Focus - Negative. ex. "A slave - a housemaid."

II. Strength of Identity

Sense of Identity is also conceived as involving a strong-weak dimension. You will be asked to rate the strength of identity before and after the LPS on a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 9 ("Strong") to 1 ("Weak").

III. Inner-Directedness

Inner-directedness may be defined as a sense of internal motivation, rather than external influences, as the main source of direction for the individual. You will be asked to rate the degree of inner-directedness on a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 9 ("Strong") to 1 ("Weak").

IV. Feeling Reactivity

Feeling reactivity may be defined as sensitivity to one's own needs and feelings. You will be asked to rate the degree of inner-directedness on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 9 ("Strong") to 1 ("Weak").

V. Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance may be defined as the ability to accept one's self in spite of one's weaknesses or deficiencies. You

will be asked to rate the degree of self-acceptance on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 9 ("Strong") to 1 ("Weak"). A low score would indicate inability to accept one's weaknesses.

VI. Self-Regard

Self-regard may be defined as the ability to like one's self because of one's strength as a person. You will be asked to rate the degree of self-regard on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 9 ("Strong") to 1 ("Weak"). A low score would indicate low self-worth.

SE/jcs

Coding Sheet

I. Sense of Identity	Before	Now
A. Personal, single focus, positive or neutral	_____	_____
B. Personal, single focus, negative	_____	_____
C. Personal, double focus, + personal, + reflected	_____	_____
D. Personal, double focus, + personal, - reflected	_____	_____
E. Reflected, single focus, positive or neutral	_____	_____
F. Reflected, single focus, negative	_____	_____
G. Reflected, double focus, + reflected, - personal	_____	_____
H. Reflected, double focus, - reflected, - personal	_____	_____

II. Strength of Identity

Before 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

Now 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

III. Inner-Directedness

Before 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

Now 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

IV. Feeling Reactivity

Before 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

Now 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

V. Self-Acceptance

Before 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

Now 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

VI. Self-Regard

Before 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

Now 9---8---7---6---5---4---3---2---1
Strong Weak

Vita