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**MID-LIFE WOMEN AND
THE SEARCH FOR SELF IN WORK**

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**A dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfilment of
requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

In this qualitative study, five stories of work meaning are explored. Grounded in phenomenology and guided by a constructivist, feminist perspective, its purpose was to describe how mid-life women subjectively understood, interpreted and defined work meaning, after a voluntary transition to work - in either paid or non-paid arenas - which held more personal significance. Following Seidman's (1998) tenets for in-depth phenomenological interviewing, the sessions enabled the women to expand upon the conversational narrative (Kvale, 1984, 1996; Ochs, 1997). The existential dimensions of lived time, lived space, lived body and lived relation provided a systematic structure for developing a thematic textual understanding. Descriptions and interpretations of the women's mosaic and metaphoric accounts were woven together with the researcher's own experience in a narrative structure, revealing everyday, ordinary aspects of work meaning.

The analysis uncovered several themes concerning metamorphosis, re-discovery and reclaimed purpose. The results indicated perspectives which coincide with some aspects of both traditional theories of adult development and relational theories of female development. Where they denote a difference is in the centrality of work as a construct that has greater continuing meaning for women's individual psychological development and identity than traditional concepts of mid-life maintenance and decline have allowed. The women in the study did not separate work and enjoyment, and pursued personal meaning and emotional, artistic and intellectual self-fulfillment through work as a way of integrating categories of identity. They were living consciously, activated by an appropriate use of self.

By giving voice to this under-represented group, the study makes the work meanings of mid-life women intelligible to educators, career development practitioners and policy makers.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Most research begins prosaically, as a reflection of individual interests and personal curiosity. This is certainly true of this study. It is about women, work and change - a large landscape in which to have found a point of rest from which everything either radiates or conversely appears to lead. That point led me to the present study, the purpose of which was to explore the subjective experience of mid-life professional women whose work transitions were related to a search for meaning.

Background to the Study

The word “work” is freighted with ambiguity. It carries with it meanings like grind or drudgery, as well as calling. Canadian researchers have highlighted a confusion over conceptual categories (see, for example, Cohen’s, 1988, historical study on women’s agricultural work, as well as research on the gendered nature of work by Armstrong and Armstrong, 1994, and by Luxton, 1990). The words “career” and “job” have other nuances of class and status, while in terms of psychological meanings, Harpaz and Fu (1997) make useful linguistic distinctions between a “job” which results instrumentally in pay; a “career” which provides feedback to the self; and a “calling” which connects to others in the community. Hidden underneath these is the deeper meaning or the existential “purpose of being”. Van Manen (1997) has characterised work as a “loosely coupled network of subjective meanings” (p. 64), but, in fact, our most common ideas about work come from sociological studies. Women’s right to meaningful work has been at the heart of many long-term and emergent economic and social justice debates in the last several decades. A cursory review of any handbook, such as Women and work (Dubeck & Borman,

1996), demonstrates the scholarly record of the social and behavioural sciences touching on women's work. The range of macro issues include legislation, pay equity, occupational cultures, career choice, gender stereotyping, patterns of labour force attachment, and work and family concerns.

However, much of the social science literature offers career interpretations built on a definition of work tied to the standard of traditional industrial psychology. Women in work arenas have been construed collectively either as organizational change agents, or individualistically as successful high-achievers. The texts rarely investigate the idiosyncratic work worlds that each of us inhabits, which might more resemble a Barbara Pym novel. Of course, drama and literature are replete with descriptions of work, since human work invokes strong emotional reactions. Work can be either deplored, as in Zola's Germinal, or celebrated, as in Tolstoy's reverence for the hay mowers in Anna Karenina. Mintz (1978) calls the latter a "spiritualization" of work, with work recast as a calling. He makes the point that, after Luther's Protestant Reformation, an active life came to be admired more than a contemplative one. As one example, he represents George Eliot's heroines, Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke, acting in the belief that work provides a way of self completion and of contributing to the world. This concept of vocation is now somewhat muted in the cultural conventions which inform our modern understanding of work, in a Western post-industrial society which extols success, individualism, and self-sufficiency rather than meaning.

Existing analytical tools have largely failed to explore other definitions of work. Even when work is recognized as important in individuals' lives¹, the issue of women's meaningful work is rarely assessed. Historically, work has been conceptualized largely as the primary

developmental activity of male adulthood (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). As Baruch, Barnett and Rivers (in Betz, 1994) stated over twenty years ago, "...life without productive work is terrible. We assume this for men, in thinking about their unemployment and retirement, but we do not think about the situation of women in this way" (p. 3). Eichler (1983) argues that this failure was due largely to women's inconsequential and dependent status, as daughters, wives and mothers. Post-modern and feminist researchers have questioned this gap in our understanding of the workplace as an important site of adult female development. Merriam and Clark (1991) have pushed for empirical accounts of female mid-life that go beyond a biological focus to take into account the role that work plays in female development. Women's relational process of "connecting" to work, not only to people, was seen as deserving a place in adult development studies (Helson, Pals, & Solomon, 1997) and Fenwick (1998), paraphrasing Bateson's (1990) essay on composing the self, argued for a focus on helping women express the self in work.

In sum, women have lacked access to stories of self-definition around work. My research, therefore, looks at the meaning of work, exploring not only the perspectives of the developmental research literature, but the accounts of mid-life women themselves, who are in, or have emerged from, work transition. I now set out a statement of the research problem and my particular attachment to it, move to the research questions guiding the study, and conclude with the organizational framework which bounded the study.

Framing the Problem

To guide this research it was essential to understand the major issues that have been highlighted over the years around women's development, and the role of narrative in giving

increased access to women's subjective experiences. These areas are dealt with in greater detail in the review of literature, but deserve mention here. Furthermore, it is key that I acknowledge myself in the inquiry. I was inextricably part of this study, so a brief personal history follows next.

Researcher Focus

After some years spent in career counselling practice and counsellor education, it became clear to me that there are misconceptions in human development literature regarding women's later development processes with respect to work. My early research interests had moved from literature and the humanities to centre on gender factors within the contemporary labour market, including an examination of pay equity. I became increasingly aware of gaps in the literature around the similarities and differences between men and women in work. Concerns around self-definition resonated in my own life in terms of work changes, and in my own professional practice, where the issues that brought people to career counselling often converged on existential questions such as "What gives me purpose? Where do I get my sense of meaning in life?" Randall and Kenyon (2001) have pointed to a crisis of meaning in post-modern times - where increasingly people seek a sense of meaning or personal identity in their work. A crucial question continues to be that of problematizing the developmental relationship between women's work and meaning.

Rationale

As noted, work has not traditionally been investigated as an important component of life satisfaction for women. Northcutt (1991) pointed out that the emphasis needed to be broadened beyond specific female occupational groups, such as managerial elites, non traditional workers or reentry homemakers. Her research looked at a general cohort of women, in terms of birth order position, ethnic group affiliation, and factors around achievement or success. She concluded that

we still need to know more about women who seek meaning in their work, and those work factors which affect emotional satisfaction. Female scholars have long criticized the use of male-based studies to understand women's experience (Gilligan, 1978, 1982). When women's actual lives did not fit the dominant theories, women - as opposed to those early theories - were typically seen as deficient. This was interpreted by critics as a trivialization of women's lives (Miller, 1986; Oakley, 1974). Even in later studies devoted to women and work, the meanings of work for mid-life women in modern Canadian society did not emerge as a principal focus. Little attention has been paid to how middle-aged women across North America define and view work developmentally (Ostendorf, 1998), or to providing empirical data on older female workers. Even when the life course of the modern woman changed dramatically, with increases in longevity (Friedan, 1993) and improved choices around professional education and careers, due to reliable birth control methods (Gergen, 1990; Giele, 1993; Sinnott, 1994; Skolnick, 1991), it has been pointed out that "preconceived notions and myths are slow to change, even in the face of an emerging body of research with women as the investigators" (Jacobson, 1995, p. 3).

Some fictions have persisted, particularly in terms of the second half of life. Foundational thinking in development and career development (Crites, 1976; Levinson, 1980; Super, 1957, 1980) typically used terms such as, "disengagement" or work "decline" for this age group. One continuing legacy of such perspectives has been the scant attention paid to the female mid-life developmental stage, or the different trajectories and experiences of mid-life women. The charge has been made that "there is a lack of an integrated body of developmental theory and research...that is relevant to today's mid-life women" (Fodor & Franks, 1990, p. 446). According to Hollinger and Fleming (1993), "...little [is still known] about women's life span and

development...” (p. 160). Fitzgerald and Rounds (1994) concurred: “relatively little attention has been paid to adult women actually in the workforce, that is, to women’s work adjustment, despite that fact that the great majority of vocational behavior takes place during the years after a choice is made and implemented” (p. 328). One reason for such theoretical neglect, in their opinion, has been the preponderance of general work adjustment models, which typically have ignored the interface between work and home.

One underlying assumption that I brought to this study was that work does offer women the possibility of self-development. I laugh at, but do not subscribe to, the poet’s satirising of the smart soulless worker:

I am a young executive. No cuffs than mine are cleaner;

I have a Slimline brief-case and I use the firm’s Cortina. (John Betjeman, *Executive*).

My thesis was that, for some groups of people in some material contexts, work does offer a sense of engagement, and a relationship with a wider world (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1997; Merriam & Heuer, 1996). Savickas (1997) has characterized work as a dramatic theatre for developing the self, involving a movement towards self-completion. This calls for assessing what work represents to the self, in a “search after meaning” (Weber, 1905/1955).

To summarize, there are unanswered questions about the work lives of mid-life women and their subjective experience of work. This situation will undoubtedly change as women live longer, “form[ing] a substantial majority of the North American population over fifty and increasingly more of a majority with each succeeding age decade” (Turner, 1994, p. 2). Skolnick (1991) has maintained that this demographic bulge of mid-life individuals will determine new social constructions. To build those, feminists have urged that it is essential to tap into women’s

narratives and women's ways of knowing, since what has long counted as significant was the world view of only a white male elite (Gergen, 1997; Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991) and women's stories have stayed off the record.

Use of The Female Narrative

Mindful of Heilbrun's (1988) belief that researchers must commit energy to writing the lives of women, I recognized that the focus on mid-life women in this study was at a time when the cultural story of aging in this Western industrialized society could be described as negative. Even if finding a personal voice has become *de rigueur*, there are fears about older women's narratives being disdained by mass culture (Randall, 1995). To demonstrate this, Scheibe (1986), cited Vonnegut, "...there is every chance that...[an older woman's] life as a shapely story has ended and all that remains to be experienced is epilogue. Life is not over, but the story is" (p. 143). This has echoes of Heilbrun's (1990) standpoint that women in fiction as in life, after youth and childbearing are past, have no plot and no story. Women have been allowed to tell the "marriage plot, the erotic plot, the courtship plot, but never, as for men, the quest plot" (p. 127).

In response to this, and in an attempt to give the lie to such negativity, I have sought out first person accounts, on their own terms, of "average" professional women between 45 and 60, who have been successfully working - however they define work - for a number of years, but who have elected, in their recent past, to transition to other forms of work. I use the word "average" not to diminish the women participants and myself, but to highlight the fact that there are interesting stories among women in non-élite and non-specialized occupational populations. Smyth, Acker, Bourne and Prentice (1999) have argued that we need to investigate the various types of women's work, in order to expand the notion of professions and professionalism beyond

notions of exclusive expertise, individualism and power.

While meaning as a construct does not easily lend itself to traditional investigative methods, the narrative offered a rich approach (Bruner, 1986; Mishler, 1986a; Polkinghorne, 1988). The ways we “story” our lives is key to appreciating the concepts of “self”, “identity”, and “development”. This research design encouraged an exploration of how these individuals interpreted and negotiated life style choices in the pursuit of meaning. It was Adler’s (1979) concept of life style that was used in the present study, one which includes the goal of significance in life, and one’s plan for achieving that goal. In conclusion, the external change event was not the focus of inquiry; rather it was an exploration of how women at a mid-life point created their narratives of meaning-seeking. It was not an investigation of the “datable” moments of these women’s lives, since the act of becoming ourselves is impalpable. With the recognition that their stories had already taken a decisive turn, this was my attempt to retrospectively story the women’s emergent work selves.

Research Purpose and Questions

The preceding discussion has highlighted both the scant attention to ordinary women’s subjective experience of work, as well as the ageist attitude to women’s narrative perspectives. The purpose of this qualitative study was, therefore, to investigate what meaning mid-life women assign to work, and what developmental issues relate to this process. Denzin (1989b) has pointed out that qualitative methods can help in understanding the experience of a neglected group, and this topic easily lent itself to a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology assumes that the deep meanings individuals have for events guide their actions. It also assumes that the essences of experience can be narrated, which is a critical aspect of my study.

My study involved what Werner and Schoepfle (1987) termed grand tour questions: in what ways might women's work transitions, at the mid-point of their professional lives, be interpreted as an expression of a search for meaning, and how might personal identity manifest itself in their story? These questions assume there are multiple realities around how people make sense of their own lives, and the study emphasized process not ends. The rationale was to gain an in-depth understanding in order to improve both knowledge and practice. The dearth of information about work as a mid-life development issue has an impact on educational policy and on counsellors' effectiveness when interacting with women clients. Richardson (1993) and Jahoda (1990) has each maintained that researchers have ignored the significance of work for women, demonstrating the cultural assumption that it is of secondary importance. This is a gap that needs addressing. The crux of this research, accordingly, is not explanation or prediction, but psychological meaning: my own, and that of the women who participated in the search for what Fenwick (1998) calls "the self in work" (p. 23).

Organization of the Study

The study is set out in six chapters, beginning with this Introduction. In the second chapter, the literature related to career and adult female development is reviewed, as well as that, which recognizes the constructs around work transformations in the creation of a woman's mid-life identity. Chapter Three describes the methodology and design issues. Chapter Four presents the participants' stories. Chapter Five discusses the results of the study, in relation to the earlier presentation of literature. The final chapter outlines the relationships between meaning and work for women at mid-life, based on the conclusions of the present study. I look at the study's contributions, as well as its limitations, and end with future research implications for addressing women's global career counselling needs.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

Framework and Organization

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the literature, theories and beliefs which enhance our conceptual and empirical understanding of the subjective meaning of work for professional women who have chosen a mid-life transition as part of a search for the self. My study was focussed on women's subjective experience: how they understood and defined work meaning, consequent upon a mid-life transition.

An examination of literature can be integrative (that is, summarizing past research), theoretical and methodological (Cooper, 1984). I sought out studies in all three domains, and use the metaphor of "quilting" or "weaving" these different pathways. In the same way that a quilt is a construction of a single whole out of many elements, each of which has its own meaning, this research has many filaments which are woven into a greater whole. At times this made it challenging to isolate the threads from the fabric, the warp from the woof in an objective and linear fashion. The orientations were often so inextricably meshed, that it became difficult to distinguish among them. The concepts popped up like an Escher motif, in an endless frame of self-reference and transformation, and were not discrete or exclusionary. I think of the paradoxes in doing research, and the assumptions central to the research paradigm, and recall Audre Lorde's (1984) words from Sister Outsider – "...knowing the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." (p. 112). As Bourdieu (1990) suggested, academic boundaries themselves are culturally produced and diligently policed for properness and legitimacy. However, given the overarching demands of research discipline, it was important to set out the framework in a

defensible manner. As Peshkin (2001) reminded researchers, while “inseparability is inescapable” in all forms of qualitative research, it is vital to consciously isolate and examine the lenses used. Only then will researchers gain the ability to “trespass” to use Bourdieu’s word, which may lead to gains in understanding.

The review was organized according to two main sections. The first section, which is a combination of both the integrative and theoretical perspectives, analyzes the work and research contributions of developmental theorists, who have provided a focus for interpreting the meaning and motivation for women’s work experience or behaviours.

Within the second section, I concentrate on defining the mapping concepts and influences that embody the search for self, in female mid-life voluntary work transition. This section also provides a brief glimpse of the interpretative phenomenological, narrative and feminist constructivist “lenses” which were used in examining the complexity of women’s work lives and meanings. A more focussed analysis of this important methodological area will be set out in Chapter Three. This chapter ends with a summary of the review.

Conceptual Overview

I begin by identifying the conceptual perspective that served as a backdrop to the study. To understand the meaning of work in women’s lives required an appreciation of several issues. Since work is viewed as a task of adulthood, it was important to understand the context whereby women have come to be work participants, and, how work has been addressed as an issue in development. The conceptual threads were structured around work, meaning and context, and embraced subtopics such as mid-life, identity, narrative, and time. Preliminary reflections centred on how work has been interpreted for women in the literature, and how vocational development

has been construed. In terms of meaning, I considered such questions as how does work affect the self identity; is the notion of generativity germane; and what are the connections between transition and learning? Finally with respect to context, I wanted to question how culture has shaped women to define work; what is the influence of gender and age; in what ways is time perceived or experienced; and how does the work story get defined as narrative? What follows is an overview of how identity development and transition are viewed in the developmental psychology literature, and summarizes the major points of departure for this study.

No one theory dominated my review of the literature search. I preferred to approach theory in the way that Apple (1999) recommended. I am not just interested in officially sanctioned knowledge. This can encourage us (in a colourful metaphor borrowed from Bakhtin, 1986) to “stand above life”, like the rich bourgeoisie, safe up on the balcony during a medieval carnival (in Apple, 1999, p. 15). This position allows one to be a quasi-participant, but with none of the very “being in the world”. Accordingly, I delved into a variant mix of development psychology, constructivism, feminism, phenomenology and cultural studies which form a backdrop to acting meaningfully, since the observation has been made that development and career theories are connected to seven social science disciplines (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989). At this juncture, I examine the concepts around work which formed the fabric and frame for this study.

Work

As noted in the Introduction, the particular meanings of work for women have had limited attention in the social science literature. Early studies showed paid work as providing women with feelings of achievement and mastery, self worth, life satisfaction (Baruch, Barnett, & Rivers,

1983; Luxton, 1980; Rubin, 1981). But, one limitation in the academic literature, as well as in common speech, has been that work is commonly defined as “employment”. This might be what Apple (1999) called a form of “category error” since women have always worked, and feminists have made most of the world acknowledge this labour as legitimate. But, as Daniels (1987) pointed out, research “consistently devalues the invisible contribution that women typically make” (p. 412) in child care, elder care or house work, or what Rifkin (1995) called making community. One empirical study (Mor-Barak, 1996) addressed this omission, finding unremunerated caring work as a source of meaning.

It remains true, nonetheless, that many studies on work have tended to focus on its economic utility. Clearly, I recognize that work is necessary to provide for living, but what I wanted to examine was what Meilaender (2000) called degrees of engagement. He offered an anecdote about three workers breaking up rocks. Asked what they were doing, the first answers “making little rocks out of big rocks”, the second replies “making a living”, and the third says “building a cathedral” (p. 1). This fits with Smelser’s (1980) objection, cited in Merriam and Clark (1991), that:

the cultural dynamics of the modern West have tended to put work and related instrumental activities into one joyless category, and then to represent them [work and love] as mutually exclusive. This cultural opposition has dominated the structure of Western thought for several centuries and has limited the number of moral and psychological solutions for the dilemmas of human existence. (p. 108)

My concept of work became an inclusive one, borrowing from several theorists. I incorporated the term “personal projects” (Little, 1989, 2000); these are the sequences of activity

that individuals design, and carry out, to reach desired goals. I integrated Studs Terkel's (1974) description of work as a quest:

...for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a life rather than for a Monday through Friday sort of dying... (p. xiii)

I chose to use the word "work" interchangeably with the word "career". I used the term "career" not in a product-oriented competitive sense but as a guiding concept of a significant personal path, what Carlsen (1988, 1991) called a "carrier of meaning". I subscribed to Barley's (1989) term "career scripts", which describe internally constructed schemes that influence the definition of self.

It is true to say the career counselling and adult development literatures have always acknowledged work as more than an occupational fit, recording it as a vocational manifestation of identity (Vondracek, 1992). More recently, Savickas (1997) has characterized work as a way of "becoming more than one used to be" (p. 5), and of implementing life projects, "actively mastering what one passively suffers" (p. 11). Work is increasingly represented in the more recent literature, accordingly, as a social activity, involving a search for meaning and a need to tell one's life story as movement towards self-completion (Richardson, 1993).

I move now to discuss some theorists who, while not directly framing their theories around the work domain, have developed theories of psychological development which include work. I begin with an overview of foundational theorists, summarize their various contributions to shaping the discourse on adult development, look at some empirical studies, before reviewing both the wide range of feminist response, and the attempt for new theories.

Development Theory

Developmentally, from a western view, the achievement of maturity is portrayed as a stable end point in time; certainly this is the foundation of much law within our society. While the idea of adult development implies simply that humans change throughout the life cycle, the sources of change are hotly debated². I now set out some of these theoretical contributions. While some approaches are dated, I included them, since I acknowledge the truth of Vickers' (1989) caution that we are constrained to think in the ways we first learned to think.

Foundational Models of Development

Adult development has typically been categorised in two time-honoured frameworks: one, focussing on phases, tied to age and developmental tasks over the *life span*; the other, to cognitive development or stages, linked with psychological theories, concerning ego or moral development within the individual during the *life course*. The former put the emphasis on recurrent life crises at particular age points, forcing a reevaluation of the self; the other fixed on key life course events. Both models recognized the universality of negotiating particular events in order to become a fully functioning mature adult.

Santrock (1999) and Berger (1993) have attested to a continuing fascination with the early *life span* research. The approach owed its beginnings to Erikson's (1950/1963) eight stage epigenetic model of human development, defining developmental stages to establish identity. The five predictable stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline were mirrored in career development. Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg (1986) introduced the idea of "developmental contextualism", where the images reflecting the biological stages were matched to vocational life (Riverin-Simard, 1988; Super, 1980/1990). Subsequent researchers looked for

age-related patterns to focus on characteristics related to age, time and place (Havighurst, 1972; Levinson et al., 1978; Sheehy, 1976; Super, 1957; Vaillant, 1977). Mid-life was typically depicted as a transition period of reevaluation or crisis. Levinson (1980) saw mid-life as a period of “detrribalization” or the ability to stand apart from the world. Within his approach, three themes were key: individuation; autonomy and generativity.³

Stage theories did prove popular, although they have been caustically compared to horoscopes - vague enough so that everyone can see something of themselves in them (Rosenfeld & Stark, 1991, p. 231). A more charitable interpretation is that the theories are inherently adaptive and therapeutic. The focus on healthy personalities, rather than pathology, informs humanistic, existential and counselling psychology (Adler, 1926/1972; Frankl, 1978; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1951, 1985), because of its optimistic emphasis on mastery and adaptation, rather than biology or childhood. Various contributions can be linked to the concept of work meaning and the search for identity. Maslow (1971b) is known for his hierarchical table of needs culminating in “self-actualization”, or the craving for self-development, creativity and job satisfaction. Individual Psychology - the personality theory of Adler - suggested that all behaviour occurs in a social context, with individuals constantly striving. He considered actualization as a core tendency for perfection, which is linked teleologically with some ideal or final purpose. The individual is committed to finding a place in the world and to achieving significance. Equally, Rogers (1951), through his “client-centered therapy”, believed in a similar directional tendency towards growth.

Humanism has been criticized as a highly egocentric approach to life, which ignores the fact that there are some social characteristics to the mind. The *life course* or event perspective

provides a more situated approach to development. This model of psychological development assumes a sequence of development, which is neither specifically linear nor chronological, and has no guarantee of progressive movement (Cairns, Elder and Costello, 1996; Gilligan, 1982, 1986; Josselson, 1987; Loevinger, 1976). Life course theory has preferred to chart a sequence of periods of stability with periods of transition. In a later section, I will define the concept of transition which informed my study. But, to sum up, early development literature, both age-ordered stages, or successive phases, has been seen as problematic, not only because the studies were done by men focusing initially on men, but also because development is much less linear than implied. For several reasons, feminist theorists cautioned against the universality of all sequential models (Caffarella, 1992) and I now examine some of that critique.

Women in the Traditional Developmental Approach

There were strong calls for female-based models to modify the original frameworks. Not only was life span/life course research based in a white, middle-class, North American culture, but it showed a bias towards the male values of separateness, autonomy and independence, rather than affiliation (Gilligan, 1982/1993). For example, Erikson (1968) saw women's focus on intimacy as a barrier to identity formation, and Vaillant (1977) defined a healthy life as one building a relationship between the self and society, "not just raising crops or children" (p. 202). To counter this, early feminist researchers segmented the sexes as cognitively different (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), with "being" as central for women, and "doing" as primary for men (Chodorow, 1978), with women grounded in attachment, affiliation and interdependence (Bardwick, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Gutmann, 1987; Schwalb, Schwalb, Harnisch, Macher and

Akabane, 1992). Counter arguments were made that separateness was a male lack of friendship (Gallos, 1988), and that women developed their sense of identity by a standard of responsibility and care (Gilligan, 1982) and took moral decisions differently (Liddell, 1993). Particular criticism was levelled at Erikson's deferred ego identity, and Levinson's disregard of opportunity structures for women (Gilligan, 1982). Others (Bem, 1993; Heilbrun, 1988; Labouvie-Vief, 1996) criticized the notion of female renunciation, whereby women surrendered their own agency, to accompany the mythic heroic male quest (see Campbell, 1956).

In their review of literature, Caffarella and Olson (1993) found ambivalent support for applying the existing development models to women. The findings were mixed, with multiple patterns, and significantly different expectations among different cohorts. Caffarella (1992) dismissed early studies as "not generalizable to all women and perhaps not even to many women" (p. 20) since woman is not univocal. Furthermore, despite its visceral appeal, not all feminist theorists endorsed a male-female difference. Women's identity was not seen as unidimensional, and the "self-in-relation" concept (Jordan, 1993; Ruddick, 1989; Surrey, 1991) was rejected as recreating a kind of gender determinism. Emphasizing the "differentness" of women was seen as "aid[ing] and abet[ting] the social reproduction of male power" (Bem, 1993, p. 194). Later theorists went on to focus, not on dualistic gender, but on the socialization of gender role (Cook, 1993; Tavis, 1992). Tisdell (1993, 1998) maintained that unequal access to power, and educational systems, based on the linear analytical type of thinking, were responsible for devaluing women's confidence. This was what Helson et al. (1997) nominated as a "conflict perspective" (p. 295) - one in which theorists considered the societal subordination of women, and their lack of material opportunities (Vaillant & Vaillant, 1990). Adler and Brayfield (1997) found support

for this in a study, delineating the positive structural impact of state policies for women in former communist East Germany. It would seem, therefore, that to ask whether there is adult development distinctive to women begs a fundamental question. I turned to literature and discovered that one of the impacts of post structuralism has been the questioning of the universal category "woman" (Lather, 1991; Lorde, 1984).

Gender Differences in the Developmental Experience of Mid-Life Work

Questions consistently surface about gender differences and work, since it is commonly recognized that men and women arrive at mid-life with different resources and life circumstances. Some early research showed that gender roles have ingrained work personality characteristics (Bem, 1981). However, more recent studies, investigating gender as a distinguishing factor at work, gave divergent results. Schwalb et al. (1992) found systematic gender differences in a study on work motivation and self concept, involving over 1250 Japanese and American adults. Yet Mor-Barak (1996), in a study of 146 older middle and lower-class adults, discovered no distinctive gender differences. Similarly, Merriam and Clark (1991) detected no significant gender differences in three patterns - parallel, fluctuating and divergent - present in love and work. The women, in their study, interpreted their world through a lens of connection and caring, but also needed work for identity and self definition. Bar-Yam (1991), in her study of how men and women make meaning of their world, found equal needs for distinctness and attachment.

My literature search revealed the limited attention that the developmental and vocational life world of mid-life women has had in research and education. Career development theory has been found to be ill-equipped to explain the vocational behaviour of women in terms of relatedness and connection (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Brooks, 1990). In addition, Sinnott (1994)

protested that models of women's development in the second half of life were impoverished in relying too heavily on the life span perspective, while ignoring clear cultural changes. This has been attributed to ageism and sexism (Datan, 1989; Kirkman, 1992; Macdonald, 1989) and has lead to hackneyed research themes. For example, Friedan (1993) criticized the popular viewpoint of mid-life depression and biological losses, even though health research has destigmatized the menopause (see Greer, 1999; Sheehy, 1992). She proposed reframing mid-life as "the pivotal time of individuation, autonomous self-definition, and conscious choice" (p. 113). Given this background, I investigated alternative voices which had emerged in the theory base of female adult development and career development.

Towards New Theories of Development

The literature search has revealed that the early development research was androcentric, and highlighted the masculine values of autonomy and rationality more than social relationships. Equally, the linearity of stage and career theories did not mirror the discontinuous and variable lives of women (Gergen, 1990). Furthermore, it is understood (although guardedly in the absence of longitudinal studies) that Gilligan's (1982) "different voice" could reflect a particular birth cohort rather than a new developmental voice for women (in McAdams, Ruetzel, & Foley, 1986). It became recognized that gender was not sovereign, but was affected by other factors such as race, class or opportunity structures. Accordingly, Baltes (1987) contended that, "in the immediate future life-span developmental psychology will not be identified with a single theory" (p. 612), since adults are better viewed as active agents who create, and are created by, their world.

An Integrated Perspective

Other theorists lent their support to this argument that ontogeny means an interdependence across systems (Cairns, Elder & Costello, 1996; Turner, 1994). Asking whether changes in adulthood are maturational or situational seems unanswerable. Not only does the interaction between our genes and our social, cultural and physical environment determine how we age (Eaton, 1989, 1990), but it was claimed that development is historically shaped by the eras in which we live (Elder, 1985). The emphasis, therefore, shifted to highlighting the process of transformation and the *contingent* nature of our being. Ivey and Rigazio-DiGilio (1994) complained that the previous emphasis on tasks/stages ignored idiosyncratic paths towards development, by a changing person in a changing world. Schlossberg and Robinson (1996) and Cook (1993) attempted to conceptualize this dialectic, taking account of both the multiple individual and socio-cultural factors, as well as the dynamic between them, to comprehend development. Peck (1986) offered an approach which considered social and historical factors at the same time as highlighting relationships. This model was portrayed as a spiralling coil rather than a linear psychological process, emphasizing context (social historical time) and the “sphere of influence” (friends and work). Such models are more reflective of what Bateson (1990) called the complex identity of the mature woman in the modern world. Yoder and Kahn (1993) called for further research that recognizes women as rooted in class, race, age, sexual orientation, and family status, not just gender. This was anticipated by Caffarella (1992) who argued strongly for the influence of social-cultural factors on psychological differences, and an examination of how women experience their identity within time and culture. Others, like the social constructionists, Gergen (1990) and Richardson (1993), while acknowledging the inhibiting effect of social

location, argued that women were individually resourceful, capable of defining and determining their own lives, where the internal values and tendencies of the individual count. To determine what these values and tendencies are was at the heart of my study. A review of the guiding concepts that informed and related to a subjective individual search for meaning in work transition forms the next part of the paper.

Significant Terms in the Search for Personal Meaning in Mid-Life Transitions

The intention in this section is to foreshadow the multi-faceted research design, and to provide definitions of additional concepts that were drawn from it. To begin, I define what I imply by mid-life.

Mid-Life

Our understanding of the age delimiters of the middle period of adulthood depends on how long we are expected to live in a particular time and place.⁴ In the last century, our interpretation of maturity has altered. Since 1900 life expectancy has increased by thirty years for men and almost forty years for women (Friedan, 1993). In modern society mid-life is considered to last from about age 40-65 (Cohler, 1982), and what used to be considered old age is now seen in North America as middle age.⁵ There is seen to be a new timing for life events, as well as a change in the meaning of social age. Neugarten (1968, 1978, 1979) had distinguished between the “old-old” and the “young-old” - that is, those who are active, healthy and financially stable, and who demand greater options in an “age-irrelevant” society. Accordingly, age is no longer regarded as a good touchstone for development, with Steinem (1994) maintaining that we have almost become a different species: “More and more, I’m beginning to see that life after fifty or sixty is itself another country...” (p. 251). A paradigm shift like this can expand previously

delimited research interests; for example, Erikson revealed: “30 years ago I lacked that capacity for imagining myself as old, and the general image of old age was different then” (in Hall, 1983, p. 22).

There was, therefore, considerable variability in the literature defining the mid-life period. Younger adults perceived the mid-life period as starting at age 30 and ending at 55, while adults in their 60s and 70s perceived it as starting at 40 and extending into the 70s (Lachman, Lekowicz, Marcus & Peng, 1994). Moreover, chronological age is a poor indicator, unless a sample is homogeneous. Other differences in the transaction of middle age were seen as social class, the opportunity structure and gender (Neugarten & Datan, 1974). Helson (1997) found that for upper/middle class men the period begins at age 50 and is highly productive, while for middle class women the age frame is viewed similarly, but it is a period of serenity. However, for blue collar male and female middle age, mid-life is viewed as starting at 40, and is described in terms of decline. It appeared that there were general theories about middle age, but equally it was clear that this wide “bandwidth” might have little application across groups. It was apparent, from this review of the concepts, that Lachman (1997) was right in expressing a need for an empirical base for our interpretive accounts of mid-life, and what meaning we bring to them.

Meaning

I now define how I interpreted meaning in the study. As noted, traditional developmental models tended to frame development in stage specific terms and marginalized the process of individual meaning making. However, more recently, development has been construed by some researchers as a version of the question of the meaning of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1997; Helson, 1993, 1997; Merriam & Heuer, 1996). For others it is the *central* process of

development (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Mahoney, 1996; Mezirow, 1991), involving a search for new balance after the self has been under siege (von Glaserfeld, 1995).

Kegan (1994) in his helix design of “constitutive meaning-making” suggested that individuals develop through five stages or “orders of consciousness” in their constructive developmental process. The last three stages are the ones that comprise meaning making, as the individual moves from being “embedded” in relationships (third order), to authoring themselves more autonomously in a system where “human life is linguistic life and humans are narrators” (p. 127). This is the fourth order but it has a limitation, since “embeddedness in a particular role does not allow for self-correction and reflection on the larger purposes of one’s life” (Marshall, 1997, p. 110). The fifth, or highest order, is the one that allows people to be self transforming, a position that Kegan (1994) maintained is only ever available to a small percentage of the population, *and never before the age of forty* (my italics). Accordingly, individuals are constantly working to make sense of their worlds, where the self is evolving and nothing is fixed.

It was Bruner (1986, 1990, 1995) who saw the process of making meaning as a social process in which the individual negotiates how reality has to be interpreted. Individuals’ stories do not mirror a world “out there” but are constructed. In other words, we live in a multi-dimensional world and cannot separate thoughtful activity that is supposed to be internal to the mind, from the contexts where such activity takes place. One concept that kept emerging from the review of the literature was the mind/body extension. Ricoeur (1992) referred to the corporeal dimension of action which brings to light a personal identity. This is also echoed by Burkitt’s (1991) rejection of the Cartesian dualism that a separate mind - located somewhere outside the material world - produces thought and action, in a mute and unthinking body. As

existentialists have it, individuals inhabit social space and all knowledge is embodied and “situated” (Lave & Wenger, 1991); this “being in the world” is seen as the context for human consciousness and knowledge. Meaning, therefore, is much less orderly than when viewed cognitively and involves a search for personal coherence and for making sense of identity (Linde, 1993) - a concept that I explore in the next sub-section.

Identity

The question of “identity”, or how people variously conceive of “the self” has been vigorously debated in social theory. One of the related problems is that common, everyday words like “self” can often be difficult to define. Baumeister (1997) and Ricoeur (1992) shared similar ontological distinctions about selfhood - or what Heidegger (1927/1962) called Dasein. They both defined selfhood as the ability to reflect, while identity was the narrative product of this reflective process within societal constraints. Despite this semantic soundness, I have employed the words interchangeably in the paper, as reflective of usage in the women’s interview conversations. Furthermore, although the word “identity” was used in the singular case throughout the paper, I accept that individuals have a repertoire of co-existing identities, which will be made plainer in the next section. One common way of seeing identity formation was as an individual task of self development.

Interpretative perspectives on the self. The word “self” appeared frequently in the literature: Rubin’s (1981) subjects talked of “finding their elusive selves”; Giddens (1991) talked of the self “as a reflective project, under continuous revision”. Trilling (1971), who saw the twentieth century as preoccupied with the notion of self, pointed out that during the Middle Ages, identity was more bound up with rank and family. Equally, Gusdorf (1956) and Casey (1993)

described modern western society as infatuated with the self, where individuals “find” themselves as special.⁶ Kegan (1994) believes that a 20th century preoccupation with the self has been further fostered by changes in social and occupational roles, as well as geographic mobility, all of which have recast the way people understand themselves.

In terms of differing perspectives, the feminist movement has sensitized us to the possibility of self creation and autobiographical self reclamation; Rogerians advocated discovering the self; while existentialists and post-modernists have talked about the self as a project. Constructionists, symbolic interactionists and phenomenologists all have portrayed the self as a fluid process of creation and revision. The constructionist perspective to understanding human behaviour holds that we adapt and mould our surroundings to enable us to find what we need in life (Bruner, 1987; Mahoney, 1996; Peavy, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1988; Viney, 1992). The social construction position (Gergen, 1991) is that the self gets vertigo or “saturated” from the multiple roles demanded at any given moment. In other words there is no true self, but just the one caught in a narrative at a particular point in time. Kegan (1994), in his concept of fifth order development (set out earlier in this chapter), argued that there is no definitive form of the self, but many forms “like figures upon the ground, a moving ground more committed to culturing a process than preserving a product” (p. 204). Symbolic interactionists do find a “real me”, which might be affected by the social feedback that people receive from each other, but which also has some opportunity to negotiate the identities that culture and society imposes (Mead, 1934). Here, the subject is granted an inner core, but one which is modified by cultural worlds “outside”. Phenomenologists have proposed that the self is the organizing construct which sorts emotional experience (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). Phenomenology maintains that self begins as a bodily

Gestalt and differentiates into a cognition of psychological unity, interacting with an environment of social roles. This dualistic interrelationship of the individual self and their world means that the person is viewed as having no existence apart from the world, and the world as having no essence apart from the person (Colaizzi, 1978; McPhail, 1995; Silverman, 1984).

As we can see from this summary, there are unresolved questions. Some theorists have argued that people seek roles in which they can express core aspects of self (Markus & Nurius, 1986), others that the essential self is a revisable story, with an intelligible identity across an unpredictable lifespan (Freeman, 1992; Gergen, 1980; Mishler, 1992; Peavy, 1997; Wyile & Paré, 2001). Given the cultural and social complexity of adult lives, the notion of one master identity has been rejected, since individuals live in different spheres, each with its own categories of prized and frowned-upon actions (Clough, 1994; Mishler, 1992). Davies and Harré (in Paré, 1999) characterized identity as a successful “positioning” towards various reference points, with identity never fixed. In sum, the reflexive question becomes not, “ ‘Who am I?’ but rather, ‘When, where, how am I?’ ” (Trinh, 1992, p. 157). As stated long ago by Erikson (1956), “a person’s identity is never gained nor maintained once and for all. Like a good conscience, it is constantly lost and regained” (p. 57).

What all these interpretative perspectives have in common is a view of the human individual as a “skilled actor” (Anderson, 1991, p. 30). In the existential view, this acting “intentionally” in the world (Giddens, 1991) is to reach the phenomenon of “really feeling understood” (Giorgi, 1975) and to find relief from existential loneliness. Ashworth (1997) pointed out that it is a Sartrean awareness of the basic emptiness which fuels our attempt to become someone, and this identity of “someone” is sought in the eyes of other people (p. 98).

We assemble our selves for specific situations in life, a process which Strauss (1959/1997) called presenting masks to the world. This is very reminiscent of Adler's (1926/1972) constructivist therapy model and of the personal constructs approach of Kelly (1955). Kelly believed that a client's stories and metaphors function to establish continuity of meaning, echoing William James (1892/1948) who believed that the adult self (the empirical me) chooses from a stage company of characters to play in life. Strauss (1959/1997, p. 166) reminded readers that identity is not just theatrical, but historical too, referring the reader to Rebecca West's (1941) discussion of bitter, embedded opposing Balkan identities in Black lamb and grey falcon. Equally, other scholars have suggested that people are constrained by the limited repertoire of sanctioned stories they can use to construct personal identities (Bellah, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Reinharz, 1994). Somers (1994) made the same point: "We come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located, or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously), in social narratives rarely of our own making" (p. 606).

Accordingly, I found various understandings of the self/selves, from personal identities; social identities; through to the culturally positioned privileged selves and the institutionally legitimated repertoires of "selves" (Gergen, 1997; White, 1995). McAdams et al. (1986) offered the concept of "imagos" or idealized images of the self, that make up a person's developmental life story. But in contradistinction, I also noted Markus and Nurius' (1986) contribution of "possible selves" which goes beyond an ideal self, to discuss the motivating force of what people fear becoming, such as failure or unloved. In summary, it was seen that our so-called self is not just something given to us, but is something we ourselves create. Stanley (1992) saw "self" as a fabrication, not necessarily a lie but certainly a highly complex truth. However, in contrast, I

discovered that Sauer and Lyle (1999) did *not* want to deny the self and argued that it encloses an “ethical identity” of a person who continues to care about life (p. 3). They have rejected social constructionist positions, such as Gergen’s (1991), which draw heavily on reiterative patterns in life, and have preferred to invoke Ricoeur’s (1992) concept of attestation, or intentional meaningful actions.

So, one emerging theme that arose in the literature was the conflict between humanist and post-modern versions of the self. Post-modernists take issue with meaning realism, rejecting the notion of a fixed self. Humanists are discomfited by such a random universe. I wanted to find a middle range theory that can integrate both the macro and micro, and, in support, I noted Fenwick’s (1998) position that, while a social construction focus is valid, it does not exclude creating ourselves in the light of humanist principles of what it is to be human, being what Frankl (1978) called a searcher after meaning. Fenwick (1998) and Merriam and Yang (1996) all recognized work as an essential site for this search, linked to the human need to seek coherence in life, an existential process crystallized by Frankl’s (1962/1969) use of the Nietzsche quote “He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*” (in van Deurzen-Smith, 1988).

Self in work. Smith (1996) pointed out that “the life plan of what to do and who to be” becomes a primary source of identity, with the consequence that the focus of a life plan is often one’s job and other aspects revolve around that choice. In terms of mid-career work change, Osherson (1980) described two kinds of meaning, which are the social (the public self) and the personal meanings, which combine to assist in the reworking of a self definition during the mid-life. This approach was extended by Wolf (1996), who remarked on an intrinsic “shifting” in response to events. She suggested there are many selves to play out in a life-time and that aging,

or mid-life development, provided opportunities to explore other dimensions of one's personality. This notion of integrated, but conditional, identity was addressed by several theorists, who invoked the concept of narrative intelligibility, which is discussed in the next subsection.

Identity and Narrative Intelligibility

One perspective informing this paper was the dynamic between narrative and self-identity. There was no single life story to be told in my study - I was investigating parts of lives, those recitals of events which organizes experience to find meanings. A theme that emerged in the earlier section on human development is that human beings always try to interpret their experience. In describing this strategy of making sense of the world in order to structure a response to it, Lauer and Handel (1983) have used the metaphor of quilting the haphazard events of our lives, and the accidental choices we make, into coherence. Both Sparkes (1997) and Giddens (1991) have put forward the importance of maintaining coherence in the plural settings of a modern world. Creating stories is one way to lend a "sense of continuity and meaning that is relied upon for the ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experience" (White & Epston, 1990, p. 10).

Telling stories contributes to that "subjective conviction of self-sameness over time" that is central to identity (Erikson, 1968). Benstock (1988) maintained that the story is an attempt to recapture the self. Similarly, for McAdams (1992) identity is bound up with arriving at a life story that makes sense; at some level, we are the stories we tell about ourselves, "the person I am, I have been years in becoming". For Ricoeur (1984/1988), narrative identity lends moral significance, and gives continuity and character in the story line, "...The story becomes that person's actual history" (p. 247). Personal stories thus were seen as having *formative* power to

give direction to lives (Mishler, 1992; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). Jung (1990) saw the narrative as organizing memory in a way that matches life itself. This internalized story is termed the personal myth, and provides a sense of “a whole being moving forward in a particular direction” (McAdams, 1992, p. 325). Psychological maturity is seen as playing out a chorus of internalized characters, engaged in dialogue with one another (Watkins, 1992), but, rather than confront competing identities, humans create “...a unified identity from birth to death... a comforting story or ‘narrative self’ about ourselves” (Hall, 1992, p. 277). This helps avoid feelings of disintegration. In her study of women and development in work, Fenwick (1998) found that her participants had an internal cohesion or “authentic” self, that allowed what she described as “fragmentation without psychosis” (p. 211).

Several theorists argue that while the unfolding story might look like individual subjectivity, it is still scripted by the narrative norms of society and available cultural templates (Gergen & Gergen, 1983, 1986, 1993; Kerby, 1991; McAdams, 1985b; White & Epston, 1990). An individual’s public action is affected not just by life chances and social influences, but is derived from private self understanding, with language and stories that constrain, or celebrate, as the case might be. Cultural circumscription means: “it can never be the case that there is a ‘self’ independent of one’s cultural historical existence” (Bruner, 1986, p. 67), a point echoed by MacIntyre (1984):

I inherit from the past of my family and my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point...the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. (p. 221)

According to Ochberg (1992), "this influence is not restricted to the subjective interpretation of obviously social life: careers, families and so on. The most seemingly private of 'self' experiences - our emotions, our bodies, our autobiographies - stand revealed as the work of cultural mediation" (p. 230). Communities set rules so stories correspond with the models of intelligibility of their culture. There are many examples of the gatekeepers in society condemning a failure to conform. Riessman (1993) imagined an interpretation of Flaubert's Madame Bovary both before, and after, the recent feminist movement. And Gergen (1997), looking at the fundamental "monomyth" of the hero venturing forth on the quest, wondered about the narrative scripts available to women, who usually get the "supporting actress" role, rather than the autonomous main character.⁷ In sum, it appears that biographies are situated in a ideological context, and what counts as worthwhile is culturally delimited. For Ricoeur (1992) this identity is "articulated ... in the temporal dimension of human existence" (p. 33). Time, through the act of emplotment, allows us to make connections, which saves us from randomness. Time thus functions as the integrative concept within development, and this is an area which I will now investigate.

Time

Bruner (1988, 1990) and Crites (1976) both contended that a story holds the past and future together in the present, creating the sense we have of our selves. Adler (1979) was one of the first to recognize this development process by which humans order their experiences into a teleological narrative. Similarly, McAdams (1985a, 1992, 1993, 1994) and Cohler (1982) also took the view that adults impose order on the "chaos" of their own histories, with a internally consistent narrative that reconstructs the past, present and anticipated future. The idea of the self is that it incorporates temporality in a triad of past, present, future (Mead, 1932/1959, p. xvii).

Ricoeur (1992) saw narrative time as human, not clock, time and invoked Heidegger's existential time where humans fuse past, present and future. In many senses, we exist in the present time world, affected by memories of the past, and anxiety for the future, reminiscent of the opening lines of *Burnt Norton* in Eliot's (1979) The Four Quartets: "Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future and time future contained in time past".

The phase/stage development approach can lead us to suppose that later phases are intrinsically better than earlier ones; that the older people are the more mature and moral they become. Beck (1989) called this "adult chauvinism". Whether moral development is incremental over the life course, or peculiar to older individuals is not the subject of my study, but his point is well taken that modern Western society organizes itself in an time-graduated fashion. Age is as apparent as gender. The failure to act "appropriately" - that is in line with societal expectations for milestones around education, work and family, or by what is called a "social clock" (Helson, Mitchell & Moane, 1984) - is scorned. In her research, Schlossberg (1984) found that: "Being 'on time' or 'off time' is a compelling basis for self assessment, as people compare themselves with others to decide 'whether they are doing poorly for their age' (p. 411).

It is now accepted that time and age-related life span theories have served women badly. Eastmond (1991) and Neugarten (1977) have pointed out that women accomplish the same tasks as men, but at quite different periods of life. Neugarten and Datan (1974) saw the traditional and persistent notional time line of social ordering as coming from an identification of three types of time: life or chronological time, social time with the expectations of a particular society, and historical time which affects the social system. Historical time can lead to a change in age norms and expectations regarding behaviour. The concept of cohort is important here, since several

theorists maintain that social, historical, economic and demographic factors impact on expected roles and affect personal biography more than psychological factors (Cairns, Elder, & Costello, 1996; Elder, 1985; Elder & Liker, 1982; Liker, 1995; Rossi, 1985).

In research on time perspective and mid-life, both Cohler (1982) and Neugarten (1979) noted the experience of time shifts from thinking about time since birth, to thinking about time remaining in life. For many years the notion of mid-life *crisis* was prevalent, although this is now seen as erroneous. One of the findings of the 10 year 9.5 million US\$ MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Mid-Life Development (MIDMAC) has been that only a minority of adult men experience crisis at mid-life (Bradbury & Hancock, 1993), while women's later life brings liberation from traditional roles (Gutmann, 1987; Helson & Wink, 1992). Nonetheless, a major consequence of the attainment of "modern" normative mid-life is the recognition that more than half of one's life may already have been lived and: "...the perception seems to be that there is still time left, although there may be a sense that your choices are becoming more limited and that time will eventually run out" (Lachmann & James, 1997, p. 4). Riverin-Simard (1988) introduced the idea of a vocational "race", and Levinson (1980) described mourning for lost "dreams", given a sense of the diminishing life-line. Bühler (1971) identified a phase of introspection in mid-life for both men and women, which Neugarten (1979) called "interiority". McAdams (1993) and Ricoeur (1984/1988) have each suggested that it is the growing realization of finite time that causes an intense revision of the narrative. Individuals rewrite their stories and reconstruct the past, present and future, to allow for a more satisfying generative ending, a theme which will be discussed later in the chapter.

In this section I have sought to show the literature on how individuals seek to make

meaning, to make their story coherent across time, when some aspect of experience and the self is challenged. Questions of identity are seen to occur primarily at trigger events - those turning points in our routines which are invested with symbolic meaning and demand a change in the personal interpretive script (McAdams, 1985b). In the next section I investigate the literature around the concept of trigger events or transition.

Transitions

Transitions are events that make up the cultural repertoire and can be prescribed by societal norms (such as age appropriateness). For example, the adult life story contains certain normative transition points like milestone birthdays - which may lead to a self assessment. However, equally, according to McAdams (1992), unexpected transitions such as loss or “the jarring transformation of identity” (p. 363) can also lead to significant life appraisal. These points have been described as “marker events” (Kenyon & Randall, 1997; Levinson et al., 1978), “triggers” or “perspective transformation” (Mezirow, 1991), “second chances” (Kotre, 1984), “turnings” (Freeman, 1992), or a “conversion or a change in the personal myth” (Feinstein, Krippner & Granger, 1988). Schlossberg and Robinson (1996) defined transitions as “any event or nonevent that results in change” (p. 43), including both anticipated and unanticipated transitions. Neugarten (1978) used the phrase “turning points” to characterize “when the ‘social persona’ undergoes change” (p. 297) such as a role transition. Transitions are thus viewed as culturally framed and socially situated, and as involving prescribed rituals which denote role exit from an earlier phase and role entrance into a new one.

I took note of Marshall’s (1997) distinction between voluntary versus involuntary transition:

Voluntary transition may often be in response to stimuli *from within the person themselves* (my italics). They have already started to “grow” and have been questioning the way they have been looking at themselves, their relationships, their jobs, and so on. These people are ready, even eager to consider new ways of relating to work and the world at large. In contrast, involuntary transitions, such as losing a job, is more likely to be the stimulus itself for people to look more closely at how they view their world. (p. 113)

In his work, Bridges (1980) made this same clear distinction between concrete *changes* and the lengthier emotional *transitions*. These sometimes painful transitions or reorganizations of the self are defined as learning (Zemke & Zemke, 1995). Equally, for Merriam and Yang (1996), following a high school class over a 14 year period, this longitudinal “change over time” (p. 64) allowed them to map the connections between life experience and learning. The next section examines some of the literature on learning and development.

Learning

There were points of disagreement in the literature. There was a question about whether adult development can be seen in most people, or just in some people, and in some circumstances (Helson et al., 1997). Adult educators are now recognizing that not all adults *wish* to grow and must not be misread as psychologically stunted (Tennant & Pogson, 1991). Furthermore, in contrast to the concept of growth, age was portrayed also as decline from youth, an almost pathological state of deterioration in abilities. I noted that there were references in the literature to stagnation (Erikson, 1968), disengagement (Crites, 1976), deterioration, decay, decline (Santrock, 1989; Super, 1980) in some theories of development. Riverin-Simard (1988) talked about mid-life as a period of wanting to avoid “vocational decadence” (p. 80). Even though

Levinson acknowledged the potential for “continuing self renewal - through the afternoon and evening of life”, he believed that this renewal ends in one’s late 50’s with the “reality and experience of bodily decline” (in Friedan, 1993). In her definition of “interiority”, Neugarten (1979) included such specific components as disengagement in social relations, as well as a resistance to new challenges (p. 223).

Other theorists moved beyond maturational factors in later life, to take into account the complex trade-offs caused by changes in the biological, cognitive and social domains (Baltes, 1987, 1997; Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Baltes & Staudinger, 1996; Elder, 1985, 1991; Labouvie-Vief, 1982, 1996). Cognitivists argued that normative losses in intellectual functioning required people to reorganize their thinking, to maintain effectiveness as they grow older. Development becomes a movement towards efficacy through the application of selection, optimization and compensation to get to a desired level of functioning. This might suggest that career or work change is creative problem solving, when age-associated losses increase the pressure for a selection.

So the picture of adulthood that emerged in the literature was more complex than stability followed by biological decline. Later life does not correspond to a recapitulation of youth, as the Eriksons and Kivnick (1986) argued, but seems to be a seesaw of change with predictability, of dispiriting losses mixed with counterbalancing reintegrations. The result can be a narrative that explains work and personal growth and life projects. These projects may be “generative” - a way of stretching work’s significance to include a social contribution.

Generativity

Generativity, or the capacity to care, has been considered fundamental for judging one’s

life as meaningful (Brim, 1992; Erikson, 1950/1963; McAdams, Hart & Maruna, 1998).⁴ In developing Erikson's model to be more woman-friendly, Gilligan (1982) built on Bakan's (1966) dual process of agency and communion, and distinguished between a "male agentic" ideology of justice and individual rights on the one hand, and a "female communal" ideology of care and social responsibilities on the other. Continuing the case for multiple patterns of experiencing generativity, Edelstein (1997), Friedan (1993) and Josselson (1987) took issue with Erikson's placement of female mid-life generativity in the context of family (when presumably child rearing is diminishing), not in the context of work. It was Merriam and Yang (1996), in work-based studies, who underscored generativity as a developmental outcome, deriving from both the experience of work and the type of employment.

In this section, I have explored the literature which refutes a static conception of development, and have investigated the several sources of developmental change, including that of narratively reconstructing identity.

Summary

The preceding discussion summarized key themes in the literature that informed my understanding of women's mid-life career transition as a manifestation of unresolved developmental issues. In this review, I have presented different literatures to frame the examination of the internal or subjective experience of work meanings for mid-life women, and the contexts that defined them. Adult and career development theories provided the fabric for this research. Development theorists saw development as an ongoing dynamic process which starts at birth and continues to the end of life. What constitutes development per se is a contested issue and has to be contextualized in social, psychological and historical processes. As I have shown,

there were contradictory findings in the literature. Developmental psychology was criticized for its singular focus on determinism as opposed to power relations, and for overlooking the differences among individuals, as well as between different cohort groups. It is a viewpoint which can reduce people to normative cartoons, while ignoring the intricacies of adult life.

However, if the individual-oriented psychological view presented an incomplete model, the countervailing social interactive approach was seen as little better since it focussed on systems, to the exclusion of the self. This oppositional dichotomy has raised critical questions about the adequacy of development theory to capture the experience of women and to enrich our understanding of their work meanings. One benefit offered by life course theory and research is the questioning of the role of cognition and learning, as well as ideas about gain and loss, growth and deterioration or decline. The myth of development as incremental growth towards greater efficacy has been dismantled, and it is now acknowledged that life always consists of the joint occurrence of both gain and loss. Lives seem to be characterized by transformations due to expected and unexpected life events, and by intrinsic factors, including aging. The major emphasis is on adaptation and coping, and by age-specific frameworks like optimization. However, individual cognitive effort is not sufficiently explanatory and the social and cultural foundation of cognition is seen as a key factor as individuals move into later phases of life. Rather than regarding ontogeny as being merely age-related as in developmental psychology, the literature search has highlighted the consequences of experience and social practices, as well as historical context. This embodies the idea that society offers many possible life biographies for an individual to select from. It was also clear in the literature search that little explicit attention has been given to the role that work or work transitions play in the developing life story, although

Merriam and Clark (1991) observed that the circumstances and tasks of women's work have implications for intellectual and personal development. Fenwick's (1998) study demonstrated that a deep need to make sense of work experiences is central to women recovering their "authentic" selves.

Another perspective informing this chapter has been the dialectic between a narrativization of one's life and identity formation. There has been a resurgence of interest in the relationship between stories and life as lived (Bruner, 1996; Mishler, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 1993). People tell their story in temporally-sequenced episodes in which transitions are explained in ways that help to dissolve meaninglessness.⁹ Social constructionists have disputed that such stories are reflective of "reality" and claim that the self is socially constructed, emergent and plural (Shotter, 1993; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). They believe that the chronicles people tell have a cultural basis and are not just born of a good story-telling ability. Identity is seen as socially defined as individuals interact with others in a larger society. The difficulty with this perspective is that it assumes that people have no wish to, and do not, resist.

A crucial question continues to be whether stories can become recipes for restructuring experience itself, for mastering the past in new liberating ways and laying down identity. Certainly, Wiersma (1992), in a case study called Karen: The transforming story, reported how an individual became aware of her personal progress being thwarted by academic sexism. Mishler (1992) and Rosenwald (1992) each saw narrative as a heuristic awakening, developmentally directing the life story into the future. I am drawn to Shalin (1993) and to Sauer and Lyle (1997, 1999) who, even while acknowledging post-modernist claims, pointed out that this is not to say that there is no core concept of self. The message is that individuals may find it possible to play

an active role and “respeak themselves”.

From an educational perspective it is important to not only orient a reader to the historical development of the subject literature and controversies within it, but to provide a transparent framework. All research studies differ along dimensions. Mine is a descriptive, idiographic, phenomenological account which was not embedded in explicit theory, although it attends to development and learning perspectives. The research reviewed above raised two concerns which are addressed in this study. One was the need to investigate the subjective meaning of work for mid-life women, and of embracing an expanded concept of work which recognizes developmental concerns and the centrality of work to a woman’s identity (Chester & Grossman, 1990). The second was the importance of conducting that research in ways that permitted the expression of idiographic changes within an individual, to look at who are optimally generative women. In response to these needs the research questions guiding this study explore the meaning of work transformations and how mid-life women agentially create themselves as “somebody”. And having earlier urged the appropriateness of the combined lenses of phenomenology, narrative and feminism to the creation of personal meaning, I now introduce the methodology that supports these questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was psycho-social in nature – it examined the subjective experience of work and transition and how individual mid-life women constructed meaning about work and self. At the beginning of the study, I was starting from my own personal and professional experience in women's employment and career counselling, fuelled by a curiosity about the link between women's mid-life work transitions, work identity and sense of purpose. As I began this research, I had to question why I was involved with the phenomenon in terms of biases and predispositions, since the perspective taken always frames what is to be studied and how (Hunnisett, 1986).

Sensitizing Concepts

What Schwandt (1994) calls "sensitizing concepts" for designing this qualitative study were set following Creswell's (1998, p. 74-78) world view, whose model I have borrowed, italicized and set out here. *Ontologically*, I took reality to be subjective and multiple, rather than particular and actual, and my purpose was understanding. The assumptions I made about the nature of reality were not as an objective, dispassionate observer, but were rooted in my own experience and understanding of the world as a white, middle-class, so-called "first world" woman who defines herself as feminist. Lather (1991) saw gender as the conceptual lens that organizes particular questions (p. 71). I am not a disinterested observer, and distanced myself from the Cartesian rational point of "viewlessness", whereby real knowledge is seen as uncontaminated by subjective experiences. I will expand, later in this chapter, on why a phenomenological focus seemed so naturally appropriate to me, as the researcher, but, at this stage, it is enough to invoke

my personal affinity with Dewey's (1980) rejection of the "spectator theory" of absolute knowledge, and with Auden's (1950) irreverent words, "Thou shalt not sit with statisticians nor commit a social science". Greene (1994) has argued: "interpretivism is about contextualized meaning [where] social reality is viewed as socially constructed, based on a constant process of interpretation and reinterpretation of the intentional, meaningful behavior of people" (in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 536). So, *epistemologically*, my stance was constructivist or interpretivist. Constructivists see knowledge and meaning as socially defined, not just as information processing. When social factors are assumed to play a role in individual acts of cognition, it is presumed that not all knowers will come to similar meanings. I took a hermeneutic perspective that individuals are engaged in making sense of their activities, and do so by naming them according to their own values or world view. *Axiologically*, I saw trustworthiness as more important than validity. *Rhetorically*, I was concerned about the language of research, since language and social interaction construct and transmit meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). One assumption I had was that the process would be mutually educative. So, *methodologically*, I undertook a dialectical process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) to allow a concentrated heuristic appraisal that would both slow down the researcher and illuminate specific qualities of the participant's experience. Following the precepts of feminist research and adult education, I drew on a trans-disciplinary and a multi-methodological perspective to allow a dialectical process to take place (Peshkin, 2001). Cook (1993) proposed that an integration of multiple perspectives particularly advances an understanding of mid-life development (in Treleaven, 1999, p. 12).

Justification for the Research Design

To access both subjective and objective worlds, I chose to blend elements of interpretive

phenomenology and feminist inquiry within a hermeneutic narrative. The fusion of these approaches seemed like a Möbius strip, as the threads melded into one another. If, as Hunnisett (1986) pointed out, phenomenology is a research tool for understanding our relationship to the world, it mirrors the feminist search for the relationship between individual and social realities. The feminist ideology of compassionate understanding of the “other” coincides with the reflective nature of the narrative, and is central to the formation of phenomenological subjectivity. Some feminists have argued that narratives are the basic block of consciousness raising (Daly, 1978), and the exposition of the meaning of such stories belongs to the phenomenologist. Furthermore feminism and constructivism have natural affinities, according to Tisdell (1998). Feminism derives from a political critique, and constructivism from a critique of epistemology - both start from the premise that things are different from the way they appear. Jacobson (1995) saw this as a useful combination for practitioner-oriented research, since constructivism can be augmented by the utopian aspects of feminism.

To sum up, the concepts of existential phenomenology, which closely reflect women’s experience of the world, and provide a base for a feminist psychology, appealed to me, as well as the phenomenological methodology of grounding concepts in subjective experience rather than in logical deduction (Boukydis, 1981). Since my goal was not explanation or prediction, but psychological meaning, I wanted to “tease” out meanings about the experience of women’s mid-life and work. Since individuals tell their histories subjectively - spotlighting parts and leaving out others - the hermeneutic reporting became as important as the story. Nonetheless, all qualitative researchers are concerned with process, and with participants’ idiographic perceptions of meaning (Geertz, 1973; Merriam, 1988), so it becomes important, at this juncture, to set out the particular

strengths. I begin with the contribution of phenomenology to this study, both as a philosophy and as a research approach.

The Contribution of Phenomenology

The central idea of phenomenology is “the world [is] not just waiting to be discovered” (Anderson, 1991, p. 29), but involves an exploration for meaning and essence (Barrineau & Bozarth, 1989; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Van Manen, 1997). It is important here to preemptively set out how essence is interpreted in the study, given tacit paradoxes within the approaches taken. While phenomenology emphasizes idiosyncratic individual meanings, I do not translate essences as hard and substantive essential structures which might lead us to believe that the world is rather simpler than it is. This departs from a strict Husserlean view which presupposes that there are absolute essences in phenomena. According to Willis (2001) this interpretation may be more compatible with phenomena in adult education which seem not always to have a univocal structure. Consistent with developmental constructivism’s multiple perspective-taking, Willis suggests looking for situated meanings, where characteristics hang together, and correspond more to Wittgenstein’s (1953) notion of family resemblance.

The research topic - women’s search for meaning in work at mid-life - can be presented as both individual and social in nature. This fits with phenomenology’s precepts of accounting for both a person’s “being” and “in the world” contextually (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Subjectivity is a central concept, since, according to Husserl (1913/1931, 1931/1964): “We see things in our own way, and if we did not actively, consciously recognize, interpret and give meaning to what we see and feel, these phenomena and events would not exist for us” (1931/1964, p. 552). Humans are thus viewed as caring about whether their lives make existential sense, with the view that each

person is unique and acts intentionally. This rejection of determinism echoes Adlerian (1926/1972) private logic and a Rogerian (1951, 1985) strengths perspective and fitted with my counselling psychology background, where people are seen as having the capacity to shape their own lives.

There are several philosophical camps in phenomenology¹⁰ (Tesch, 1990), from which I selected the hermeneutic perspective as pertinent to my study. The word derives from the Greek god Hermes, the interpreter of the Delphic oracle, and emphasizes the interpretation of experience. Originally conceived as a method of textual analysis, it has since moved its focus to meaning-making, in the dialogue between interpreter and narrator. As such, Kvale (1996) deemed it particularly relevant to interview research. As Alfred Schutz (1967) wrote, “meaning does not lie *in* the experience. Rather those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively” (p. 69).

Heidegger (1927/1962) offered an approach for systematically gathering individual perspectives in order to understand the collective meanings of an event (Dieckmann, Allan & Tanner, 1989, p. 45). Since I wanted to study “average” or non-élite women, my approach was closer to Husserl (1931/1964), who in a famous phrase, advocated getting “back to the things themselves”. Accordingly, what is meant to be studied is everyday, ordinary life, or to quote Wittgenstein (1988): “God grant the philosopher insight into what lies in front of everyone’s eyes” (p. 63). My task, was to discover how the women understood their world, intuitively and reflectively, in order to find both common and unique “constituents” (Giorgi, 1975), by determining:

...what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to

provide a comprehensive description of it ... from the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essence or structures of the experiences. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13)

The objective was not scientific proof, but to describe lived experience (Creswell, 1998; Fiumara, 1990; Schwandt, 2000), so as to give rise to what might be called the Eureka factor - that spontaneous recognition that patterns fit together logically for us (Tesch, 1990). The result is meant to be that a reader feels "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

Phenomenological Method

Phenomenology is more concerned with knowing, rather than method per se (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Tesch, 1990), with Schwandt (2000) adding that "philosophical hermeneutics...is not in the first instance, a procedure- or rule-governed undertaking" (p. 194). Giddens (1976) pointed out that:

to speak of "phenomenology" is not to speak of a single unified body of thought...It is more an approach, an attitude, an investigative posture with a certain set of goals...to use the same exact method on two different problems violates the phenomenological attitude. (p. 24)

Van Manen (1997) has defended this phenomenological vagueness: "...the paths (methods) cannot be determined by fixed sign posts. They need to be discovered or invented as a response to the question at hand..." (p. 29). While there may be no prescriptive "cookbook of instructions" (Keen, 1975, p. 41), some researchers have suggested procedures (Hunnisett, 1986; Mott, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982; Van Manen, 1984¹¹), in order to offer "practical knowledge of thoughtful

action” (Van Manen, Bergum, Smith, Ford & Maeda, 1987). Patton (1990) identified three basic Husserlean steps : a) epoché, b) phenomenological reduction, and c) structural synthesis. Epoché refers to the period in which the researcher must identify and “bracket” disabling personal biases in order to be a clear receptor. Reduction is the phase when the researcher brackets the rest of the world, in order to suspend theoretical interpretations of any kind (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). In the structural synthesis, the abstracted themes are constructed to form a Gestalt, or meaningful whole. These three steps are expanded in the section on analysis.

So in determining my role as “bricoleur”, to use Lévi-Strauss’s researcher term (in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3), how did I identify myself so readily as a phenomenological hermeneutic? Principally, I found my attachment to phenomenology in Gadamer’s (1975/1989) reminder about how important the question is in our search for knowledge. My question derived from my life: Who are women as they change work identities is close to the existential question of who am I? Having changed careers both voluntarily and involuntarily during my own life, this research offered me a way “to reclaim the human and passionate element” (Janesick, 1994, p. 51). Several other researchers (Harding, 1991; Maynard, 1994; Miller, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Stanley & Wise, 1983/1993) have stressed the importance of reflexivity in acknowledging the role we play in creating and interpreting research data. My involvement allowed no detachment (Bergum, 1989) and required that I “write myself, not in a narcissistic way, but in a deep collective sense” (Van Manen, 1984, p. 28). This is normally suspect in social science research but, like Peshkin (1992), my subjectivity was transparent: “under no circumstances can I shed it - I can deal with it, manage it - but it has the capacity to dictate all parts of the research process...” (p. 4).

Accordingly, as both a researcher and self reflexive participant concerned with portraying

the lived reality of women's lives, I wanted to ground the study in women's stories, using phenomenological interviews that were concurrently informed by a constructivist approach and a feminist stance. I looked to the wealth of literature around constructivism and feminism to provide me with a personal perspective through which to approach and interpret the research.

A Constructivist Approach

Constructivism shares with phenomenology several relativist interpretive assumptions about the subjective nature of lived experience and social order. Its primary emphasis is on probing for meanings, with the individual as an, "active agent, seeking order and meaning in social contexts where his or her uniquely personal experiences are challenged to continue developing" (Mahoney, 1996, p. 5). This was reflective of a shift from a psychodynamic view of personality, with drives and instincts, to one where the self is not a given with prestocked cognitive data banks, but a construction (Bruner, 1987). Theorists such as Nelson and Poulin (1997), Peavy (1997), and Phillips (1994) have set out four bodies of literature which contribute to the constructivist perspective that human realities are constructed rather than discovered. The first is education related (Bruner, 1986; Piaget et al., 1991; Vygotsky, 1978), with an emphasis on how the individual learner goes about constructing knowledge with a personal cognitive apparatus. The second body of literature covers personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1955), where we exist as a plurality of possible worlds and can choose from a repertoire of characters. The third body is social constructionism (Gergen, 1982) or a socio-cultural approach (Wertsch, 1993), where both schools acknowledge the defining and relational nature of cultures. The final one is narrative psychology (Bruner, 1990) which considers that people organize their experiences in narrative rather than categorical ways. I located myself across this wide spectrum, with an interest both in

individual knowledge building, and in community knowledge building and its attendant focus on contextual values. This echoed the feminist standpoint that knowledge is culturally situated, and that women have been forced to adjust to the expectations and conceptual schemes provided by the dominant institutions (Harding, 1991; Walkerdine, 1989).

A Feminist Lens

Phenomenologically, I took on the role of an engaged feminist inquirer, with a responsibility to tell these women's stories. The imperative in feminist phenomenological research is that it be reflective, collaborative and relational. Ethically the feminist researcher has to promote a non-exploitative relationship, so that the research can be transformative for both interviewer and interviewee (Lorraine, 1990; Olesen, 1994; Punch, 1998; Reinharz, 1985/1992). I wanted to enable this diverse group of participants in researching their lived experience. As I have noted earlier in this review, feminist researchers in the 1970s and 1980s focussed on "the absence of women from or marginalized reports of women in research accounts...[and stressed] a particular view that builds on and from women's experiences" (Olesen, 1994, p. 163). Growing skeptical about gender determinism, and grand categories such as sex and patriarchy, they began to focus more on story details (Tisdell, 1998). The unified self or voice and the intellectual who objectified and spoke for others were rejected (Lather, 1991; Stewart, 1994).

A major theme in post-modernism has been to find space for here-to-fore unheard voices, or what Spender (1985) called a muted group. As noted earlier, Heilbrun (1988) believed that women's stories were left untold, because their plot lines had no appeal to a mass culture shaped around male concerns. Decades ago, Virginia Woolf introduced readers to the fictional "Shakespeare's Sister". Even more recently, famous women have continued to be left out of the

frame. As Butler (1990) reminded us, Rosalind Franklin was totally omitted from the DNA discovery story, as told by Crick and Watson. The dominant life scripts allowed to women have been seen as a product of patriarchy (Smith & Watson, 1992), and so there are serious impediments to recording the real subjective experiences of middle-aged women; not the least of which are the lingering, disparaging words of Freud:

throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity ... nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply - you are yourselves the problem.
(in Fiumara, 1990)

Maggie Siggins (2000), in her book recounting stories of women classmates, recognized this centuries-old “black cloud of misogyny”. Her biographies were of “cusp generation” women, and celebrated the fact that “...every now and then, there’d be this little tiny rent in the misogyny cloud and women bubbled into it” (in Kennedy, 2000). In similar fashion, I wished to offset these outdated, but deep-seated, sentiments. My goal was to understand, interpret and define the specific meanings within the work change narratives of mid-life women in order to learn about differences, as well as common experiences. I wanted to champion women’s lives as the location from which feminist research should begin, and stress the importance of listening to women themselves tell us about their everyday lives and experiences and name what they think critical.

The epistemological debate about what it is to be a feminist inquirer has touched on the question of what constitutes knowledge, about the nature of power, about who can be the “knower”. Lather (1991) proposed validating research, not by researcher neutrality, but via a praxis-oriented model where women “get smart” about their daily lives. This credo of no more

experts was taken up by Roman and Apple (1990): “We must shift the role of critical intellectuals from being universalizing spokespersons to acting as cultural workers, whose task is to take away the barriers that prevent people from speaking for themselves” (p.ix). The basic tenet of my research was that each woman had the right to describe the world from her point of view, with little intrusiveness. In trying to find a mutually educative dialogic approach, I was mindful of Reinharz’s (1985) words that research is, “...a process one undertakes for oneself: it is not something done ‘to’ or ‘for’ someone...” (p. 4). According to Oakley (1981):

A feminist methodology...requires, further, that the mythology of “hygienic” research, with its accompanying mystification of the researcher and the researched as objective instruments of data production, can be replaced by the recognition that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias - it is a condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives. (p. 58)

Others have added to the discourse on generating knowledge, promoting the positive uses of subjectivity, and non-hierarchical relationships between subjects and researchers (Cole, 1993; DeVault, 1990). Fonow and Clark (1991) have echoed this, claiming that self reflexivity - whereby the experience of the researcher is deliberately included - is the most valuable source of information. I was not writing out my story, per se, but I was undoubtedly working out issues which have been, and are, mine - issues about change and transition, about meanings, choices and identities; it was, therefore, a sort of autobiography.

None of us, however, is able to separate our story from the countless larger stories which construct our worlds. I will now discuss why I chose to use a narrative perspective in designing the study, and used narrative as the reporting genre to give a subjective voice to women.

A Narrative Perspective

For hermeneutic phenomenology all knowledge is meaning generating (Gergen & Kaye, 1992). The outcome is a heuristic descriptive narrative (Barrineau & Bozarth, 1989; Moustakas, 1990) whose themes and patterns offer knowledge about lived experience. It was Bruner (1988) who actively rejected the mind as logical information processor and most championed a narrative way of thought as a “world-making function”, so that: “we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we ‘tell about’ our lives” (p. 15). Randall (1995) called this the “autobiographical imperative or the restorying of our souls and finally the novel-ty of our lives” (p. 13). Several other theorists see life as story as a recurring and attractive metaphor (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Heilbrun, 1988; Rosen, 1996) - as Bruner (1999) noted, “No story, no self” (p. 8).

My past profession has sculpted this project - as a counsellor I am aware that people enter counselling because they want their lives to change. Over the years I have learned, that clients tell their stories as a way of arriving at their own internal wisdom. Auster (in Fulford, 1999) wrote that “we construct a narrative for ourselves and that’s the thread we follow from one day to the next. People who disintegrate as personalities are the ones who lose that thread” (p. 13). Bruner (1986) called counselling the conscious retelling of our life in “a more contradiction-free and generative narrative”, while Savickas (1997) saw the process of career counselling as one of enhancing narratibility. Situations can be invested with meaning, and identities changed by changing the story; thus our biographies can re-assembled to address unfinished business and, in Savickas’ opinion, compensate for what was missing in childhood. In Rosen’s (1993) words:

storytelling is an essential part of the functioning of the human mind. It is a major means

of thinking and communicating our thoughts ... Scholars of many different kinds...have all insisted that narrative is not an optional extra - froth on the surface of human behaviour - but the 'central function of instance of the human mind'. (p. 14)

Erikson (1968) saw the private story as key in the development of personality, and the feminist movement has sensitized us to the possibility of transcending oppressive patterns through storying (Gergen, 1997; Riessman, 1993). Narrative is seen as a way to contain the accidental and sometimes unbearable quality of life (Geertz, 1983). White (1995) believed that "...when people are engaged in meaning making they are engaged in telling stories about their own and each other's lives" (pp. 216-217). He set out three layers of narrative interpretation, which echo the feminist analysis set out earlier. At the centre is the personal and individual life story which exists within a stock of socially available repertoires of the self, and these two inner boxes are surrounded by the dominant cultural narratives which are the larger stories we live within and which can constrain the self. Interest in narrative has grown because of the persistent misrepresentation of women in androcentric theory (Belenky et al., 1986) and because of the dynamic of what Gilligan (1982), building on Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976), called manstories and womanstories. Since people make sense out of their lives by creating a narrative, it was critical to define methodological issues.

Narrative as Method

The biographical method has had much focus in educational research (Pinar, 1992) as a way to reveal personal practical knowledge. Riessman (1993) found that respondents "narrativize particular experience in their lives often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society" (p. 3), which might be likened to Mezirow's (1991, 1994) concept of a disorienting

dilemma. I used narrative precisely because it is a *sense making* activity, which allows individuals who can recognize that they have experienced a substantial shift in focus and life/work perspective, to reflect upon this transition. Iris Murdoch once said that one does not *live* a story, but tells it later - seeing it only from the outside (in Randall, 1996).

I found Ochs' (1997) conversational narrative approach helpful in "exteriorizing" the women's interior conversation, as we worked jointly to construct their personal stories. When accounts are all over the temporal map, ordinary conversation can construct coherence within the dramatic tensions of the stories. I wanted to learn those incidents which might be construed as making progress in a personal quest (Mishler, 1992). Morawski and Brunhuber (1995), invoking Adler's views on early recollections, give a reminder about the selective memory process of individuals. What matters is not so much accuracy, but the metaphoric representation of the person's current life style. Lincoln (1995) saw narrative as both a lens for viewing and understanding a phenomenon, as well as a method to ensure completeness and rigour.

One of the implications of talking about work is that the problem can be defined narrowly, instead of richly and complexly. It was critical to determine what aspects of the narrative constituted the basis for interpretation - what Riessman (1993) called "unpacking a text". Several researchers have highlighted the basic importance of language, an area which is examined next.

Language in Narrative.

According to Kerby (1991), language is a formative part of reality, not just a tool for communicating. Heidegger (1975) demanded that we "dwell" in language, with "no trace of predatory or hunting paradigms on our own" so that others may help us, as researchers, to give birth to our *own* thoughts. Since our sense of self-meaning is derived from the language and the

stories that we hear (Benstock, 1988), post-modernists have treated the self as a linguistic social construction (Kerby, 1991). However, others (Gubrium & Holstein, 1994; Ricoeur, 1991) reject a deconstructed self that emphasizes linguistic sources, proffering a “middle ground” where a self is fluid, but also “real” through narrative.

Mishler (1992) has been adamant that narratives do not speak for themselves. His guide to narrative analysis focussed on the meaning of what was said; the interpersonal relationship; and the textual analysis. Others have investigated such areas as the ethics of interviewing (Mies, 1983), the relations with informants (Lather, 1991; Oakley, 1981; the Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Reinharz, 1985/1992) and the centrality of language (Daly, 1978; DeVault, 1990; Smith, 1987; Spender, 1980/1985). Despite a call to speak the truths of silenced groups of women from some researchers (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Reinharz, 1985/1992), others, like Riessman (1993), have contended we do not have direct access to another’s experience, and so can only record and interpret what we hear. In an exposition of the five levels of representation - which will be set out later in this chapter - she showed how texts about lives are “worldly creations” which reveal the intersections of the social, cultural, personal and political. She called the resulting core narrative a kind of radical surgery of “poetic structures”. This issue of portrayal will be highlighted later in the section on analysis, but, at this point, I want to set out the research process I undertook in terms of interviewing, transcribing and analyzing.

Procedures

Since interviewing has been proclaimed as particularly suitable in phenomenology to capture the “structure and essence” of everyday consciousness (Patton, 1990, p. 70), I chose to gather the stories this way. I based the interview process on the five phases identified by Kvale

(1996). In 1) the participant gives unrehearsed responses without any interpretation from the interviewer; 2) the participant discovers links and connections - that is, new meanings in what she experiences; 3) the interviewer takes the opportunity to offer interpretations for clarification or rejection; 4) the interviewer listens for what is not said - reading between the lines; 5) there are subsequent interviews where the initial interpretations are offered back for consideration. Kvale (1984, 1996) and Paget (1982, in DeVault, 1990, p. 9) have used the term “conversation” instead of interview, which is suggestive of more openness, and reminded me, “that the person being interviewed can legitimately take over the direction and flow of the interview” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 11). Holstein and Gubrium (1997) recognized that research “subjects” are not stable entities but are *actively* constructed through their answers with the researchers. Given that the research process involves negotiating meanings with subjects over time, I understood the need to accept a lack of specific rules around conducting the research and believed myself to have a “high tolerance for ambiguity” (Creswell, 1994, p. 9).

Interviewing Process

I wanted to find professional women who had undergone a voluntary work transition at a mid-life point - not an imposed major work disruption - and obtain their stories about their experience of work, work meaning and transition in their own words. In terms of my usage of professionalism, I was not looking at categories of work per se, but more the concept of a “seasoned” worker and I chose not to involve women who had extended or frequent periods of unemployment. Since interviews are seen as the essential vehicle to develop a conversational relationship (Van Manen, 1997), I conducted a series of individual interviews - what Kenyon and Randall (1997) call biographical encounters. I sought out a purposive sample of women, who had

experienced what might be described as either turning points (Neugarten, 1977; 1996), or epiphanies (Denzin, 1989a), in their work lives. I contacted potential participants initially to determine whether they were in a transition that was suitable to the study. The transition had to be either over or ongoing - and was based on internal psychological change in the way individuals related to their work, not simply an external change in job. In the preliminary interviews with prospective respondents, I was careful to offer a broad canvas of work meanings and encouraged women to enlarge their own definition. I found it delicate to reject potential candidates who described important personal change processes, but ones that did not appear to match my criteria of a pivotal shift. I acknowledged the importance of these individuals' transitions and thanked them for their interest.

Selection of Participants

To provide an empirical account of women's mid-life work meanings, I purposively solicited women who were in the age range 45-60 years with a long-standing commitment to work, which set boundaries around social and economic status. The age range was based on the third phase of adult female life cycle (Bernard, cited in Neugarten, 1996). Some theorists maintain that it is only at mid-life that individuals question how private values may have become submerged (Jung, 1990; Kegan, 1982, 1994). Heilbrun (1988) calls this the point at which "women stop being female impersonators" (p. 126). Moreover, the experience level of individuals can affect their motivation to reflect - conflicts often do not come with entry level jobs, but with investment of time in our work lives. Apter (1995), invoking Joyce Carol Oates' phrase, called this "looking back time" when the idea of a reciprocal universe has collapsed, taking with it childhood magical thinking or the notion of an adolescent heroic journey. The concept of

diminished time leads to what Heidegger (1927/1962) calls uncheerfully the “Being Towards Death”.

The participants had to be able to recognize in themselves a major recent work “shift” (within approximately the last five years) which had lead to a very different path. The phenomenon of a self-initiated, self-reflective and pivotal mid-life transition needed to be relatively recent so that memories and interest remained rich (Van Kaam, 1989). Since transitions can be said to be successful only when they have finally made sense (Bridges, 1980), I intentionally sought women who had come through the process, and could retrospectively narrate the larger part of their experience, even if some elements or outcomes of the transition were still ongoing. Because of the reliance on interviewing, participants needed to be able to express themselves verbally (Polkinghorne, 1989).

I advertised, formally and informally, that I was seeking average professional mid-life women who were committed, or felt that they had a calling, to their work, which included the non-paying or voluntary sector. This recruitment call for participants is attached as Appendix A. In terms of recruiting, I used multiple strategies, including network selection or snowballing; asking for referrals from friends, business partners and a professional network of colleagues, or from women’s professional organizations; advertising in alumnae journals; seeking clients at women’s employment centres who were engaged in career development questions; using informal networks in local arts groups or through support groups for survivors of significant illness, to canvass for potential participants with my research recruitment advert. I found one candidate by happenstance, while walking around an art exhibit vernissage at a conference on Women and Religion. I also contacted Presidents of association chapters who knew me, since I was aware

that there is a circle of trust when an intermediary can give you permission to use their name in any introductory contact. Despite having many friends, and new acquaintances, who were exploring mid-life's work choices fully and expressively, I only recruited participants with whom I did not have a relationship. I chose to forgo friends' stories - albeit reluctantly - given that some boundaries should not be trespassed, and can put friendship at risk (Sparkes, 1997). I used Lexis-Nexis to search for feature articles about individuals who had radically changed their careers. Since I live in an area historically characterized as single industry in terms of jobs, I had expected to be able to easily find, and access local, regional and national contacts across the country, who had used multiple level governments' workforce downsizing to explore other "work" ventures. Contacts made in my previous occupation which had involved regular travel across the country would have made this a feasible option. In actual fact, none of my participants had taken advantage of any kind of exit or outplacement package from any employer.

To avoid confounding the topic, the sample was small and culturally cohesive. Research has revealed that "the key to success...of collaborative research models is homogeneity of research participants" (Ahola-Sidaway, et al., 1999). Their histories could be described as "white-collar" in a traditional demarcation, but I had not sought this deliberately, and imagine that some of the participants would be bemused about that designation given the work they actually chose to do. I am aware of the checks that opportunity structure, class, colour and culture of origin have upon self identity. For example, I have already raised the variability in how we define the mid-life period (Helson, 1997; Neugarten, 1996; Neugarten & Datan, 1974). In terms of number, Morse (1994) recommended six participants, echoing Blumer (1979), who believes that "half a dozen individuals who are knowledgeable about the issue researched constitute a far better

representative sample than a thousands of individuals who are not” (p.xxxii). Polkinghorne (1989) maintained that a small group allows for in-depth interviews and the presentation of information in compelling enough detail to enable readers to connect to the experience of what Inglessi (1990) called “privileged witnesses”. Fiumara (1990) advocated that “less is more” suggesting that attentively listening to a small number of respondents, or even one voice, can become an accredited source of knowledge.

From a prospective list of twelve people I limited the sample to five women who seemed willing to share meaningful insights, and got their commitment to continue, and asked them to fill in a background questionnaire (Appendix D) on age and brief educational and relationship history. The five participants were working middle-class, from urban and suburban regions, all with post-secondary education. They included both Caucasian and First Nations women, aged between 47 and 57. Two had been married and left as single parents of birth or adoptive children. They were now in new relationships; three were single, childless, with no current partners. They could identify their parents at either end of the economic spectrum - either upper middle class or else very poor. They either self described as religious or spiritual, or as having no expressed interest in religion.

As I continued the research, there were occasions when I had to seriously examine my criteria and consider whether I wanted to modify them. Once was when I was in contact with a woman who had just turned 40 (and so did not qualify in the age range), but who had given up a worthwhile career in the medical field to totally retrain herself for a teaching career with young underprivileged children. The other instance involved regretfully giving up a participant since she lived in Nunavut and the process of interviewing remotely, without the benefit of interviews face-

to-face (even after an initial session together) proved just too difficult without the benefit of body language. With the selected participants I discussed, before the first face-to-face interview, either by phone or e-mail, the scope and purpose of my research, and the expectations of their role and their time commitment.

Interviewing for Data Collection

I set up sequential, loosely structured dialogic interviews with the five participants. In terms of what to call the interviewees themselves - whether it be “respondent” or “participant”, there are several viewpoints. Giorgi (1987) advocated using “co-researcher” to recognize that interviewees function as more than research “subjects” or as passive “informants”. However, mindful of the advice given by Seidman (1998, p. 8) on the use of terms, I could see that, since I was not involving the individual women in the research design or in the findings analysis, the word “participant” was more appropriate to a mutually informative dialogical exchange.

Following Seidman’s tenets for in-depth phenomenological interviews, there were three separate sessions of 90 minutes with each participant. Most of these were able to be spaced three days or a week apart, and were completed in a two to four week period (only one took longer at eight weeks, because of that individual’s busy schedule). I concluded the interviews for each new case, modifying my intervention to some degree, before moving on to the next person. Since these were women who had many commitments, we set up suitable times and convenient places that would be relatively free from interruptions; for some it was my office, for others their home, or their office if they had private space.

At the beginning of the first session I explained the study, and went over the Consent Form (Appendix B), outlining the fact they could drop out or decline questions. Interviewing can

become a psychologically vulnerable process as people disclose events and decisions that have affected their lives. Written permission to proceed was sought and the women were invited to keep a copy of this form, which deals with safeguarding the anonymity, confidentiality and general welfare of the research subjects. I informed the participants that approval had been sought and granted by the Research Ethics Board for research involving human subjects. The issue of voluntary reflexive journals or the introduction of personal artefacts was then broached. We discussed the use of pseudonyms to mask identity and location, or whether they wanted to be credited as individuals for what they said. I did not share the questions in advance as I wanted to obtain spontaneous responses at the time of the interview which were as close as possible to a true reflection of the experience and not overly intellectualized or pre-structured (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Seidman (1998) suggested that this is appropriate for having the “participant reconstruct his or her experience” (p. 9). Keen (1975) warned that the “the researcher must find a way to evoke descriptions from his participants that will tell him (sic) what he wants to know without telling them what to say” (p. 58). Both phenomenology and feminist practice imply a temporal process, which narrative can support in avoiding a questionnaire format. I gathered the brief demographic data that confirmed the selection criteria, set the tape recorder between us and began the interview.

Researcher Role and Reflexivity

Given that I had no hypotheses to prove or disprove, I had actively chosen a qualitative approach to get to a genuine discourse and break down the barrier between the researcher, as constructing knowledge, and the “researched”, as merely providing information (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Kvale, 1984). Social science customarily has shown a cardinal distrust of the researcher’s

“self” as being a potential threat to objectivity. However, it is now recognized that personal histories are germane to our research (Abbey et al., 1997; Bergum, 1989, 1991; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Hutchison, 1988; Stanley & Wise, 1983/1993). Moustakas (1994) called this reflexivity - the casting of a problem statement autobiographically, which Pinar (1992) saw in this way: “...We are not the stories we tell as much as we are the modes of relations to others our stories imply, modes... implied by what we delete, as much as by what we include” (p. 218).

Consequently, it was important for me to admit subjectivity. I had come to this research project with a compelling curiosity about my own subjective experiences as a middle-aged woman, whose continuing involvement with work has been set in a context of changing philosophies and trends. As a result, my voice appears in the research as advocate, passionate sixth participant and as a facilitator of other voices. However, there were early difficulties for me in finding this voice, and in reconciling my status of “insider/outsider” to use Ayala’s (2000) words. I had to make decisions on how “to write [my] self into the text” (Billig, 1994, p. 326) and decided that one way would be to use my journal to chronicle some of their images to find matching literary references from my own background which were revived for me by their issues.

I began by assuming that my own gender, similar work status, and age would gain me not only access but, more importantly, the trust of interviewees (Edwards, 1993; Olesen, 1994, 2000), and this was accurate. In that sense I was an “insider, to the community of respondents that I was interviewing, and I shared their experience. In determining an appropriate stance, I had taken notice of Reinharz’s (1985) statement: “...we should feel free to substitute explicit interests for implicit ones, include the researcher as a subject and draw upon her self-reflection and subjectivity as a source of knowledge...” (p. 17). Bergum (1989) has encouraged researchers to look back

on their own lives (which can include the experience of marginalization), “reflecting upon and understanding our own personal, political and intellectual biographies as researchers, and making explicit where we are located in relation to our research respondents” (in Steier, 1991, p. 121). Common interests can make an interview feel safer, as shown by Wiersma’s (1992) respondents, who spoke more frankly when they knew she was starting a new career just as they were.

However, I was also concurrently enmeshed in the research community, and in the paradox of being made effectively an “outsider”. Behar (1993) has written about these parallel vicissitudes, explaining that “we ask for revelations from others, but we reveal little or nothing of ourselves; we make others vulnerable, but we ourselves remain invulnerable” (p. 273). I had been careful to give information on myself at the start of the interviewing process, and had never felt constrained about commenting, throughout the sessions, with personal observations or corroborations. But I was also keenly aware of Lal’s (1996) view that flooding the conversation can act to silence participants (in Weis & Fine, 2000, p. 34). In the words of Rosaldo (1989): “if classic ethnography’s vice was the slippage from the ideal of detachment to actual indifference, that of present-day reflexivity is the tendency for the self-absorbed Self to lose sight altogether of the culturally different Other” (p. 7). This respects other findings on the importance of giving primacy to the subject’s view point (Colaizzi, 1978; Hycner, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999), and to the notion of interviewing for storyline, to help individuals organize and express meaning (Cohler, 1982; Peavy, 1997; Savickas, 1997).

I came eventually to recognize that I was both a researcher *and* a reflexive participant in the discovery of the essences, or distilled meanings, around voluntary work transitions among mid-life women: we were all integrated in that experience. The imperatives of phenomenology

and feminism were helpful to me in this resolution. Both approaches acknowledge the self as an instrument, with an emphasis on self-search and self-dialogue to illuminate the research process (Creswell, 1998; DeVault, 1990; Moustakas, 1994; Oleson, 2000). This implies a degree of vulnerability. I chose to do this self-search in the pre- and post-interview sessions and within my journals, which Janesick (1994, 1998) recommended as giving space for intuition and reflection. This writing process allowed the participants' themes and concerns to emerge, and prevented me from "voicing over, writing over people's voices" (DeVault, 1990).

Ethics of Interviewing

Corradi (1986) believed each interview unique, because with a different person "the event of understanding" would differ (p. 3). Since interviews are co-produced (Gergen & Gergen, 1983; Mishler, 1986b), my own interviewing skills were key. My professional counselling background meant that I have experience in respectful and empathic listening and in establishing rapport with participants. While aware of this need to build rapport, I was also conscious of Seidman's (1998) caveat that there can be too much as well as too little. While my career counselling background and experience with transition was useful in conducting the interview, equally this experience could have been a potential threat to interpreting the interview findings. My role in the study was to be researcher and not counsellor, and I had to bracket, or set aside, my own understandings. Nonetheless, Ribbens (1989) and Rubin and Rubin (1995) have suggested that one of the most important qualities for a researcher is the ability to listen and hear what is being said, which may not always be what is being verbalized, and this demands a counsellor's skills. A story may include undeclared truths. A capacity for what Fiumara (1990) called a listening perspective is an important one, since:

we might be able to learn more by stopping to listen, if we were only able to free ourselves from a logico-dialectical furor that drives us on to come up with ever more critical questions, while tacitly opposing proper hearing. (p. 29)

Feminist interviewers have made important points about sensitive woman-to-woman interviewing. Reinharz (1992) has argued that "By listening to women speak, understanding women's membership in particular social systems, and establishing the distribution of phenomena accessible only through sensitive interviewing, feminist interview researchers have uncovered previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience" (p. 45). As a starting point, I wanted to avoid being exploitative and uphold the notion of reciprocity.

Reciprocity

The legitimation of our research is through the values we hold. Feminist research is concerned with not dehumanizing people. My aim was to act as a confidante and scribe, in order to conduct research that involved "give and take", so that it was enabling for both interviewer and interviewee (Oakley, 1981; Olesen, 1994), or even therapeutic (Inglessi, 1990). In order to be admitted into their stories, it was necessary to equalize the relationship. To do that, I needed to discriminately share my own experience, and did so by placing myself at the first session with a short biographical account of myself as a middle-aged woman who had gone through several self-imposed work transitions. It was essential to present how my own experiences and values had influenced my research interests, and would continue to influence how those research findings would be presented. Concerned as I was with reciprocity, I was keenly aware of Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton's (2001) criteria of "rapport, safety, honoring and obligation" (p. 325).

At the beginning of the process I set out the singular advantages to the researcher of using

this material to gain a PhD degree, and the potential for the individual to understand themselves better. I was tentative about this latter benefit, since I felt it might not be so clear-cut, given that the women had already gone through some critical self questioning, and I also explained potential risks as well to the participants. My hope was that the process of recounting a narrative would be self-reflective, possibly leading to greater self-understanding and self determination in women's daily lives. Researchers have seen stories of personal experience as the basis of agency, since stories can stir up transformational changes in how we live (McAdams, 1993; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992).

Design of Interview Protocol

Merton, Fiske, Kendall (1990) suggested developing an interview guide with 5-7 broad topic questions. I designed a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) that covered the following themes: work, women, development, time, transition, self-identity, mid-life, and generativity. Frameworks are seen as critical (Laslett & Rapoport, 1975; Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954) since, as Riesman and Benney (1955, 1956) argued years ago, interviewing requires that there are "well-established conventions governing the meeting of strangers" (p. 229). The protocol, which was piloted with three volunteer participants, provided some perimeters around experience and ensured there were shared understandings of meanings. But I was careful not to over structure, so that questions could flow naturally from the interviewee's responses, "telling their own story" (Polkinghorne, 1988). My goal was a free flowing dialogue with an attitude of openness to allow the phenomenon to emerge, not to manipulate through too much early questioning. Subsequent to the second set of interviews, I made a note in my journal, about my increasing sense of trust with a non-standardized protocol, as I learned to rely on its power to

allow the experience to emerge. Mishler (1986a; 1986b) has denounced the dominant model of scientific research, with standard interview schedules and fixed response categories. Apter (1995) reminded us, as well, that nothing is more boring for the research respondent than to be asked a series of questions “in which she has no interest” and that a study, with no theory to confirm or refute, demands that the interviewer be led by her respondents (p. 38).

Yet we do need comparison points. The guide, therefore, was a way of nudging conversations around the nature of the women’s work realities and hopes, while located in, or emerging from, transition. I heeded Seidman’s (1998) and Gadamer’s (1976) injunctions on the I/Thou relationship and on “being with” the respondent, but was careful not to move beyond this into the full “we relationship” which some researchers see as desirable (Oakley, 1981; Reason, 1994). I wanted to create a respectful communion and avoid that “predatory” search for essences (Fiumara, 1990). This demanded silence, as one way of *being with* the interlocutor. Listening for the silences is an expression of Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) and indicates the importance of “what does not happen” (Patton, 1990, p. 235-237) and the counter productivity of someone “who is never short of words” (Heidegger (1927/1962, p. 208). Seidman (1998) noted the “difficulty and desirability of sometimes saying nothing” (p.xvi). DeVault (1990) also has pointed out how critical this process is, since women have learned to “translate” when they talk about their experience, with the result that parts of their lives disappear and need to be “recovered”. She has argued that women researchers must call on their own experience to notice ambiguity and the unvoiced features of talk. Nonetheless, Riessman (1993) has given one cautionary example of a middle class misinterpretation of a Puerto Rican respondent, showing that this is not foolproof, and may lead to cultural misinterpretation.

I did not take notes in case they were distracting to the interview process but used occasions immediately afterwards, either in my car or at a local restaurant or public library, to privately jot down “speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 121) on the field data as well as on the research process. It was important to record emphases and gestures that might help with interpretation. Reflections on field notes were entered into my research journal later that same day to join those notes which had begun with my first telephone call to participants. At the end of the interview sessions I was careful to end the process gracefully and disengage (Mishler, 1986b). Seidman (1998) pointed out that meeting and interviewing three times in a condensed number of weeks creates a relationship, not just an island of interchange. After all, we had undergone together an “intense sharing that opens all lives party to the inquiry to examination” (Lincoln, 1995, pp. 283-284).

Transcription and Analysis of the Findings

I had prepared for each follow-up interview by listening to the previous tape. I avoided doing any profound analysis between sets of interviews, but was obviously conscious of the content of previous sessions. However, I chose not to tug at and crimp the material for significant emerging themes, and left the fabric of protocol questions largely untouched. At the end of each interview I asked if the women had suggestions or comments and I also made sure that I stayed a little while after the tape machine was unplugged to see if there were unvoiced concerns. Upon completing the whole set of interviews all sessions were fully transcribed. Pseudonyms were given to mask each individual and the tapes and paper files were kept locked, to be erased or destroyed at the end of the doctoral research retention period.

At this point the material was filed in electronic and paper file folders initially by

pseudonym, and later concurrently by category. Piantanida and Garman (1999) talked about living with the study and “resonating with the stuff” (p. 159), and my “stuff” included the interviews, conversations, newspaper clippings, art work, photographs of their art and gardens, and my own memos and journals. The five stage process of analysis, borrowed from Riessman (1993), is set out. *Attending* involved looking selectively at the findings and winnowing out. *Telling* recognized that there was a deliberately favourable account by the teller (p. 16). *Transcribing* meant writing the essence of a subject in the same way that a photograph supposedly “pictures reality”, despite being a highly interpretive process. *Analysing* meant editing and reshaping what gets included or excluded. *Reading* involved recognizing that the text stands on moving ground, open to a search for metaphors and many constructions. To begin this process, I listened to the tapes repeatedly. I heeded Mishler’s (1986a) advice on taking speech seriously, to ensure that pauses, non-lexical expressions, and overlaps did not get filtered out in the word processing. Some statements took on added meaning when changes in inflection captured my attention. In particular, Teresa had a distinctive musicality in her speech, where clauses built strongly and poetically upon each other in waves of cadence and emphasis. As I wrote, I was deliberately conscious of not going to premature conclusions (epoché). I felt a sense of stewardship of their stories in rereading the rich material in the transcripts, and was reminded of the dilemmas in doing feminist analysis as we transform respondents’ lives into public theories.

Feminist Analysis

Ribbens and Edwards (1998) have pointed to the lack of training on data analysis, which is often equated with computer coding, and raised the question of how “listening to women on their own terms” (Gilligan, 1982; Harding, 1987; Oakley, 1981) might be operationalized within the

actual research process. Mauthner and Doucet (1998) advocated three or more readings of the interview text and the original tapes to help place the individuals within the multi-layers of social and cultural contexts. My first reading was for plot and my emotional response to the narrative, since that will affect how one might write about that person (Brown, 1994). The second reading was to mark the personal pronoun statements and to underline the “I’s” as a way of underscoring the relational method of data analysis. A central issue revolved around the dilemma of keeping respondents’ voices strong, while, at the same time, recognizing my role in shaping the research process and product. The third reading was one of reading for relationships. As Brown and Gilligan (1992) noted, tracing the voices through individual interview transcripts not only helps to maintain the differences between correspondents, but helps the researcher herself to find a new way of understanding - not just concentrate on looking for confirmations (Grant, 1996). This helped me resist the reductionist stage of data analysis of cutting up into themes and aggregating.

On occasion I checked with participants in person or by e-mail or telephone to clarify issues or questions. The data analysis stage is one where respondents typically have little control, and researchers can name and represent other people’s realities, and, perhaps appropriate their voices (Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1994). Others, like Joyce Carol Oates (2000) in writing Blonde, worry that we impose stories on events in reconstructing a life out of scraps of information (in Houpt, 2001). It was important to sort out how to be in the text, in terms of voice and signature (Geertz, 1983). Given the post-structuralist emphasis on contradiction and multiplicity, I recognized the importance of examining who I was in the writing process, as I produced the narratives I had collected. The story can become embroidered with the researcher’s subjectivities, and Weis and Fine (2000) have stressed the responsibility of “coming clean at the [researcher-

researched] hyphen" (p. 59). I had to acknowledge why I had chosen the research area, what I was choosing to report and to omit, whether I was as drawn to classifying the mundane as to the exotic, and the degree to which I wanted the research to have application. Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1983) have urged researchers to acknowledge these contradictory forces. For them the process of research is complex, but not pure; despite a commitment to listen to women on their own terms, it is clearly the researcher who shapes the entire research process and product.

In what Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 108-9) referred to as "correspondance" or "member checks", I did offer the women completed transcripts of their interview for review of factual content and authenticity (Merriam, 1988; Sandelowski, 1993). I wanted the participants to review the material with me and see if there was dissent or any challenge to their transfer story. This was a form of triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) to compensate for the power imbalance inherent in all interviews. Feminist researchers want to give the women their story back to see if they commit to it. It can become a means for self reflection. Initially I had assumed that the women would want to read the constructed stories, and I was keen to provide accounts of their lives that would be instrumentally useful to them (Gergen, 1982). As Forester (1993, p.191) has reminded us, stories play a powerful role in transformation processes. However, as the anecdote related in the next section reveals, I became tentative both about participants' vulnerability (Josselson, 1996a), and reticent in asking these individuals for yet more attention to my representation of their lives. I increasingly had the sense that my role in their lives was attenuated, if not superfluous. I maintained a connection with three of the women participants and talked about some of my emerging interpretations in our conversations. It was on one of these occasions that I was challenged over my use of the term "oppression" with respect to

women, and I took note of this to modify my vocabulary. However, these were active, dynamic women and I recognized that their lives had moved on substantially in the long period of intervening time that it took for me to write up the study. It was a convoluted issue. I wanted to reciprocate their kindness to me and yet not become another example of what Belenky et al. (1986) call “benign authorities” (p. 90), by claiming time in a well-intentioned way. Ultimately two of the women participants read their stories, and found them helpful. So I determined that, since I had choreographed the narratives in ways that respected their voices in ways that were safe to say out loud, I could take responsibility for the other unread stories.

All had been willing to read the transcripts and these were accepted with only minor changes, such as the spelling of proper names. Several expressed interest in, and benefit from, the perspective given back to them, and only one woman was distressed about how “pathetic” she sounded. Sounded out on this, she expressed a sense of her story being boring, or having no large-scale heroic line. Edwards (1993) has pointed out that participants may find their stories different to what they had anticipated. I was concerned about what Clark and Haldane (1990, p. 143) have called a “slash and burn” technique, where research participants can be left feeling exposed or vulnerable. In the process of establishing an intimate bond of trust, I was keenly aware of the ethical precept of *first do no harm* and the subsequent need to safeguard the interests of the research participants. I had always checked at the beginning of the second and third interviews about whether the women, in post-interview private reflections, had found the topic, or my questioning, intrusive, and been reassured. At the end of the complete series of interview sessions with each participant, I had shared my own experience in self disclosing, woman-to-woman statements to make a link, and create a sense of a larger solidarity. However, this incident

required more. I did not want to create disequilibrium.

Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that the workplace is a place of intimacy (Marks, 1994) and personal stories are concerned with intimate lives. Such private worlds can be a source of disquiet, as well as insight, for the respondent. I had already looked at positionality - that is, my own identity, in terms of attributes such as personal work changes, age, profession, social class and had determined that there was mutual comfort. Consequently, this particular participant and I talked together, after this admission, to restore her sense of self. We spoke about interviewing as a “unnatural situation” to use Ribbens’ (1989, p. 586) phrase. We discussed women’s hesitancy around their stories as coming from the fact that female matters are often at the edges of mainstream concerns, and of how conventional approaches have shaped an understanding of what it is to be a “convincing” story. Overall though, I was left to question the contradictions in the research process and how is it possible for a researcher to make an unambivalent commitment to reciprocity? After the interviews I had spent considerable time with individual phone calls or coffee sessions, and, in one attempt to offer something even more concrete back, had presented workshops gratis for one of the women.

However, during the interviews themselves, I had often been aware of suppressing my own sharp urge to jump right into the conversation and be truly “present” with the participant at that moment. I had not wanted to confound whose story was being related and had kept my own ego and story in check, and let the interview speak for itself. Now I wondered if such a self-imposed stricture about researcher “silence” had caused me to miss the intimacy of sharing my own personal life at congruent times. My sense of the academic requirements, about constructing the research process in particular ways, may have caused me to miss an “obligation”. This

participant felt her own inadequacies but not mine. Yet, I was obviously theorizing my own life during the dynamic of the interviews, and, as St. Pierre (1997) has pointed out, “the examination of one’s own frailty surely makes one more careful about the inscription of others” (p. 181). But this was clearly not transparent. And this is something that remains unresolved for me - the myth, as Bochner (2001) called it, “that what we do academically is not part of how we are working through the story of our own life” (p. 138).

Phenomenological Analysis

In order to understand the construction of the women’s life narratives I had selected hermeneutical analysis as a process. It has been characterized as a circular practice (Gadamer, 1975/1989), or what Tesch (1990) called “decontextualization and recontextualization” and what Marshall and Rossman (1999) termed “reduction and interpretation”, whereby a larger pattern is reconstituted from the dismantled core fragments. My task was to find the essences of the structural meanings of the experience in order to interpret them. As noted earlier, I have interpreted essence, not as an invariant, but as being related to matters of meaning in the construction of their story. These representations of “truths” arose from my particular experience with the women at a particular time and with a particular purpose. Underlying this interpretive process I was attentive to the three related phenomenological concepts of subjectivity, intentionality and being-in-the-world.

The phenomenological approach particularly demands “immersion in the data” (Creswell, 1994; Van Manen, 1984), so having read and listened to the tape transcripts several times in terms of a feminist approach, I embarked on a five phase phenomenological analysis (Bullington & Karlsson, 1984). In carrying out this close textual examination of the interview data, Phase One

was epoché, which requires attending, with as little preconception as possible. Merleau Ponty (1945/1962) exhorted the researcher to perceive in a primitive way, by letting subjects take hold of us before imposing a cognitive schema. I was keenly aware of Van Manen's (1997) cautionary words that phenomena must be approached hesitantly, since: "... lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal" (p. 18).

Before organizing the constructs around the basic units of meaning, I had to enter the world "as lived by the person" (Bergum, 1991), and account for a person's "being", within the social contextual influences of living "in the world" (Brennan, 1994). As a researcher, I needed to discover the meaning of the individual experience of mid-life work transition through some understanding of the events, perceptions and behaviours surrounding it. But meanings are not neutral, and context plays a role in shaping assumptions so I had to situate that person's perceptions, expectations and behaviour (Keen, 1975, p. 29), in order to understand as many different facets of meaning as possible. Hermeneutics sees social, cultural and historical forces as shaping consciousness in ways that we are not aware of. People may perceive their own subjective process as an external reality, but, in fact, perception and interpretation can be seen in terms of socialization. Von Eckartsberg (1986), Marcia (1993), and Cushman (1996) have all written about culture building, whereby the person is "situated" as a consequence of being shaped by his or her world "happening".

I was also aware of a tendency to wonder about what had happened "before". McMahon (1995, 1996) and Plummer (1995) have alerted researchers to the fact that we can tell a story but not the whole story. Polkinghorne (1988) has named the predicament of being "in the *middle* of our stories and...[of] constantly having to revise the plots as events are added to our lives

...without knowing how the story will end” (p. 69). The process of bracketing which is explained more fully in the next section was helpful in putting myself “in the place of the other” (Creswell, 1998). Writing my own journal helped me to fathom what experiences did, in fact, mirror my own and how many were reflective of quite different realities.

Phase Two involved reflection upon the raw findings, and tapping into my own experience to look for perceptions and reactions that were either similar to, or different from, my own. I was conscious of the central notion of subjectivity, whereby what gets produced as knowledge and meaning results from ongoing relations between people. It is not viewed as a “methodological taboo” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 264). According to Schutz (1967): “every act of mine through which I endow the world with meaning refers back to some meaning-endowing act...of yours with respect to the same world” (p. 32). Phase Two has two sub-processes. The first is horizontalization where each statement is initially taken as having equal worth. The assumption is that every experience has multiple possibilities of meaning. The second stage of Phase Two was to “bracket”, or discard repetitive or irrelevant material, in order to reach the principal features. I had to allow the data to speak for themselves, “suspending as much as possible the researchers’s meanings and interpretations and entering into the world of the unique individual who was interviewed” (Hycner, 1985, p. 281). I understood then the paradoxes in doing this type of research, and the accuracy of Denzin’s (1992) notion of the tension between objectivity and subjectivity, and the complicated, entwined line between the investigator and the investigated. My goal was to determine not only what common threads existed, but conversely what stood out as unique. I was particularly aware of my obligation to honour the women’s words and not transcribe them into my own vocabulary. As one example, in rereading my journal on one

occasion, I found that I had used the past participle “oppressed” to describe one incident. But I recognized almost instantly, and with some chagrin, that I would be taken quickly to task for that by the woman in question.

Phase Three involved transforming the women’s words and ideas into my own language, drawing from experience (theirs and mine) to highlight issues that might only be hinted at in the stories. Kvale (1996) has reminded researchers to listen for what is not being said, in these “deep-deep probes into the human soul” (Douglas, 1985, p. 51). At the heart of phenomenological thinking is the idea that every conscious act is intentional, with the “self as conscious subject” channelling to that which has meaning for an individual (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Phase Four involved clustering and organizing such units of meaning into a textual description and exploring what structures stood out in this synthesis. I followed Creswell’s (1994, p. 155) recommendation to read through the data to get a sense of the whole, to make sure nothing had been overlooked, and to evoke the meaning rather than the substance. Van Manen (1997) has told researchers to unearth something “telling, meaningful and thematic” (p. 86) when unpacking the core portrayals. This analysis began with the first material and proceeded towards a gestalt-like synthesis, which Colaizzi (1978) said is achieved with “that ineffable thing known as creative insight ...[to] leap from what subjects say to what they mean” (p. 59), which might be characterized as the “enlightened awareness” of Phase Five. This final Phase was to move to a general structure of the constituents which ran across all the women’s narratives of work meaning.

As I read the transcripts, I kept highlighting and congregating words and phrases to mark what was of interest. I did this first with paper copies since I read “better” away from the computer screen. After marking the hard copy by means of coloured Post-It Notes and/or

highlighting, I went through a messy assemblage of cut and pastes to winnow out and label tentative themes for each individual. These edits of the transcripts were finally re-entered, or recombined into new computer texts, and ultimately re-checked against the whole sets of interviews on the hard drive with word search/word find capacity on the screen. These early empirically-developed categories were filtered through the prism of interview questions to offer the constitutive events of an individual's experience. Only later did the classifying become more complex and interpretive. Equally it got more tedious, resulting in double or triple codes, as I filed excerpts in computer files under assigned categories. This sorting was done physically since computer application programs did not seem serviceable to me within the narrative format of this study. I was keeping a weather eye out for shared connective bits of experiences, and for relevance to the literature, and did note-taking in this closer reading to peg similarities. Nonetheless, I was alert to the importance of rereading the full narratives, not just the snippets that I was creating in the analysis. So it became a rhythmic, dialectic process of reading, reflecting and writing, rather than a linear accumulation of the data categorizations. I did not want to miss the broader themes running through, and was mindful of Mishler's (1986a) arguments that qualitative analysis can be guilty of taking pieces out of context, stripping them of ordinary understanding, and so fracturing any interpretation. Moreover, Mishler (1986b) has argued that, since an interview is not just a linguistic event but a behavioural one, traditional attempts to code for a "true" view are iatrogenic.

I began then to create selectively smaller, coherent portrayals of the women and of the phenomenon under study. Since this was an interpretive, not an empirical inquiry, the portrayals were meant to yield insight, rather than be preoccupied by facts. To unpack the material, I

continued bolding and organizing salient features in the text to get at each individual's uniquely lived work journey, and to find any shared common characteristics. Commonalities were then grouped into themes, which in turn were grouped into overall holistic patterns that described the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1976). While it sounds relatively linear, it was far from it and involved an iterative assembling and reassembling of the "mosaic" (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 145) to get at what is called the *aha* moment - that conceptual leap from the individual to the universal.

Fenwick (1998) saw the process of interpretation as analogous to hermeneutical cycles of building understanding. As I searched for the broader motifs, I prepared narrative summaries for each respondent and identified some emerging themes, such as an awareness of time and timing; agency and competence; physicality; and communality. I chose to decide that informational saturation had been reached, which normally indicates that there are no more surprises. But like Apter (1995) I always heard something new in these women's stories, and became very emotionally bound up in the stories.

Summary

In this chapter, I have been laying the groundwork for the methodology chosen in approaching my research questions. I was curious about voluntary career transition points and work meaning and sought out first person accounts of women's experience at a mid-life transition point, to learn about the similar and different ways women interpret work meaning. The primary method was the interview, supported by a literature review. In selecting interview parameters, my focus was on urban/suburban professional women, for whom the notion of work was important. This group was representative of my own consulting milieu and an interest in providing informed counselling practice energized me. Like many women writers - Virginia

Woolf, and Doris Lessing are two that spring to mind - I wanted to know more about the points in female lives wherein women learn to devise plots in which they are the actor in their own story. The women in this study, born between 1943 and 1954, have no archetypes for "aging in work".

As a result of my specific research concerns, with no well-established theory base to guide the study and no hypotheses to prove, I selected a qualitative research design that was descriptive and phenomenological, and guided by a constructivist, feminist perspective. My position here was that the three interwoven world views of phenomenology, feminism and constructivism were intrinsically linked in the research design to help illuminate ways of understanding work, which has no single monolithic meaning, and could lead to a rethinking of career and development approaches. Both phenomenology and feminism can help in an analysis of women's work and development, to show how conventional approaches have narrowed our thinking and reinforced fictional distinctions. At the root of the methodological approach I employed was a critique of objectivity, and an adoption of "the standpoint of women" proposed by Smith (1987, p. 105). I wanted to study women's lives in terms of work meanings and work identities, to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience. We need to know more about the experiences of mid-life women and the meaning they ascribe to work transition, since "every woman has something important to say about the disjunctures in her own life and the means necessary for change" (Lather, 1991, p. xviii).

The salient aspect of feminist phenomenological research is that the construction of meaning is best understood through collaboration, based on empathic open dialogue. Peshkin (2001) called this an "emic" voice - a respect that "encourages a quality of attention to lives, that otherwise may be demeaned as those of mere actors on the stage of our research settings" (p.

244). Polkinghorne (1988) wrote that "human experience is made meaningful with self as a story" (p. 151). I wanted to use Bateson's (1990) concept of improvisationally "composing a life", from elements of chaos, since: "our lives are full of surprises, for none of us has followed a specific ambition toward a specific goal. Instead we have learned from interruptions and improvised from the material that came to hand, shaping and reinterpreting" (p. 237). I saw narrative as the proper vehicle for restoring voice to the respondents (and legitimizing that voice), and, at the same time, articulating different notions of appropriateness to the larger community. In that sense, the research study was meant to have a socializing impact. The use of narrative as a reporting style places the study contextually within the discipline of educational research, but I am aware, ruefully, that Pinar (1992) has pointed out that "...being a woman, and an autobiographer or a phenomenologist, is having two strikes against you in most curriculum departments..." (p. 169). Nonetheless, I remain confident that this approach will offer some benefits to counselling approaches and methods.

In the next chapter, the women are presented alphabetically by their pseudonyms. I have remained faithful to their words with distilled passages scrupulously based on the tapes. The distillations do include some isolated passages of direct speech in quotations (marked with Roman numerals, delineating which of the three interviews is meant, and Arabic numbers indicate which line). This mix of speech and crafted profile is not a regular approach, but I wanted to experiment with Ochs' (1997) concept of shifting the reader to "overhearer" to point out the complex relationship of author, character and reader/hearer. While names, references and other identifiers of the participants have been altered or deleted to protect privacy, the work narratives remain authentic and should further the understanding of women's identity development.

CHAPTER FOUR: PORTRAITS AND PROFILES

This chapter offers the portraits and profiles of the five participants. Short global descriptions are given first, which represent a composite of my subjective impressions of their work journey. Each abridged portrait is immediately followed by a crafted profile (Seidman, 1998, p.102), in their own words. This is a way to transform the interview data into a compelling story according to Mishler (1986), by conveying a sense of process and time. The product can be seen as co-constructed, since it was created by me, the interviewer, from what each woman offered as significant in terms of work transitions and a search for meaning in work. However, by carefully crafting a profile in the participant's voice, her words are allowed to reflect her consciousness.

Adela

Portrait

Adela, at 57, is the oldest member of the group interviewed. Neither of her parents remains alive but she has a younger brother and sister a few hours' drive away, although her own life is firmly centred in the metropolitan city in which she herself lives. Single and with no children, she spoke with me at the time when she was making a decision to formally retire from paid work, as a career public servant, to take up even more forcefully the volunteer work that she has been doing concurrently over the last several years. In first transitioning to a life of community activism, she had initially petitioned to do a three-day work week, an idea which at that time was being championed as a "work smart" initiative. This reduced work week has meant a significant loss of income for her, but this has been outweighed by the option of exploring other

areas of fulfilment.

A first born child, she was the first generation to go to university in her family, and knew that this was, in some way, a compensation for her father who had been prevented by the Depression from pursuing higher education. She was originally educated as an historian with French literature as a joint major at university, at a time when joint majors were unusual. She took a year in France for this degree, and while there decided to study Russian. Upon graduation, she began a successful position in archival and restoration projects in the Maritime region of Canada. However, to enable her to be geographically nearer to an ailing parent, she ultimately left that satisfying work a number of years ago to go back to university in the province where her parents were resident, to take a post-graduate degree in a different discipline. Intelligent, and driven by an impulse for knowledge, she has redefined her occupation quite extensively during her public service career. Now employed in a prestigious institution, she is re-examining its commitment to its national mandate.

She described the prospect of continuing her public service career until a typical retirement point as filled with questioning. Swallowed up by the demands of a bureaucratic organizational life, she felt hampered in pursuing her several ongoing interests and commitments and uninspired by the management model. Outlining the problem of insufficient staff at work, she queried the level of commitment to the service from senior management, who helped create a sense of impermanence with so many temporary staff.

The community work which attracts her is also public service related, and has focussed mainly on civic planning issues, such as regional official plans, traffic impact, the protection of agricultural lands from over-development, the prohibition of tandem parking in the city, as well

as working with tri-levels of government on plans for a large acreage of public space which was razed 30 years ago, and whose use has remained the subject of planning dispute ever since.

Other projects included battling street prostitution, needle clean up, and working with police and justice officials on the establishment of a Johns' school.

On two of the three occasions we met at her home, which gives off a sense of tranquillity and peace. The house, for which - characteristically steadfast to the archivist within her - she was compiling a history, was chosen very deliberately because of its brick exterior. Coming from the Maritimes where everything is wooden, she fell in love with those "nice big brick houses with big old trees". The aesthetic appeal comes from both a well-managed garden, flanked with colourful perennials, and from a calm interior filled with antiques - some brought as memories from her parents' home. This sense of calm was all the more remarkable since the house is located in a very central part of the city - almost downtown - and with major intersections and busy traffic nearby. Consistent with her value system, she walks or bicycles to shops and local community services, and has given up her car.

Profile: Well There is More to Life than Work

When I look back at my early memories I can see that I had a home life which respected industriousness as a virtue. My father, as was the expected masculine norm, worked to put food on the table. In order to find a more satisfying outlet for his skills and creativity, he taught swimming at night school after a full day at the engineering company, and spent spare time woodworking, wood-turning and doing crafts. This enterprise ultimately equipped him to take on my mother's unfinished crewel projects, when they grew older and she suffered a stroke. When I think of my mother as a younger woman, it is in similar terms of compromise and

“making do” with available options. Forced to give up her teaching job upon marriage, she found an outlet for herself teaching at night school. This not only allowed her to be at home during the day - which was expected for women at that time - but provided some independence, since my mother liked having her own investments, no matter how small. I think I can link my parent’s serious attitude to work to family loss of money in the Depression. This not only thwarted my father’s own ambition of going to university, but had real consequences for my grandparents, who had to work until their 70s, and, in the years before the Old Age Pension, create income through renting out part of their house. I would name this “the immigrant experience” of progression, with my grandfather a plumber, my Dad an office worker, and me, myself, the first graduate in the family. But I do remember the stress my Dad felt working at “a job life long”, which required supervisory roles, and involved him occasionally in difficult strike situations. What he wanted me to be aware of - some of the key messages he passed on - were about security for the future, and the desirability of an indexed pension. He did not have great personal expectations around job compensations or rewards, as was made clear when he visited me in Nova Scotia at my first job. While he was pleased to see that I had a separate office with windows and a door, he felt compelled, nonetheless, to warn me that work was not glamorous, and not to expect that in my future work sites. He was right [laughs]. I also recall that he told me that, in this first job, I was going to be earning almost as much salary as his, which was supposed to be a family wage:

I think he wanted to do this, to impress upon me how valuable my university education was, but what he did, in fact, was indicate to me that there was something wrong with the world if somebody like me, who couldn’t do anything, could earn as much as my father

who had been in the working world for, I don't know, 25, 30 years, maybe 25 for sure.

And had to support, you know, a wife and two remaining children. (i, 419)

Earlier on, just after graduation, I had been to visit the local Employment Office for help with my job search. And I do recall clearly that the world, as represented by the officer there, didn't hold out a lot of hope for me with an Arts degree. The first question he'd put to me was "What can you do? Can you type?" . So I had felt lucky to get this work, and consequently, could summon up some sympathy for my father's worry, when I later made my decision to give up that particular job. This was following my mother's stroke, and I wanted to move closer to home to be near my parents. Yet this change in careers was seen by my father as very risky behaviour, even though he did want me to be closer to them.

My family's concern for financial security was highlighted by that first adult job in the Maritimes, where the *raison d'être* was to retrain unemployed Nova Scotian miners and create work for a local community where seasonal work was the norm:

...I had never encountered this sort of on again, off again, work of the fishing plant...it was something that kind of dawned on me, the difference between working when you were called in, and having a steady job with an income you could count on...that was when I realized, I could never live, certainly at that age - and even now - I don't think I could live with uncertain income. I can live with - as long as I had a *base* of certain income [my savings] - I can live with uncertainty, and a range above that...(iii, 226)

But I have gradually been giving up that need for a sense of security. I wouldn't describe my lifestyle as lavish - I am prepared to live with less money. I made that decision some years ago, after a session of career counselling specifically geared towards women. I came to the realization

that I needed enough money to survive and to live with the things that I liked to do. I decided that I was prepared to accept the tradeoff of being able to do, right now, the things that I was interested in. To the lawyers and architects I had met in voluntary civic committees, I guess, I was a "strange animal", since I don't think they had ever encountered anybody who gave up a secure job and income to do volunteer work for no pay. I'm not sure why I have been letting go of the security issue - because it was *always* very important to me before, to have a job that was permanent. For example, when I changed jobs, I did it fairly carefully. I looked into the options and understood the risks of changing my job, but:

I guess, as time went by...I realized...what a gift it had been...I have been lucky enough that I have chosen my career changes, and been able to manage them in a way that they gave me the sense of security that I needed. (iii, 46)

When you ask me what drives my commitment to community ventures, I would say that I think of myself as privileged. I guess there is a sense of - not quite obligation, that is too strong a word - but I have been very lucky. For example:

I have always been able to get a job. When I first starting working, of course, that was the norm. When I switched careers, from being an historian to being a librarian, it was still fairly normal that you would get a job quite quickly after finishing a degree, but, since that time, of course, it has become very different. And, people who have the same background in education as I have, have such difficulty in getting jobs and, I guess, I feel very lucky that I have never been in that situation, of having to take a series of temporary jobs...(iii, 40)

Also there have been other occasions in my life, when I have understood how fortunate my

upbringing has been. When I left home to find work, I was so surprised to discover that some schools in other parts of Canada didn't have any French teachers who could actually *speak* French. Moreover, when they did their French dictation, they had no records to listen to:

they had no practice throughout the year and their teachers couldn't speak French, they got to the exam and they had this person, you know, speaking lovely French, and none of them could understand it. And, they had no lab in the high school, so part of their departmental exam was filling out the lab books that you then sent in. Well they had to make it up, with the teacher's help, they had to sort of imagine they were doing these experiments in a lab that they didn't have. (iii, 198)

I must have been naive, since I had not considered that life and school could be that different. When I first went down east I was surprised to find so few community activities. There was nothing organized, especially not for girls. There were sea cadets for boys. So I undertook to be a guide leader for them - I got conned into it [laughs] - and to lobbying for grants for playgrounds. I am not someone who sort of tends to have a narrow focus and do only one thing at a time. In our home, television, of course, was always so frivolous that you had to do something useful while you were watching it [laughs]. I can now see that this attitude translated temperamentally into needing to pursue a variety of work and career interests. I never want to be "too boxed in", and this is part and parcel of my approach. I have to smile to myself when I find the current work culture using buzz words like "multi-tasking". I suspect that men must have invented the term as it wouldn't have occurred to a woman, since it's just natural [laughs] given that:

women, of course, have always been doing that, the fact that you're watching television

and knitting, I mean. And, you know, you think of mothers, how, you know, were talking on the telephone and, you know, rescuing their - and polishing - I mean, it is just sort of second nature. I mean, you couldn't survive, as a woman, if you couldn't multi-task...

Whereas, men, I think, have had the luxury of being able to, you know, sort of go in and focus on one thing. And, again, I don't know, I mean not all jobs require you to be totally focussed and concentrate only on one thing but they aren't, I think, perhaps as used to having to, sort of, keep their ears open to and eyes on other things that might be happening around them, disasters about to befall, like the pot boiling over or whatever. I guess, just the way we work, although I have never had children, just maybe, what we learned from watching our mothers, I don't know. (iii, 857)

I sometimes think I grew up very innocently. I didn't question things particularly in my youth. I have made up for it since [laughs]. I have, sort of, examined my life and made certain choices. One of those was when I went back to university, for the third time, as a scholar-librarian or librarian-scholar. I had cut back to a part-time work week to embark on an MA in Canadian Literature, and the professor set us to work looking at the White Papers - a whole range of policy papers that the Liberal government was involved with, and:

...that was when I realized how bad things were getting. She sort of forced me back into the political arena and, so I had been trying to ignore all this and not to get too upset about it, so we were sort of forced into looking what these proposals were and cutting the Canada Pension Plan, going into the Health and Social Transfers, or whatever they are called. And the changes that were being made to the Student Loan Program...I mean, the whole deal with the income contingent loan repayment plan, all this kind of stuff. Oh, I,

it was just awful. And, at the same time, it was when they were trying to get (naming a major exposition) here. So, I got dragged into that, as well, and, [it] just, appalled me the sorts of things they were trying to do - the way they spent our money - so, that was the end of my academic sojourn [laughs]...(i, 897)

So, while I gave up pursuing a third degree, I think I have stayed a student on the outside in my volunteer civic activities, learning about new things - the whole exercise of planning, how cities grow, how cities develop - and investigating with landscape architects and transportation engineers such things as the toxic effects of salt damage on both trees and concrete curbs. I have often said to people if I spent as much time in school, in classrooms, as I did as a volunteer on one major project here, I would have a PhD in planning [laughs].

One of the things that did come out of our discussion last week, was the continuity that I may have missed in terms of the research orientation of many of the things that I have done - the research and learning, which I don't think I had ever put in quite those words. The sheer joy of research is what pulls me in initially and I have always been excited about learning. When I remember my own time in Girl Guides I had a sense of belonging there, learning, doing things.

I can remember my younger self poring over university calendars and, because I did not want to dilute my subject base, I went on to lobby for a Joint Major at University when that was not the thing to do academically - I had to pioneer that route. And, as the first in my family to go to university, I was under a certain obligation to achieve, despite being a natural scholar who learned quickly and easily. I think when you are the eldest you have to do everything first and there wasn't anybody else who had done it before me. Because of this - being the oldest in my immediate family and the second oldest in my extended family of cousins, I think I have always

been very conscious of the passage of time. I have always been conscious of being old. Always. There isn't enough time to learn about everything that I am interested in, or even to find out about everything that I *could* be interested in. You need three lives. I guess this must be a theme in my life. Maybe, it is because I am not particularly focussed. I am interested in a wide variety of things, and get easily distracted from what I am supposed to be doing. I'm aware that I can "fritter" away my time doing things that are, perhaps, not as important. I also see myself as a procrastinator and I can, you know, "fiddle around", do anything and, then time just disappears. So, when I started to work part time, I contracted with myself that my very first thing would be to do a project. I started out practically the first day. I went off to City Archives to do a history of my house. I had those goals and I followed through...time becomes valuable in the sense that there are certain things that you want to get, that you want to accomplish, to learn.

I'd not describe myself as a specialist. I am much more of a generalist. For example, at my most recent paid job, I gravitated into the special collections area, which was seen as slightly unusual. So I got to work with other people from different disciplines which was quite stimulating. I do enjoy working *with* people. So I suppose I'd claim that as a satisfaction at work - the collegiality. At the ____ [historic site] too, there was direct contact with the other players like the historians, the architects and draughtsmen and then, those people who were going to be doing interpretation. Although my research was very private, it was research geared to a specific end. And, that wide spectrum of interests, I found very interesting - the collaboration and that real sense of being a team, working together to produce something, and learning from each other about our specialities. I see my work identity as the one who takes the raw material and organizes it and produces the findings that will allow other researchers to actually make use of it.

Even though - in my other world - I have been very focussed on issues, I don't see myself as a community activist, but more as a researcher. This inclination also meant that I wasn't particularly interested in management within the library, where you know certain administrative tasks had to be done:

I was much more interested in doing the research. I was, I found these things just distracting. And, I just didn't want to be bothered with them. And, I think that was when I realized that I just didn't have the interest in managing. And, I respect, I feel good management is *really* important...(ii, 490)

Working with others and *sharing* information is what is important to me. I am a collector of information, because I know how to do it and it is a reciprocal system. When you talk about legacy, I see my contribution in terms of the idea of sharing knowledge, which, I guess, is a kind of a legacy. I wouldn't have used your word wisdom but, certainly when I think of the ___ [major national association] they do pass on wisdom, and they pass on the experiences of what worked, what didn't work, how to get around something or whom to contact. For example, when I was part of the housing co-op, I struggled to learn how the budget worked to be better able to serve the co-operative. I would describe my motivation to become President not as power-based, but because I had certain skills to contribute, and in return I could learn a number of new skills, as a result of being involved with interesting and congenial people. There is a sense of satisfaction from learning new stuff. I mean, there is always something new to learn, things change. But I think a lot of it has to do with the people. You can get sort of bogged down, and feel that you are just beating your head against the wall, and can't do this anymore. When I consider the fight we had against street prostitution and our work in producing a kit to educate some of the resistant

judges, I did find strength in the collective. Somebody else comes along who is full of energy and re-energizes you, so although we have had some failures, there is a sense of coming together to fight a great battle. I discovered how much I missed this interaction when I first started to work part time:

...in order not to *waste* my precious two days, I [had] set myself a research project to do a history of my house. I went to the City Archives - and I would come home and I didn't have anyone to discuss this with. And, so, I would go over to my neighbours' deck and say, "Guess what I found out today?". And, I realized, after a few weeks I sensed, that they were getting this earful from me every weekend [chuckles]. Because, I didn't have other people to share my great experiences with. Which, of course, is part of - and I realized, of course, that was what I was missing from work. (i, 737)

When I began part-time work, it was because I was looking for challenges, or alternative ways of finding satisfaction. I had been involved in various issues - for example, I am very attracted by the notion of co-operatives. Although I didn't live in the housing co-operative, the work I did for that group was one of the more important things that I have done. So, I sort of participated in one of the little working groups for this neighbourhood study. And, I learned about new zoning - all kinds of things, it was fascinating - hydro corridors, discouraging traffic in the downtown core. There are plenty of opportunities for participation and volunteer activities and for sharing knowledge. For example, a couple of weeks ago - the week the police were doing their crackdown of bad cyclists - I was handing out those little packages that Citizens for Safe Cycling use to reward the good cyclists. A friend came by on her bicycle and, as I handed her one, she said, "Oh, Adela, they are building a parking lot up here on Mountainside, why are

they doing that?" So, I came home, and I phoned and I phoned and I had the answer by the end of the day:

I felt really quite proud of myself...But, things like that are always cropping up.

Something will happen and someone will go, "I wonder about", or, "Can you find out about?", and, I don't often enough say, no, I guess...(iii, 537)

I mean, at the moment I have a crusade going against, what is known as, tandem parking downtown. That's where, when you drive into the parking lot, you leave your keys:

it is a battle or crusade, and I keep watching what is happening and have input whenever I can to the decision making process. In fact, I have an Ontario Municipal Board appeal. I mean, I filed an appeal. With *my* \$125.00...(ii, 835)

One thing I've concluded, is that everything is linked together. I mean these things are all inter-related. You can't isolate this thing from that thing, because, if you follow the thread, they all connected somehow. And, I mean, not just my interests but the way we live and work. We had a bit of that discussion before. The choices you make. They are all interconnected somehow or other and it is really hard to isolate things. And, I guess that's always been a problem of mine that's why I don't finish projects and can easily go off in another direction.

I had, therefore, to make a very conscious effort when I was working part-time and doing two concurrent jobs (paid work and voluntary work) to keep those worlds separated. I tried hard to limit the number of non-work related calls, and to do meetings, and anything else that takes me away from work, on my own time. If I did have other obligations on a work day, I tried to make up that commitment, since I couldn't take that much time off. If it was just sort of a longish lunch, I would stay a little longer, or make it up another day, but if it was an hour and a half piece

of work...well. Of course, I am now very exercised about finishing up certain projects before I retire. There is a certain amount of knowledge transfer that has to take place with the woman who is replacing me. I am the last of the old guard, sort of. So I need to take two or three people around through the corridors and say, now this little stash of things is this - and there is a pile of things I don't know anything about, it is a mystery, you will figure it out for yourselves. It is important to pass on all the knowledge of all of the odds and ends of things that have a history. And, I am the only person who knows the history.

I enjoy competence. When I was President of a housing co-op I had to learn all kinds of math and financing and budgets, which I hadn't thought I was very good at, but I learned it. As well, I encountered lawyers through my work with the Federation of _____ - an organization with a certain standing amongst politicians and bureaucrats or public servants, that we interact with on issues. Sometimes, there can be a great challenge in a battle of wits, and I do have a great sense of triumph about battling against these quite smart lawyers, and actually winning something. We had one big discussion over the use/misuse of valuable agricultural land for different purposes:

I was there on some of my days off and heard quite a lot of the testimony but, you know, the lawyers would be going at it, hammer and tongs, and then they'd call a break. And they would stand around talking about their golf, or their kids, they'd just switch off. And, you know, I found that quite intriguing, because I think that was the closest I had ever been to lawyers before. And then, of course, I would see them at Committee of _____. That was, actually, one of the things I enjoyed about that particular Committee - [it] had all these lawyers and planners who, you know, you might have encountered as a minor citizen and there they were, they would come to the Committee and I got to be the

Chair and they addressed me as Madam Chair. I loved it [peals of laughter]. (iii, 742)

And I do have a sense of accomplishment about being a “pioneer” there. I would claim that I was the first, you know, “ordinary citizen”, on the Committee of _____ who was appointed, not for their professional value, but for the fact that my sole qualification, really, was through my volunteer work in all these processes with planning. And, I do also remember, years ago, being so pleased telling my parents that I was going to Europe to do my third year of university. They laughed and said, “Of course, oh sure. Um”, but I did actually accomplish that, with my own money, so I was proud of my independence.

One of my areas of work disappointment has been in the reward system of the public service. There is a lack of respect, if you will, for the expertise of people who were doing the work, as opposed to the expertise of those who were managing the work. That sort of respect only goes with higher level positions, and:

I just had that sense that there were a number of people who really weren't suited to management who pursued a career in management because that was the only way to get ahead and they needed that, I guess, that sense of, you know, advancement. And, I find that most unfortunate that, because I think people are bent out of what they might naturally be better at... (iii, 479)

So I do have resentment about the poor rewards for being good at what you do - it has always kind of bothered me. There should be some way to recognize experience and excellent work. A number of years ago, they did develop what they call the peer review process where, in fact, you can have actually a higher classification level than the boss, because of moving up the system through participation in professional organizations and publication in scholarly journals. I have

forgotten all the different things that you can use, to get the points, but it has never been put in place, as far as I am aware. It's also been very wearing with this whole notion that somehow we could just keep going with temporary staff and a sense of impermanence:

... to me, it indicated a lack of, I don't know, a lack of commitment to the service.

Although, the person who is in charge kept saying, "Oh, it's wonderful, we are committed to the ___ research service"... yes, we were able to keep it going. But, it is, it is very unsatisfactory... [As one example] one of the researchers, who was working on children's literature and doing a fair amount of literature reference work, plus a fair bit of what is on the web sites for both the children's literature and the ___ research service, she was pulled back to the regular area from which she came, after, I guess, about two years and, I think, she was quite upset. She felt she was developing some expertise and then it was just going to disappear... she had been developing an expertise which was now just being tossed away. (ii, 343)

I do have the sense that management at the higher levels has let us down, despite the attempts by some braver individuals to get recognition for the damaging effects of budget cuts and staff downsizing:

At one point my boss...asked us if we wanted to do a little theatre for this session [with the chief executive who was genuinely seeking local level and staff input]. And, she proposed that what we could do is explain what we do and then she was going to ask all of those who were presently working for the service to stand up and then all of those who would be working for the service on April 1st to sit down. Which meant everybody but me sat down. And, then she said, "And Adela works three days a week". So, we said,

“Yes, we thought it was a good idea”. Now, apparently, they had, all this, all the division chiefs or whatever their titles are, had said “No, no, no problems, we are not talking about any problems. Everything is going to be just wonderful”. And, so, she broke rank in fact, and was severely criticized by some of her fellow managers for doing that. (ii, 283)

I mean, as my former boss said, “We always put our best foot forward”. There *are* people who are quite willing to speak out but it has always been a very top down organization, I find, for the most part. You even have to get your supervisor’s permission to *volunteer* to go and help shelve material, when it was being left in boxes because of lack of staff. And, certain middle managers, I guess, have prevented information from rising up to those who actually might do something about it. And, that is very frustrating, too, as you can imagine.

Also the bureaucratic structure doesn’t inspire me to get involved. For example, the hiring practices are frustrating. I remember one manager - desperate for a new staff person - who had to advertise the job in a very general way, despite the fact that he actually had a person in mind, who had done similar work. However, he wasn’t allowed to just hire this person, he had to go through an arduous competition process:

...60 applicants...qualified. And, we went through the applications in, I think, and sort of narrowed it down to 40. By this time, of course, time was passing along - by the time we were looking at something like a 6 month term, and he said, you just, he couldn’t face interviewing 40 people. How could [pause], who else in the library had time to sit there? He had to have some one else as well, a three person board. And, so, he just threw up his hands in despair and cancelled the competition. (ii, 506)

I want to tell you about one of the events which did particularly shake me. The

department was being offered money from Industry Canada to move into web-based offerings and our section couldn't offer anything that was exciting enough, psychologically - we were into visual poetry readings. I was told at one meeting that they were looking for "projects with cachet". And, when I went back to my desk afterwards, I was thinking, "Cachet, I am here stemming *chaos* - I don't have time for cachet", and that was when I realized that I had to leave. One of the main reasons why I had earlier decided to work part time, was because I felt that I could get some gratification from working for the degree or, as it happened, falling into community work. But this was to leave altogether - and I think I made a deliberate move towards sanity:

I remember when I was very upset with things at work, I spent, oh, about a month being very angry and I remember getting angry with myself for *being* angry because, it is just, it is such an unproductive emotion and, I mean, takes so much out of you. And, gets you nothing in return, so just decided that I would stop being angry and, sort of, set all these problems aside and, that was partly with my, I made my commitment that I was going to retire sooner rather than later...I just said, I can't spend the next two years of my life or longer being angry, and so, I am going to remove myself from the situation. (iii, 678)

If you were to ask what is my greatest accomplishment, it is that:

...at work I have survived - I have survived on my own terms, maybe that is what, where I can say I, I do have a sense of, you know, that I have sort of maintained my goals of continuing to work at the work I enjoy and doing it, I think, reasonably well...(iii, 389)

I'd also say that I feel that one of my "successes" has been achieved in my working part time.

It's given me a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of pioneering, of setting an example. There

are sort of two streams there: one is that, you know, there is more to life than work, and we should all work less and pursue other interests, and the other is that if we could all work four days a week, we would create a five day a week job for someone just starting out in their career. I couldn't convince my colleagues of that, but because of my part time, they did hire someone on term, who did eventually become a permanent employee. That was one of Treasury Board's objectives, I think, to give employment to other people and I was sort of holding them to it:

...I did create a job...we were at that stage where there was so much work and there were all kinds of people who were unemployed, qualified people who couldn't get jobs and get started on a career, and I found that very upsetting...Partly because, I guess, I have had it so easy. I mean, I just sort of fumbled along from university, to job, to university, to a job. And it really, it bothered [pause] so, it fit with my own plans, as well. And I felt I had accomplished something for me, and something for another librarian. (i, 684)

I remember one manager saying how pleased she was that I had *insisted* on working three days a week, because she thought of it as really important to establish this workable precedent. She was glad someone was there.

I am now aware of diminishing time and have decided that if I wait until I retire, I might not have the energy and the strength to do all the things I want to, or I might not find them as enjoyable. There is a pressure I am feeling that I just don't seem to have enough time to do some of the things that I would enjoy doing. And I am not enjoying paid work as much anymore - there are too many pressures that I am just not prepared to cope with. I have sort of carved out the career path I am going to follow. I want to be good at what I do, which is all public service related. I try to do it as best I can.

I remember once being asked “What would you do if you didn't have to work full-time?”. And, I didn't think about it very long. I knew, right even then. It didn't take me very long to say, “Oh no, there are so many other things you can do, there are so many other interesting things to fill up your time”. So, I had that attitude very early. I remember saying, “The answer is, there is more to life than work”. So, there is a certain sense, I suppose, of paying back for, what I consider the fairly privileged life that I have lead.

April

Portrait

April, had just turned 50 at the time of the interviews. After having worked in university administration for over 20 years, she is now running a successful private practice in landscaping where she does design consultation, garden maintenance and also teaches horticultural workshops. With the recognition that she was beginning to spend all her time gardening, even gardening in the dark, she began to reassess her life work some years ago. An early catalyst, about six years ago, was entering and winning a contest in a gardening magazine. The tiller, won as first prize, was sold to fund further horticultural studies, but with no thoughts at that point of permanence or career transition.

A concern with financial security has been with her since the pivotal event of an unexpected marriage break up, when she became a single parent left with a one year old. This state lasted for around 15 years before she committed to a new partner. Educated as a young woman in Europe, she found herself steered, by both parents and teachers, into a private secretarial college. This was categorically not her choice, but she describes herself as powerless in that social environment of the Sixties, where women's choices were still at best nascent, or at

worst disregarded. With a woman friend, she emigrated to Canada in her early twenties. Then came a period of taking and leaving administrative positions as she followed a new husband, whose job entailed moving across the country. She points out the dilemma in this, since women's wages traditionally gave them no leverage, except to follow the higher salary of a "couple". Left with her infant son after the marriage breakdown, she continued her administrative work very successfully in terms of progression. She moved from a major library in a metropolitan city to work in two of Canada's larger universities, in different provinces, and made use of all opportunities to enrich her work, holding various positions at two prominent schools. She was involved in high profile activities, such as the conferring of honorary degree ceremonies with notable Canadians like Pierre Trudeau; she worked on a special task force with the first woman on the Supreme Court, in a study promoted by the Canadian Bar Association on the role of women in the legal profession. She was responsible for writing, editing and doing lay-out for magazines for both law schools where she worked. She instituted the first career counselling and placement program within Canada, for women graduates who were seeing the discrepant job realities involved in being a woman and a lawyer. This was a first for Canada, and involved researching and incorporating an American model for the new service. It is easy to describe her as "successful" in her work but she describes it differently: "when I was working in administration, I wasn't really myself". At one point, tired out by doing three concurrent jobs, and by doing arduous ten month years to get her summers off: "tak[ing] on more in order to gain more satisfaction", she decided to accompany her spouse on his funded sabbatical and take one of her own, financed by the overtime pay accrued by this deliberate extra work load. This was the occasion when she headed to England and did horticultural training with a famous

octogenarian - a woman world-renowned as a gardener, lecturer and author. The intent was simply further education and pleasure for a self-described learner, and she took a negotiated unpaid leave of absence from her job. However, when April returned to Canada she felt quite physically unable to return to her previous post. For the first time in her life that high school combination of upper level English, biology and art studies - which had caused such raised eyebrows then - was being put to use. She resigned her job - went on for further studies at a Canadian horticultural institution to broaden her knowledge of plant hardiness - and has really not looked back since. Her home office - where we met on all occasions - is testament to these interests. It is packed with books and binders on plants and landscaping; there are numerous plants growing under lights and the room is filled with things that are visually appealing - old photographs, prints and a collection of antique pottery.

Profile: I No Longer Feel Compartmentalized

I have very strong memories of spending very happy times with my grandmother. I used to stay with my grandmother at a young age. She had a beautiful garden and I remember going around the garden with her. She had a small orchard and used to make perry - a cider type of drink made with pears. When I was about 11 I had my own garden, that I called Sunnyside Farm, which was the whole of our back garden that I had turned into vegetable beds, and I sold the produce to my parents. My parents did garden but no, I didn't get my interest in horticulture from them, because anytime I went into the garden with them they would *explicitly tell me* what to do or how to do it. But with my grandmother I could garden as I wanted to. She allowed me that.

I have another work memory of a summer job from about age 15, I would say. My

mother was never idle - she's not an idle person, she's just relentless, busy, busy all the time - and I wasn't encouraged to loaf around. She wanted us out of the house clearly, so we were sent out to work and this one summer I worked in a factory. It was an automotive manufacturing company with assembly lines, and I was doing work study on the shop floor. So my job was to go around with a clipboard and time these grown men and women working at perhaps a two minute job that they had to do thousands and thousands of times a week. My task was to look at ways of improving how they did it in terms of the order and placement of where the bin was for the parts. They were milling, sawing or cutting and, and everything else. And it was a huge eye opener to me:

...I'm afraid I was that age before I realized that there were mothers and fathers out there that did these, these dreary, awful jobs in these awful conditions and had to ask to go to the bathroom and [pause]...And I think that may have been why I decided to stay at the school even though I felt, I didn't feel bright in my school. (i, 233)

My mother had been a teacher but my father stopped her working, since it was not worth it tax-wise to him as the principal bread winner, I mean that's just how it worked then. But my mother's a very strong person and she looked for ways to find a career. She started a catering business with the next door neighbour and then she ran an Outward Bound school. My father's own education had been interrupted because of jaundice, and so he did night school in mechanical and electrical engineering to catch up. Eventually he moved through the ranks into management, but one of his key messages to me about work was that "you have to equate tedium with income". And that philosophy was brought home to me in terms of my own interests. I liked to draw and paint when I was younger but my parents dismissed that, saying "You know,

anybody can paint, anybody can draw. I mean it's not a *career*".

I wasn't comfortable at school: "I never found role models at school, at all, it was just a mystery to me. I was uncomfortable really... I was not thought to be of university material..." (i, 148). I felt as though I was always hitting a brick wall in terms of wherever I went for role models, there were none for me. I never felt as though I wanted to stay in school. I had thought I wanted to get out, but the experience of working on that shop floor made me realize that if you didn't have an education - that was your future - that was all you were going to get. And so that was a strong motivating factor to stay on even though it felt almost awkward asking to do your "A levels" when you were in that stream. And I had to beg to stay on. I remember having to go to the headmaster to request doing an art and a science combination. It wasn't allowed. I had to have special dispensation. When I did finally leave school the career counsellor advised that I could be a matron housekeeper and some other similar job [laughs ruefully]. It doesn't happen here in Canada, but it happened there and I certainly feel victimized from that experience and I carry baggage from that, I certainly do.

My parents steered me into going into a private secretarial college in London. My mother really pushed me to become a secretary. They thought it was a wonderful college, but it wasn't my choice. I didn't like what I was doing and I felt powerless. I *really didn't* want to go, but my parents said, "You've got to do something". And I said, "Well I'll go to the local technical school and do something" but I think they were concerned for me. When I look back I consider the secretarial years as a waste, but, clearly, I was at that age when I assumed I needed a learning process to "come from somewhere" and so just acquiesced in their plans for me.

It was a residential college in a gorgeous building, and with very prim and proper

teachers, all women. There was one who, as we came out of the residence, used to stand and measure the height of our skirt from our knee with a ruler to make sure it wasn't too short. We also weren't allowed to wear trousers. We got gated for infractions and all these stories you hear about women climbing down drainpipes and getting out - you know, it's all true [laughs]. They forced you into this sort of behaviour.

I did graduate successfully from the secretarial college and found my first job just off

Marble Arch:

All the managers were in these little offices with doors all down each side of this long, rectangular building and all the secretaries were in the middle with their desks... my desk was ... not very far away, like 15 feet from the door of his office, they weren't very big, it was like cubicles. And he [my manager] would get on the phone and he would say, "Miss ____, will you come in please?". And I would have to go in, sit opposite his desk and he wouldn't speak or he would, or he'd say something like, "I'd like you to go down to - ", and he'd take a long time to say it, so slowly, " - to Selfridge's food department and I would like you to go to the fruit and vegetable counter - " - and he spoke with this long, tedious - worse than real time - " - and find me a large, ripe pear, a *yellow* pear and make sure that, you know, when you touch, you know, dah, dah, dah" [pause]. And this would go on...you know, I would be called in to do a letter or something, and it would take like three hours. I was just mortified by this experience, because I was, you know, I had done this career, this secretarial job. I had, I had done well... and so I had got a good job. I mean people from those colleges got good jobs. I mean it was just...[long pause].

(i, 305)

So within two weeks of this experience, I took the initiative, and it was very difficult - gee, I haven't thought about it for a long time - and went down to the personnel department and told them I was really unhappy and they moved me immediately. I never looked back, I never saw the guy again. I worked for two absolutely terrific men and they totally tolerated me. At that time it was the 60's in London and I was living in a flat and walking barefoot across Hyde Park. So I was not typical of the secretaries at the school. I was reading Lord of the Rings. Anyhow my bosses liked that about me and tolerated it completely and humoured me.

And this is where I came face to face with the truth of my father's maxim about "equating tedium with income". I was in a flat with a lot of the others who were at university, and they had no money at all. So work was something I had to get through to allow me my life after work, you know. Then one day, a friend from college and myself, we just happened to walk by Canada House. As I recall it, we went in and they kind of *grabbed us* and said "You know, here's a job in Manitoba!" so we decided to emigrate and leave London but not for the Prairies [laughs]. I didn't even think about it when I look back. I just had the money to travel and so that's what I wanted to use it for. Caroline and I landed at Montréal airport and we were actually photographed - I guess it was on account of our long maxi coats and high boots - the clothes we took to be "normal".

I began work in Toronto and did find my first role model there. A work model not a personal one. A tough boss, she headed the personnel unit - with bleached blonde hair and lots of makeup and very expressive - lots of gesturing. She isolated the fact that I had things to offer and encouraged me to go to U of T and do all these courses in personnel administration, which I liked to a certain point, but again, it didn't feel quite right. She tried to mould me in a way that I

wasn't comfortable. I can remember that she would say things like "Is that what you're wearing today to do this?" And clearly she was right - I was wearing scarves over my head or whatever [laughs]. I can remember I wrote her a letter when I left to thank her for being such a pleasant boss. Talk about understatement. She said, "What do you mean pleasant? Wasn't I fantastic, or amazing, or *something*?" But it was interesting. Coming to Canada just seemed like an adventure. London had been too dull - partly because the job was just predictable and I couldn't see my way out of it there.

At that point I was in a relationship with my first husband and his job moved him to Eastern Canada and away from this job that I liked. I clearly remember the feeling of giving up a job because of someone else. I told myself that I had to do it because I'm married, and this is where my husband's job is, and that's what my parents did. You follow the spouse around. Then what happened was my spouse lost his job, and I could see this as a pattern in my spouse. Always losing jobs. Even though he was the higher income earner, you know:

...And I remember thinking that. And then he decided...that he was going to go back to architecture school. He'd never discussed it with me and, what I recall, it was sort of a *fait accompli*. I don't remember feeling any kind of anger about it at all. In fact I remember feeling pleased about it - bizarre now. My parents I can remember saying, "Oh this is dreadful...you won't have any money", and I'm [going], "But this is something he wants to do, you know, this is great". You know, I don't remember the money part as being, dawning on me or having any significance whatsoever. And I thought oh this is great, you know, this will be a better life for *us*, right. Cause I had seen my unit, my parents as a unit. Even though my father clearly dictated where they went, I'd never seen

my mother powerless in the relationship in terms of decisions or how things interacted in the family, you know... (i, 671)

The breakup of my marriage was devastating. But it never occurred to me that I would not be okay. I had kept a sense of myself as a person. For example, I can remember looking at an envelope that my mother had written to me and it said, Mrs. ____ on it (my married name). And I had thought this has got *nothing* to do with me. But you could not call that a feminist response, since I would say that my feminism came later and really sprang from my experience of being a single parent. Up until that point I had not taken much interest in the movement. I can remember when my marriage fell apart that my mother said, “Well I’m sure it was because you didn’t iron his shirts” and that actually came up in a conversation (rolls eyes expressively), but:

Hey, you know, you’re the one who was left with the child. You’re the one with the low paying job...I do remember each time I went into ask for more money or a better job, it wasn’t initially forthcoming. And I would have thought that... my work, competent work record should have stood for itself. And it didn’t. And I can remember... I had to go and get a job at a medical school. It wasn’t a job I wanted in any respect at all and again, I was interviewed by the dean of the medical school and he asked me about when I was having, planning to have babies. I mean, so it didn’t matter where you were or what you were doing ...(iii, 490)

Finances became important because I was a single parent with a one year old, and that forced me into looking at my financial situation. I started out in a lowly administrative position at a very low salary. So I began asking myself where I was going - it seemed nowhere. I was then in rented accommodation and wondered how was I going to support us in the tradition to

which I wanted to become accustomed [laughs ruefully]. It wasn't really what I had hoped for myself, so I just gradually kept asking for a better job and better pay until I became the highest paid administrative person in terms of what that organization could offer. I never got used to the process of having to negotiate my salary, but bargaining seemed to be the way it worked:

...and each time I felt really put out that they hadn't understood that I was worth it. And it was that sense of self-worth again that just drew me. But every time I was made to - I felt crummy about it. I felt that I'd really not been me. You know, I obviously put myself, not in an aggressive stance, but, you know, I thought you didn't have to do that to get what you wanted. And each time I had been proved wrong. Each time I had to feel that I had to go out on a limb to get extra salary, to get, you know, job title...(iii, 506)

When I came to my last job, part of it was to do the magazine for the law school. There was one occasion when I'd done *all* the work for the magazine, the layout, the stories and one professor on the advisory faculty committee nominated himself as the editor:

...[laughs bitterly] I, I said, "No you won't". I said, "No.. I mean I'll stop work right now if you think that you're going to have that"... I guess that, I'm not very self-reflective, as I said before, but after all those [occasions] I'd come home and I felt crummy that I,... not that I'd hurt these people, but that *I'd* overstepped. (ii, 520)

I don't dwell on things. If something isn't going right, then I quickly move in another direction or a different path or change something. It is true that I made the most of the opportunities:

...in both jobs I was involved in writing projects, I wrote the magazine for the law schools
...And, you know, it was very interesting developing it basically for myself...At that point

there were no law school counselling officers across Canada, I was the *first* one. And, there was a model in the States and so I sort of plugged into that in terms of getting information. And so it was quite a pioneering sort of thing. (i, 49)

When I was at that law school, we celebrated the 100 year centenary, which gave rise to lots of interesting projects - a commemorative booklet, a Canada Post stamp, an exhibition at the archives, a stained glass window. We did all sorts of things that brought me in touch with people that I could relate to. The opportunities were there in that job to mix with interesting pockets of people. The former dean there was a very good role model for me, and really helped me find people to interview and talk about. He used to take me out to lunch and made me feel like a real person instead of a dogsbody. But it is true that, as long as I was a secretary:

I always felt under someone's thumb and I felt very uncomfortable. Because it always seemed to be like I'm writing someone else's ideas and [I used to think] "He hasn't written this very well [pause]..." (i, 569)

I'd say my most interesting project there was my work with _____, the woman working on a study for the Canadian Bar Association on women and the role of women in the legal profession. I didn't have a law degree to offer her, but something drove me to write offering my help and she accepted me. So, as well as my job at the law school, and my job at the development office, with two bosses, two secretaries and two offices, suddenly I had Madam _____ too. I was just in awe of her. She was like nobody I'd worked for before in my life - just phenomenally efficient. And I haven't really talked about what I saw in terms of women in the legal profession, which led me to want to work for her in the first place:

...a constant force in my career at that point [was] in realizing that there were bright

women in law school who were doing well. But they weren't getting articling jobs, they weren't getting this, they weren't getting that, you know. I mean I could see the pattern. But also too those that did get into it weren't happy in it. The, the people that were the least happy, or whatever that word may be, were women, older women who had left positions in teaching or nursing, quite high up positions with quite high salaries...and were just incensed that they were being treated like this way. And so I would have to do a lot of counselling with these women. And they used to come in and bellyache and scream and shout. (i, 714)

These women all had amazing stories to tell the Task Force. You know, all those stories of the 80's - coming back from their articling interviews and being slapped on the bum by the senior partner. And students working for small law offices or sole practitioners, thinking they were lucky to get the articling positions, and being told to vacuum the office. I had seen this in my career as a placement officer and had not been able to help these intelligent women, who had come in with such high ideals, to achieve the careers that they wanted. They leaned towards social activism and pro bono work and couldn't satisfy or reconcile these nurturing needs in the corporate world. Women lawyers being typecast, doing wills or estates or family law. So it didn't really matter how much education you had or how well you had done at school, there it was, *still* there. Bright women had invested in further education, they wanted to do something with their lives:

...so they went into law, thinking that I can make a contribution and ... then when...they found out what was available to them they were very disappointed and ...very disheartened...they were pigeonholed into these very straight little cells...(ii, 44)

So this was a chance to do something and I mean Madam _____ put it in place. The work was satisfying but ultimately I didn't stay with it:

...because I didn't see it actually as helping me. You know, it seemed *apart* from me. I was always looking for, to do other things. In fact, I remember putting the extra money into, oh this will buy me [the opportunity] to go to this horticultural conference, or wherever it was I went to...(i, 743)

On reflection - I mean it's the first time I've thought about it - I wonder if I took on *more* in order to gain *more* satisfaction. And in overloading myself at work I got mono. Clearly it burned me up doing those three things to try and get the satisfaction:

And I didn't... I immediately thought, well okay, ...what is all this extra work giving me, it's giving me extra finances - so what do you want to do with it? And I immediately put it into going to the horticultural classes. So that helped me formulate that clearly I wasn't happy, ... there was no point taking on more cause it didn't give me what I was looking for. So I must have been looking for sure. (iii, 197)

Things didn't change substantially when I moved on to the next university. I took on extra duties in the Development Office. I've always felt that I've been a conscientious worker and I have never had any doubts that I do my job well. Nothing fazes me, having dealt with the egos of the legal profession! And it has given me some satisfaction to know that, after I've left jobs, I've always been replaced by lawyers. In one instance, my job was split and given to *two* lawyers [laughs wryly]. But this sense has persisted of feeling underpaid, under-appreciated - and, in a hierarchy of which I wasn't a part. I felt totally powerless. For example, on one occasion I had to organize a banquet reception and there was a fur coat that was being raffled off.

It was really a values clash... "I just thought, 'Am I doing this? Am I doing this?'" and that was when I realized that I wasn't sure there was such a thing as philanthropy. I just saw it as completely surreal and self-serving and I couldn't get past it. I was able to move on and develop an expertise around endowment and memorial projects which allowed me to make a more authentic connection with people. And I did start a project there for a group of women administrators, in order to put forward some issues. I became an advocate for them, since it was extraordinary to me to be in a highly educated environment, where people were treated worse than anywhere I'd ever been. But really ultimately, there was nowhere for me to go. In such a two tier structure, there's the faculty and then there's the staff. You do the same job, you become more skilled at it, you can do it in a shorter space of time, you can tackle new projects, but essentially there's nowhere to go. And that is when I decided I had to take a sabbatical year. I mean my spouse's might be paid, but I could have a sabbatical too.

I must have had the idea of changing my career before, but winning the garden competition gave me the impetus to decide to study horticulture in England. I had forgotten this memory. What led me to this particular school in England, was that I'd had a 30 second daydream many years ago. I had gone to visit my parents in England and my son was one and I had, as I said, become a single parent:

...I can remember sitting in the back seat of the car with my son and my parents in the front seat and I sort of felt like this 13 year old who had gone wrong. You know, things hadn't worked out in my life and I was really quite full of self pity...(i, 95), and I was wondering what happens now? I don't know where we were going, but we passed this arboretum and you could see this winding pathway. And there was this beautiful old Georgian

stone building and it said School of Horticulture:

...and I thought, oh in your dreams, you know...If I had my money ...if money was no object, if I had to get everything together in my life, *that's* what I'd want to do. And, and so that took me 10 years to get to that point just because it wasn't right at that point...(i, 102)

I had long admired the famous English gardener, Rosemary Verey, of Barnsley House in Gloucestershire. It is this incredible place - just so English, upper class, with the gardeners being local people that she trained. We can joke that it's like something out of P.G. Wodehouse, with the habitual upper class twits, and even a woman in the landscape section, who was truly called Twig. I decided that since writing to Madam _____ had brought such positive results, there would be no harm in writing to Rosemary Verey offering her my volunteer services. I was a bit apprehensive since I only had a few months of school at that point, but was accepted. Every Wednesday another student and myself drove over at 7:00 am and spent the day in this garden. And this woman, again not a role model, was just an iconoclast of the first degree - at the time she was in her 80's. She would grab both of us and basically we had to support her. And we would walk around the garden with her, at an ungodly hour. And it was always in the pouring rain of course. And she would lead us around and list all the things she expected us to do that day, which was just an incredible list and with incredible detail:

And she, you know, she elevated gardening for me in that you could take pride in these small tasks. You know, and it was very important in the way you did this, [that] added to the overall picture. It wasn't just sweeping or cutting or, you know, it was, it somehow had a, a significance in the whole of horticulture...(i, 817)

She was very intimidating and completely silenced me, but I suffered her in order to learn the craft. It was suffering, no question about it, but it was also an opportunity for me:

I realized that early on when I was studying again I was this rabid learner, yeah...as most are going back to school - high achievers...(i, 896)

As I told you earlier school was a mystery. I've always worked surrounded by people with degrees and I'm aware that I don't have one. I never felt at ease in class and used to say things to myself like:

well that can't be true, you know, ...I have to get home and read something. I'm sure what they're saying isn't true. Like I always felt, you know, a false start learner. I never seemed to be in the right place at the right time. (iii, 306)

It could be because I grew up in a school system where you certainly were not invited to speak, or ask questions - the British school system doesn't encourage that kind of thing. What I noticed going back to school was that I *still* felt quite intimidated to ask questions:

...I'm not going to take up 39 other people's time with my little question, right, yeah. I can research that on my own and I've always had that...[pause] my method ... of getting answers ...[was] I always enjoyed doing papers, doing my own research. (iii, 345)

I've run across a lot of women who have been successful in their careers - the sort who went to Mount St. Vincent. I think that being in an all girls' school has had a very positive effect on the lives of these women. They do not feel those things that I felt going in to ask for my new job title and more money. I don't think, they ever felt that they were taking up valuable class time or their boss's time. I tend to defer or I have done in the past. You know, the good girl thing, that we were talking about before.

So here I was back in horticulture school and the same kind of teachers were still teaching - totally and utterly frumpy and weird - even though this time they were teaching what I wanted to learn, *desperately* wanted to learn. But because there were a lot of very young students, you know, 17 year olds, bussed down from Birmingham I had a fantastic time and somehow found my way with these paternalistic teachers, who would want to call me dear, because I had a six foot son [laughs]. Horticultural school worked - our class just seemed to gel even though we were this total mishmash. We had a girl from Roedean (a British private school), you know, amongst all these Brummies (people from Birmingham), one guy lived in his van for the whole year. It was really an eclectic mix. I got so much enjoyment out of that. I discovered the humour, the camaraderie, and that experience was not replicated in Canada. And I felt sort of sad about that - about emigrating in one sense - not that I would ever go back:

...it was just sort of the humour, the way the class worked, the teacher interaction with the class. It was just the asides, it was just the way everybody kidded around. It really was a lot to do with the humour and just the personal interactions. And I've never been able to find that in Canada in any shape... (iii, 387)

When I returned to Canada after the sabbatical I was due to return to work. But I was just horrified - in fact, even walking down the road between the law school and the student union - my whole body would kind of cringe, really it was a gut reaction. It was:

A physical reaction, response. Yeah, absolutely physical. As well as the mental...At the time that I went, I thought that I was only going for a year...when I came back I did have a real rejection to it and, and even though I was offered my job back and subsequently even to set my own hours and time, you know, I just [pause] you know [long pause].(i, 7)

I was so grateful to have found something that I enjoyed:

I felt I could be *myself*, instead of being this person who went to work from 9 to 5, smiled and did my job and came home again. And I, I can actually remember ... peeling off my clothes as though I was peeling off....my work, an identity ... (ii, 127)

It was more than a kind of bodily freedom. After all I have a “uniform” for gardening - sun screen, insect repellent, rain gear in the car, depending on where we’re going, what time of year and what we’re going to do. It was more to do with compartmentalizing the expected roles of work:

...I can remember biking to work and think[ing], or trying to evaluate my job, cause there were a lot of good things about it and, in that it, I, I felt that it often tested my intelligence and my ability to deal with difficult people and there were a lot of good things about it. But I can remember the only time I felt really good was biking to work and biking home. So it was definitely kind of a taking off and a putting on...(ii, 143)

In fact I felt locked in:

...I see my office, you know, with its little air vent and it was kind of a cool office. It had a window, it was my office in the law school and there was a building, oh I don’t know, within about 6 feet behind, I suppose and, and it had all these wire strips so that the pigeons wouldn’t land, so you looked out you saw this wire strip with these nails sticking up so the pigeons couldn’t land...(iii, 242)

I remember when I won the gardening competition and there was an article in the paper, suddenly, people in the university community would start to ask me questions about gardening:

And this was, this was something that I would say *nobody* would have known about me at

all. It was something I had kept quite, not secret, but private... why would people be interested? - I'm here to work, you know. The ethic of work [is] you work...(ii, 219)

I had kept my private life and my working life in two completely different compartments - even dividing them off. In my career I had made a point of working and getting paid for a ten month year. I don't know if I could have articulated it at the time, but it was to do with time - time to be outside, time to myself, time to be me, I suspect. But to get those two months off in the summer I practically worked those hours in the months, before and after, catching up, because I was a one person show. Nobody does your work, it's still there, sitting at your desk. So, in one way, it didn't make sense, but I was willing to do that so I could have that block of time. Being in mid-life was a factor in my transition; I do remember thinking I didn't want to do that particular job for another twenty five years - I needed a change.

Time was an issue when I applied to the local horticultural program in Canada to Canadianize my knowledge around hardiness and plants. It was really difficult. I should have applied in May and this was late August. There were 500 applicants for 20 spaces and they told me I was too late, I'd missed the boat and would have to go through the application the following year. But I must have just kept on going. I started dealing with one person and hit a real brick wall with him, he wouldn't even talk to me. So I dealt with someone else and then I talked to another woman who taught a class there and she encouraged me to keep at it. And eventually I was allowed to take all the work I'd done in England, including the course outline highlighted to show what I'd done in order to get advanced standing. Luckily I'd brought all my work home. I had to go in with a suitcase since I had eight binders that were (spreading arms) a whole year's worth of work. I definitely felt that I needed their approval and that I had to be on my best

behaviour to encourage their support in a very paternalistic system.

They initially were only prepared to let me audit it basically. But I was tenacious because I didn't want to take any more time and I wanted my program condensed. I wanted to do a year and a half in the year. But because they initially wouldn't let me in, I actually didn't start my year until October. And there was no way I was going to come back and do the woody curriculum separately. I was at the point of feeling that I had some contribution to make and I wanted to start *doing*.

I'm not the traditional student in horticulture, although I'm not abnormal by any sense. There are other women like me who have chosen horticulture at my age, although the physical world of gardening is not dominated by women. A lot of women give it up, you know, because you do get problems with your hands - carpal tunnel. You can see how my fingers, the joints spread out. You get callouses. I mean it's not a pretty sight and you get sore knees, you know, cuts and bruises. However, I don't see myself retiring - I see myself being able to do this till I'm in my 80's. Despite the physicality you can still get by doing your own garden, doing seedlings. There are lots of things you can do that are to do with growing, but don't involve lifting heavy things. I do feel that this is a better career to be doing - maybe not financially, but mentally and emotionally which has an effect on your health. I strongly believe that. In fact, looking back, I can see situations in my past where I can see health problems that were related. So I had to put the emotional side ahead, and that's what I decided to do for my own sanity. I mean, where would *we* be if I was miserable?:

I mean that was a very difficult peak for me. Because after my first marriage broke down

I swore that, you know, I'm not going to get into that economic unit, that's crap, you

know. I mean, yeah, there was I playing the supportive little role and okay, bye, bye, you've done your bit...So when I made this decision to go back to school...we had become a new, a new family...I had saved money of my own so that my money was, that I was using, at least, for my education, my fees and that sort of thing...(ii, 897)

I don't feel reinvented. It's just that I'm able to reconcile certain aspects of my life into getting paid for them, which I feel very quite fortunate to do. I realize that the work is also undervalued so I still believe I am not getting paid what I feel I'm worth. In fact I have this lovely little ad, somewhere in my possession, that I cut out of the local paper, when I was in England, that reads "Gardener/Toilet Cleaner Required". And I've always kept that. In fact when I was at horticultural school here, I kept it in front of my binder, alongside a Goethe quote [laughs]. You know, a lot of the work that I initially did in gardening was very messy, it was cleaning up other people's mess in their gardens. So it was quite humble. But the difference is I enjoy what I'm doing:

I can't quite put *why* I do it ... you know, as I increasingly get older I think I won't be able to do the digging, I won't be able to do the heavy work. And of course you think too that you could easily give the work out to someone else...but I have thought about that and I don't want to do that...So I have made a deliberate decision that I want to do the manual work and I will take on another person and I will be part of the crew...I don't like being indoors sitting designing in the summer or even in May, I like to be out...(ii, 717)

At the beginning, I was concerned about turning what was essentially my hobby of gardening, my interest, into work. Maybe I wouldn't enjoy doing it, gardening at home anymore. But, that hasn't happened with me - in fact, I could do it 24 hours a day. I feel at a good place

now - I'm not dwelling on finances or anything like that, this is just a purely emotional reaction to the questions you're asking:

...I don't feel as though I need a big statement. I certainly don't ... feel the need for public recognition because I think I've got my private recognition now. I've reconciled the fact that I don't have a great long line of degrees ... I've come to terms with a lot of things that bothered me in my earlier career...I like to be of help. Yeah, I'm, I'm a helper... I am still in a very nurturing profession. Yeah, but it, it totally suits me, so [pause]...(iii, 690)

Of course, I have a lot of people come up to me and say, "Oh wonderful, you're a gardener, what a happy little life you must have tending your flowers". But it's really not that, you know. It's about interviewing clients, sitting down with them, very much like counselling. You want to go into their house and sum them up. It's also about calculating soil and moving mulch and heavy, difficult work really, measuring the plot, doing compass points, taking photographs. And I do like the feeling of being physically tired - so often in the evenings all I can do is totally crash. I think my A levels at school - English, biology and art - are reflected in what I enjoy doing now. It is amazing how they come together. Perhaps you are right that I've rediscovered that person who was in my grandmother's garden:

...I no longer feel compartmentalized, I no longer have to, you know, peel off my clothes - we talked about that... and go into that cold, gray building... I get to do what I like all day, every day and there is no... there's no division. I mean I think it's, you know, getting paid to talk about gardening, it just seems like a dream come true [laughs]. (iii, 272)

What's more, I feel it is on my own terms. I think people recognize my value and people are appreciating me more. As I think I've said, I felt so underappreciated at the university. The

Vice Dean wrote me a letter after I'd left saying, you know:

...we so miss you, we never realized, all these things keep coming up, and there's no one to do them, we didn't realize you did them. You know, how come you never said you did them? Like they, they were *invisible*, the tasks that I had taken on... so it's, yeah, so there's a lot wrong with what I do. And the way I do it...(iii, 904)

I was once at a conference at Dalhousie called Women as Managers. The facilitator talked about how women will waste all kinds of time, taking things to the nth degree of perfection, but not take time to market themselves appropriately - and I think that was true of me.

I am now involved with teaching at a community centre. It pays miserably but I enjoy it because it is in a part of town where money is scarcer and you can make a lot of difference. We created a community garden which meant such a lot to the bleak neighbourhood. People came by and said, "Oh, this is just so great, it's so nice, it's so visible". I like things to be visually appealing. I don't like drinking out of styrofoam cups, for instance. I like things around me that, that speak to me. I do have a sense of public space, so I can get nervous about having high end clients too. I struggle with that all the time. One of my classmates in England worked in Elton John's garden. It's been featured in a lot of glossy magazines, but he probably is there one week a year. And I couldn't do that. I don't just want to be a gardener for an absentee landlord.

I can also get concerned about maintenance and getting caught up in making gardens tidy. My own garden I think is quite a reaction to the gardens that I do for other people. Most people don't like the chaos that I like. I try to be unstructured there because gardening is, in effect, about altering nature. Nothing is natural really, and I think of it as controlling anarchy. Which is odd, since I never felt in control when I was at my other work. I also worry about servicing

certain types of clients. When the money is shorter you can go for high end clients, since you tend to have more opportunities to play about and do what you want. But that doesn't make me entirely comfortable. So this is what I'm trying to reconcile. I'm not just in it for the money.

Although financial independence is still definitely an issue for me. It was important for me to use my own money for my education, my fees and that sort of thing, but I knew that in terms of costs I wasn't going to pay my way in this career change. It bothers me and I do remember discussing it with a friend who's a writer, also without a strong income. After my first marriage broke down, I'd sworn never to put myself in a situation where I'm dependent on someone or not earning my own way. But in my first relationship, I hadn't seen myself as a person - I'd seen a family unit. I think the difference is that I have started to think more in terms of myself, and my present partner allows me to do that. Whereas before I was definitely the nurturing partner - nurturing my husband's education and paying for it [laughs sardonically].

I am interested in other things than money, though. What I'm trying to do is educate people away from pesticides into organic gardening. Recently, I opened my front garden to raise money for banning lawn pesticides. And I'm wondering if my teaching will also help satisfy my need to give back or whatever to the community. I think it's a Vita Sackville West quote "the more one learns, the less one feels one knows". It's important for me to share garden wisdom. I do like the way that gardening has evolved in terms of those stories that are handed down. When I think about your question on legacy, I went to the Hamilton Botanical Gardens a number of years ago. We were given a tour by a docent - a wonderful man, retired. It was very early in the year, nothing was growing, so it was kind of a difficult thing for him to have a group through. Anyhow he told us his legacy had been planting oaks, more oak seedlings. I thought that I would

start doing that:

planting oaks because they take so long and they're long-lived that you do have to nurture them for the first year. I thought what a wonderful thing to go around places and just put in a little oak seedling...(iii, 685)

Brenda

Portrait

At 51 Brenda is single woman, without children, who is physically and emotionally close to her parents - to whom she says she owes her attitude to life, and her work ethic - and to her brothers and their extended families. She has chosen to live in the country area where she grew up, and commutes to the city to work. Having and keeping good friends and a loving family is important to her. She likes to connect with people in a meaningful way. Her office has several family photos, photos of the lake and her dogs, as well as personal pieces of treasured furniture which have been hauled through several office moves in the search for cheaper office space, more suited to not-for-profit status and funds. On her desk stands a cast sculpture of a group holding hands in a circle which represents her idea of team spirit.

As a young woman/elder sister she acted as a model for her three younger brothers and "interpreted" them to her parents and pleaded their case on occasion if necessary. They all followed her to the same university, although not in the same young hippie tradition as she describes it, and with very different career results. She had thought about taking up nursing, which she described as a familiar option, along with teaching, for young women of her generation. She chose not to pursue that educational route but, after graduation with an arts degree, was astonished not to find work easily in a severe downturn in hiring. She still vividly

recalls being asked at interviews about her ability to type, and being refused work as an elevator operator in a department store, since she was over qualified. Both memories appear vivid; she describes the uniform of hat and white gloves for the operator job, and the self- and world-annoyance at being rejected for work over a lack of typing skills. Discouraged by the gap between expectations and outcomes, she travelled overseas for a year and then returned to work within the federal public service, initially at a clerical level, since that was what was on offer.

Over the years, she worked her way up to a senior manager level. In her last position in government she was responsible for a large departmental program. At the time of our interviews, she had left her government post and moved to her current position in the private sector three years previously, where she had taken up the post of director of a non profit or charitable organization. This agency offers services to clients who are seeking work or looking for career information on a walk-in service basis. She is clear-headed and articulate about this transition. Extrovert and enthusiastic, she loves this work and finds the work of community advocate motivating and energizing. The walls are covered with photos of the recent graduates from a work training program - many of whom would be described by more traditional agencies as "hard to place", as well as with press cuttings from local papers, and TV programs about the impact of this service to the community. Her enthusiasm is paradoxically tempered by a fatigue begotten in a continual and crisis-driven search for funding, in a province which has cut funds to community services, and with a federal government which is moving away from the concept of core funding to service groups. That her staff are motivated to stay loyal to her and the project, despite not infrequent delays in pay cheques, is testimony to her long-term commitment to them. They know that the inspirational message framed on her wall which reads "Never doubt that a small group of

thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has” is a foundation for her thinking.

Profile: Arriving into Myself

My family of course had an influence on how I look at work - both parents have a strong work ethic and my grandmother owned her own business. She was a real little business woman, with her own millinery store. Even though my mom worked at home she was up before I got up, and she was still doing something like sewing when we went to bed at 11:00. So I had a sense that she was always working in some way. But she was always a stay at home mom. And she made us work, like such as the second you were out of university or high school or whatever, the second you were free, she had you checking the ads in the paper for that job that you could start tomorrow or that day [laughs]. Long, long before I became a feminist my mother was feminist. She was one of the first women's libbers and getting all her friends - males and females - all riled up in discussions about it. My brothers and I had the same jobs around the house. I mowed lawns and they did dishes and we all took turns and everything was equal. My dad was a research scientist and manager - very hard working. I had a lot of respect for him as an employer, a worker person. You know, he was never off sick, unless he was *very* sick. One of my first jobs as a summer student was where he was working. So I got actually to see him also from a co-worker kind of perspective and saw that he was very well liked by his genuineness.

Some of my early jobs in school were to help at hospitals. I was allowed to actually witness operations from a foot from the operating table. And I worked as a nursing assistant at the main Hospital. I was heading into nursing, but I changed my mind. There was a troubling and sad event when a child who had drowned was brought in - and so I changed direction and

went into psychology at Queens, thinking I might move towards social work, which I never did go into. When I did graduate, that was the first year that university graduates couldn't find work. There was a huge great crowd of us. I went to Toronto and I was sure I'd have a job in a minute with my little degree. I don't think I had really thought what I was going to be doing until I was out looking and so I actually hit a big unknown. And I spent five months looking - with my parents being persistent, even from home, that I was pounding that pavement - and I was.

Sometimes I had two interviews a day every day and I got as many letters back of rejections:

And I was asked if I could type and of course I couldn't type, never been taught to type.

And I don't know how often I was [asked that]...[There] was a job I really wanted in a newspaper, I think assistant editor or something...it was just one of the fields that interested me. And they were down to three and the one who got it could type... so then I started going for all kinds of jobs such as elevator operator and...I was turned down because I was *over* qualified...I just wanted any job by then. (i, 97)

My cousin and I did get a job through somebody and I turned it down:

my parents were quite angry with me, that I'd turned it down after all that time. But it involved wearing, you know, this little outfit and these white gloves and a hat, which I, you know, I was from that generation, peace and love and this was completely not me besides...(i, 126)

I graduated in psychology and English, so then I didn't really have a profession. The women right after us, in my brother's generation, learned from our mistakes and they leapt into business and they started into engineering and following the male fields:

I'm really glad to see women getting that need. I don't think most women had it when I

was growing up, this need to be self-sufficient. Most women did not... And I'm very glad to see it. I wish they were all self-sufficient in some way. (i, 351)

Anyway I went off to Europe and found a job in a Swiss mountain village selling tickets at the door of a discotheque, which was at least good for my future French-speaking capability. But more importantly it gave me something for my work world in the future. I'd gone to Europe all by myself, I'd never been on a plane and I spent the most scary first two weeks in loneliness. But I learned I could stand on my own two feet and survive, no matter what. I came back with a core of something that I certainly needed in my work world afterwards.

When I came back to Canada I started my career in government at the clerical level. I would often speak to management about how clerks were being treated. Between union and management I've always been somewhere in the middle. It was a bit like being between my brothers and my parents doing the negotiating. I used to voice things at meetings:

As nicely as I possibly could, but that maybe so and so is being asked too much to do photocopying when she's really at this level and then I realized that wasn't helping anyone, me or them, and so I shut up...but I've always taken that role. (i, 264)

Twice I quit on principle. On one occasion a deaf woman had been treated terribly by a supervisor, and there were two other people who were on tranquillizers. So I went to her and then I went above her about it. I put myself on the line saying, "Look either that supervisor goes, or I go". Anyway, to keep my stance that I had stupidly taken for myself, which I would never do again or advise anyone to do, I quit on principle. And so then guess who ended up unemployed and not eligible for EI (employment insurance). So I paid that price.

I think this spokesperson and fighter for the cause of the worker was probably very

related to my family role. And to the fact that maybe I had wanted to go into social work or a people-helping profession. And so I made a people-helping profession out of my very bland statistical clerk job. I'm not sure about the word "helper". I tend to object when people come in here to our centre and in career conversation say, "I like to help people", and I think, "Don't use that expression":

And I don't know why...this probably comes from this male-female thing of don't, you know, it's not necessarily good to be seen to be one of those who help people, it sounds weak, you know. So I rarely use that expression...but...I care about people.(ii, 642)

I had to *learn* how to be a good advocate for workers. And one important turning point was when I decided that I would shut up at the office [laughs sadly]. I had to realize that it was not getting me or any of the other people anywhere. But I wasn't giving up on it, I was just realizing that it would be better to be quiet about my goals. That allowed me to open up the door and advance up the ranks to the officer level. And as I carefully watched all that, I realized that I now had power. So that was another turning point - this realization that once I reached a responsibility for other people that I had power to influence what happened for those people.

As I look back, I can see that all along, I've had to be *pulled* to the next level rather than go there. I've never been ambitious, upwardly ambitious, because I always have had a lack of confidence in my ability to do the next level. I have had some wonderful mentors. In all my work life they've pulled me forward and, often those very same mentors were the ones I sought out for advice later on. They've seen my potential as a manager, when I have been resisting and not having confidence. I've said this to other women since, and have noticed they have this same reaction that I used to have. So what has happened for me, in my work life, is that almost always

someone has offered some position without competition. In hindsight I can see that I was very lucky to have met such people. I believe I have a couple of angels out there keeping an eye on me. That helps, whether they really are or not [laughs]. I have been very lucky and I've always been a team player on my colleague level:

... I don't ever think I behaved as if I thought I was better than anyone else... I've always respected that they got there for a reason because they're good at something and they've earned where they are... they may not do things the way I might wish they did ... but they're senior to me, they earned it. I respect them. There's things they know that I don't know, and I can learn from them. (i, 477)

I work very hard on my own management responsibilities - always have. I want my staff to be excited about work, to help them be challenged. Staff need to be trained, they need to be rewarded, they need to get along with their co-workers. As a manager in government, I used to always ask for other managers' unused training money. I've got in trouble with that sometimes, but I learned early, that one of the biggest gifts you can give to your staff is training. Two things happened to me in government that I'm very, very proud of. Twice I was taken through a 360 degree leadership assessment. One was with all departmental managers across the country and the second was done with all HR managers at headquarters. I came in number one in the top 1%, the top 3 people in both, that's for leadership skills. Yeah, but did they ever promote me? No...[long pause]. I was told this was an exemplary result.

And so I've thought a lot about the difference between an administrator and a leader. I notice here, for example, that some of my volunteers - former school principals - like saying that word "administrator". I'm thinking the rest of the world outside of the school world has

graduated from the head person being an “administrator”. That is an old word. I’ve faced that contradiction many, many times in my government career. I can’t imagine how many documents there are on wanting people who are risk takers, creative, with new ideas, blah, blah, blah:

...It’s not that we don’t have good women in government, but we should have expanded our skill sets a little bit. I think we could have had a lot more women leaders in the government. But not just the same type. We’ve tended to promote those that have maybe more masculine traits or maybe, traditional...They’re financially savvy. They, you know, chop, chop (expressive movement with hands). (ii, 399)

And I’m not a long time feminist either, I’ve only just been a believer for the last 5, 6 years. I’ve always been a people equality person - enormously. I’m a fighter for causes, but I try to be as much for that guy as for that woman. Although I can tell when I see chauvinism happening - the split second I see it, I’m annoyed with it and I get protective about women. I can tell you that so often I’ve had a right-hand male assistant who went through me and whom I couldn’t trust:

And each time...I developed a wariness of it and you know, it always disappointed me to find it happen...But this person next to me if it’s a male will likely, from my experiences, they will try to be seen to be better, smarter, senior and, in doing that, must make me look a little bit less smart, less, ...and it’s done so cleverly. There’s, you know... “Brenda couldn’t, couldn’t be here, *you know* how she is”. (ii, 149)

So I’d say overall that I have found the female value system more collaborative, perhaps softer and service minded. My own style is to look out for all my staff:

...I work very hard that everybody who reports to me, and each and every single one is as

important as the other one. So I watch, I watch their body language - I look at their eyes every single day, every time I see them I do a lot of reading: are they okay?; they look okay. If they don't look okay, "How are you? - Come on in". I've learned to deal with it instantly, when there's a staff problem. (i, 451)

And I have stuck with my goals:

I let go the, I've let go really that other thing which is not really a value for me to, which is prestige and position...but it hurts me a little bit. Probably if they offered it to me (senior executive level) I probably would have turned it down (pause - looks away). (i, 507)

Anyway I've learned that just doing well in your own little world is just fine all by itself, and it's not power, at any cost, for sure:

...it's very important to me to have fun, too, in my life. And so...I wouldn't for any money, no matter...what change I could enact by being an executive director or ADM (Assistant Deputy Minister) I don't want it, if it could not be fun... (i, 523)

I've always treated time with respect. I try to maximize what I do with it and that includes having fun, you know. Yeah, fun at work is very important. I've always thought time was precious:

... it's precious partly because I don't necessarily believe I have a lot of it, you know. And I just, but I don't know whether I've always felt that way or recently more so. I don't count on it, I don't count on growing old. So [pause]... (iii, 183)

At the moment growing older *is* affecting my work life in a positive way. I like being older. So that's good. I'm not worried about it affecting me in terms of getting a job later or

anything like that, because I will pursue things that are suited to the age that I am at that time. You could say that I am time focussed in the sense that I'm not patient anyway about certain things. I don't like it when things take a long time to happen when they seem so graphical and sensible and needed. So I tend to think that they might happen sooner than they do.

So overall I could say that I believe in *Carpe Diem* in the sense that I am also trying to enjoy my non-work day as well. In the sense of growing older myself:

I used to think in my late 40's that... I need to get at these things *now* because I won't be able to do them after I'm 50 or I'll be seen to be old, I'll be all those things - but now that I'm here, in fact, I'm expecting I'll probably, very possibly work 10 more years doing different things. And I'll enjoy it...(ii, 213)

Learning and growth has been always the motivating factor. Growth is always kind of positive for me. Even in those jobs where I've worked at something that I didn't like, I've always chosen a responsibility that I haven't done before and I was willing to learn and grow from it. That stopped happening in my government position. I became aware of wanting to "escape", to be free of the weight of government:

The, the things that have been, that just drive me crazy, the restrictions and ... lack of creativity or the lack of power to make change or to do anything, you know. I probably reached my growth limit within the structure, that I was in. I probably didn't see any further growth there. (i, 561)

When I left there, I knew I was taking a big risk. But:

it was worth the risk that was all I knew. A lot of people... colleagues thought that maybe I had lost my marbles, sort of, "What is she doing leaving this security?". Security is

important to me but not like that...(ii, 285)

I've been told that I am a true entrepreneur. It always fascinates me when I hear it, and I'm always complimented to hear it. I think they mean a creator, a starter. When they have called me a change agent, I felt more comfortable with that word, because I see myself as a catalyst for change, very often for different things. Currently I'm taken with this philosophy, borrowed from a book I am reading - it talks about individuals in terms of a house and describes what stage you're at. You can be in the basement, or at the first, second and third storey. And, of course, the attic is where you want to be - the attic is the top to aim for. And naturally [laughs] there's the basement. All through the book, it talks about slipping into basement behaviour. It describes each of the floors in terms of growth. I mean that's part of the work that I'm doing, it's not just the work I'm doing *here*, it's the work I'm doing on self progression. The learning, that I've done here in this job, is a very big value for me. It's happening at a time when I need it. At this place I have just been "on a mission" [laughs]. It's been a bit of a pilgrim's progress - unexpectedly.

We're still in the process of attempting to create a neighbourhood career centre concept. We want to be a drop-in centre for all age groups, since in this economy it's amazing how many people really are in the process of change, and yet have no one to talk to about it. Sometimes the policy makers review the concept, and make suggestions that there should maybe be either certain hours, or separate places for youth and for adults. Instantly I say - No - that's the charm of this place. The fun of it is to have different ages helping each other out and sitting beside each other - I've always liked that. I do that at home as an aunt, bridging the intergenerational thing. I think you can reach that generation, and be a kind of path to the younger group and I like that. I

remember when I started I was all by myself in that whole big office and I was the only employee. We had no phone, no anything and this was my place of work.

I guess I like almost every aspect here - especially the writing and the contacts. I love interpersonal contacts. What I don't enjoy are the fake contacts. I wish I could avoid "schmoozing", as it's called. I don't enjoy going into certain arenas, where I feel that people have a different agenda than I do - one that's not true and genuine. I try to just remain myself, but I don't always feel comfortable in certain superficial situations.

We've now been in place three years - and it's taken me two years longer than I thought it would, so it's been very challenging. We're so close to realizing it. It's so needed and it could be such a special thing to leave the world with. It was this desire to create something important, to make a contribution. I was waiting for the right time to do something meaningful in the community. I have been able to be a mentor to a number of people - and that might be enough all by itself, but most of all I would love it if I could leave something *lasting* with this community centre. We are in a constant struggle for economic survival in this venture, always looking for funding. The financial bumps in being a non-profit are brand new for me. It's scary, so I've depended on the people that work with me. Sadly, there are so many bureaucratic delays which affect whether the staff get paid on time or not. I mind for them but, personally, I don't look back to the sort of relative stability I came from, or, if I do, it is only fleetingly, because the freedom so much more outweighs the loss.

This freedom is to do with working within my own values, I would say:

...that just came to me as, as you were speaking...I'm so comfortably within my own values here and [before] I was quite constantly and frequently seeking out others with the

same values, or having to quash my own values to go along with things...(ii, 131)

And I have a little probably activist piece now that I didn't have before. Over the years I've had a lot of "Can you type?" as well. And I couldn't! [laughs]. I mean, not only did I *not* like the question, it was just as annoying that I couldn't type. The categorizing is something that you think you'll get used to it, and we don't realize that it's so tiring. There always has been a little bit of a struggle. I see that there's still a lot of those male-female things in the work world and we haven't figured out how to perfectly handle it:

You know when you're in a meeting...and you're getting yourself a coffee...do you have the confidence to just say, "Can I get anyone else a coffee while I'm up?" like you would do with a bunch of women, or a bunch of anyone, you know!. Or are you going to *not* do it, because you're going to...put yourself in another...role. (iii, 153)

I didn't, and I don't, have a chart or a plan for my career - I just go with the flow and see where it leads:

So I just sort of fell... into one thing after the other basically. But, had I been in nursing I would have known what I was doing, and not been always in a [pause], going, you know, into a question mark. (iii, 94)

Yet, I am very strong within myself. In some ways I have a very strong faith in the world and life. The spiritual part has come only recently. Only in the last three years or so, have I really connected it with something bigger. I'm meant to learn what I'm learning in my life, and you're meant to learn what you're learning, and it's not my business in a way, you know. I've learned spiritually...things that give people strength and I pass them on and share them. That's one of the things that I believe in. I feel that my work allows me to help others reach their

potential, that's what my work is:

And, that's what's so rewarding about it, cause I find it so important people reaching their potential, and learning and growing and this is a learning and growing place, you know.

It's one of the bridges, one of the learning and growing bridges. (iii, 12)

And so it's exciting to me. I think luckily though, I mean I have arrived into myself probably for the first time in my work life.

Teresa

Portrait

Teresa grew up poor in Newfoundland, and left home at 14 to work, and ultimately never went home again to live. As the fourth child of twelve, with eight younger siblings, she knew early that her parents simply could not afford to keep her. The small wages she earned were sent home to help out. High school was not easy, since she recalls herself as extremely quiet and shy - one who found it hard to believe in herself and find a public voice. This is hard to credit now since she is a confident, articulate woman of 47 - tall, elegant with very short hair framing a model's facial bone structure. She has done occasional modelling in recent years, but recounts that this was an early girlhood dream that was never fully realized. She characterizes her growing up as "held back by rules and regulations", not the least of which were those of the Catholic high school she attended. She also recalls comparable rules in her home, around her brothers having preferential treatment with household tasks and getting "off scot-free". She can remember even as a young girl, challenging her mother about the unequal division of work, and the difficulty in finding a means to express this. She also had to contend with her mother's strong conviction that continuing her high school education was unnecessary given that a

woman's role was to get married and then "someone would keep her". Given this background, it is almost too indulgent to conjecture that Teresa's current commitment to monitoring and promoting equity principles in her present work comes from such beginnings.

She did continue her schooling, despite a lack of encouragement, and took business courses before graduating and finding work - sometimes doing two jobs at once. Married young, she was devastated to be told that she would not be able to get pregnant and carry a child to term. The couple chose to adopt a baby, which she describes as a turning point in her life, since less than 10 months later she did give birth, and then had to have a medically-advised hysterectomy. Her two sons - now grown- have been a wellspring of happiness for her, and she talks about mothering them with such immense satisfaction. She left the marriage in her late twenties, effectively becoming a single parent for several more years, and her children have been a steady emotional anchor. Work seems to have been a matter of economic survival for several years, taking jobs in trucking offices, and in debt collection which she described as emotionally difficult and adversarial, but which she strove to do professionally and respectfully. In her last job in Newfoundland, she survived a serious and unexpected downsizing exercise which slashed the positions of friends and colleagues. This seems to have been a serious emotional wake-up call about the nature of work itself, which lead to her ultimately resigning to follow a life-long dream of going to college herself. She became a middle-aged student in a business college, thousands of miles away in a city where she had no contacts or support group. The retraining has led her now to soul-satisfying work with which she can identify, advocating for diversity in the workplace.

Profile: This is the Real Me.

I started working when I was 14 years old. Growing up in a large family, I realized at a

very young age that my family couldn't afford to take care of me. So I was mature and very responsible and found work as a nanny. At 14 years of age I left my home:

I did give them my wages. I would send money home to my mother every week, every week. I obviously did a great job. I did that through my whole entire high school.

Working with children taught me a lot. It taught me a lot about myself and about the things that I could do. And I knew that wasn't going to be all I wanted to do for the rest of my life. (i, 44)

We were twelve children. I had a brother and two sisters who were older and then it was myself. I was the fourth child, and then there was eight younger than me. And it's funny because we used to joke about our independence. First of all we had to walk and talk by the time that we were 9 months old because we had to get out of the crib and make room for the next child. And we learned interpersonal skills because growing up in such a big family we had to - we had to survive. If we had a falling out with one another, we had to be able to quickly patch things up and make it work because there would have been mass confusion and mass frustration for a long time.

In my first real job I was hired as a private secretary for a trucking company. There was *no* other female in the office. Granted I knew what the job involved and I know I did my job well, but it was dealing with the attitudes. You know, the guys would come in and they thought that you were there for nothing else but to cater and serve these people. I mean just having to deal with their comments and their subtleties. It's a good thing that I had brothers, and that I was able to use some of the skills that I had developed very early on to be able to carry me through when

things got a little bit uncomfortable. To be able to put them in their place, and stand up for my rights. And make them realize I was not someone to be toyed with - I was someone to be taken very seriously, because there were boundaries.

Gender has always been a big issue in my life:

We were eight girls and four boys. And the girls seemed to get the most difficult tasks and the boys always got off scot-free. I have memories, fond and not so fond, of things that the boys got away with and the girls the responsibility that was, was placed on us.

Like for example, washing dishes, washing floors, caring for smaller children, caring for the boys. Mom would say, "Iron your brother's, iron your brother's shirt", and me, being the rebellious sort, I would say "Mom, he has two hands, the same as I do." (i, 77)

Looking back I can see that this upbringing - this business of catering to the men was just how it was:

I mean my father could not even sweeten his tea, she would do everything for him. So I think that there was sort of like a mind-set in the family environment and, not just in the family but I mean things that I noticed around me. It was the boys always got the preferential treatment, and we always felt as though, you know, the boys were, you know, like we've got to do this because he's a boy, we've got to do that because he's a boy. But then when it came to I'm a girl and I need you to help me, you know, it sort of rested on me to do it yourself, you know. So I learned that a long, long time ago... (i, 84)

My mother was very shy, she was very withdrawn. She did not associate with anyone, she always claimed that she was too busy. The phone would ring in my parents' home, my mother would not answer the phone. I don't think my mother ever picked up the telephone. I

think it was just the mentality of the time. And I think that in our family the eight girls were looked upon as being not under control. We were seen as independent:

And independence then was a big nasty word. I mean if you were seen as being “independent” you were, of course, you were arrogant, you were controlling, you were all these negative things. (i, 87)

For instance, I found my brothers would get so angry if I would instruct one of the younger girls to stand up for herself. I’d tell her to say what she wanted, and not just to ‘settle’. And I remember one of my sisters, telling me about a brother, saying:

“John’s really mad at you”, and I would say, you know, “Why?”. She said, “I don’t know, but he said it in such a way, you know, that I was just like you”. And I said, “Well then, you should be proud of yourself, because now he’s starting to realize that you’re not going to take any of his...nonsense...You’re going to do what you want to do, you know, and do it”. (i, 121)

I never wanted to be just following the crowd, even with my peers. I didn’t want to push people around, but, at the same time, I did not want to be seen as a pushover. I didn’t want to irritate, but yet I didn’t want to conform. Even early on, I wanted to stand out as being somebody who was determined to make a difference. I could have been lucky since I think timing has got a lot to do with it:

Like I think I was born at the right time, when there was a movement. There was, there was something really happening. And I found that for myself like through music through newspaper, through television programs...And I wanted to be that way and I set that, you know, stage for myself. (i, 142)

I would focus on women, women who were powerful, women who were role models, women I perceived to be strong :

And I wanted to be that way...because back then I think if you did things that were a little bit out of the ordinary, people would really stand up...look at you kind of weird, or say that you were acting out...You know, just kind of blocking you whatever step that you tried to take forward...I wanted a little bit more...I felt like I was being so held back by rules and regulations mostly set up, as I understood it and as I felt, by men...(i, 140)

And even though the high school had women in it - the nuns - it was still a world that was set up by men :

...if there was anyone who was going to set the woman's movement back into the Stone Age it was growing up in that environment. First of all we were a high school of women only. There was no interaction with men. We were locked upstairs. We were not allowed to talk to the boys. The boys were in a high school just two minutes away from us. Like when we'd go out on break, if the boys even came into the parking lot of the school to talk with the girls then they would be banished. And I'm not kidding when I tell you that the nuns would come out with brooms and beat the boys away from the school if they ventured on to the parking lot. Never mind coming to the stairs... it was unbelievable. Even in the classrooms, like the instructions and the teaching and the negativity and the, and this is where most of my self-talk came from. Because I would listen to the instruction...I mean religion class... family education classes ... home economics classes - the women cook, they make the beds, they cleaned the house, they cared for the children, that was *it*, that was *all*, that was *everything*...(i, 267)

That mind-set or that mentality was everywhere. When I was finished high school and I wanted to do business education, my mom says to me, “*When* are you going to be finished school?” And I looked at her and I said, “What do you mean?”. She said, “Well, you know, I mean you’ve graduated, why do you want to go back? You’re only going to get married and have children and your husband will take care of you”. I remember clearly looking at her and laughing. My answer was “Mom, when I get married, *if* I get married I want to be a partner. I don’t see that one day I’m going to get married and my husband is going to bear the burden of the responsibility of taking care of me and any children. Who’s to say that I cannot be a mother, a wife *and* a career person?”. And then it was her turn to laugh and she thought that was hilarious.

I did get married, I did have children, I did have a career, I do still have a career. When I first got married I wanted to have children. And much to my surprise I found out that I could not. So I ended up, after 6½ years of marriage, adopting a six week old son. And then because of that wonderful experience, through him I found myself pregnant. So I had two children, an adopted child and a biological child, never to have another child. Then when my marriage ended I had two small children, who were just 2 and 3 years old. Those two little guys were and are my world:

...when I look at them today as adults, adults successful in business, it’s just amazing.

And too, myself along with them, I grew. I grew. I became the person that I *was*, if you can understand what I’m trying to say. (i, 406)

I’d say that a big factor in my marriage breakdown was because I’d felt like a glorified housemaid. I remember thinking this is insane, this is not me. I felt like I was banging my head against the wall. But I had kept a job outside the home and it was because of that same job that I

was able to take care of myself and my children, when I decided to leave. I was independent - I didn't have to sit there saying, "Oh, woe is me".

I began a series of jobs. The longest was working as a collections officer in Newfoundland. I didn't always like the consequences of the work there but it was important for me to do it professionally and to always treat my clients with the utmost respect. However, in 1995, after 14 years there three quarters of the staff were laid off. I was one of the twenty five individuals who was kept on. I tell you that to be kept on was devastating, and that's really weird. Things were really in an awful, awful place, but I stayed on and I did my work for a while and then I decided that this was not what I wanted for myself - this kind of survival at any cost. So I had to make a change and get down to planning a transition to the next part of my life. We had a family conference, and, together the boys and I talked it out, and worked out that they could stay with their father and I could retrain myself. I could go back finally and finish my business education - something I had always wanted for myself. Here I was 42 years of age, for the first time in college, doing something I had always dreamt about doing.

And the first three months was probably the worst time in my life. I missed the boys desperately. This was the first time that I had ever moved outside of Newfoundland. So there I was thousands of miles away from home in a different province. I was in school with people who were much younger than I was. Not that it was a big factor, but it was something I had to get used to. And for me it was like here I am, I'm an older person, am I doing the right thing? And there were people from every background imaginable and it was something that I certainly wasn't exposed to. I was in a new city, I would get lost turning around. It was quite a hectic time - quite an emotional time. But, you know, when I graduated, I mean air propelled me across

the floor to pick up my diploma. It was the first time that I had graduated from college. I wanted it, it was a dream, it was a lifelong dream. And, after that schooling, I found work in government that has lead to this office here dealing with employment equity issues.

There are no words to describe how I feel about the work that I've done in this past year. There is an air in this environment. My eyes are opened. Never in my life have I ever been exposed to different backgrounds, black, Chinese, persons in wheelchairs, blind people, persons with learning disabilities. This was like a real eye opening experience that I can identify with. I'm drawn to the underdog because I was there. I identify with it. I know what it's like. When I was young I'd been very quiet, very shy. I wore my hair long so you couldn't see my face. I felt pressure, I felt like nobody cared what I had to say. Nobody cared what I thought. Nobody cared what I felt:

I feel like my hands were tied behind my back. I feel, I feel as though tape was put over my mouth. I felt like my ears were closed up. I felt like my feet were nailed to the floor, you know? And, you know, I'm now in an environment where, you know, God it doesn't stop you. It doesn't stop you, no matter what. What, what keeps you going, is the heart, the head and the determination that you get from combining the both of them. (ii, 247)

What I feel now, after working here, is that things are capable of change, not just for me, but they're going to change for women in general. Somebody has to set the ball in motion and once it gets in motion, then who knows. You can change anything. I'm living proof of that. I am definitely a recovered self. I mean the timid person that wouldn't say anything above a whisper, look at me now. You know, it feels really good to know that you're in charge - not in charge of everything, but you're in charge of *you*. I really believe that I would not recognize me

at 23 years of age. Heck, my 32 year old self would have been surprised [laughs]. Not because I've changed physically, but because I've changed everything about me:

I'll tell you why I feel that way. I bumped into a girlfriend of mine who I went to high school with and, and she said, "Is that you? But you were so shy, you were so quiet, that, I can't believe that it's you". And it's like - yes, it's me. It is me. This is the real me. And I remember from my own mouth saying those words and wondering where they came from. This is the real me. The me that you knew, I didn't know. And now this is me. (ii, 435)

I wanted to be more than just another working woman. I needed to be a woman who is not of the archaic mind-set. As well as someone who is recognized and not undermined: "I've always been a fighter, I've always been, you know, heels dug in and just, just ready to tackle whatever came on" (ii, 339). I also want to be remembered as a good person. It is important for me to be somebody who makes the difference, that makes other women feel as though they too can, you know, *be* and *do* and *say* and *think* and *feel* and *want* and *need* and *hope*. I might like to gain knowledge, but I also like to pass it out. I like to spread around what I've learned. I am still thirsty for more knowledge: "I'm a little bit apprehensive, but the fear doesn't stop me, it just makes me more determined that I have to find out what's behind wall number three, you know..". (ii, 96).

When I think about time, I recognise that the family's raised, the marriage is over, but the career is still growing. To me it's *amazing* that the career is still growing, and it's like I have more time, I have more energy to concentrate on things that are really, truly important to me for the rest of my life. So I have a feeling that there's more:

I think that if tomorrow I couldn't learn, I couldn't work, I couldn't interact, I couldn't feel, I couldn't understand, I couldn't show compassion I wouldn't live, I would just die, I would just wither and die....(i, 97)

I don't think about retirement. It's almost like time has gone back. You know, it's like I have all of this time ahead of me:

...Retire, what's that? I'll retire the day I close my eyes...but I'm not looking at that. I'm looking at, you know, I have health, strength, energy, intellect, ability, you know, and I want to be able to use it to its best, best potential...(i, 410)

I think things happen for a reason. They don't just happen by chance. I'm not an overly religious person or anything, but I honestly believe in destiny. I think that for each and every one of us, there's a plan - something carved out. But you have to work at it, you have to mould, you have to shape it, you have to design it, you have to help create it. I believe that there is a stronger power. I believe that for myself. My sisters often say to me that I've got a horseshoe planted somewhere. My answer is no, there's somebody watching me - there's someone watching me. And so that 'lost child' within definitely is something that really sticks out for me. Overall I don't think that she was lost, I think she was forgotten. She was forgotten.

Yolande

Portrait

Yolande, at the time of our interviews, is a 52 year old visual artist, who is also a bureaucrat within a large federal department. Well spoken and well educated, with many classical and literary references interpolated throughout the conversations, Yolande left the Reserve to come east to the city to attend university, but was overcome with the sheer size of the

town, its different topography, its buildings and its traffic, and ultimately dropped out. She found work initially at a clerical level within government, and then rose through the ranks, as a career public servant, to director level at one point. She has worked progressively within aboriginal portfolios doing research and writing, and being involved in programs of service delivery. While she has been passionate about her contributions in the past, she now sees this regular occupation and work life as less than engaging: “It’s a tool that will enable me to get a decent pension. It’s a tool that will enable me in the meantime to be as extravagant [with my art] as I want” (iii, 580).

Profile: Breaking through the Chrysalis

Early memories of work life revolve around sheer survival. A Plains Cree, I grew up on a reserve in Saskatchewan, as part of what you’d call the deserving poor, where life, as the second eldest of 10 children, meant lots of physical work, knowing that if things weren’t done, we didn’t eat in the winter. Money, if available, was contingent upon infrequent Wheat Board cheques, and, in a world without running water or electricity, we children were expected to haul water, haul wood, look after younger siblings and manage the garden. The garden was a valuable source of food for the family and thus important labour. Everything that we could do that would add to our income - that didn’t cost us anything other than our sweat and labour - we did that. We picked berries, we canned. Our gardens were huge so that we were able to do all the canning. We grew great batches of potatoes, turnips, carrots, beets, you name it, we did it, and they were stored in our root cellar. It involved a lot of work, not just maintaining the garden, but preserving these things for the winter. We also raised our own chickens, which we would buy from the hatchery. When they cleaned out a granary, we kids would go and sweep out the corners and get that grain for next to nothing from the farmers. And then in winter we had to

slaughter them:

...And there were times I can remember when we, what we had done in relation to gathering berries, hunting, the garden - and if we had a long winter for example - there wasn't any food. There was potatoes maybe, the root vegetables sometimes lasted longer, but we'd have gone through almost everything else and we didn't have money for shells, so we would be out snaring and, you know...so it was a hard life. There were times when we went hungry as the oldest kids, because mom and dad went hungry too. The younger kids were the ones who, who ate [pause]. (i, 72)

I was taken as a child of seven to residential school in a 3-ton truck, with benches that had been bolted in at the back, and then spent the next six years there. It was a very, very big separation and I can remember:

standing right at the edge of residential school and looking at the town...and the town, you know, psychologically in my mind, could have been hundreds of miles away, even though I could see it, because the...I wasn't part of that and it wasn't part of... it didn't want me either...(i, 152)

The sense of isolation was so overwhelming and I retreated into a solar universe, as found in the pictures of an old school library book:

And I would be facing the moon at first, and I could see the blackness of space, or the diamonds of stars, plus all the planets, and then I would slowly rotate and face the sun and I would be warm....I would be like a planet unto myself almost. I never thought of it in that sense, but I was like one of this huge thing out there, and my own identity in there, and therefore, and I, so I belonged. I was just one of those. (i, 440)

It was at school that I took on my father's image of life "as a relay" in terms of generational progression to a better life:

He felt his generation - they had only been allowed to go about to grade 5. To go beyond that was impossible. Well, almost impossible. He had been offered an, an education provided he wanted to be a priest and that wasn't his vocation, so he always felt that he had been denied something very, very special...(i, 106)

It was at school that I began a search for validation. The task was to leave my name on every plaque there was, to prove that an Indian student could be just as good as, as a white person. This desire for success and for contribution was to offset the racism of a world where as an Aboriginal person you *never* quite measured up. It was never said in that way, but you always knew that some white person out there was going to do better than you were, no matter how hard you tried. As a result, deep down I learned to guard within me all the things that were precious, so that I could carry that forward.

I also knew that my generation was expected to go on from school to be pioneers also at work:

Work like everything else became a mission...[it] was to prove that Aboriginal people could do, could be the same, perform in the same manner. It was always we were the generation, the 60's generation, you know, the post-war kids were the ones who were taking Aboriginal people into the new, into this century and into the next century... this mission there of, of proving, to whomever it was, that we could also hold our jobs, that we could make a life for ourselves. And...for me it was not just for Aboriginal people, it was for my brothers and sisters so that they had a role model...(i, 482)

When I left home to attend university, it was difficult for me. I would now refer to it as the clash of cultures. This is crystallized by my very first piece of art which was a self portrait. Within there, I had drawn a person...You could tell it was me. And one side had a braid which came down, and the other side was the way I wore my hair at the time, which was flipped at the sides. This sense of split or ambiguous identity began early at residential school, where we wrestled with both Christian ideals and spiritual Aboriginal beliefs. There were cultural clashes. For instance, the old culture sees the northern lights as our ancestors dancing across the sky. We call it, "The Dance of the Dead", and it's not a morbid idea, it's a celebration. But at school:

...we were to become little white men and there was no value to our other, other life. And it was very difficult 'cause I...I always questioned and always got into trouble and I was very young to make my first communion...I asked this very innocent question, 'Is there one God?'. And he (the priest) said, 'Yeah, there's one God'. Well that was great, so I said, 'Okay, so you call him God and I call him Manitou'. And he said, 'No, Manitou is wrong, God is, you know, is right'. And, being the logical little person that I am, I said, 'Well then, there's got to be two gods, one that's wrong and one that's right'... and...that ...I guess highlights always the choices that had to be made - of what do you keep from your culture and what do you do of the dominant culture...? (i, 252)

I do have a strong sense of a cultural "hook"- a continuum - to my grandfather and great grandfather, and the sense of pain in school teachings that failed to take that reality into account. I was taught that if you didn't become Christian then you could never make it to heaven. And it didn't matter how good you were, you couldn't bring your relatives from the past. And I wasn't willing to give up my ancestors. I went through the forms, since that's the only way to survive in

residential school. I performed the forms, but in my mind, and in my soul, I could not give up my great-grandfather, or his fathers, and all my other relatives. And that taught me that there are different forms of survival. I was constantly making such choices, and remember Dorothy Gilman's image of the tightrope walker over the abyss:

and this is her analogy of life, and one time she wants to do this marvellous cartwheel, and if not, at least a pirouette, you know. And, so I've come to acknowledge that, that's the way life is. And I...want to use the energy from that to, to create...(ii, 690)

When I first got paid work, I was hired as a young woman by the federal government, where I progressed from clerical positions to the Director level - all in Aboriginal portfolios. However, in the last few years, I made a decision to turn my back on the managerial post, "to break through this chrysalis of this business woman that I have been". I went back to an officer level involved in writing policy, and gave up that pressure to do more:

I'm willing to give them a good, good solid piece of work while I'm here, but...people want you to give *more* and, at the moment, it's the respected way... women have said it's the male way. I'm not sure what it is, because women themselves have bought into this. (ii, 723)

This job allows me to pursue my visual art, which is now a central focus for me. Every day I walk straight from work to my rented commercial studio, and there are so many creative tensions:

There are times when, when I'm in a productive mood where it doesn't really matter, I come from here, I can go in there, and yes I'm hitting the deck running. There are times when I, I resent having to eat because I, what I need to do is, is on the go, my mind is

focussed, I resent having to go home and go to sleep. And there are times when I resent having to come into work. (ii, 132)

At an earlier stage, my studies took me to the local community college and to the School of Art, with such teachers as Susan Feindel, Robert Hyndman, and John Tappin. I was described by one of those teachers, in ironic appreciation, as “the noble Fauve” [laughs] because of my intense and uncontrolled use of colour. I prefer to characterize myself as an artist who is Aboriginal, but not an Aboriginal artist since nary a bead nor a feather is to be found. I’m an Aboriginal person who does art, but I am not in the field of Aboriginal Art. I want to go beyond culture. I recognize that I could be successful at “good” Aboriginal art:

...I could make a name for myself. I could be out there with Robert Houle... the fact is I don’t want to play that game, I don’t want to be a feminist artist, I don’t want to be an Aboriginal artist, I just want to be a Yolande artist. And that’s, I guess, what I hold out for. And it’s kind of like Robert Frost and the road not taken. I’ll hold out for my own road. (ii, 651)

My current involvement or endeavour is with figural sculptures in cement and plaster as a rebellion against the lovely voluptuous figures in perfect stone which are you know, the beauty myth all over again. This is a deliberate attempt to liberate what beauty is and to try and capture and anchor the beauty of the women I grew up with, those who:

...didn’t have beautiful figures, they all had, you know, 10, 12 children, but I loved them and to me they were beautiful. It was *their* beauty that I wanted to capture. And I wanted to anchor them and perhaps that’s why I used cement as well, you know. And, and for men I was more, I wanted to deal with their muscle, but I wanted to deal with their

fragility. (iii, 650)

Physicality and size is now a recurring topic for me. I have lost over a 100 pounds for health reasons in a period of one year, in a hospital-run weight management program. I am still experiencing a range of emotions that comes with a change in body size, and other people's perceptions of me. I feel I am much more in touch with the skeleton at the moment than I've been before. I love muscle, I love sinew, I love bone. I have great admiration for Henry Moore's corporeal sense. Furthermore, in drawing and water colours, I can do no other than "draw large" using my hands:

...there is no way I can work...small. Some people do, they just naturally work at that level. I used to bring my, my sheets were 48" x 30" and I would go off the page. I needed to move the whole body when I was working...I tend, I put my hands in the ink or the paint or whatever that I'm using, and I feel what I'm doing...I need the body movement when I, when I'm, when I'm working... I've noticed that I do very, very little work now with, with brushes...No, I have to *feel* what it is I'm doing. It's feeling. And, and I can, and I'm, I'll never be a miniature artist, no, there's just no way I can do that.

So there, there needs to be an, an element of the body movement as well. (i, 658)

While I enjoy the freedom of being able to really exaggerate in clay and cement to show emotions, it demands a physical endurance:

I've got my headband around to keep the moisture from coming into my eyes...

I sweat from my head a lot.... And then I've got, of course, gloves up to here, because I'm working with cement, and I've got my old clothes and I've got boots on. (ii, 373)

This commitment also has a financial price, since these big works need expensive studio

space and storage. There's a part of me that recognizes, ruefully, that craft work would be more sustaining than fine art, but that this is a route I am not prepared to take. I have this quote, this "thought du jour" cut from the newspaper which sums it up: "The painter who is content with the praise of the world for what does not satisfy himself, is not an artist, but an artisan" (Washington Allston, 1779-1843). And, what is more, I feel that in this "rational" age, I am doing figurative work in a time when it is looked down upon and I really refuse to change. This is my field, this is where I will make my mark. I consider that my art is deliberately focussed in the area of what I call the three primal cultures of:

the female, the male, and procreation from which all other cultures follow. And each of them are a culture unto themselves. ... So I've always wanted to look at the figure beyond, beyond the ethnic parameters that, that are, have been placed on them, including my culture. (ii, 624)

My purpose has always been to communicate, art is a form of communication. Art that is not seen is not art. Art requires a viewer and there, that's what completes art. Whether that takes place 250,000 years later or 250 minutes later, that's okay. I imagine that:

In the old days I would have probably been a story teller... And today I'm allowed this...I have found that that is the way I chose to communicate because it allows me to develop my thoughts in a quiet fashion in my space, in my time, and then to put it out into the world. I'm not a news person, I'm not a journalist, I'm not a, you know, fast media type of communicator, I need the time to develop, to experiment, to think... (iii, 852)

Moreover, this need to tell the story is again linked to the physical:

The body fascinates me because the body was the way they originally communicated, you

know. And it's not just the face. You know, a mother doesn't just look at the baby and go like this (*makes a movement to stare into the face*)...the mother's using her body the way she positions her shoulders, the way she holds the baby, the way she holds her head, you know, and if you ever watch a mother talking she's never, it's never just, just still, it's always moving up and down, sideways, etc. She is communicating with her child and that's how we communicated when we first started. And, so for me, I see the body as... the original alphabet and that's what I want to use in my art. (iii, 784)

As for money, I am philosophical about the motivation for financial growth. I'm not so concerned about having stacks and stacks of money for today, so that I might enjoy myself twenty years down the road, you know. It's very fragile, you can lose it anytime. You cannot pretend that it's not fragile. You see I think we build our RRSPs and all these things, in the hope that we will make life less fragile, but it's still there. The fragility does not go away no matter how many RRSPs you have. So I have a different interpretation of investing, beyond old notions of 20 tepees and 30,000 buffalo behind you. I visualize myself, in the future, being in a very small apartment, not having a lot materialistically, but with a lot in my head, and in my heart, and in my soul, you know. And that to me is a lot richer. That's where I want to be. That's where I want to bank.

When you asked me about roles that had been taken on, or imposed, I can remember my father telling me that I had to take care of my older sister when we went to school. And I was the caretaker in the family. You asked me if I think of myself as a resilient child. I did question life in my school, as I've said, and I understand that, to some degree, I have been a "warrior" - a role that my grandfather told me that the Plains Cree - unlike other bands - allowed their women in

times of war. But, rather than rebel or warrior, I think the noun “elder” is more appropriate to what I am moving towards now:

Many times in life I’ve been forced to be part of something that I had no control of; I could either accept it and then use it, or fight it. And, quite often, accepting doesn’t necessarily mean you can’t change it, and change does require a certain amount of “fighting”. Fighting for your rights, changing this thing, getting a new, a better...forcing say the nuns to acknowledge that...they could be more lenient or whatever...(iii, 203)

I would call myself someone who has always been interested in bridging conflict:

...a warrior’s time frame is only so long and then he moves into the progression of elder. And I’m in the transition into elder... I think I’ve done my warrior bit, you know... one of the things that I do with people is, I turn the kaleidoscope. I was born on the middle ground... You know I’ve always been cursed of being able to see both sides of the coin...It’s a role that I’ve been given. It’s a role that I’m not sure that I’m there yet. It’s a role that in my culture is supposed to be the final attainment, and I would like to be, you know, to reach that level of wisdom...(i, 896)

Now that I look back I am able to recognize the sisterhood of the nuns institutionalized in the residential schools alongside me:

...This was not a vocation for them, they were from poorer families where, you know, very patriarchal, and they were sent off and...It’s almost like we were inmates together and some, some of the abuse came from that...(iii, 267)

I am not sure how to respond to your question on identities since life is always about making choices of how to survive, and I can draw a parallel with my first culture. It’s the same

as when, when we were hunter/gatherers. If the buffalo didn't come north because of a prairie fire, well then, you had to make alternative choices to your food chain for the winter. I want to challenge the idea of *just* being a warrior, *just* being a nurturer or a learner:

I think people owe it to themselves to be many, many, many things, in and of themselves, to fulfill all the facets of, you know, to walk down every radii of this ball that they are, you know. And there are an infinity of these things. And, so I think you owe it to yourself to be as complete as you can be. (iii, 178)

It is the same as when I am painting. You use dark colours and light colours and thin lines, broad lines. You want to go and paint the best picture you can using all the colours that you can possibly put on there. I remember the Pointillists, adding colour through small precise dots in a painstaking and time-consuming way:

...yes the little dabs, and to me, it was sort of, it was so perfect, 'cause like every event was kind of like that one little dab. So you would make it that perfect little, you know, as much of it as you wanted, whether it was red, whether it was blue, whether it was, you know. It provided sort of an image for me of, of events in life and, and where that goes into making your picture of who you are...(iii, 188)

I can recall reading the Mrs. Pollifax's series, where in one of those books Gilman talks about looking back at her childhood, and seeing this very serious, lonely in quotes, but essentially happy child. I sort of recognized myself there. I could identify that I was alone many times. Although I had lots of people around me, basically I was alone, but I wasn't essentially unhappy, you know.

As I mapped out earlier, in our interview discussions, I have a strong image of personal

connectedness, as a planet in a solar system. That is, in part, the old philosophy that you are part of everything. But now the balance seems to be in the process of being reevaluated. I want to go on and do my own thing. I want to find out who Yolande is, and as an individual, not as a collective. I think I've done my bit and I think it's time for other people to make their own choices now. Perhaps the words of my grandfather are of some comfort to me in resolving this dichotomy:

[he] had told me that I had to be a Cree of my particular period not his. His was his time and this was my time. So, in art, I took that to mean that I would be a contemporary artist in the full sense of contemporary art, not being contemporary to the time, but in the type of art being produced of the time. (i, 698)

For me there is a seasonal or universe sense of time and a trusting notion of natural progression:

My own time sense... is much broader, it's very, the universe sense of time, the ocean sense of time...I use the word seasonal, in the sense that...I'm ruled by season. It's a sense of things progressing naturally. And if things don't happen here, don't worry about it, it'll happen over here, you know. The, everything in it, will evolve...(i, 772)

I think if you miss something, you know, maybe you just go in a different direction. I believe that I am now more freed from time, not so concerned, and think that in the time left for me that I have no need to do any grand project. The universe, and I am part of the universe, requires only two things from you, to be born and to die. So what I do with it in between, is for me, it's not for the universe. It doesn't care. My philosophy is that time, and how we use it, is an imposition we do to ourselves, and, far from taking on board those expectations of accomplishment, I can

state sanguinely: If I achieve it I achieve it, if I don't, well history isn't going to write a book saying Yolande did not do such and such, you know.

I have to acknowledge that living in a modern age enables me to do things that will go beyond my own lifetime. Technology means that the objects, that I make, can be protected, and can go beyond my lifetime : "we're no longer limited by what we can carry on our back....In the old days my great-grandfather, his father, my great, great-grandfathers, were dependent on the people they had interacted with, to continue their thoughts, to pass them on..." (iii, 607).

Achievement is coloured differently as learning and growth, not as success in any material sense. I think it's a "sin" if one chooses not to learn:

as an artist it's incumbent upon me to continue to grow. To continue to grow requires me to continue to look inward, to continue to experience, to continue to, to, to allow the viewer to bring back information to me...I want that matrix to keep expanding...and bring back to me, you know, understandings of life...(iii, 465)

I have a philosophy that life is really a series of learning - you're constantly in a state of arrival or leaving. In communicating my art I want to allow the viewer freedom to communicate back, and the work will then be a mutual learning experience:

art is a form of communication and it suffers all the hazards of communication. And I've often said that my responsibility as an artist is to produce a work...Now you can either try to control that communication, which is a form of fascism, or you let the viewer communicate back ...(iii, 446)

When you talk about the issue of meaning I guess this question surfaces and resurfaces: the real issue is "How much of what I am, can I bring?" As I grow older, I am less willing to

define myself through the paid work that I do in government. I look back at the jobs I've undertaken and I guess I'd say that I don't want to be the missionary anymore: "...I've been part of this huge collective. I think I've done my bit and I think it's time for other people to make their own choices now" (i, 525). I feel I have often lived other people's dreams. And I am only now being reborn or perhaps emerging from this chrysalis into my own dreams. There is this contradiction for me - the strain or tension in being part of a collectivity. On the one hand, I have a clear sense of connection into, and responsibility towards, my community:

...you have to survive...and your responsibility also is not just to the individual, but it's always a responsibility to the community. Yeah, so my communities, there's me, there's the Aboriginal community, there's the [city named] community and then there's the Canadian community. And so the communities do expand as, as you age. (i, 917)

I am convinced that one's responsibility should be inward, so that it can go out. When you think about Tennyson's Lady of Shalott - the woman is the perfect Victorian image of the ideal woman, cloistered and steadfast to her tasks:

...well her imagery...is this loom that she had, and she put life in there. She was divorced from her weaving...at least that's the sense I have. In my experience, you are the weaving. You are not just the weaver, but you are the weaving, you know. And it doesn't matter whether Lancelot rides by, you know, ...I am wanting to communicate what I have learnt by looking into my mirror, by looking out my window, by experiencing what's all around me and bringing that back in. (iii, 830)

In terms of legacy work I am not sure how to respond since that question created contradictory feelings. I want to express myself, but my interpretation of communication rejects

any imposition of particular value:

...I will do art, but I will not do art for the sake of having a show in two years' time, or for doing this kind of thing. I need to do the art so that it expresses what / want to say to the world. I want my wisdom, I guess, what I have accumulated in knowledge and feelings and experience over the years to somehow - I want to pass that on. But I don't feel that I need to impose on anyone... I leave it up to the viewer and the audience to decide what they want. (iii, 407)

Yet at the same time as I push the joint responsibility of the viewer *with* the artist, I see my work as my offspring. They are "my children" and they will be my legacy:

I'm finding that fine art, whether it's visual art - and whether it'll be in the writing as I start to write - there'll be a way, *my* way of contributing to the next generation... Whether they take it or not, is not my responsibility, it's theirs. Mine is to formulate it to the best, communicate it to the best of my ability. (ii, 871)

I do have this sense of responsibility to try and push beyond the individual into the collective:

...And that pushing is not in the sense of being militant, but, in the way that you gently push out your learning, which you have experienced - bring it back into the world again. Whether it is accepted, I mean, if you drop a stone in the water the rings that are going out are not concerned whether or not they will ever amount to a big wave, or whether they will fizzle out on the shores, they're just rings and they just keep going. And somebody may learn from those rings, somebody may, you know [pause]... (iii, 820)

At the same time I am worldly enough to add that if I can make three or four pieces, write a few things that will pass on that knowledge - somehow that is important, even if it's only

passing it on to one person or whatever. Really I'd have to confess that a large part of being an artist is to be remembered. There isn't an artist that doesn't want to be remembered, doesn't want their art, their work to live beyond them. But I am beginning to question whether that is a very European attitude since there are a lot of artists, like eastern artists where it's the work that is preserved and not necessarily the person, who actually did it. I just feel that on my death this universe will use everything that I am, and I have no need, I find in my mind of a need to continue, myself personally. However, at the same time I need to reconcile a wish for continuance with our abiding societal sense of fragility and impermanence:

...I've often seen that the need for heaven has been people trying to deal with the fragility and the shortness of our life. So it gives them comfort to think that they will continue beyond, you know. And I, I noticed that in, and it's almost universal, you know, somehow or another to continue. (iii, 365)

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter consists of an examination of both the individual and the common, cross-arching features taken from the portrayals of the women that were presented in the preceding chapter. In the process, I first reviewed the unique material, to highlight salient features. I then did a cross analysis of the interviews to identify patterns that might help me get to the *aha* moments. Trying to find meaning in this manner does not imply simplification, since these themes were then clustered, in a process of “weaving and braiding” (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997), into a gestalt of the lived experiences of work meaning for mid-life women.

Description of Findings

Certain thematic constructs appeared across the stories - although they presented themselves with differences of degree and texture. I outline the findings here using two vehicles: through the use of metaphors and within an existential framework.

First of all, I examine the way that metaphors provided powerful archetypes and insights. Interpreting the women’s images helped me to identify several themes as being common to all participants, and to discover that they favoured Ryff’s (1989) model of subjective psychological well-being. I had not previously sought to use her scales - autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, personal growth, and self-acceptance - in developing my research design, but these scales seem now to offer a happy way to underpin the approach. So, I incorporate these same descriptors within the second vehicle - Van Manen’s (1997) four-factor existential framework of temporality, spatiality, corporeality and communality.

communality. This existential architecture is pertinent to a phenomenological approach and it also allows me to re-introduce the guiding questions of the interview protocol and display the themes put forward.

The results are not completely discrete and contain overlapping information. On the surface, the women appear to share a number of similar elements and common characteristics, yet, at the same time, their individual journeys are varied and compelling. One of the immediate shared features, I note, is their use of descriptive metaphors.

The Use of Metaphor

I want to draw attention to the inductive use of metaphor in interpretative research. Bruner (1996) has maintained that the stories we tell of our lives contain the folk tales, myths, or legends, that have spoken to us for generations. Not only do we make ourselves up each time we open our mouths (Moring, 2001), but we have residues of powerful accumulated scripts, like a medieval palimpsest (Atkinson, 1995). The importance of this way of describing human experience has been advanced in Jung's (1990) schema of "archetypes", which dramatically represent our deepest instinctive understandings. Metaphor lends itself to meaning making, with Bateson (1989) concluding that, "each of us constructs a life that is her own central metaphor for thinking about the world" (p. 241).

Certainly the narratives that each of the women offers about their work transformations and iterative work meanings give rise to several significant images. They include chrysalis, pioneer, elder, tightrope walker, warrior, relay racer, connector, lost child, nurturer, outsider. Survivor also appears, but as Atwood (1972) has acidly informed us, this is Canada's informing symbol - hanging on and staying alive, so I chose not to emphasize that image. This search for

symbols might so easily have disintegrated into a reductive exercise, but I felt the emotive power of the important and profound realities that lay behind the words I was being given. The women's own words do have great emotional and intellectual power, drawing on matters of interest to the human psyche. Accordingly, I want to recognize and highlight the three most important and cross arching metaphors offered - chrysalis, pioneer and outsider - even if they were neither fully sustained, nor derived from any "epiphanic" moments. In fact, no such points of epiphany were attributed in their conversations, since any disorienting dilemma or turning point of transformation appeared to be prolonged over time.

Chrysalis

All of the women used illustrations of metamorphosis, recalling for me McAdams' (1985b) use of the word "imago" to describe significant characters in the personal myth. Yolande talked about emerging from her chrysalis, "And I am only now being reborn or perhaps emerging from this chrysalis into my own dreams. I've gone through so many transitions in life" (ii, 674). Teresa stressed this point of reclamation and emergence even more, "I [used to wear] my hair long so you couldn't see my face, I didn't even want to acknowledge that I had a face" (i, 407). April described sloughing off her smart work clothes and feeling liberated, "it was definitely kind of a taking off and a putting on" (ii, 143). Brenda claimed with gratitude, "I have arrived into myself probably for the first time in my work life" (ii, 109). Adela said, "I never want[ed] to be 'too boxed in', and this is part and parcel of my approach" (iii, 853).

The transformations are all combined with historical context and "choices" available to women. All of their mothers seemed shadowy, yet, at the same time, informing figures. Yolande's and Teresa's mothers were busy giving birth to multiple children. Brenda's mother

was “always working” long hours at home. Both April’s and Adela’s mothers had found energy for entrepreneurial work, when denied a career role. April had talked about her father “stopping” her mother working, because it was not tax-advantageous to him: “my mother has always been strangled because my father’s always been the principal bread winner, I mean that’s how it worked. And so he had financial power...” (i, 469). I wondered about context and conditioning, and was curious about Margaret Drabble’s (2001) emblem of The Peppered Moth, with respect to mother figures. Are women in different eras forced to take on camouflage and pigmentation according to their environment? Obviously I cannot answer for their lives - they did not give me their stories and it is presumptuous, even unethical, to speculate. But, in the same way that Drabble’s fictional protagonist deals with the brilliant, and unfulfilled, genetic inheritance of Bessie Bawtry, I cannot help but consider that, in writing about any individual woman, it is important to acknowledge the generations who have gone quietly and unsung before, and who may have unexpressed ambitions for their girl children. This may have led to a reactive sense of agency in the women of my study. Harris (1995) has described a powerful push-pull dynamic between mothers and daughters, with women striving to define themselves as different and separate from their mothers, yet wishing to retain an emotional connection.

Pioneer

These women were, to a large degree, pioneers in finding opportunities, and showed characteristics of self-determination, often in spite of the limits of the structure of opportunity. Yolande described her life in terms of a mission. She also asserted that: “life...doesn’t provide anyone an easy street” (iii, 143), and used words around the concept of survival: “...life is, in and of itself, survival...[it] is a form...of war. It’s a personal war” (iii, 132). Brenda mentioned the

difficulty of not having anyone's steps to follow in, and of the responsibility of being a torch bearer for her three brothers: "You know, they saw the trouble I was having getting work, and so they all went into business...So I think they had an opportunity to learn from some of my experiences, whereas I didn't have [anyone]..." (i, 211). Adela, who also talked about the responsibility of being the eldest, had been the first volunteer person ever elected to the senior civic committee; she had also initiated job sharing in her office. She took pride in having created a part-time job for another person, who was having great difficulty getting work in a tight job market, despite her obvious strengths. This business of precedent-setting came up in her story of lobbying for her joint major at university, many years earlier: "neither of the departments actually liked people taking split majors. I took it, partly because I didn't want to be narrowed down that soon. Some of...the departments...I think they figured your loyalties were divided" (i, 76). And this is re-echoed in her decisiveness that the best way for a young student to learn the French language properly would be to go to Europe. While in France she had decided to study the Russian language in French, since it was impossible at that time to travel into the then USSR to study. April took pride in introducing the law school counselling office to Canada: "I was the first one. And, there was a model in the States, and so I sort of plugged into that, in terms of getting information. And so it was quite a pioneering sort of thing" (i, 52). She also described the punishingly hard work in doing overtime, as a way to create a route for herself to fund an unpaid sabbatical. Teresa talked about her need to break new ground, to be recognized as a woman who is not of the archaic mindset.

All these individual struggles involved a high degree of tolerance for ambiguity, as the five women threw off the difficulties of being engaged in life roles that were not quite rewarding

enough, in the search for a “path with a heart” (Hall & Mirvis, 1995). Part of this ambiguity is enmeshed in the process of being an outsider.

Outsider

Kanter (1977), in an early work, argued that women were “outsiders” (p. 55) in a work system which consciously devalues their work. To a large degree, all the women participants shared this sense of being an “outsider”, and described the tension in non-recognition of their contributions to work.

Yolande’s first experience of alienation, however, had come as an eight year old Plains Cree in residential Catholic school, standing right at the edge of residential school and looking at the town which had sent her away, unwanted. She recalled memories of a big, foldout book at school, which depicted the solar system within a jet black space. To compensate for her child’s sense of rejection and of “other-ness”, she had put herself, metaphorically, into this picture book and imagined herself between the moon and the sun. She surprised me with her notion of gender kinship with the nuns, who, vocationless, had been dispatched to the schools only because they were “second girl, second children, female children”. She described this as almost being like “inmates” together, and this experience, while painful, had at least taught her the valuable skill of weaving her way, “through the jungle, literally” (iii, 275).

School teachings failed to take their reality into account and consolidated an experience of alienation for all the women except Adela. As a natural scholar, she found school an easy challenge. Brenda found herself unprepared by school for the real world, and April found school an actively unhappy, mysterious experience. Teresa described her school as “the stone age” with the nuns physically beating back the boys from the girls. April was similarly segregated, in a

women's residence, where staff banned pants and measured skirt length. Yolande's segregation was intensely psychological, denying her the value of her ethnicity, culture and gender in order "to become little white men" (i, 251).

This sense of isolation and other-ness is continued nowadays in Yolande's current work culture, where she revealed that she is "suspect" because of her reluctance to do excessive overtime. Brenda was also suspect within her early office environment, since she took on cases of harassment and defended weaker colleagues. At one point, she even paid the price of quitting work for her principles. Her learned response as a junior officer was to "shut up" since it was counterproductive, "...But I wasn't giving up on it, I was just realizing that I would be quiet about it. That allowed me...to reach the officer level" (i, 388). Even her beginnings in work had started with feelings of alienation: from the question around typing, to the mandatory uniform which involved wearing little white gloves and a hat, items she normally disavowed in her dress. Within her recent work place, she had looked for validation from her management group, which often was not forthcoming, despite exemplary external leadership ratings. This had caused personal disappointment, and so, having left her senior position in government for the non-profit sector, she still didn't visit her former colleagues. She insisted, "I'm not ready yet. I probably will need to know that I've succeeded to be able to do that. To know *that in their minds* (my italics) I have met with success" (ii, 313). So for Brenda, at least, the struggle for mastery and competence was still allied to dominant standards.

This would appear to reflect Morawski's (1994) idea of "liminality", where individuals become stranded on the thresholds of "betwixt and between" (in Peavy, 2000) in the struggle to reconcile private values with dominant societal ones. Such ambiguities in matching personal and

external expectations did appear in the stories of all the participants in this study. Adela introduced the parallel image of chaos and cachet, as she struggled with a personal need to deliver excellent service, in an understaffed, and perhaps indifferent, office, where often the collections were materially damaged by flood and weather. She told the story of a colleague, pulled back to her regular position, after having developed a special program in a different section, which was then just going to disappear, being tossed away. Adela had always looked for affirmation for specialist skills, but found a system that only paid attention to a management level. She was not prepared to compromise her values and leave behind her specialist skills. She, like Brenda, had escaped the early formulaic “but can you type?”, but was still finding control valued rather than genuine leadership.

April, in her story, talked lengthily about the experience of being undervalued and a dogsbody, in a two tier structure, with faculty and staff clearly demarcated, with “really, nowhere to go”. Taking on extra duties, like the magazine for the school, still did not make her feel included. Despite April’s having done all the work for the magazine - the masthead, the layout and the stories - a professor nominated himself as the editor, until challenged by her. But finding her voice was not the sole issue. There appeared to be a growing distance between her outer work life and the importance of other aspects in her life. She described watching the pigeons through her barred office window, somewhat like a caged bird herself. She was not alone in this emotion, of finding work the same sort of alienating “mystery” that school had once represented for her.

Teresa articulated a similar need to negotiate her way through the unknown. She talked about dealing with “the attitudes, comments and subtleties” of the truckers in her first job, and the

difficulty of educating them about “boundaries”, which, in that particular instance, she wanted to impose, and not dismantle. Here the outsider role was for protection.

It became clear to me in the analysis that any study of women confronting the reality of their fringe position within their workplaces introduces the spectre of what Durkheim (1964/1966) called anomie, where the expectations about behaviours in society are unclear. All the participants conveyed this sense, expressed movingly by Teresa, as finally finding “the real me” and by Yolande, who looking both at her work and at her cultural survival, asks “...the real issue was, how much of what I am, can I bring?” (i, 379).

As well as the notion of outsider, I found that particular, central, informing metaphor, present both in literature as in life, of the organic cycle of human life and the four seasons (Frye, 1960). This links obviously to an examination of time, which is represented in Van Manen’s (1997, p. 93) taxonomy of four existential motifs: temporality (lived time), spatiality (lived space), corporeality (lived body), and communality (lived relationship to others). I use this as a framework to anchor the themes I uncovered, which reflect some of Ryff’s (1989) scales of autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, personal growth, and self-acceptance.

Framework of Four Existential Themes

This framework offered a way to chronicle the responses to the guiding questions of the interview protocol. I had not originally devised the interview protocol to capture all of these existential themes, but Seidman’s (1998) three interview protocol quite deliberately seeks responses to the concept of time. After their interviews were concluded, and I was in the immersion process of staying with the “data”, it occurred to me that this existential framework

suggested an inclusive way to treat their stories. Briefly, Temporality allowed me to address questions around the comprehensive idea of Development, Time and Transition. In the interviews (Appendix C), I had specifically asked for early ideas, and first memories of work; for a retrospective look at how each individual treated time; and for comments on how each woman was defined by work at a mid-life point. The second theme, Spatiality, allowed for Context and Gender questions, such as: is there any special history about women and work in your family's past; and in what ways might gender have defined your own work life? Corporeality, as the third theme, embraced ideas about Self-Identity and Body Kinesthetics. Questions that were pertinent (although not exclusive to this theme) included: tell me about the various parts/roles that you have played; were they chosen or imposed; do you see environmental, social, or historical factors that have affected your identity? Finally, the fourth theme, Communality, looked at purpose in life and positive relations with others, and gave room for the questions: how do you see work as contributing to (or detracting) from your life; how do you see the legacy that you have to give?

Temporality

Any conception of the self and role-taking incorporates temporality, according to Mead (1932/1959). Ricoeur (1991) saw time as important to "narrative emplotment", whereby the self, he argued, is discovered in its own story. The remembered and anticipated events of a person's life become the person's life story, as the past and future are reconstituted in the present. Randall and Kenyon (2001) employed the term "facticity" to represent the idea of life as lived forward, and understood backward. This might well include the idea of context, whereby each adult cohort population grows up in a singular socioeconomic and political context that affects their psychological development. This is what the philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1962) called story time,

in his three element conceptualization of clock, story and journey time. Story time has an emphasis on the present moment, yet recognizes the larger stories we all inhabit in terms of culture, class, gender and time.

Story time. All the participants talked about the context of limited choices available to women in their own youth (Franz, Cole, Crosby & Stewart, 1994). Brenda pointed out that her group was born, “in the days when women were either teachers or nurses...just past the time when they were secretaries or stay at home” (iii, 123). Adela remembered growing up when a career tended to be one job that you stayed in: “I guess...somewhere along the line I must have sensed that...I would be too boxed in with something like that” (iii, 850). April recalled the impact of the factory time and motion study upon her thinking; how her youth was a time of little choice and of misogyny: “my mother...thought [teaching] was an unsuitable career for a woman because it was so female dominated...and dreary to be surrounded by so many women...I always felt... a false start learner. I never seemed to be in the right place at the right time” (iii, 308). Teresa, just slightly younger in this group, and a little more optimistic about era and context, recognized that she had begun to find new images for women in newspapers, songs or television programs, to counteract the prevailing ideas of being female. Both Yolande and Teresa reported the limitations on a previous female generation - their own mothers. Yolande: “I grew up in a time where there was a high infant mortality rate on Aboriginal people. Mom had ten live births and brought all to adulthood...that was a lot of hard work on her part...” (i, 83). Teresa had a similar experience of moving quickly out of childhood to make room for the next child. Both could see several compensations in terms of current work choices, which came with being in a modern world, with the benefits of technology. Yolande gratefully acknowledged that she, “was a Plains Cree of this

time" (iii, 861), and Teresa celebrated the impacts of equity legislation.

Clock time. Clock time is where the past, present and future are seen to be discrete, linear and unidirectional. In the women's stories, work transitions were often presented in a linear way. After all, as Riessman (1993, 1994) commented, the western narrative tradition is temporally sequenced, with beginnings, middles and ends, since we have trouble hearing stories which are organized episodically. But there was also an existential context around time, which relates to mortality. As Huxley (1956) once remarked, "The most intractable of our experiences is the experience of time - the intuition of duration, combined with the thought of perpetual perishing". Brenda saw time as precious, and because she didn't count on growing old, was feeling pressure to seize the day. She sought fun at work, echoing the findings from Hale (1990), that older workers increasingly look for enjoyment within their work day. All the women seemed to seek, what McClusky (1963, 1974) called margin, or balance between the "load" and the "power" of life. None of them could ever be described as being afraid of "hard" work, but they were making constant efforts to find the energy to live out his formula of re-investing in their psychological capital, as a way to prepare for other challenges in life.

Adela protested that she needed three lives, and was consciously not "frittering time away" on what she called her distractions. Her decision to retire early was to enjoy experience while she still had energy and strength. April could not countenance any further delays about starting the horticultural program in Canada. She was particularly aware of the process of pursuing time, having worked arduous ten month years in her previous jobs to get her summers of freedom off. Teresa had decided that she could no longer put off her dream of college, but paradoxically at our interviews, felt released from the burden of time and was celebrating the time

now found for herself. Yolande struggled to make time for her art, in what she called the short time frame that we have on this earth, and expressed resentment at having to attend to physical needs like eating and sleeping. This intimation of mortality was presented by the women matter-of-factly, in terms of goals still to achieve. They showed none of Yeat's poetic line of "an aged man is but a paltry thing" (in Ellman, 1948) - a theme that has often been represented in traditional models of career development, and in outlines of mid-life adult developmental tasks, as shown in the following table I have created:

Table 1- Tasks of Middle Adulthood

CRITES (1976)	ASSESS CAREER AND PREPARE FOR RETIREMENT AND DISENGAGEMENT
BALTES (1973)	HOW TO LEARN TO SUBSTITUTE WISDOM TO COMPENSATE FOR THE DECLINE IN TECHNICAL SKILLS
SUPER (1980)	MAINTENANCE - CONTINUATION ALONG ESTABLISHED LINES
RIVERIN-SIMARD(1988)	LOOKING FOR GRAVITATIONAL EXITS FROM CAREER
ERIKSON (1968)	SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO FIND GENERATIVITY VERSUS STAGNATION AND EGO INTEGRITY VERSUS DESPAIR
HAVIGHURST (1972)	ACHIEVING CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH CAREER MAINTENANCE
LEVINSON (1978)	CRITICAL POINT FOR DISILLUSIONMENT OR STABILITY
SHEEHY (1976)	RENEWAL OR RESIGNATION

The above selection shows how clearly established career counselling bought into a quasi stage theory of “mapping out” lives. As in literature, spring, summer, autumn and winter phases seem to match birth, zenith, dissolution and death. Middle adulthood seems here to be coterminous with maintenance, decline, disengagement and decay. There have been, of course, some countervailing viewpoints. Most notably, Jung (1968) saw continuing development with mid-life as the time for reflecting backwards, to determine what is left to create as individuals recast the past through the prism of the present. This according to Frye (1963) is the story of all literature: the story of “lost and found” - of lost worlds and regaining them. In career theory, Crites (1976) saw this as disengagement for re-engagement, and Riverin-Simard (1998) characterized it as a search for a guiding thread in life. But largely, career literature has demonstrated societal expectations about clock time, which Mezirow (1985) saw as one of “the distorting ideologies which enthrall us” (p. 147-148). It can get translated into education, work and retirement gateways as represented so transparently in Table 1.

Journey time. Journey time refers to inner aging (Heidegger, 1927/1962) where the past, present and future are intimately connected. In Heidegger’s words, “...what has passed is gone but what is past is yet to come...” in the hermeneutic circle. Yolande seemed best to represent this notion. She described time as an illusion and was accepting of life’s trajectories, recognizing her lack of control and that “life seems to be a constant thing of negotiation” (iii, 208). This theme was experienced by all the participants in terms of the choices made (or allowed to them) in their past and present lives. For all the participants time had been described in the interviews as a commodity to be wasted or well spent. However, with that pecuniary sense, there was also a recognition that such limits force individuals into assuming other choices that provide definition

and give meaning in individual lives. As a result, the women in this study appeared as individually resourceful, determined to grow and develop in their own lives.

The theme of personal growth is one which blurs the boundaries across time and space, as Leach (1998) has pointed out, and space is an area that I want to explore now.

Spatiality

According to van Manen (1997) we exist existentially in a landscape whereby the space in which we find ourselves affects the way we feel. As such spatiality is intricately bound up with notions of embodiedness (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962). The human body is thus an expressive space (or Dasein) which is further modified by time in Heidegger's view (1927/1962). We exist concretely acting in the world and being aware of a finite existence. Both of the categories of time and corporeality will be dealt with in subsequent sections, and, as far as it is possible to separate what Merleau Ponty calls their "gears", I want here to isolate and concentrate on some thematic aspects of space - such as family, engagement with a life project, and the tension between public and individual space.

Since space is part of our relationship with other people, I will begin with the individual's response to family. The application of facets of Individual Psychology - specifically the use of early recollections, and information regarding positions in the family, facilitated an understanding of the factors that interact with behaviours.

Family and birth position. Investigating family influences, Northcutt (1991) found that the choice of which parent to emulate, or to please, was an important function of personal growth and career development. Josselson (1987) used the term "guardians" for those whose identity was tied to fulfilling family expectations. Her word "pathmakers" was for those building identity on

their own terms. It would appear that only at mid-life have the women in this study been fully able to choose their own path. Adela's and Yolande's fathers' lost educational opportunities meant that they were most enthusiastic for their young daughters' further formal schooling. Brenda's father sent her to his alma mater. Yet now, Adela's metaphorical PhD is in volunteerism, Yolande's education is in visual arts, and Brenda is exploring spirituality. April's father gave her a message, as a young woman, about "tedium" at work, but her gardener self is finding that love and work are not a problematic combination. Teresa - and April too - fought against the cultural imperative around ironing men's shirts, and the tensions in arriving at their own dreams.

Most of the women were effectively older children, in the sense of setting examples. At the interview sessions I had not questioned their own perceptions about their position in the family constellation, but at the analysis stage I could see links with Adlerian constructs on birth order and the striving for significance. Some were either chronologically the eldest, as Adela and Brenda, with high parental expectations. Adela reported, "I am the oldest in my immediate family... I have always been conscious of being old. Always..." (i, 532). Brenda talked about having three younger brothers "and the one below me did not really like my being older" (i, 40). April, as the second child, might conceivably be construed as extra achieving, but she is the only girl and gravitates to a special relationship with her grandmother, across the generations. Yolande, the second eldest of ten, and Teresa, the fourth eldest of twelve, were recruited into oldest child roles. Both of these women left or were taken from their homes, and so altered their position in the family constellation, although Teresa continues with that middle child propensity to fight against injustice.

In looking at the effects of early influences on personal self creation, I recalled Alice Munro's essay (in Lecker, 1999) on industrialization destroying a sense of community. The theme introduced is one of pastoral nostalgia, and I wonder if both April (remembering the happy child in her grandmother's garden) and Yolande (recalling times spent learning old wisdom at her grandfather's knee) are part of this impulse to recover an unspoiled landscape. The following two sections explore aspects which underscore the theme of engagement, toward such recovery.

Personal growth. Learning and competence were commonly expressed values and needs in the interviews. Brenda, Adela and April began by wanting very much to respect management, to comply with the idea of its internal soundness. Brenda reported admiration for the wisdom managers must have had to get where they were in the system. Adela realized that her lack of interest in managing could be counter productive, not just to herself, but to the organization which deserved better. April talked about her willingness to recognize, if not defer to, authority: "it's obviously very deeply engraved. You know, the good girl thing, that we were talking about before" (iii, 804). They not only respected the construct of competence in their work worlds, but sought it personally. In terms of learning history, Brenda had a BA; Adela had embarked on a third degree; Yolande had dropped out of university but later found art school; April, who once mourned never having a degree, now took an academic sabbatical; Teresa went back to business college 30 years after finishing high school. What was interconnected was their sense that learning took place primarily "outside" institutions. All the women wanted to pass on their knowledge, but equally and persistently sought to grow themselves. They associated the process of learning to the structure of the self. Friedan's (1993) book The fountain of age showed that learning to be oneself is an eternal pursuit. Adulthood is not a period of intellectual stability

followed by decline but, on the contrary, is a period of ongoing intellectual growth. Haan (cited in Hunter & Sundel, 1989), in assessing the Berkeley study examining personality at mid-life, found that significant changes were due to an open attitude, concluding that “older dogs evidently learn new tricks” (p. 154).

I found a drive for continued growth in the narratives of these women, which argued for a new approach in our definition of work and generativity. Teresa felt that she had grown “along with” her two sons. Adela recounted her stories of activism, but always as a means to research: “there is a sense of satisfaction, I guess, from...learning new stuff. I mean, there is always something new to learn, things change” (ii, 256). This reflects her attitude about life as progressive, with her family moving from manual labour to the professions, as well as the symbolism of her earning as much money as her father in her first job. For Brenda, “learning and growth has been always the motivating factor” (i, 548). In a work environment where - unlike April - she was actively encouraged by mentors, she began to realize that she could deal with challenge, “I’ve always chosen a growth responsibility, where it’s going to be something I haven’t done before, and I was going to learn and grow from it” (i, 552). So for her, “growing older *is* affecting my work life in a positive way, you know...what comes with age is to just not worry quite as much about what people think and ...so I like that” (ii, 720). This challenged the negative aspects of the models of biological aging. April’s story around education is one of agency. She had pushed for recognition and better pay in academic administration work - and was made to feel “crummy” in that process. Through overtime, she, painstakingly and pro-actively, bought herself an academic “sabbatical” to capture long lost credentials. This is all the more remarkable, since she had witnessed women lawyers empowering themselves through education and yet still

remaining powerless. Despite an early marriage break-up that she described as “devastating” (and a resulting need to be economically independent), she adventurously took risks in seeking significant learning. She showed initiative in approaching both Madam ____ and Rosemary Verey. The latter gave her a Gandhi-like perspective on the significance of small tasks.

Yolande was also very focussed on developing herself; anything other was a “sin”. But she was also philosophical, invoking the Buddhist ideas of the interrelationship of the individual to the universe: “I’m beginning to realize that wisdom is not an event that occurs at a certain point in your life, and stays there forever, it’s an eternal learning process and sharing. And learning to recognize what is there” (iii, 234). This seems to reflect Osherson’s (1980) belief that development occurs with an individual’s ability to accept ambivalence and engage in self-reflection.

Environmental mastery and autonomy. All these women approached work meaning in ways that might be characterized as flexible and tenacious - ready to respond to changing circumstances. The themes I have excerpted point to ideas about autonomy and valuing mastery and pleasure (Baruch, Barnett & Rivers, 1983; Brim, 1992; Ochberg, 1992, 1994). The women were persistent and hardy, and deserved the description given by Ries and Stone (1992) of “perennial flowers” who re-pot themselves and bloom many times. They showed a broad degree of openness to experience. Yolande wanted to continue to grow, “I want that matrix to keep expanding and to bring different...parts of that matrix to learn and bring back to...understandings of life. ’Cause to me life is fascinating” (iii, 477). In recognizing her difficult childhood, she pointed out that this gave her notions about the importance of both, “the arduous and the sublime”. She rejected, “finding the best superannuation and GICs...because where I want the

investment is in my personal experience” (iii, 571), and yet at the same time, finances were not immaterial to her well-being.

Several other binary themes became clear. The idea of good girls/ rebels and compliance/resistance emerged. April escaped from the confines of the residential college dormitory, took a swinging 60s woman to work through the park, yet always produced a professional conscientious persona within work. She grew regretful that this good girl was never recognized, and found herself and her work made invisible. Yolande described herself as rebellious with authority and yet always trying to find a “middle ground” with her elder-like ability to see both sides of an argument. Adela and Yolande had dreams both *conferred* on them by parents, and equally *deferred* dreams of their own. Adela, after a life time seeking financial security, was on the point of giving it up for relative impoverishment. Brenda, having found success at work, was prepared to risk failure with her community venture. April and Adela, warned parentally about tedium at work, deliberately tried to create personal excitement and involvement. As Brenda reminded the listener, she had made a people-helping profession out of a very bland statistical clerking job; so for her it was a process of silk purses out of sow’s ears. Teresa, having pushed for her own freedoms, was determined to pull others to success. April and Yolande both talked about the tight-rope walk, or the strain between collective and individual desires, as they consciously recognized and adopted their own private needs. April tried to reconcile the conflict in philanthropic work and the raffling of a fur coat, and Yolande was struggling with the push towards her community and an equally insistent need to separate: “I don’t want to be the missionary anymore. I want to go on and do my own thing. I want to find out who Yolande is and, as an individual, not as a collective...” (i, 525).

Another interpretation of this ability to adapt to changing circumstances is called career resilience (Brown, 1996; Collard, Epperheimer & Saign, 1996). Part of this derives from self-efficacy, or people's beliefs about their motivation, cognitive and emotional resources to exercise control over their lives (Bandura, 1977, 1989, 1990; Maddux, 1995). Betz and Hackett (1997) argued that career self efficacy is a result of vicarious learning experiences, and can lead to the development and expansion of career goals and expectations (in Brown, 1999). These interviews confirmed this aspect - the women's transitions signalled intense passions, but we do need to throw some light on this factor. In particular, it is relevant to ask *where* the women derived their sense of efficacy, when their work locations were not only not meeting their needs, but, largely, proving deleterious to them. They had been able to extract positive aspects in their work - Adela with her specialist knowledge, April with her intellectual challenges, Brenda with her respect for a just system, Yolande with her impact on Aboriginal welfare, Teresa with her sense of difficult tasks done fairly. But what were the *sustaining* sources of vicarious learning that supported them when disillusion set in, and how were they able to expand their notions of themselves and be perseverant and open to new ways of thinking? This does not accord with theories of disengagement (Crites, 1976; Cytrynbaum & Crites, 1989) or Neugarten's (1979) ideas about interiority, or a decreased preoccupation with the external world. On the contrary, as other researchers have argued, these women's experiences of transformation appear to have been potentially powerful agents of integration and emotional/spiritual growth (Davis, Lockwood & Wright, 1991).

Boundaries. It is also important to include here the tension between public and individual space, and to explore the notion of space as an expression of structure which can refer to

constricting aspects. All of the women talked about their paid work in contrast to their unpaid and domestic space. This was their “spare time” and the worlds were strictly separated. April did not introduce her secret world of gardening as a topic in her work world. Teresa kept her maternal responsibilities separate. Yolande was not given kudos for her art at work. No one was more insistent than Adela about ethically apportioning time to her paid and voluntary civic responsibilities, and giving back time to the paid job on a so-called day off. This shows up the structural ambiguity in talking to women about women and work. They relate to the accepted definitions of what gets counted legitimately as work, and become “confused about the interstices of paid work and unpaid” (Leach, 1998, p. 99).

Plateauing. Another physical boundary is career limitation, or plateauing (Bardwick, 1986), which is assumed to cause psychological disappointment in individuals. April, Adela and Brenda seemed to have met such organizational impasses at work, while Yolande had retreated deliberately from the promotions offered to her. Only Teresa - a kind of re-entry woman - seemed to find meaning in her current office work, so these results were not a blanket condemnation of bureaucratic careers for women. However, Kanter (1977) described bureaucracy as misanthropic and as a “corporate Olympics of survival”.

Twenty years later, in a study done of bureaucracy, the same conditions seem to continue (and have application for four of the women in my study): “Disaffection of women managers is not related to a lack of interest in career or other personal characteristics, but stems primarily from organizational factors, such as inhospitable corporate cultures, office politics” (Phillips, Little & Goodine, 1997). We saw this in Adela’s, April’s, Yolande’s and Brenda’s stories. Yolande saw her paid job as a means to support her art which was her work. April exhausted

herself working at several concurrent jobs to create satisfaction for herself; Adela, “frustrated by bureaucratic and administrative process” (de Blois, 2002), decided to exit rather than face her own self-styled “unproductive” anger over the failure of the management structure; Brenda was wistful over unrealized possibilities, but was finding a mission for her energies in the non-profit sector. This seemed to illustrate Bardwick’s (1986) belief that this kind of revitalization only occurs when people can let go of old illusions, and “give up ambitions for promotion and replace them with ambitions of challenge” (p. 99).

April could not find this challenge within her office, and talked cogently about having nowhere to go in terms of her career and her career “space”, both physical and psychic, feeling some affinity with the barred pigeons. This contrasted with her home office, where the windows and door are open to the sounds and smells of summer and the energy of passing traffic. All the women appeared to be looking for the freedom to organize time as they wished, whether it was in the civic world, or the visual arts or horticultural communities. They seemed resolved to give up any sort of earlier Faustian bargains made for the sake of security. None of them seemed preoccupied with material gains, although none was frivolous about the sense of support that adequate money could provide, and acknowledged that being “cash-careful” was an important female issue, a finding that is echoed in Ostendorf (1998). Yolande put it cogently in terms of wanting, not tepees and buffalo, but wanting, instead, to bank her personal experience.

Scripted boundaries. Steedman (1987), in talking about a female landscape, introduced the notion of “lives lived out on the borderlands” which don’t square with culture’s received scripts, and reinforce the “outsider” notion, which was introduced earlier in this chapter. We see the notion of what I think of as social and patriarchal “disavowal” in some of the women’s stories.

April renounces her married title, as having “nothing to do with me”; Yolande repudiates beads and feathers; Brenda rejects white gloves and anachronistic dress codes; both April and Teresa are reluctant to be defined by the simple, but symbolic, household iron.

Lindh and Dahlin (2000) expanded this idea of limiting boundaries. They borrowed Bourdieu’s concept of habitus or personal orientation to the world:

Habitus is a fundamental aspect of a person... it is most easily spotted whenever a person ends up in an environment or social context that is dominated by people with different habitus. Either the newcomers have to adapt themselves to the dominating habitus of this context which is the complex experience of many class-travellers, or *they probably have to abandon the situation* (my italics). (p. 201)

Feminist literary critic, Judy Little (1996), took a similar position in scrutinizing the self in the novels of Woolf, Pym, and Brooke-Rose. She identified female subjectivity as the outsider, or, in her phrase, a “legal alien” (p. 15). With respect to the political and economic power that women have within most societies, she surmised that:

When a woman enters a profession she may not necessarily adopt the entire cultural package of...the male professional. Her career discourse (or discourse of “quest”) is likely to be in dialogic apposition to the discourses that structure the careers of men. (p. 23)

The women characters in Little’s study, in consequence, construct “alternative selves” to fit into society’s expectations. Finlayson (1995) and Harris (1995) have each talked, in similar fashion, about the fractures and broken patterns in female identity, when dealing with the conflict of being female and being taken seriously. In her essay, “Professions for Women”, Virginia Woolf (1943) had raised this issue of stereotypes which hamper women. Woolf kills off the phantom

“Angel in the House” which claims that women must charm, conciliate and lie to succeed. Her representation of the emotional turmoil experienced by women, when trying to write and work, may be fictional and symbolic. However, the angel personifies the values transmitted by schools, churches and mass media upon the women’s lives in this study. This seems to mirror Somers’ (1994) argument that the “social narratives are rarely of our own making” (p. 606); a position restated by Cushman (1996), who saw politics and economics configuring the self.

In support, Martusewicz (1992) has argued that the work world model of individualistic self consciousness is fundamentally inapplicable to women, since the imposed female cultural expectation is one of relationship. Walkerdine (1988, 1989) has reiterated that the problem of women’s subjective relation to professional life is a system that defines her as the other: “women have entered the battle on the grounds laid out by male science and remain ‘the other of reason’” (p. 152). Certainly Adela, in particular, does “battle” on behalf of civic issues which seem inherently intellectually plausible - toxic damage to vegetation, roads encroaching on green space, the education of conservative judges. Just that process of having “to fight the good fight” as she called it, would appear to “ultimately position women as less capable in relation to the standard of rationality” (Walkerdine, 1988, p. 153). Yolande also described herself as a warrior, involved in guarding and carrying forward, that which is precious to her aboriginal community, somewhat “like a Holocaust survivor”. Brenda learned to “shut up” at the office - she subversively “loses” her advocate voice in hopes of doing more good quietly. This recalls Pipher (1994), who has written about the pressure adolescent girls face to create a false self: “just as planes and ships disappear mysteriously into the Bermuda Triangle, so do the selves of girls go down in droves” (p. 19).

Reclamation. Friedan (1993) urged women to reclaim these missing pieces. She has argued that, since the rigidly proscribed sex roles that dominated women's earlier years are not as pervasive in older age, women can "recover" themselves. For Hancock (1989) these lost pieces represented "the girl within" - a touchstone for identity. The women in my study were, as adults, rediscovering an early sense of self, conjuring up the ideas in Roe's (1956) landmark study, which had emphasized early experiences as a primary factor in finding satisfaction in one's field.

Recalling their childhoods provides only some clues for making sense of the choices they had made. The women in this study, as in Fenwick's (1998) research study, were confronting and breaking free of workplace structures that constrained them. In their stories I saw a creative assertion of their values. Adela can no longer accept the lack of commitment to the service. Teresa's is a story about escape - initially from overweening societal constraints, and then, finally, from those which she has internalized to such a degree, that she has lost her "real self". Her first work choices had been heavily influenced by both family of origin, and an educational socialization that reinforced those restrictive roles. This is true in no less a sense for Adela, April, Brenda and Yolande whose families did have larger aspirations for them, but still expected their daughters to achieve particular roles. Yolande subsequently has learned to draw large and off the page, using her whole body; she recolours her life boldly like a Fauvist. April, remembering both her caged office and the women lawyers "pigeon-holed" in cells, is now almost permanently outdoors, living free. Adela, conscious of her father's wisdom about indexed pensions and security, has turned her back on part of that safety-net. Brenda has found her adolescent social work instincts reborn in a community venture which takes her energy, but, equally fuels her enthusiasm. They all had begun to realize the emotional and creative potential in altruism and

serving the community, or in discovering the spiritual connection with work. In searching out what Fenwick (1998) called “authentic selves”, I will now investigate the references in their stories to the lived body or corporeality.

Corporeality

Feminism has always been deeply concerned with the body, and suspicious of the way it has been traditionally interpreted in terms of oppositions: mind/body; subject/object; self/other; inside/outside; male/the “opposite” sex. To give one example of this phenomenon, bell hooks (1981), pointed out the no-win situation for the female black slave body, which was seen as male in its capacity for work, but female in its embodiment of evil lust.

The feminist take on phenomenology is that being in “the world of the subject” cannot be divorced from the constitution of the body, since the body and the social world are mutually constitutive. Ricoeur (1992) talked about the corporeal dimension of action which brings to light a personal identity, which is experienced as a sense of being at home in one own’s body and in the world. Furthermore, Gergen and Gergen (1993) have described female biography as being “embodied” far more essentially than male biography, where to be fixed on the body would be viewed as unmanly and narcissistic.

Body kinesthetics. Early studies showed women having a sense of themselves as a “poor fit” (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). The participants gave several such images when describing the lived body as a site of meaning. Their reflections illustrated what Debats (1996) meant by incorporating (in the Latin sense of “corpus”) a situation into their own biography. April talked about “physically cringing” when passing her old office after her sabbatical, and remembered disrobing from her work/career clothes, as if she could find herself under the outer garments.

Yolande, interested in Henry Moore's concept of the skeleton, was sculpting the female body - both personally in a weight-loss clinic and artistically in Portland cement - as her way of reclaiming it. She also used the metaphor of being reborn from the chrysalis to describe her own emergence into her own dreams. Both Brenda and Teresa had lost their voices. Teresa felt her mouth taped shut - and only found "air" in her new work place, whilst Brenda was wise enough to see the merits of "being silent" as a woman. Teresa, in a somewhat religious simile, felt nailed to the floor. They were orienting themselves kinesthetically in ways that reflect Kendon's (1992) idea of the body as a way of selectively organizing attention.

Self-acceptance. Gergen and Gergen (1993), in the study on narratives of the body cited above, concluded that while the female cultural code of being brings a more profound sense of aging for women, it also leads to a greater sense of acceptance. These participants' visual depictions of the body recalled Sartre's words that it is not a question of choosing to be, but a question of choosing authentically to be oneself. Quindlen (1993) suggested that it is only with maturity, that we can confront how much of ourselves has been "traded". She cited Dorothy Thompson:

one cannot exist today as a person...without having to have a showdown with oneself, without having to redefine what it is that one lives by, without being clear in one's own mind what matters and what does not matter. (p. xxviii)

The women talked courageously about breaking through the chrysalis to arrive at an authentic self, about emerging from behind their hair and of rejecting compartmentalization. Burkitt (1998), building on Ilyenkov's (1977) image that such thinking does not happen in isolation - as in Rodin's representation of the "The Thinker" - argued that the lone thinker is

learning *how* to think within the social conditions of something to think *about*. So social space and communality become the context for human consciousness and knowledge.

Communality

Within this category I position findings within two themes I call purpose in life and positive relations with others. These emulate the Ryff constructs of personal and community purpose and connectedness. The findings suggest that the women's concern for others indicate strengths in self-initiative, resourcefulness, and functional competence, which mirror the valuing of autonomy and mastery outlined earlier as a significant theme.

Purpose in life. To look for meaning and purpose in life is a familiar theme in literature which emphasizes middle adulthood as a period of taking stock to make sense of one's biography. Several of the women talked about finding surprising linkages in their lives. Adela expressed that all of her interests had lead her recursively to the same value system - she saw everything as "connected". April, serendipitously winning a garden tiller, had found again the horticulture school that had been a daydream - or mirage - for her at a low point in her life. It was there that she retrieved and re-integrated her early school subjects, that she had once pleaded for to a headmaster.

Faced with the social pressure to continue a disjointed work-life, using only a fraction of their talents, these women had all gone through a disquieting process of transformation, that left them with what Sheehy (1976) termed a sense of "voluntary obligation to strangers" (p. 72). Findings indicated that generativity, or a transfer of knowledge, to the next generation was valued by all the participants. Bradley (1997) calls it involvement and inclusivity. For McAdams et al. (1986) it is defined as both agency and communion. Agency can be a legacy of hard work, an

idea or any expression of the self, and communion is the act of giving “a gift which lives on” (Bakan, 1966, p. 15).

Both Adela and Teresa felt lucky and privileged and expressed a sense of moral agency. Moral here means not only spiritual but having a learning focus, or a quest (Evans, 1979). As Mintz (1978) pointed out, George Eliot’s Dorothea Brookes wants to centre her moral energies into a “long-recognizable deed”. Equally, Baumeister (1986, 1991) has suggested that one of the imperatives of a modern society is to become “better”. In many senses, these women’s stories have an element of spirituality (Tisdell, 1999). Their search for coherence includes working for justice and improved policies, like Adela, Brenda and Teresa, as well as accessing and manifesting their creativity as artists like Yolande and April. As Brooks and Daniluk (1998) argue, being passionate about something means to be connected to our own spirit. This is the legacy question.

Adela, Yolande, April, Teresa and Brenda all demonstrated a concern for growth, through sharing skills and knowledge. April with her community garden, her oak seedlings; Adela with her committee work; Brenda with her community centre; Teresa with the equity program and Yolande with her commitment to *all* her communities - visual, aboriginal and global.

Adela’s gift is knowledge, “I haven’t used the word wisdom but, certainly, when I think of the Association...they do pass on wisdom” (iii, 606). Her quest is for a productive life, not allowing time to “fill up the empty spaces” (iii, 323), but “accomplishing what you set out to do and time to give good service” (iii, 13). Teresa had similar sentiments, “I like to gain the knowledge, but I also like to pass out or spread around what I’ve learned” (ii, 80). She wanted to be remembered as a good person. April was also a teacher, crusading for organic cultivation. She planted community gardens to bring beauty to blighted spaces. Brenda’s spiritual need was

to pass on those things she had learned to other people. In addition, she fervently wanted to leave a credible service in the community, and spoke wistfully about leaving something lasting - and yet also found consolation in her daily work of community building. Yolande saw herself as a link to the Aboriginal philosophies, ideas and thoughts, which to her were being lost. She described her art as her “children” and wanted to pass on generatively her accumulated knowledge and feelings and experience.

Positive relations with others. The notion of generativity includes an altruistic emphasis on the centrality of relationships and collegiality (Hardin, 1985; Mor-Barak, 1996). Bradley’s (1997) notion of inclusivity indicates communal activities and relationships, which reaffirms the “consciousness of connection” (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996) and Caffarella and Olson’s (1993) notion of interconnectedness. These constructs would appear to be reinforced in the interviews.

The women expressed a desire to be a part of a team and to have satisfying relationships. For Teresa and for Brenda it was principally with immediate family, but they also showed concern for the well-being and morale of staff and colleagues. Brenda commented: “I’ve been a mentor to a number of people. And that’s just enough all by itself...” (iii, 27). Remembering her father, she sought genuineness in work relationships, not “schmoozing”. For Yolande it was with her teachers and the colleagues in shared studio space. For Adela it involved seeking out collegiality and contact, when doing isolated personal projects, like her house history. For April it was meaningful relationships with clients, where she could be authentic about her own aims for organic gardening, and where she could reconcile the high paying client with her need to provide community gardening at the same time. April also valued camaraderie with her fellow-students,

appreciated being trusted by her co-workers to lobby on their behalf, and was very caring about intimate relations. Her need for autonomy and independence, when she was pursuing her dream of horticultural training, also created an ethical dilemma around the potential impact on her immediate family, and brought back memories of the difficulties in reconciling personal and family economic needs.

In sum, relationships are clearly important to the women in the study, in ways that were ignored by traditional development theorists, and, perhaps, not even this fully realized in feminist relational models, given the early discrediting of the notion of connectedness. All the women introduced a particular idea around valuing movement towards personal sanity and mental wellness, that could be included in their notion of connection. All respondents sought a more affiliative working environment (Richardson, 1993). It was noteworthy how many had expressed the concept of looking for role models, or mentors, throughout their own lives. For example, April and Brenda, although late individually to the feminist movement, had been, nonetheless, politically informed and honed by their life experiences. In her narrative, April went so far as to wistfully recognize the power an all-female university education seemed to bestow on its women students, in terms of personal confidence.

Yolande maintained her responsibility as an individual to try and push beyond the individual into the collective, like a stone ringing the water. This need for connectedness often meant that these women's views on leadership did not square with the traditional ideas on authority and administration. April referred to women's invisibility at work, their inability to market themselves intelligently: "Whereas men will just do the two things that are going...to get them noticed" (ii, 885). I felt they showed a sense of disappointment or betrayal, in that they did

not measure up to the received notions of leadership which were more to do with cost-cutting, than people management. Adela felt that staff often went inappropriately into management, since it was a vertical structure that brought people desired extra salary. Yolande despaired over the cloning of a particular style. Similarly, Brenda hoped for more women leaders "But not just the same type. We've tended to promote those that have maybe more masculine traits" (ii, 401). She was particularly vocal about confusing "administrators" for "leaders" in a modern world. When Brenda was agonizing over what she called "that old word", it reminded me of DeVault's (1990) important caveat about interview research, whereby the linguistic substance of women's speech might get lost in a typical technical transcribing. This seemed to be an example of not expecting neat definitions, but shaping new meanings, reminiscent of Daly's (1987) attempt to develop a new vocabulary.

Myself in the Process

Something is missing in the stories I have told of women's mid-life growth and that is my own story. The interviews represented a dialectical process of coming to know myself and my own struggle to understand what it is to make a positive contribution to, and through, work. As I wrote the analysis I held up a mirror and could see myself in the women's struggles, betrayals, their constraints and disempowerment, as well as in their victories. As Doris Lessing has noted, reading another life refers the reader to herself, and reveals one's own enduring explanations of life (in Pinar, 1992). The Personal Narrative Group (1989) added that the truths seen in personal narratives "jar us from our complacent security as interpreters 'outside' the story" (p.261). Being involved with the women's stories, with their memories, explanations and exasperations, carried me, like the Great Gatsby line as a "boat against the current, borne ceaselessly into the past"

(Fitzgerald, in Cohen, 1999). I met my past, present and future, and, resonating with the experience, found an “enlightened eye” (Eisner, 1991). Perhaps it was as a neophyte English literature teacher, years ago, that I first learned to see stories of people’s lives as a way of “knowing” to counterbalance a 60’s world where scientific experimentation and behaviourism were the more favoured scholarly approaches.

With April’s story of the “matron housekeeper” I felt again the deadweight of limiting career advice, with Teresa the manacles of early messages when growing up. Like Brenda I had memories of being asked to type - which in that time period [pre-computer] was not a desired and gender-free skill but a rank. Like April I could recount being asked, voyeuristically, about my own method of birth control at my first job interview. Yolande’s devastating sense of cultural assault, brought less hurtful - but nonetheless bleak - memories of the stratified social world and class divide in England. With Adela I recalled what it was to be the first graduate in a family - although my British education differed in that it was a brave post-war progressive social experiment that, in effect, yanked children out of their social class. Walkerdine (1985) has described it better than I ever could:

It was in that moment, in the fifties, when I felt set up, set up to want, to want to be different, special, when I was chosen to be one of the children of the post-war boom, who would leave the safe innocence of the suburbs for the stripped-pine promises of the new middle class, for the glamour of the metropolis and the desperate lure of the academy.

(p. 63-64)

Ostensibly benign, its effect was to displace children and make them strangers to their parents - just like Yolande. Even as a good student, I felt the disempowerment of a syllabus that was

riddled with male cultural artefacts - Jack London and Hemingway to read and not Eliot, the Brontës, nor Iris Murdoch. April called them “adverse role models” when recalling her English teacher, who would go to great lengths to read the unabridged version of Shakespeare for cheap shock value.

Given these ironic beginnings, I find it telling that theorists (Bruner, 1986, 1987; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1988) maintain that we make sense of the world vicariously through narrative and narrative thought, and that our lives are mediated by means of textualization. How was it then that we were able to find our own authorial voice? The conversation with April offered one answer around our need for life-long learning; that our starvation diet has made us zealots, and the hunger comes from having been so disempowered for so long.

All of us, as participants, were required to show a degree of vulnerability in our stories. We touched on what is not normally said - those messages of what is unnamed in families, what is not reported at work, as we struggled to maintain our veneer of sophistication. This becomes, in effect, the real job of the phenomenologist - to discover what has been unknown, rather than to verify the known. Sometimes this was done by investigating the laughter which accompanied many interview comments (Pollio, 1982). The women often spoke in a self mocking or sardonic way - and at other times the work world, and its rules, were just so self-evidently funny, or mock-tragic, to us all.

Final Reflections

The research design for this study had anticipated that the findings would be multi-dimensional. Josselson (1987) divided mid-life women into four categories - traditional,

innovative, expansive, protesting. I could find all of these characteristics in the participants in my study; they did not own one adjective solely. Curious, caring, adventuresome, persistent and adaptable, they had shown a commitment to continuous learning, and to searching for worthwhile opportunities. They had struggled with the goal of creating meaningful work lives as a point for exploring their identity, and, in so doing, had demonstrated Krumboltz's (2000) notion of "planned happenstance" that individuals, to a certain - albeit limited - extent, create their own worlds.

While Josselson (1987) and Astin (1984) may have believed that a woman's socialized adolescent identity formed the template for her adulthood, these women's responses to early positions in life, have been both innovative and improvisational, concerned with building skills for new futures. These new futures were described as extended - since all of the women talked about continuing to work; for some they envisaged being in their 80's and not retired.

The analysis uncovered several themes concerning the psychological, relational and temporal meanings of work in women's lives. Their stories were mosaic, not linear, and consisted of assembling and reassembling a meaningful picture, like Lifton's (1993) "protean" self. The women demonstrated both resistance and resilience to that notion of foreclosure in terms of work identity. Whether their lives were "going into a question mark", as Brenda described it, they still embarked on that tightrope walk. Notwithstanding differences in social beginnings, personal circumstances and culture, they have characterized their identities by interconnection to a larger community, as well as through a very self-focussed individuation. This reflects some of the findings of the Finnish study by Niemela and Lento (1993), which described the creation of more equal relationships with others after a woman's 50th birthday. Autonomy was complemented with altruism. Self acceptance was more important than wealth, or outward success. These women

were grounded in agency, and sought new growth and challenge. Nor were they despairing over lost opportunities, or fiercely battling constraints. They appeared sanguine and resolute - not in protest, but taking self responsibility for their lives, and in negotiation with themselves to achieve their goals. They had side-stepped barriers of racism, lack of earlier academic preparation or lack of personal control, inappropriate career counselling and diminished “choices”. They were compensating for the nature of their early opportunity structure, and how it might have shaped the options available to them, with perseverance and a determination to learn.

The challenge, in this analysis, was to find the thematic patterns in these particular women’s work transformations and go beyond the stories, towards the implications of those meanings and ideas in people’s lives, and this will be set out in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In this final chapter I will re-collect, and re-examine, the common essences culled from the synthesis of the five profiles presented in the last chapter. Recollection of the findings allows for hermeneutic phenomenological reflection (Van Manen, 1997), in terms of both attentiveness to, and interpretation of the phenomena, with respect to three criteria that I have selected to address. They are: 1) the contribution towards increased understanding of the phenomenon: this section begins with an examination of trustworthiness, examines shared constructs, and looks at limitations; 2) the research and practical implications of the study, as well as recommendations for future directions; and, 3) the meaning of this research process to my own development.

Contribution

The goal of all research is clearly credibility. Mishler (1986b) maintained that this depends on persuasiveness and coherence to the reader, correspondence for the participants, and pragmatic utility for society. This construct of trustworthiness forms part of the contribution section that I examine now.

Trustworthiness

It is a commonplace that a post-modern intellectual climate finds notions of truth suspect. The world has grown suspicious of the word “real”, since it can be appended to any organization such as the Real IRA or Real Women, and become meaningless. From a hermeneutic perspective there is no particular canon for reality, since the human subject is an unfinished subject.

Furthermore, the authenticity of the narrative study has often been seen as problematic when compared with other research approaches. I did find it somewhat paradoxical to see the

notion of truth and fixed identity rejected, at just that point in history when the world has learned to respect personal ways of knowing. Bochner (2001) saw this criticism against narrative inquiry, as a “macho” and anti-feminist pursuit by particular sociologists, bent on purity of reason and disengagement. Her point was that all knowledge is constructed and not discovered, and that constructivism merely offers one set of credible conclusions.

Moreover, since the aim of feminist research is to let women speak for themselves, not to manipulate, it becomes illogical to want to verify the information. Narrators may, or may not, represent their lives accurately - it is enough that they believe they have been doing so. According to Mishler (1992), each life is a selective reconstruction of that which the narrator deems significant. Treleaven (1999) pointed out that the respondent diachronically maps what is considered important in her own development, and that the past becomes burnished by an interpretative logic it might not have had at the time. The point in telling stories about lives is to make them not only more intelligible, but essentially more bearable (Bruner, 1990; Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Moreover, since the conventions of communication make each one of us try to say something socially acceptable, there will necessarily be discrepancies in individuals’ stories of transition (Maxwell, 1996). Self narration is an interpretive act, not a simple mirroring of the past (Kerby, 1991, p. 7). We all forget, re-write and self-deceive; as the poet P. K. Page (1997) suggests, “memory [is] a trickster figure”.

The women in the study did not have monolithic identities, but the effort to summarize can make a discontinuous life appear unified. Josselson (1995) has reminded us that narrative forces us to supersede dichotomies, causing us to recognize that “people are composed of a dialectic of opposites” (p. 33). As Harrison (2000) pointed out: “narrative is made from the rubble of

experience, a necessarily retrospective process of assembling those details that contribute to the chosen story, discarding others, equally true, that might resolve into another picture" (p. 84).

Alice Munro, in an interview with McCulloch and Simpson (1994), responded to the question of what is real, by saying "Every final draft, every published story, is still only an attempt, an approach to the story". She pointed out the elusiveness of self: "there is no self beyond the story...one creates multiple selves in search of a centre" (in Lecker, 1999, p. 126). Furthermore, these stories did not just rest with the narrators, since as researcher I was, "...selective in defining and shaping the data...and the interpretations that flow from their findings" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 13). So, as Ochberg (1986) argued, "If our interest is how people conceive themselves, the problem of 'truth' is irrelevant". All that was offered here was that which proved meaningful to a specific community at a particular historical time frame. After all, as Riessman (1993) reminded us, our subjects do not hold still for their portraits.

Despite these considerations, narratives need internal fidelity. To be formative, they must be persuasive to the individuals whose lives they represent (Ochberg, 1994), and be authentic, not only to the precepts of research, but to the "feeling tone" of the lives they represent (Lincoln, 1995). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) invoked plausibility. Bruner (1986) argued, not for empirical proof, but for "verisimilitude" or "truly conceivable experience" (p. 11). Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton's (2001) claim for phenomenology is that it seeks persuasiveness, credibility and insightfulness. This was echoed by McPhail (1995):

[it] is not interested in episteme or verifiable knowledge, but has as its goals the uncovering of doxa, or the belief patterns of human beings, that provide their meaning, guide their actions and have been constructed in the act of living...The goal of this type of

research is not to arrive at explanation but rather to come to understand the processes that human beings engage in as they construct meaning from experiences... (p. 163)

In sum, phenomenology demands not detective work, with efficient data reduction, but more of a witnessing (Giorgi, 1994). This is a familiar feminist rallying cry, that compartmentalizing life into parts - private/public, work/play - ignores the contexts that shape their creation. So ultimately, trustworthiness, therefore, comes to “depend on the quality of craftsmanship during investigation, continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale, 1996, p. 241).

In terms of internal trustworthiness, I gave the transcripts back to the interviewee group to check the material (Merriam, 1988), and kept an audit trail of key decisions made during the research process. In the final analysis, the researcher has to take responsibility for the work and for its probity. Wolcott (1994) has insisted that the interpretive researcher is capable of making credible conclusions and seriously sorting fact from fiction. Therefore, in terms of validity and reliability, I remained “self-conscious” and reflexive, in terms of the choices, made throughout the thesis process, and the defensibility of those choices. I maintained an ongoing journal which outlined the decisions I made, concerning the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 66). I was conscious of effective interviewing techniques to get at the participant’s words and meaning, beyond my own assumptions. While my own identification with feminism was transparent in the choice of research topic, and in my personal introduction to the women participants, I was nonetheless careful about “reining myself in”. The questions were designed not to “lead” in terms of gender politics, and I was respectful of - and fully attentive to - the avenues that their conversations led me to. When one of the women reported that her mother had steered her away

from teaching since working with women would be “dreary”, I refrained from comment, or any exploration of this, since this could have been unnecessary proselytism and have taken away from the story. The only script which overtly showcased gender was Teresa’s, with her stories of dominant brothers and work place environments. When I put questions to Adela about the sex trade workers in her local area, to see if there was a dynamic between seeing prostitutes as liberated or victimized, I was quickly brought back to her reality. We were discussing needles in the park, and for her this was not a debate among feminists and academics. I was also mindful of the challenges in phenomenological bracketing of personal experience, within a feminist approach, which conversely promotes self disclosure. To help me resolve this dichotomy, I kept in mind Mishler’s (2000) rephrasing of a quotation on “interviews as speech acts” from a previous book, to his current usage of interviews as “socially situated actions”. This gave me the permission I sought to clearly acknowledge the nature of the interaction between myself and the women participants. I needed to suspend biases, but not the enabling value of personal involvement.

The strength of a phenomenological study is supposed to be its capacity to engender spontaneous recognition of ourselves (Moustakas, 1994; Tesch, 1990), so that a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can see what the researcher saw (Giorgi, 1975). Ultimately I am not claiming that I have identified and proven the essential nature of meaning in work. This is a small study, done in-depth, gendered and context-bound.

Constructs Found within the Research

Contribution is here assessed in terms of both the research questions, and the literature in this area. The research question in this study was: what is the subjective meaning of work for mid-life professional women as they emerge from voluntary work transitions? A secondary

question was how do mid-life women find identity and agentically create themselves as “somebody”?

One overarching significant finding was that work remains a vehicle for the expression of meaning, and is associated with personal development. Work provided the women with opportunities for independence, for purpose, for generativity, for mastery and competence, all of which assisted with identity formation. My interpretation begins with some constructs that arose in this study in terms of what is already known about women’s development and narrative meaning. I will provide a synthesis of these key findings in a later section but begin by examining first such central components of their experience as personal and environmental mastery.

Challenges and Mastery Experiences

This study has highlighted that, even for women who are relatively privileged in terms of skills, there were still considerable challenges in work. I had deliberately chosen experienced women as participants, and yet, they all had conflicts concerning what might be termed their assigned place, and their perceived place, in terms of personal capacity. Lazarus (1991) has argued that personal meaning is a product of such negotiation between individual goals and values, and the environment. Burke (1994), in her study of identity, with 35-50 year old professional women, has given, as one example, the conflicting societal demands made upon women to be both affiliative and separate. Furthermore, Kerka (1992) and Merriam and Clark (1991), in their models of self-definition, have described a process for charting work (productive activity) and love (relationships with others) separately. This might well be called intellectual gymnastics, but a “capacity to recover from difficult emotional challenges” has been construed elsewhere as resilience (Dixon, Hickey & Dixon, 1992, p. 243). It could also be seen as a

tolerance for ambiguity, which social learning theorists like Krumboltz (1994) applaud, given that post-modern life is ambiguous.

The stories I was given showed adaptable women, who re-engaged and refocused, using both alternative perspectives of time and of space. They did not demarcate their lives into separate spheres, and sought to harmonize being both connected and distinct, invoking Taylor's (1999) research on the importance of balance. Reminiscent of McGuigan's (1980) metaphor, the women in this study demonstrated that women's adult development did not lead to orderly, stepwise progression in work, but was a "braid of threads in which colors appear, disappear, and reappear" (p. xii). Development was thus seen as adding greater complexity to the mix of functioning (Caffarella & Olson, 1993), where the norm is the dominance of change, not linearity.

Chapter Two set out the literature base with respect to women's psychosocial development, and how women come to know themselves through voice and relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; DeVault, 1990; Miller, 1986; Pipher, 1994; Stanley, 1992; Walkerdine, 1988). The self was sought collegially, but was also celebrated through an individual voice. This study effectively demonstrated that a sense of agency was crucial to both processes.

Agency and Autonomy

The women's stories showed an emerging self-determination, assertiveness and instrumentality (Solberg, Good, Fischer, Brown & Nord, 1995). This concept of agency has been a major focus in research on women's career development (Brown, 1999; Hackett, 1995; Hackett & Betz, 1995). It often appears as a narrative whereby women are moved beyond Belenky's (1986) concepts of silence and received knowledge into other women's ways of knowing such as through voice and subjective experience.

Studies have linked agency to self efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1997; Betz & Hackett, 1997). This instrumentality was manifested in the learning that the women all pursued as a means to personal growth. Miller (1986) has described autonomy as becoming a "separate and self-directed individual" (p. 95). In the stories, the women sought independence, or autonomy, and were reconciled with it: They gradually grew into themselves as "self-directed", until it was no longer seen as a threatening construct.

The literature on the impact of transitional changes upon agency was well supported. Sinnott and Johnson (1996) believed that it is only through disorder, and the disruption of a credible identity, that change can occur when women become keenly aware of "loss". Development is thus seen as having a dialectical basis and several researchers have claimed that a central concept here is critical reflection (Brookfield, 1986, 1995; Jarvis, 1987; Scott, 1998). It leads to questioning what has been uncritically accepted previously. Cognitive and social-cultural constructivists have maintained that development occurs as individuals use this knowledge to solve problems (Anderson, 1991; Billett, 1995, 1998), in "...identifying dependency-producing psychological assumptions acquired earlier in life that have become dysfunctional," (Mezirow & Associates, 1990). The women's stories resounded with belief systems and old messages, about family units, about working productively, and managerial support, that had brought questioning or some disillusion. This had meant finding a voice to express this disjunction.

McGray (1996) found, in her study of mid-life women's aspirations, that they wanted to find this voice. This process of developing one's voice, or making knowledge "their own" (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 422), has been termed a perspective transformation (Brookfield, 1986;

Mezirow, 1994), which causes the creation of a new meaning structure. For these women, meaning was interpreted as a capacity for engagement and activity (Kegan, 1982; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The stories endorsed Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, 1997) concept of flow, as the women sought balance between challenge and sheer enjoyment. They looked for fun combined with hard work, and, as such, illustrated Maslow's (1971b) definition of people, "working at something that they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy in them disappears" (p. 43). The present study confirmed Houle's (1992) finding that self-development is not so much a matter of perfectibility, but more the ability to define oneself within a potentially alienating world.

As young women they had frequently "disowned" themselves (Pipher, 1994, p. 38), when emotions, wants and thoughts were not deemed socially acceptable. This is consistent with Peck's (1986) model of women's development, where the outermost flexible core is social historical time dimension (context, aging). At the centre is the core of self definition, unique to the personal concerns of each woman, but again heavily dependent on social historical time and social forces. Results showed that organizational influences, historical context and structures were a fundamental component of these women's work experiences. One consequence was that the women found themselves as exiles and outsiders, burdened to different degrees by the structures and norms which hampered their sense of who they were. They described themselves as caged or constrained in boxes, tussling with perfectionism, looking for escape from the borderline. The women's disillusionment, fuelled in previous roles, contributed to psychological growth, as they struggled towards authenticity, or "owning" their experience.

Authenticity and Self

As noted in the definitions of terms in Chapter Two, post-modernists have dismantled the

illusion of an individuated self, arguing that we adopt a complex of roles or personae (Gergen, 1991; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990; Kerby, 1991; Mahoney, 1996; Sparkes, 1997; Stanley, 1992). The self is not seen as essential, but made from fragmentary human experience. One interesting finding arising from this study was the experimentation with a personal typology of metaphors. Fenwick (1998) has used the term “fictive selves” to describe how, as individuals, we shape our several “selves” through work roles and social strictures. However, unlike Fenwick, I did not feel that labels deprived the women of a sense of agency. I saw them instead as useful and animating - evidence of imaging, and moving towards, an elusive, better self. The women’s stories held the notion of wanting to creatively weave and express this self. This is a central ambiguity for post-modern sensibilities: we recognize intellectually that the self is constructed, but like psychological chameleons or the “peppered moth” try on various selves, with the aim of transgressively extending their boundaries. The women, through their narratives, showed an interplay of parts. They were not finished entities but were simply showing what Josselson (1995) has called dialogic moments where, “the self is most clearly in dialogue with itself” (p. 37).

These moments included recognizing an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982), and the generative commitment to make a significant contribution. This mirrored Lifton’s (1993) “protean self” as individuals look for “a larger ethical commitment, whatever the difficulty in finding and sustaining it” (p. 127). The women sought change and new experiences only when they were intrinsically rewarding, and, echoing Mor-Barak (1996), seemed to be involved in greater socio-political activity as they got older. They all manifested aspects of Kotre’s (1984) generative modes - parentally, with various definitions of “children”; technically, in passing on skills; and culturally, in creating, renovating or conserving some aspect of culture.

Key Findings in a Narrative Approach to Identity

In summary, in terms of the key findings I submit that we gained a deeper level of understanding about women's development theory and about women's narrative search for identity.

The former has often been equated with hierarchical movement and "prescriptive steps", where women's narratives of idiosyncratic transitions are lost (Birren & Birren, 1996; Gee, 1985; Randall, 1995). In contrast to the traditional literature on life stage, these women did not exhibit any tendency toward decline and degradation. I had little sense of any pressure of age and time that was forcing creative problem-solving (Baltes, 1997), with no idea of a "vocational race" (Riverin-Simard, 1988) or disengagement (Neugarten, 1979). The women in the study were authoring metaphors, as a way to explain their pursuit of possible selves (Gergen & Gergen, 1993). They were living tiny, continuous and insubstantial transitions over the course of a life. These resembled Hamlet's "a thousand natural shocks" - not epiphanies - and their metaphors of discovery invoked images of shedding layers and finding air. These are not the elements characterized in mainstream development theory; these women were not self-actualizing and claiming vertical space as on a Maslow triangle. So this finding was inconsistent with the orthodox approaches outlined in Table 1, and should help to further deconstruct that tired myth of staged and phased development which continues to affect career practice¹² and work place structures.

My findings suggest an alternative evaluation that work provides important life meanings and directions to mid-life women in their search for "identity" or authentic personhood. Like Miller-Tiedman (1999), I found a focus on the emotional and spiritual aspects that work supplies

as a source of mid-life renewal (Bejian & Salomone, 1995). Distinct themes, suggestive of affiliative identities, emerged in the women's stories, such as communicating, advocating, finding mentors, helping others, and making the world a more equitable place. This recurrent emphasis on relational dimensions - often dismissed as the effect of socialization - supported the theorizing of Crozier (1999) and Gallos (1989) that the major theories of career development have neglected this particular construct in women's sense of meaning in work. Overall, these results provide new ways of understanding psychological and moral development, or what is called "mindfulness" (Engeström & Middleton, 1996; Langer, 1997; Peavy, 1994). In Yeatian terms, they seemed to be "remaking [their] song" (in Ellman, 1948, p.186). This is counterpoint to the assumption that outer development leads and determines inner development. Activated by the sense of an "appropriate" use of the self, the women in the study are seen as developing mental schemas to develop a coherent story.

It is true that Ricoeur (1991) saw the whole of life as "an activity and a passion in search of narrative" (p. 29), but if, as asserted by the novelist Ben Okri, we are "Homo fabula: We are storytelling beings" and that "all stories are forms of resistance" (in Josselson, 1996b), I am still left in awe of the women's courage in pushing towards a set of more satisfying identities.

Limitations

This study presented detailed accounts of the continuously redefined meanings of work for mid-life women. I am not blind to its philosophical and practical limitations. There is a concern that the interpretation will be made according to the researcher's existing preconception of the subject matter (Maxwell, 1996). My goal was not to eliminate those inferences or influences, but to acknowledge them, which I tried to do by including myself so explicitly in the story. This

question hinges on who is our research for? It is to give public representation to our participants, but it is also to pursue topics for which we have a personal attachment. So the research is inevitably refracted through the prism of my personal story.

One limitation is the interdisciplinary nature of the study; the idea that we are constitutive of our own experience crosses philosophy, theology, literary criticism and psychology (Kegan, 1982) and the analysis risks becoming not especially focussed. Another minus is the focus on individual studies, which can “tend to masquerade as a whole when, in fact, they are but a part - a slice of life” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 377). The study only included a single age, single sex cohort, so that the results may simply indicate the time period under investigation, instead of identifying age-related behaviours. This group, although they all disavowed feminism in their early years, is part of a generation which was informed by the revolutionary concepts of womanhood in that movement. Thus, any findings could be viewed as a function of the time period in which this group were socialized in Canada, since the development process is influenced by social historical time, and by the sphere of influence or relationships in which the women are involved.

While I wanted to increase the understanding of women’s mid-life stage with respect to work, at the same time, I had to recognize that the population sample could be characterized as privileged, however dissimilar their family and occupational backgrounds. Despite differences in early socio-economic backgrounds and immigrant experience, it was bound by a perspective that is essentially middle class and North American, since it appeared to assume that individuals have time, and the desire, to engage in introspection. In fact, the notion of jobs as vehicles for self expression and growth may in itself be a “first-world” phenomenon (Kanchier & Unruh, 1988).

Consequently, the study may not be relevant to all cultures. According to Sue et al. (1998), certain Asian groups want to avoid “morbid thinking”, and not all minority groups share a belief that insight is valuable. Moreover, introspection presupposes that there are no immediate pressing pragmatic survival needs. Looking at work meaning without reference to economic struggles conjures up Leonard Bast’s rebuke to Helen Schlegel in Forster’s (1910) Howards End, that music and meaning are for rich people for after dinner. This begs the question - can the meaning of work be of consequence to anyone but the individual? I would argue yes - that the stories we have of women’s work, from Rosie the Riveter onwards, offer a way to comprehend the position of women in the culture at large. Women have a right to work and women need to work - financially, socially and psychologically.

Broader Implications

Criticism has been levelled against phenomenology for focussing solely on micro processes, and failing to promote broad societal change. So, it is crucial to go beyond the individualist tale to wider perspectives to make explicit the contribution of the inquiry. In searching out these particular women’s perspectives, my hope was that these understandings of work would be useful to other individuals as the basis for research, and could be of pragmatic use in learning and career processes. The next section looks at both those implications, and closes with recommendations for future studies.

Research Implications

The analysis uncovered several themes concerning metamorphosis, re-discovery and reclaimed purpose, in the meanings of work in the middle years of women’s lives. The results indicated perspectives which coincide with some aspects of both traditional theories of adult

development, and relational theories of female development, with respect to the link between the meaning of work and personal growth and emotional well-being. Where they denote a difference is in the centrality of work as a construct that has more continuing meaning for women's individual psychological development and identity than traditional concepts of mid-life maintenance and decline have allowed. The women in the study did not separate work and love, and pursued personal meaning and emotional, artistic and intellectual self-fulfilment through work as a way of integrating categories of identity. They were living consciously, activated by an appropriate use of self. This sense of self was key. In no way did it invalidate the continued value of maintaining connections in their lives; however, the emphasis in the literature on individuation versus relationship (Surrey, 1991) was not borne out. Rather than an either/or approach, it seems reasonable to approach the study of women's adult development in ways that embrace multiple perspectives.

In sum, this research has demonstrated that what is needed to appreciate the complexity of mid-life is an eclectic perspective, since development is as rich and varied as the surrounding historic conditions and the individual coping responses. The field will benefit from emerging research since we still know only a little about how personality, age, history and cohort membership interact in producing changing patterns across the life course. The future offers possibilities, since as Baltes (1997) has commented about old age (and presumably, by extension, a vital and engaged mid-life), "old age is young" and there has been no time to build an "optimizing scaffold". Kegan (1994) believed that the longer life span will provide more opportunities to "engage in the curriculum of the fifth order" (p. 352).

I was looking for a deeper level of understanding about work since some of the divergent

meanings of work have not been visible through the lenses of existing theory. As Leach (1998) pointed out, we need to enlarge the definition of work, since “some forms of work do not readily fit into the meanings of work...rendering them uncertain factors in people’s sense of identity” (p. 8). The findings cry out for a revision of such definitions to reflect the realities of women and to separate work from external or occupational structures.

An understanding of development requires an understanding of how individuals engage and struggle with socially prescribed categories. This study found mapping subjectivity as a crucial element. The private quality of women’s mid-life development through work was accessed through stories as one way of mobilizing, or supporting them. Agentic stories might not change society, but they have a heuristic value and can stir up changes in how individuals live (Daly, 1978; Miller & Hodge, 1998; Weedon, 1997). As Kerby (1991) has maintained, what is told, and what is lived, may promote each other. Given McKenna’s (1997) report of widespread mid-life dissatisfaction with work, consciousness raising, as a tool, could continue to be of special relevance to women. It might help counteract what Freeman (1992) called the null educational environment. Her concept posited that women were more adversely affected than men, when provided with limited resources (in Betz, 1994, p. 18).

In terms of the agentic struggle, I saw the participants as questioning what it is to live intentionally. Unlike some post-modernists who see the self as an artifice I take the view that stories touch the formation of identity. I would be naïve if I refused to recognize that life is provisional and that the search for meaning is negotiated in a culture. However, these women do not think their self is illusory - they reify an inner self as a child, or a real me. Some kind of identity animates them which is not a fiction of discursive construction. And like characters in

many of Iris Murdoch's novels they are pursuing a good life even if they might not know that they are doing so. So questions for future research might profitably focus on how moral agency is shaped, and about what enables individuals to defy the social order and be individually defiant or resistant.

According to both Polkinghorne (1991) and Silverman (1997), researchers need to do more than offer understanding about human experience, but need to touch practical learning and career processes, an area which will be explored next.

Practical Applications

If this research should make the experiences of women at work intelligible to policy makers and challenge educational institutions to provide more effective female career counselling and mentoring, before and during the ambiguous aspects of work transition, then the expectations of this study are fulfilled. Bloor (1997) has rejected the argument that social scientists should not be practitioners' helpers. This concept of practical theorizing has been supported by Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997), who have focussed on the ways adult educators must be helped to broaden their theories of practice. Morris and LeBlanc (1996), in looking at problem-solving abilities in younger students, have argued that educators must retrain themselves into acknowledging pluralistic frames of intelligence, and place a focus on cultivating such strengths. Furthermore, since work behaviours are related to expectations of efficacy, Hackett and Betz (1995) have urged practitioners to act as advocates and social change agents, in terms of restrictive beliefs, the restoration of options, and the narratives socially available to women (Canaff, 1997; Chen, 1997; Lippert, 1997).

This issue could become all the more pressing because there has been an overall increase

in the numbers of women age 50 and older (Statistics Canada, 1996, 1999). Longer life has bred larger expectations, and mid-life people are aware that they have a large responsibility for their own future. Given the implications and applications of demographics, virtually every sector of society will in some way be affected. In a post-modern society where large and increasing numbers of adults are having to reevaluate their lives because of industrial changes, this could have application to both men and women. This is an approach which could counteract the effects of a Western culture which lives in terror of old age¹⁴. Championing stories about living robustly in our middle age could help prevent stagnation in work and promote the idea that a primary national resource lies with the talents and untapped creative energy of older members (Robinson, 2001).

Recommendations for Future Directions

Many tasks remain for researchers to comprehend the scope and effect of women's adult transitions, as they search for more integration and meaning in their work and life. It is an area which is under-served and under-studied. Education and career research has focussed principally on developmental issues for high school and college students, while spending too little time on work satisfaction and issues of stagnation.

Stivers (1993, p. 413) put forward the instructional potential of even single lives. Bruner (1990) once stated that: "perhaps the single most universal thing about human experience is the phenomenon of 'Self' and we know that education is crucial to its formation" (p. 35). Adult education is a forum for individuals to consider new life choices. With this as a background, it seems important for educational researchers who are concerned with women's learning needs to continue to ask questions on how women negotiate their work path. Collins (1991) has argued

that the adult learning curriculum could more fully embrace strategies and environments which adopt the concept of significant personal learning. This would allow women to contribute their accounts of existential meaning. Such accounts would help build a developmental theory of women at mid-life that links together all the significant aspects of life, including work and other involvements. Further research on women's work meanings could help determine whether the results are applicable only to mid-life women, or have broader benefit across gender, different social groups and age.

Some of the findings in this study centred on gains in self-understanding and self determination. Since Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation has been criticized for its individual cognitive emphasis, as opposed to systemic injustice (Tennant, 1993), we need to enlarge the research base. It would be fruitful to ask greater numbers of women stories about when they see themselves as agentic in the workplace, given the disorienting organizational and structural barriers that might deter that. Gergen and Gergen (1993) have pointed out that the workplace, and its frameworks of meaning, makes little allowance for "embodied" selves, and often treats relationships cavalierly, and in an operative fashion. Given that the women in the narratives captured in this study have largely rejected the male version of the workplace and the practices favoured there, it would seem important to capture this "discourse of embodiment". One way could be to adopt Dollarhide's (1997) advocacy of career programs with an existential focus to stimulate individuals to explore issues of personal meaning. This might allow the examination of under-theorized areas like intuition or spirituality in adult education, and promote research around individual growth at work, as a way of balancing the organizationally-based research. Further research is also warranted on investigating the sense of efficacy within identity,

beyond a cognitive approach, to embrace the role of emotional factors in the development of the self. Moreover, Helson's (1997) concept of serenity in middle class women of this age group, could be explored, since this is an area which was not represented in my findings, nor appeared further in the literature search.

Insights

Seidman (1998) suggested that the final stage of the phenomenological process is for researchers to reflect on the meaning of the work for them. Elsewhere, in this thesis, I have reflected on why I chose the topic, and my felicitous discovery of a feminist, phenomenological approach to inform the narrative. I have discussed the challenges in finding my place "at the hyphen" when conducting the research, about the dichotomy of being a researcher *and* a participant, about bracketing the counsellor in me, and managing being emotionally engaged (Lerum, 2001) in the research, so as to enlarge public awareness. What remains here is to concentrate on the process of writing the dissertation, and the insights that resulted from the experience. Several theorists (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Savery & Duffy, 1996) have contended that to explore others' meaning is a way of elaborating our own understanding.

This has been a long research road. For almost two years, I have cradled these experiences of the five women in my head. During this time I have been travelling with my work. I have mentally transported the stories to Nunavut - where the story of work is very different, to the Middle East - where the story of women is different, and back to the Arctic Circle - where the story of aging is different. During this stage of incubation (Moustakas, 1994), I have resonated to every timbre and tonality of the larger world of stories, articles and new published books. I have been able recursively to find threads of their stories everywhere, whether such connections existed

in fact or not! I am taken with the image of the Australian aboriginal walkabout, whose purpose is to “sing nature back into existence”¹⁵. I wanted to truly listen - truly attend - to these narratives, so generously given, and give them back their song.

Writing the dissertation was both agreeable *and* like Sisyphus. I enjoyed the process of weaving the thesis as my version of “the” story, but, in equal measure, actively disliked that huge boulder of never being finished with the process of editing. In addition, in one of those rewrites, I resisted moving from the profiles of Chapter Four to an attenuated interpretation of the findings in Chapter Five. Given the intimacy in my own head, I presumed initially - and erroneously - that the profiles spoke with a full richness that might be lost or fragmented in a renewed refractory examination of the pieces. What happened instead were subtle kaleidoscopic shifts in my own understanding. The participants in this study cogently brought to life the subjective experience of work transitions, allowing me to reflect that we had *all* lacked signposts across the territory of work meaning. It gave added meaning to Finlayson’s (1995) observation that, “people feel life through their fingertips and often understand their experiences are historically significant, even though they may not grasp the meaning themselves” (p. 5). The women’s words profoundly affected me. As Stivers (1993) has said, “we find identity and meaning as a result of the stories we tell about ourselves” (p. 413), and so my hope is that this was universally felt, and that we all learned something about ourselves. Like Ken Saro Wiwa (2001) I came to understand the platonic truth of his statement that: “We still need to fix our values in a coherent system, to believe in something, an idea, a community of shared aspirations perhaps. We have to lay down a default identity that we turn to and cling to in times of stress, confusion and bewildering change...”.

A Final Word

This study revealed what a particular segment of a specific population believes about the meaning of work. The profiles and shared constructs spoke to the complexity of the subjective experience for these women, and to the powerful social elements that permeated their, and my, milieus. In a culturally amorphous world, which is given to identity remodelling, this account of work meaning is not put forth as a definitive one. Stivers (1993) argued for “believability, not certitude, for enlargement of understanding, rather than control” (p. 425). This analysis has offered the textured work transition experiences of women participants at mid-life, and has brought forward stories of their journey towards narrative authenticity. It has presented one approach in the discourse of how individuals are drawn towards greater consciousness of choice about how to live, and what to do.

In a post-modern world, which has lost its assurance about Truth and about personal will and determination, there is still a hopeful note. I am convinced by the findings of this study that defining the self only as a social process is to ignore the importance of humanism, and what it means to construct our best self, whereby, in Wordsworth’s line: “the past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them”. Gubrium and Holstein (1994) have argued that in post-modern times - which emphasize deconstruction, linguistic sources and the influence of context - the self has not so much dissolved but become more fluid. The word summons images of liquidity and aqueousness, not of linearity or cycles. Bruner, quoted in Seidman (1998), has written appropriately: “We live in a sea of stories, and, like the fish, who...will be the last to discover water, we have our own difficulties grasping what it is like to swim in stories”.

ENDNOTES

1. Work has long been recognized as a central activity with social and psychological implications. For example, Freud, in Erikson, 1950, saw it as a sign of the well adjusted individual. Adler (1979) saw the three major roles in life, as work, friends and love, with work providing the context for agency and for union. Erikson (1968) interpreted work as providing personal and social identity, while Super (1980/1990) envisioned work as a dramatic theatre for developing the self, portraying a rainbow of major life roles, that include student, worker, citizen, leisurite, and family member.
2. Questions that circulated in critical reviews of the literature, such as Caffarella and Olson's (1993), include: how is development triggered and sustained; to what extent is it due to biological maturing (Piaget, et al., 1991; Vaillant, 1977), psychosocial needs (Bühler, 1971; Erikson, 1950/1963; Maslow, 1971a), cultural contexts (Cole, 1996; Kanter, 1977), the optimization of age-related changes (Baltes, 1973; 1997; Labouvie-Vief, 1996), adaptation within the life structure (Gould, 1978; Levinson et al., 1978), and the impact of environment (Elder & Liker, 1982; Neugarten & Datan, 1974; Rossi, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1993).
3. Individuation was seen as a process of learning to integrate polarities within the older self (Jung, 1990); autonomy as a progressive struggle for freedom from the internalized constraints of childhood (Gould, 1978) and generativity (Erikson, 1950/1963), or a concern for the next generation's well-being and for one's psychological legacy.
4. Santrock (1989) viewed mid-life as a socially determined "invention", based on shared definitions of the life course timetable, which Tennant and Pogson (1995) revealed can be very discrepant across time. They noted that the 13th century Isidore of Seville delineated "youth" as between 28-50, a social construct completely alien to modern thinking (p. 104).
5. Citing research on mortality patterns in national populations, Apter (1995, p. 322) pointed out that, whereas in 1850, only 2% of the population lived past the age of 65, now about 75% of all people die when they are past 65.
6. It should be noted, however, that Benstock (1988, p. 34), has interpreted this model as inapplicable to women, because of their culturally imposed relational group identity.
7. In recounting the autobiography of Lee Iacocca (who sought achievement through mobility that threatened a diabetic wife), Gergen (1997) suggested that would incur loss of social approval for women.

8. The concept of generativity was first expounded by Erikson (1950) as a quality of adult character at mid-life (his seventh stage with the oppositional alternatives of generativity and stagnation). When lives are relieved of primary obligations, individuals can attend to their legacy of ideas and values, demonstrating a “concern in establishing and guiding the next generation; it implies productivity and creativity” (Erikson, 1963, p. 267).

9. Meaninglessness here is used in the sense of Yalom’s (1980) four existential dilemmas: death, groundlessness, isolation and meaninglessness. Meaninglessness is the last ultimate concern. From the existential/phenomenological perspective, meaning in our existence is found in engagement on three levels: Umwelt (the natural/environmental world), Mitwelt (the human community), and Eigenwelt (the inner, experiencing self).

10. Tesch lists a variety of philosophical camps, including reflective or transcendental, dialogical, empirical, existential, hermeneutic and social (pp. 39-41).

11. Spiegelberg (1965) distinguishes six procedures for doing phenomenological research which are “all aimed at giving us a fuller and deeper grasp of the phenomena” (p. 57) of the content of consciousness. Van Manen (1997) has set out six interacting activities to implement this. These include 1) researcher interest, 2) an investigation of lived experience, 3) a reflection on themes, 4) a written description of the phenomenon, 5) a sustained orientation to the phenomenon, and, finally, 6) a balancing of parts and whole in the research context (pp. 30-31). In setting out five principles for phenomenological research, Hunnisett (1986) includes not only valuing subjective reality, the ways of creating meaning, and the structure of experience in addition to its content, but she also emphasizes the importance of a relational context, and of a mutually receptive dialogue. For Mott (1994), phenomenological research involves: (a) the unassumptive or non-intervening study of a personally or socially significant phenomenon which is (b) investigated as a natural experience, rather than a conceptualization, with (c) the goal of understanding characteristic and essential themes

12. Some theorists have expanded the notion of career beyond echelons in paid employment (see, for example, Chester & Grossman, 1990; Osipow, 1994).

13. Whether this be Helen Gurley Brown of Cosmopolitan magazine, who held a philosophy of age as a machine running down into decay, collapse and ruin; or Simone de Beauvoir, who, catching the image of her face in a window was repulsed (CBC Radio Two Ideas, Hillman, 2000).

14. I have taken this enchanting image from Carol Drinkwater’s (2001) The olive farm. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press.

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Are you a woman at the “mid-point” of your life?

Have you recently made a *major* shift in your career direction?

Would you be willing to be interviewed as a research participant in an Education PhD thesis?

Or can you refer to me other women who have “work transformation stories” to tell?

Women participants are being sought in Canada for this project who:

- are between 45 and 60,
- recognise in themselves a major recent work “shift” (within approximately the last five years) which has lead to a very different path,
- are committed to their work. Please note this includes women in the non-paying or voluntary sector.
- can commit to at least three semi-structured individual interviews - ideally face to face, although telephone interviews can support out of province interviews.

Please contact Gwenda Davies (tel: 613-837-2788) collect to get more information.

CONSENT FORM**Principal Investigator :****Address:****Telephone:**

The purpose of this research project carried out by Gwenda Davies, and supervised by Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway, is to explore the meaning of professional work transitions for mid-life women. The hope is that the study will inform the career development community about work transitions and the expectations which mid-life women have for their professional lives. One result could be that career counselling practitioners and educational developers will be better prepared for women's ongoing work aspirations at mid-life stages.

If I agree to participate in this Ph.D research project, my involvement will consist of at least three 90 minute audio-taped interviews in person, or by telephone, where ongoing face-to-face interviews prove impossible. To ensure anonymity my name will not appear in the research or in any publication arising from the research, unless I have selected otherwise to self-identify. Instead pseudonyms will be used. To ensure confidentiality all data sources will be accessible only by the researcher and all transcripts and documents stored in a secure manner. The audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of the project.

Interviews will be transcribed by the researcher, Gwenda Davies, at which point I understand I will be asked to verify my transcripts to ensure that I have been represented accurately and in a way which does not represent an invasion of my privacy. By signing this consent form I am agreeing to allow the researcher to negotiate with me at the tape transcription point for the continued use of direct quotes from the interviews, informal discussions and documents in ways that does not compromise my anonymity.

It is understood that in signing this consent form that I will have an opportunity to read that part of the final draft, that involves my participation, to ensure that I am still comfortable with being identified, or at that point then wish to adopt a pseudonym.

I understand that since this activity deals with personal information, it may induce emotional reactions which may, at times, cause unease. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences. At any time I am free to refuse to answer questions, or to withdraw entirely from the study. If I choose to withdraw material pertaining to me will be omitted and destroyed. In addition I have the right to ask the researcher questions concerning the research and to consult with outside experts. Information requests, or complaints, about the ethical conduct of the research project can be addressed to the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research Ethics (613) 562-5800, ext. 1787.

I (PRINT NAME) _____ give permission to Gwenda Davies to use information obtained by tape-recorded interviews in her doctoral research. I understand the nature and conditions of the study and voluntarily agree to participate.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

There are 2 copies of the consent form; one to be returned to the researcher and the other for you to keep for your own records. If you would like to receive a summary of the findings once the research is completed please fill in your address overleaf.

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway
Advisor
Faculty of Education.

Gwenda Davies
Doctoral Candidate
University of Ottawa

GUIDE FOR THE RESEARCH CONVERSATIONS

[The following is intended to serve as guide for a semi-structured interview guide. As such it outlines the general concepts to be presented, and not all questions will be asked of every individual. Since the goal is to access the subjective experience of the participants, the interview method is designed following Seidman's (1998) three interview series for phenomenological interviewing, which allows for a cumulative and interactive process. This allows the interviewer to respect the women participants' telling of their experiences in their own words. Accordingly, the interviewer will have the flexibility to follow up on areas of individual importance, as well as introducing the themed questions set out below.]

Preamble:

Thank you for agreeing to discuss parts of your life story with me to assist me with my Ph. D research. To help me on the three occasions that we have agreed to meet, I will be taking notes as well as audio-taping our conversations. I just want to remind you about the rules we set up to protect your confidentiality, and ask if you have questions about that before we start. And the other point I want to stress is that you will hear me using the word "work" and "career" quite inclusively - I try not to qualify it into house work, volunteer work, paid work and I tend to think of career not as something that you do between 9-5 with the idea of vertical progression, but as your entire life. If you feel that my words does not mirror your understanding, please feel free to correct me and to use your own vocabulary to describe your own experience.

FIRST SESSION

Work:

- I am interested in the topic of women and work. I have some idea of your work history/life experience from your resumé, but I would like to hear about your early experiences in your own words.
- who or what influenced your early ideas about work events?
- can you recall your first three memories of work?
- can you go back and reconstruct what you expected to get from work when you first set out in the work world? Tell me about your first major work experience out in the larger world? What were your first impressions? What did you like, not like and can you tell me why?

Women

- was there any special history about women and work in your family's past?

Development/Time/Transition

- as you look back can you talk about how you viewed, or treated time in your life?
- can you describe some significant turning points in your past? Were they upsetting in any way?
- how long did you take to actually respond to or act upon these points of recognition? Was it a steady process towards your new goal?
- when you look over your overview of your work life what do you think has been a motivating factor as you moved through the various experiences of your life? Describe the key points that made you decide to seek other forms of work?

Self-Identity

- tell me about the various parts/roles that you feel you have played over your life time? Which one(s) is/are comfortable?
- have you left any behind? Was that your choice or imposed on you?

Closing

(Remind participants that they may wish to reflect upon the interview and journal any further insights which can be discussed at the next interview stage).- is there anything that you want to say ? Anything you want to ask me?

SECOND SESSION**Work:**

-(moving the story up to the present) Tell me what you are doing now in your work life? Can you reconstruct a day for me?

- what is it like for you to do what you do?

Women

- tell me about the ways gender defines your own work life?

Development/Time/Transition

- is this how you conceived your world would be at this stage of your life?

- can you talk about how you see time at this point of your life?

- can you describe the transition process you are in?

- what was the transition about?

Self-Identity

- do you feel that you have a work identity?

- tell me about the your life roles as you see them now. How does work shape your sense of who you are?.

- what role(s) do you play in work? Were you able to find these roles before your transition?

Mid-Life

- describe the significant times in the last five years when you were at a point of change?

- what do you think drives your own transition process - social status, contribution, economic factors, other factors?

- has growing older affected your work life? If yes, are the reasons internally based? Because of any outside social factors?

- how does work define you at this stage of your life?

Closing

- are you surprised by any insights as you spoke about yourself; your identity; what work means to you?

(Remind participants that they may wish to reflect upon the interview and journal any further insights which can be discussed at the next interview stage)

- is there anything that you want to say ? Anything you want to ask me?

THIRD SESSION**Work Meaning**

- now that we have talked about how you came to your work and what it is like for you to do that work, what does it actually mean to you?
- what gives you a sense of well-being in life?
- how do you see work as contributing to (or detracting) from your life?
- what excites you about work? - tell me about the satisfaction you get from work
- what is the most difficult thing about your work?
- when you think about your work, what gives you sense of accomplishment? a sense of pride?
- has work fulfilled your sense of what you need out of life?

Time

- where do you see yourself going in the future?
- how do you see time at this stage?

Self-Identity

- tell me about the meanings of the various parts/roles that you feel you have played over your life time?
- do you see your identity as self-made? If no, what are the environmental, or social, or historical factors that you think affected this identity?

Generativity

- what does work allow you to give back to the community?
- what do you want your contribution to be?
- how do you see the legacy that you have to give?

Closing

- this is our last session of interviewing together and I want to thank you for your contributions. Before we end today are you surprised by any insights as you spoke about yourself; your identity; what work means to you?
- is there anything that you want to say? Anything you want to ask me?

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name _____
2. Age _____
3. Place of birth _____
and where you grew up _____
4. Give a brief educational history _____

5. Relationship history (such as single; married; living with a partner; divorced; widowed; with or without children)

6. Address, including phone number or email address

