PATTERN RECOGNITION AND LIFE INTEGRATION IN WOMEN OVER THE AGE OF EIGHTY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF NURSING

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DECEMBER 2001

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DEDICATION

For the 3 am talks, the long evening discussions, the grounding and grinding "so what's", the support, the encouragement, and never letting me give up.

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving and devoted husband

Jerry R. Dawkins

His enthusiasm for the process almost exceeded my own.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A work like this is never accomplished without the grace and love of family and friends. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the people that have made these years possible for me and have contributed to the writing of this study. I believe that family is at the heart of who we are and who we become. My deepest thanks and love go to my children, Stephanie and Jeff Tucker for helping me with my presentation and keeping me sane, and Katy and Benjamin Herron for reminding me to play. My other children, Rusty and Debbie Dawkins and Carrie and Mike Weatherly kept me encouraged and mindful of family and I love them for their care. None of my children gave up on me, even when I would have. They gave me wonderful grandchildren, worlds of smiles and wonder, and a continual awareness that there was another world besides school. Their love is the delight and joy of my life. My sister, Sue Hamilton, my brother Tom Hamilton, and my mother, Joyce Hamilton are always there and I thank them for their loving support and faith in me.

In the course of a life many acquaintances are made, but few deep friendships are formed. Without the friendship and mentoring of Dr. Helen Bush, my guardian angel, I

do not know how I would have finished. It is to her that I owe a debt of such deep gratitude that I will never find the words to express. Thank you, Helen, for all your love and caring. To my other sister and dearest friend, Jeanne Rogness, I send love and my forever friendship. Your wisdom kept me grounded and focused.

I also wish to thank the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Maisie Kashka for her dedication and encouragement throughout these years. She is a devoted faculty member and a precise scholar. Along with my husband, she kept me grounded in reality and never let me lose myself in the heady ozone of theoretical abstraction. Rich thanks are extended as well to the members of my committee, Dr. Patsy Keyser and Dr. Gail Davis, and to a former member, Dr. Deborah Garrison. Your willingness to work with me and nourish this journey is enormously appreciated. To my friend Shirley Purcell RN, MS, and her friends, all of whom are nursing colleagues, I thank you for the collective nod you gave to this work.

Finally, I wish to thank a former faculty member of Texas Woman's University, Dr. Barbara Lease. Barbara, I learned from you in one semester what I was unable to learn from others in almost twenty-five years. You are a gifted teacher and a wonderfully warm and funny person. I will always treasure the times you turned and said, "trust me, Dawkins, it works", and it did. You have my eternal gratitude and, I hope, the appreciation of many to come who will avail themselves of the results of your teaching.

To all of you, my heartfelt thanks, gratitude, and love.

ABSTRACT

PATTERN RECOGNTION AND LIFE INTEGRATION IN WOMEN OVER THE AGE OF EIGHTY

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December 2001

The purpose of the study was to attain knowledge about the life patterns of women over 80. The goal of the study was to answer this research question: What are the patterns that emerge from the rich stories of a woman's long life.

Using a network sampling technique thirteen women were approached and agreed to participate in the study. They ranged in age from 81 to 95 years. The interview used a single question with additional questions and guiding comments used to elicit as much information as possible. The women came from urban and rural areas in three distinct geographical locations, Colorado, Oregon, and Texas.

Using a constant comparative method, four patterns and a basic social psychological process emerged from their stories. The patterns are (a) caring for family, (b) maintaining health, (c) learning throughout a lifetime, and (d) experiencing employment. The basic social psychological process identified was life integration.

The pattern of caring for family was composed of five categories. The categories are remembering childhood, reviewing adult life, acknowledging responsibility for others, exploring family history, and making faith visible. Four categories formed the

pattern of maintaining health. They are remembering childhood illnesses, reviewing adult health and illness, coping with accidents and injuries, and accepting the illnesses of aging. The pattern of learning throughout a lifetime is comprised of the categories of remembering life as a student, reviewing learning as a continual process, experiencing learning in life, and manifesting the creative. Three categories formed the pattern of experiencing employment. They are working outside the home, pride in a professional career, and working for oneself.

These four patterns provide a means to view life integration for women over 80 years of age from an inductive to theory perspective. The inductive perspective is well grounded in the data. The emerging theory could be useful in generating nurse actions if weaknesses are located in the patterns of a woman's life. Implications for future research focus on replicating the study with women over the age of ninety, older men, and a more diverse group of women over eighty.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The issues of aging are, and will be, predominantly the issues of women (Dychtwald, 1986). These issues include multiple losses, decline in functional abilities, limited income, changes in social networks, and loss of independence. Whereas women make up the majority of the population and represent a larger proportion of the population at each higher age (Guralnick, Fried, Simonsick, Kaspar & Lafferty, 1995) they have been historically understudied. As early as 1986 Rossi stated that social policies for the elderly contain a masculine bias that denies in the aging of our society an increasing feminization. Scarr (1988) acknowledged gender was not specified in many studies because findings would become controversial if women were found to be more of or less of, or whatever, in relation to men. Rodeheaven (1987) declared, "Indivisible in culture and in law, older women increased in number, but their numbers have not informed social policy" (p. 745). In recent years nurses have undertaken systematic inquiry into the health of women and some have focused on older women. However, Flaskerud and Nyamathi (2000) stated that in 1994 the National Institutes of Health (NIH) mandated that "women...be included in all NIH-funded research projects involving human participants...but that effort still falls short of its mark" (p. 1).

Older women, in particular, need to be studied since they are living longer now than ever before. The average life expectancy of a white American woman is 84.3 years (Healthy People 2010). However, research on women over 80 and 90 years of age is sparse. Nursing, a profession that is comprised primarily of women, is ideally situated to

study the lives of women. Research on a long life may reveal patterns important to the generation of new knowledge for application to the nursing care of older women.

An outcome of World War II, the generation known as "baby boomers" is going to make a considerable impact on the number of elderly using the health care resources of America in the next thirty to forty years. There are approximately 76,000,000 people who make up this generation (Walker, 1998). We, as nurses, are in a unique position in our varying roles to care for and care about the aging population of the nation. In every health care setting, the age of people being seen is increasing each year as the "baby boomers" reach their fifties and sixties. In clinics and hospitals, nursing homes and home health agencies, nurses frequently see the impact of aging. We see those who master and transcend the complex problems of aging and achieve integration and we see those who do not.

The events that comprise our lives create a physical, psychological, social and spiritual picture. This picture of aging reflects "an indivisible whole – a whole in which the parts are not distinguishable" (Rogers, 1970, p. 41). Recognition of the whole picture enables us, as nurses, to see the individual patterns that form a woman's life. The ability to view each piece of a woman's life in relation to the whole, or pattern recognition, allows nurses to gain insight into how individual choices and behaviors impact one's health and longevity.

My motivation for studying the life patterns of women of advanced age is an outgrowth of my years as an undergraduate nursing student at the University of Colorado. In tandem with general systems theory, the concept of wholeness was stressed as part of

the theoretical framework for nursing education. We were taught that human beings were more than the sum of their parts and that each person had dignity simply because they were human. Teaching that humans are whole seemed to be an outcome of conjointly teaching systems theory, since it emphasizes the study of parts. I was also introduced to an array of human development theorists during our rotation in pediatrics. Erickson's Childhood and Society (1963) was our textbook and I was impressed by his eighth stage of ego integration versus despair. This idea resonated with the lessons we had received on wholeness. This learning stayed with me throughout my career and has shaped my practice as a nurse and provided some of the perspective for this study. A few years later, as a graduate student, I was exposed to Rogers (1970) theory of human beings as a unified whole. Then, as a doctoral student, I was introduced to Newman's (1986) theory of health as expanding consciousness. These two nurse theorists, with their concepts of patterns and wholeness, have also influenced my perspective for this study.

As my career in nursing evolved, the concept of pattern recognition took on increasing importance. The assessment tools we use in nursing primarily target specific conditions, body parts or disease entities. Looking for a picture of a whole person, instead of a summary of the parts of that person, is an important aspect of understanding what events people choose to assimilate as they integrate their lives into a meaningful whole. Observations from the field demonstrate that the elderly are often seen and treated as though they are their diseases, or their parts, even within their own circle of friends. Although not unique to the elderly population, this treatment seems to have a negative

impact on their ability to integrate their lives. The events and experiences that shaped their lives get lost in the fixation on a single part of their lives.

Pattern recognition is basic to an understanding of health (Newman, 1986), and the ability to integrate one's life is important to one's mental health. It is my belief that a review of one's life, particularly from the standpoint of a great age, will reveal patterns that are important components of integration. Considering these patterns as part of women's lives, or pattern recognition, may assist nurses and other health care providers in identifying and developing different assessment and intervention strategies that will help people achieve a healthy old age.

Domain of Study

While the literature reflects several studies of pattern, the studies focused on a specific disease or life style, or on a specific learning or reasoning strategy. The domain of the present study is the examination of a woman's entire life for patterns of meaningful events that may be important for life integration.

Significance of the Study

A review of the literature indicates research in several areas that are applicable to the human-environment simultaneity paradigm of nursing (Parse, 1987). The human-environment simultaneity paradigm involves the study of wholeness. Although there are only a few studies completed during the last ten years, the studies that were published examined a wide variety of concepts contained within theories developing this paradigmatic approach to nursing. The literature search revealed no nursing studies that replicated other work on pattern recognition or advanced the work of already published

research. The concepts and ideas that have been researched include: a) pattern recognition as a way of knowing in critical care (Fisher & Fonteyn, 1995); b) patterns of powerlessness and despair in aging women (Schorr, Farnham, & Ervin, 1991); c) pattern recognition and expanded consciousness in women with ovarian cancer (Endo, 1998); d) pattern recognition as a tool for the assessment of educational strategies (Jacono & Jacono, 1995); e) pattern recognition as a therapeutic skill used by expert addiction nurses (Conti-O'Hare, 1998); and f) health as expanding consciousness in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Jonsdottir, 1994), people with HIV/AIDS (Lamendola & Newman, 1994), and children with cancer (Karian, Jankowski & Beal, 1998).

The literature review reflects the need for further research in several areas. Meaningful life experiences may reflect choice points that are important to living a long and healthful life. Pattern recognition as a part of the armament of nurses has been minimally studied. Newman (1994) considers it to be the essence of nursing practice, but few studies have examined it as a way of knowing. The gaps in the literature indicate that the exploration of meaningful events in a woman's life from the perspective of advanced age in search of patterns is indicated.

Schorr, et al. (1991), state that "the process of synthesizing restrictions in physical movement and the completion of at least two thirds of one's lifetime, at the same time expressing hope for the future, may reflect an emerging awareness of health as the pattern of the whole" (1991, p. 61). They specifically recommend further research on the aging population using qualitative methods. Examining the life stories of women over the age

of 80 for patterns is consistent with their recommendation and the gaps located in the extant literature.

Theoretic Context

Newman's (1986, 1994) theory of health as expanding consciousness is based on the concept of pattern. Her concepts of patterns and pattern recognition are consistent with the holistic model of nursing practice. She considers health to be a pattern of the whole, and her concept of pattern recognition, as a way to identify that pattern is intriguing and established an important theoretical context for this study. Newman defines pattern as "the whole of a person or of a universe in which the parts cannot stand alone as separate" (1986, p. 15). Patterns are interactive and the activity of the individual parts of a pattern can be seen in the activity of the whole pattern. A sleeve for a blouse has no function or purpose until it is attached to the body of the blouse and the pattern can be seen in its entirety. The whole cannot be separated from its parts but, in fact, is more than the sum of its parts. This is evidenced by the almost infinite variety of designs for blouses that create different looks, styles, and functions. A life is a whole made up of biological, psychological, social and spiritual parts. An examination of the whole will reveal the activity of the parts, but a life is infinitely more than just the sum of those parts. These ideas that Newman posited led me to believe that the examination of a life, from the advantage of advanced age, might reveal a pattern, or patterns, that would tell us something about what represents a long and healthy life.

Pattern recognition is a cognitive process on the part of the nurse and the client that searches for characteristics of increased awareness as persons move through the

events of their lives. Together, the nurse and the client can assess for patterns and both may move to higher levels of awareness about the events and their meaning. Pattern recognition moves to examination of the pattern and then determination of action to be taken if necessary. Changes throughout the life can be revealed through pattern recognition. The present study used pattern recognition to examine the meaningful life events in the lives of women over the age of 80.

Research Question

The research question for the study was: What are the patterns that emerge from the stories of a woman's long life? A single question recommended by Newman (personal communication, April, 1996) was asked of the participants of the study: What have been the most meaningful events in your life? Newman posits that this single question will elicit most of the information about the patterns in a person's life. The definition of "meaningful event" was derived from Trice (1985) who determined the properties as: concern for others, helpfulness, action, and positiveness.

Assumptions

There are three assumptions that underlie the focus of this study. The first two assumptions are supported by the theories of Rogers (1970) and Newman (1986). First, human beings are irreducible wholes that are more than, and different from, the sum of their parts. Second, the pattern, or whole picture, of a human being can be uncovered and recognized. The third assumption is that understanding the pattern of a person's life may lead to information that will be helpful to health professionals in designing different assessment instruments and intervention strategies. Assessment and intervention

strategies will be useful to all health providers in assisting elderly persons to achieve a healthy old age.

Definition of Terms

An introduction to a study that is in search of new ideas, or is attempting to re-frame current ideas, is not complete without a section defining the terms used. The term's pattern and recognition are used in the study as they are found in Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (1988). Pattern is defined as a model from which a copy can be made and as a process from which a thing can be made. As such it is both a fixed concept and an interactive concept. Recognition is associated with the term recognize. To recognize something is to acknowledge it or to identify something known or perceived before. Therefore, recognition is the act of acknowledgement or identification.

When combined the term's pattern and recognition acquire a new meaning that has specificity for individual disciplines. Physicists use the term pattern recognition as the ability to see combinations of data, such as those that make up the picture of chaos. Botanists discuss pattern recognition as the ability to differentiate between species of plants using signature markings. I have chosen, for the purpose of this study, to define pattern recognition as the ability to look at a variety of objective and subjective material and, by capitalizing on logic, reasoning, and intuition, to glimpse a whole picture of a person's life.

Other terms that require definition for the study are categories, constant comparison, coding, open coding, theoretical coding, themes and wholeness.

Categories - divisions, or parts, of a pattern, in theory more abstract than a concept, but in science more concrete than an idea.

Constant comparison – an analytic procedure of both coding and analyzing data as it emerges from the material.

Coding - the process of labeling the categories that arise from the data in an effort to sort and recognize emerging themes and patterns.

Open coding - the initial and broad process of labeling categories found in the data.

Theoretical coding - a process of data collection where the researcher uses the constant comparison of data to decide what data to collect next and where the data may be found.

Themes - structurally important elements of a pattern formed by the combination and integration of categories.

Wholeness – a complete pattern, not lacking in any parts, that is more than the sum of its parts.

Summary

The population of women over the age of 80 has not yet been studied in depth. The domain of the study is the examination of women's lives for patterns that may be important to life integration. The theoretical context of pattern recognition as posited by Newman (1986) provided a framework. The study focuses on the research question: "What are the patterns that emerge from the stories of a woman's long life"? Three

assumptions underlie the domain of the study and the terms important to the understanding of the study have been defined.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Providing a literature review that sensitizes a qualitative study without intruding into the outcome of the study is an intricate exercise. Grounded theory research is intended to develop theory derived from the data with minimal bias from other studies or theories. Without some sensitizing framework, however, to demonstrate where the researcher's thoughts have come from, a study can become bogged down in the data and leave the reader without a clear sense of what is happening. Nursing theory, empirical studies and popular literature stimulated a search for patterns in the stories of women's long lives. Nursing theory that sensitized the study primarily involved the work of Newman (1986) and Rogers (1970). Empirical literature used to sharpen the focus of the study is presented in this chapter.

A review of the literature revealed few studies that used the concepts of pattern and pattern recognition as a conceptual framework (Endo, 1998; Jonsdottir, 1994; Karian, Jankowski & Beal, 1998; Lamendola & Newman, 1994; and Schorr, Farnham, & Ervin, 1991). Schorr, Farnham and Ervin's study used quantitative methods to study the concept of health as expanding consciousness and it was the only study that focused on aging women. The literature search also revealed few studies that used concepts from Newman's theory, such as pattern recognition, time, space and movement, to study other dimensions of health care (Conti-O'Hare, 1998; Fisher & Fonteyn, 1995; and, Jacono &

Jacono, 1995). Researchers suggest that further research on pattern recognition in nursing is warranted.

Endo (1998) studied pattern recognition and Japanese women with ovarian cancer using Newman's theory as a theoretical framework. In this study pattern recognition was used as a therapeutic intervention enabling the women to examine their life patterns in the early stage following diagnosis. Endo found that the earlier in the stage of illness that women were able to identify their life patterns, the quicker they moved to a state of expanded consciousness. Pattern recognition was accompanied by personal insights that evolved as a transformative turning point. The women were able to let go of the control of their families, experience a greater openness in their relationships with others, and a sense of being part of something bigger and beyond themselves. Transformation occurred while the women were engaged in a caring partnership with the nurse investigator. For other participants who were contacted at a later point after the initial diagnosis, transformation toward higher consciousness progressed more slowly and less clearly (Endo). The timing of the encounter with the nurse at a point early in the disruption caused by the diagnosis appeared to be a critical factor in the evolution of expanding consciousness for these women.

In Jonsdottir's (1994) study people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) were examined in relation to the concepts of space and time as discussed in Newman's theory. Jonsdottir's study on people with COPD used a hermeneutic phenomenologic approach to examine the meaning of their life patterns. Pattern recognition was the central concept of the study. The study engaged ten participants in a

hermeneutic dialectic to describe their experiences with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The data analysis of the interviews resulted in seven identified themes. The themes were isolation, resignation, unsuccessful resolution, difficulties expressing self, conflict in expectations, emotional condition and breathing difficulties and work of high priority. Individual patterns were extracted and analyzed using Newman's (1986) adaptation of Young's steps in evolution. Seven participants reflected the binding in time stage, and three participants reflected the next stage of centering in space. Binding in time was represented by feelings of little individual identity and choice. Centering in space was represented by expressions of self-determination, competitiveness, and the search for control. None of the participants shared life experiences that represented the stage of choice characterized by increased personal insight, and denoted by Newman as pattern recognition.

Karian, Jankowski and Beal (1998) studied the lived experience of childhood survivors of cancer. Five adults, age 23 to 26 years, who were survivors of childhood cancer were participants in the study. The effect of childhood cancer on the life of an adult had not been thoroughly studied since survival rates have only recently been extended. The personal experience of the researchers had noted an increased awareness, sensitivity and maturity in their pediatric patients with cancer. They became interested in how the experience affected their emotional development as they matured into adults.

A hermeneutic dialectic approach was used to explore the answers to a single question as recommended by Newman. The question was "What are the most meaningful events of your life?" (as cited in Karian, Jankowski & Beal, 1998, p. 156).

Analysis of the interviews was performed after transcription of the interviews and also used a hermeneutic approach. The findings were viewed as a whole and included thematic analysis and pattern identification to provide meaning to the phenomenon. The goal was to "show and explain the meaning of the lived-experience for the subjects" (Karian, et al., p. 157). Results indicated the emergence of individual patterns and themes that embodied the concepts of changing relatedness and expanding consciousness as developed within Newman's theory. The patterns and themes included "optimism, hope, stronger bonds to family and friends, increased capacity for empathy, a desire to help others and deeper feelings for the value of life" (Karian, et al., p.153). The narrow age range of the subjects and their location in one urban area limited the study. However, the results do offer hope to nurses that the long-range effects of cancer treatment can be positive.

While on faculty at the University of Minnesota, Newman began to operationalize her theory. A study done with Lamendola (Lamendola & Newman, 1994) used a heuristic approach to examine health as expanding consciousness in people with HIV/AIDS. Nine gay men were interviewed and their stories were explored in search of patterns. Themes of childhood alienation, early movement away from family, and cycles of aloneness and searching were discovered. Upon being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, the young men reported experiencing a turning point that brought them to a feeling of greater connectedness with other people and with their communities. Lamendola and Newman considered the patterns of their lives and the experience of greater connectedness to be an example of movement toward expanded consciousness.

In a quantitative study by Schorr, Farnham, and Ervin (1991), Newman's theory of health as expanding consciousness was used as a framework for examining powerlessness in elderly women. The study examined the relationships between chronic illness, death anxiety, hopelessness, future temporal reference and powerlessness in 60 subjects using five instruments. The five instruments were the Sickness Impact Profile, the Death Anxiety Scale, the Time Reference Inventory, the Generalized Expectancies Scale, and the Situation Control of Daily Activities Scale.

The premise of the study was that aging women were vulnerable to a loss of power because of their changing interactions with the environment. Decreases in physical strength and reserve, diminished social support and loss of control over activities of daily living were perceived to increase death anxiety and hopelessness, and to constrict ones perception of time. The results of the testing demonstrated no significant relationship among the variables. A descriptive profile emerged, however, that indicated that aging women "perceive themselves to be healthy, in control of their lives, hopeful about the future and only slightly anxious about death" (Schorr, Farnham & Ervin, 1991, p. 61). Schorr, et al., used Newman's (1994) theory to interpret the patterns found in the descriptive data. The results of the study described a synthesis of chronic illness, diminished functional ability, and decreased control over daily activities in elderly women into a pattern that supports restrictions in movement as a turning point toward the expansion of consciousness.

In related research, Conti-O'Hare (1998) studied the archetype of the wounded healer as seen in the practice of expert addiction nurses. A case study was used to

examine the pattern recognition skills and the use of mutual patterning as a therapeutic tool by an expert addiction nurse. Conti-O'Hare used the archetype of the wounded healer as a framework for discussing the case with the nurse. She identified optimum and less than optimum therapeutic relationships that might arise by using mutual patterning, or sharing of life patterns, with addicted clients. The case study revealed that the use of the wounded healer archetype in conjunction with the skills of pattern recognition and mutual patterning, has the potential to yield stronger therapeutic relationships then traditional approaches.

Fisher and Fonteyn (1995) examined the heuristic, or reasoning, strategies that experienced critical care nurses used to think and make decisions. The researcher's used "think aloud" data and protocol analysis to identify and describe the heuristic strategies that allowed nurses to analyze patient data, assess patient status and make decisions necessary for the prompt and effective delivery of care. Five strategies were identified from the study. They were pattern recognition, attending, anchoring, focused questioning and listing. Pattern recognition, as a reasoning strategy, has not been studied in isolation or in other populations of nurse specialists. Research is warranted that specifically examines pattern recognition as a heuristic essential to the nursing process.

The nursing profession was the subject of a study by Jacono and Jacono (1995). This study examined nurse's perceptions that might impact their reluctance to adopt particular nursing theories or theoretical frameworks. Jacono and Jacono used pattern recognition as a tool to help identify perceptions not previously considered that created a reluctance to adopt new ideas.

In a related study on the spiritual dimensions of aging, Trice (1990) used a phenomenological approach to examine the meaning of life experiences. Victor Frankl (1962) wrote about the importance of experiencing meaning in life based on his experience as a concentration camp inmate during World War II. He observed that loss of meaning was frequently, and quickly, followed by death from natural causes or suicide. The elderly are considered to be especially vulnerable to the loss of meaning, particularly as they move through the transition of retirement from their life's work, whether in or out of the home. Trice stated that "the pursuit of or experiencing meaning to life has been identified as a concern of the spiritual component of the whole person...loss of this sense of meaning to life is seen to have a negative effect on the health and well-being of the individual" (Trice, p. 249). The impact of loss of meaning on general health and well-being brings this issue into the realm of interest of nurse researchers.

Trice (1990) interviewed a sample of eleven (11) participants, age 65 to 87. The median age was 69 years. Nine participants were women and two were men, and all were Caucasian. Each participant was asked to "describe any experience from life during which they had the sense that their life was meaningful and had purpose" (Trice, p. 249). The analysis of the transcripts revealed four major themes. First, every experience involved a concern for other people. Second, each participant perceived himself or herself as being helpful or useful to someone else. Third, each experience involved taking action for the benefit of someone else. Finally, every experience was perceived to be positive. The themes apparent from this study are consistent with the stage of

evolution described by Young (1976) as decentering, or becoming involved in the concerns outside the self. Newman (1994) describes this as movement through infinite space after the experience of a choice, or turning point. Trice (1990) recommended that further research be done by nurses into the perceived meaning of life by the elderly as it impacts their general state of well-being and health.

Summary

The literature revealed only a few studies that utilized the concepts of pattern and pattern recognition. Research conducted by Endo (1998), Jondsdottir (1994), Karian, Jankowski & Beal 1998) Lamendola and Newman (1994), and Schorr, Farnham, and Ervin (1991) were reviewed for relevance in clinical situations. Schorr, et.al. conducted the only study using a sample limited to older women. Fisher and Fonteyn (1995) considered reasoning strategies of nurses using pattern recognition, and Jacono and Jacono (1995) studied nurse's reluctance to adopt theories in practice using pattern recognition to identify perceptions. The archetype of the wounded healer using the skill of pattern recognition and mutual patterning was studied by Conti-O'Hare (1998). In a related study, Trice (1990) examined the meaning of life experiences to elderly participants. A gap in the existing literature regarding pattern recognition and meaningful events of women over 80 was noted. This study attempted to fill that gap.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE FOR THE COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF DATA

The study utilized a grounded theory approach for the collection and analysis of data and for the discussion of findings. Grounded theory is a methodology that attempts to derive, or enhance, theory by using multiple stages of data collection and then refining and interrelating categories of information (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This is an emergent design that uses succeeding methodological steps based on steps already taken. Using this method requires constant interaction and interpretation by the investigator (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A search for patterns in the lives of women of advanced age is best approached using a qualitative design that supports description, meaning, and inductive reasoning (Creswell, 1994). Grounded theory was the method of choice for this study.

Setting

The study was conducted in three geographic locations, including north Texas, southern Colorado, and central and coastal Oregon. Entry into the site of the study was by mutual agreement of the participant and the researcher that resulted in an invitation to the woman's home or place of residence. Twelve women were interviewed in their homes and one woman was interviewed in her room within a nursing home. Each interview lasted until the woman felt she had shared all the meaningful events in her life to her satisfaction. Every interview lasted between 1 ½ and 2 ½ hours until each woman felt that she had no additional information to contribute at that time. They were informed that a copy of the written transcript of their personal interview would be mailed to them for

their review, and they could add information at that time if they felt their stories were incomplete.

Population and Sample

The population for the study was women who have reached the chronological age of 80 and who were mentally coherent at the time of the interview. The sample size was twelve women and was acquired using a network technique. Information was sent to churches, senior center's, retirement homes, agencies engaged in providing care to senior's, and schools of nursing about the study and included requests for participants, or referrals to possible participants. Each participant was asked if she knew of other women who might be interested in participating in the study. Initially, one woman contacted me as a result of information sent to a Senior Center and then referred me to the other women in the geographic location of Colorado. A nurse colleague referred a woman in Texas to me. A friend from church referred four women in coastal Oregon to me and an associate from work referred seven women from central Oregon. Each woman was contacted by me, given information about the study, and asked if they would be interested in being interviewed. One woman from coastal Oregon and two women from central Oregon declined to participate. A $10 honorarium and a written transcription of the interview were given to each woman who participated in the interview process. Participants were added to the study until data analysis suggested saturation.

Theoretical sampling occurred as themes and categories emerged from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is a process of data collection "for generalizing theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to

collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (Glaser, 1978, p. 36). Data collection was controlled by the emerging themes of the study. The emergence of major themes and categories occurred quickly after the onset of the study. The goal of theoretical sampling was to provide as much depth to the categories as possible to ensure adequate saturation of the data.

Ethical Considerations

The Human Subjects Review Committee of Texas Woman's University approved the study (Appendix B). A description of the study, its purpose and aims, and the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study was included in an informed consent (Appendix C). Each participant signed an informed consent, which included consent to be audio taped.

Potential risks inherent in the study were shared with each woman and included fatigue due to the length of the interview, perceived invasion of privacy, and sadness or unhappiness about old wounds and failures. Possible benefits of participating in the study were also shared and included: 1) having one's life story in writing as a result of obtaining a written transcript of the interview; 2) being able to tell one's life story to an interested listener; 3) having one's life validated via the telling-listening process; and, 4) being able to bring closure to unhappy past life events via the telling-listening process.

Participants were not identified on the tape and any reference to self or other person was deleted from the final transcript. Audiotapes and written transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of the researcher for a period not to exceed ten years. Shredding will then destroy all data.

Data Collection

The researcher was in the role of interviewer and the interview was the instrument for the study. As the researcher, I interviewed each participant and audio taped each interview. Every interview started with a single question recommended by Newman (personal communication, April, 1996), which was "what have been the most meaningful events in your life?" Newman proposed that this question would elicit most of the information needed to engage in dialectic aimed at discerning patterns. Supportive comments, prompts, or simple questions were used to further guide the interview. These comments and questions included, but were not limited to, the following: tell me more; please explain further; what happened next; and, can you give me an example. My primary task was to listen and elicit information until the woman chose to close the interview or felt that there was no further information she wanted to contribute. The typed transcript of each woman's interview was mailed to her for her review and no participant added any information.

Theoretical Data Analysis

Transcripts of the interviews were subjected to analysis using a constant comparison method. Theoretical sampling and analysis of data began with the first interview and continued as an interactive process simultaneously with data collection (Creswell, 1994). Data were subjected to reduction, display and conclusion drawing/verification. Reduction of the data consisted of substantive and theoretical coding (Glaser, 1978). Substantive coding involved both open and selective coding techniques. Theoretical coding consists of eighteen coding families. Of these eighteen,

only four were used as a framework for theoretical coding. The others were reviewed for relevance as the codes emerged from the data.

Glaser (1978) proposed the concept-indicator model as a way of generating code. Grounded theory depends on this method of coding which "directs the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators" (Glaser, p. 62). This model depicts a method of constantly comparing indicator to indicator and then indicators to concepts as core categories and themes emerge from the data. The concept-indicator model denotes a constant comparison method of data analysis and coding.

Open coding involved the organization of data into as many categories as possible. After as many categories as possible emerged, the data was placed into as many of these categories as fit. This allowed for the maximization of best fit and the most workable categories were able to emerge. "Open coding allows the analyst to see the direction in which to take the study by theoretical sampling" (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). This enabled a focus for the study to emerge that was relevant to the data. Glaser posited six general rules that were followed during the process of open coding.

The first rule is to continually ask questions of the data. During the process of open coding, three questions were continually asked. The first question was "what is this data a study of?" (Glaser, 1978, p. 57). This question was a reminder that the original intentions of the study may not fit the data that emerges. Although I asked for the most meaningful events in their lives, what emerged was their life stories. The second question was a reminder to consider the relationships of categories as they emerged. As each interview was read and each incident was reviewed, the question of which category the

incident indicated was considered (Glaser). As coding occurred, the final question was "what is actually happening in the data?" (Glaser, p. 57). This question focused each category while generating the core category. The purpose of asking these questions during the process of open coding was to maintain theoretical sensitivity to the data and to focus the analysis on the emerging patterns.

A quick reading of the transcripts to gather an overview of the data, and then an analysis of the data line by line are the second and third rules. Glaser (1978) does not recommend the strategy of a quick overview be accomplished alone. Only a thorough and painstaking review of the data, line by line, allows for full theoretical coverage to emerge. A quick overview yielded an overall impression that guided indepth exploration of the data. However, it did not facilitate the verification or saturation of data. After obtaining an overall impression of the data, a line by line reading searched for emerging categories and patterns.

The fourth general rule is to interrupt the coding frequently to memo the data. Glaser (1978) considered the bedrock of theory generation to be the writing of theoretical memos. "Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding" (Glaser, p. 83). They lead to abstraction of ideas and were a constant process beginning with the first interview. Memos were written as thoughts, ideas, and categories came to the forefront during the line by line analysis.

As comparisons were made between interviews and between incidents within interviews, the fourth rule, stay within the domain of the study, was upheld. The process of questioning the data facilitated compliance with this rule.

Finally, the last general rule was not to assume any special significance from the demographic data obtained as part of the study. Race, gender, social class, economic status and other variables were not assumed to have relevance. Examining these variables occurred after the categories and patterns emerged and the core variable was identified.

Selective coding techniques were used when I decided that no further open coding was required and that coding for core categories could be pursued. Delimiting the categories to a single core variable then followed. Other variables were not lost and may assume core importance in later studies. Categories were coded that selectively fit a core variable. The primary core variable is sufficient to meet the stringent requirements of a parsimonious theory. This is the stage at which open coding became seriously narrowed and the theoretical memos became focused on the ideas necessary to support this major theme.

The written transcript of each interview was read and re-read, and compared to other interviews, searching for themes and categories. Using the techniques outlined by Glaser (1978), themes and categories were coded using substantive and theoretical techniques. Selective coding delimited the data into core categories. Those category codes were searched for the basic social psychological process that emerged through the process of constant comparison. Categories and themes were examined for life patterns. Finally, the data were compared to the concepts of other studies concerning aging found in the literature. When the line by line analysis of each interview was complete, all of the interviews were read again searching for recognizable patterns.

The Data Analysis Process

The data was analyzed using the QSR-N5 software for qualitative analysis. This program is the fifth major revision of a product with a long history, earlier known as NUD*IST, designed for the qualitative systematic researcher, thus the acronym QSR-N5. Richards (2000) wrote the reference guide for the program explaining its use and functions. The information received with the CD and the reference guide did not identify the programmer of the QSR-N5. Primarily designed as a coding tool, NUD*IST evolved into QSR-N5 by incorporating advanced analysis and report writing functions. The program consists of three basic tools: coders, text search, and node search. These tools operate on two complementary sets of data: (a) "the document system, holding all the documentary data and research notes, as well as memos about these, and (b) the node system, representing all the topics and categories that matter to the research project, and memos of the researchers' ideas about these" (Richards, 2000, p. 2). Documents used by the researcher are imported into the program, using a merge function, and can then be opened as a complete document. QSR-N5 allows the researcher to extrapolate, code, analyze and develop theory from data entered into the program and supports multiple qualitative methodologies.

Data from the interviews was coded into what the program refers to as Free Nodes and Tree Nodes (Richards, 2000). Free Nodes contain codes that stand alone, or have no relationship in the data to other codes. Tree Nodes contain codes that form the root of other codes that are related. The codes that emerged from the data initially involved 21 Free Nodes, 23 Tree Nodes that formed the root for other codes and 111 related nodes

attached to the Tree Nodes. The labels attached to each node formed a category of experience in a woman's life. As rich as the data was the sheer number of codes was not surprising. The challenge was to find the categories and themes that emerged from these codes that enabled the data to become more cohesive and cognitively manageable.

Categories

The categories that emerged from the initial coding of the interviews were numerous and covered every possible point that it seemed the data exemplified. The 22 Free Nodes formed categories that I felt initially stood alone without referents to other categories. The 23 Tree Nodes formed primary categories that had sub-categories coded beneath them forming a pyramid, or tree. Table 1 exhibits these categories as they were initially coded. The sequence reflects the timing of the coding within each document. Not all of the categories were created out of the first one or two interviews, but emerged and were refined as each interview was analyzed using constant comparison.

As I worked with the data I saw that the categories I had identified spread across the life span. The categories and themes that initially emerged were seen at varying phases of life. For example, most people consider work to be a category that would affect adults only, but several of the women described the work they did on farms as children and jobs they held while they were in high school. Learning was acquired in formal schooling as children and as a function of life experiences as adults. The categories that emerged from the data were not all described by each woman, although as the themes emerged it was apparent that each woman's story made a contribution.

Table 1

Free Node and Tree Node Categories

Free node categories	**Tree node categories**
Meeting new people	Childhood
Celebration	Adult family and family history
Victim and fear	Responsibility and loss
Life lessons	Moving/relocation
Interesting life	Retirement
Attitudes about others	Travel
Fun	Learning
Humiliation	Risk taking
Tolerance	Teaching
Creativity	Independence and influence
Alteration in plans and change	Work
Love	Military service
Longevity	Survival
Aging process and active	Religion
Flexibility	Health
Story telling and life review	Caring for others and living arrangements
The Depression	Community service
Impact of society/culture	Moral values
Stability	Friends

Themes

After the initial work of coding and analyzing, eight themes were derived that represent the stories told by the women throughout their life span. The eight themes were resilience, independence, change, integration, risk taking, caring for others, learning, and work. They were placed in a matrix and divided by the time of life that they occurred for each woman. This initial conceptualizing of the themes allowed me to refine the data into more abstract terms and to work with my committee to begin the process of drawing meaning from the material. Although they created an initial framework from which to further search and formulate ideas, the themes were drawn from experiences that were common to most women and reflected the ideas of many other researchers and theorists. The process of data analysis continued and the themes were refined into nine themes, and finally into four major themes.

Managing and Recording Data

The data was managed using a combination of resources. Each interview was audio taped using a micro-cassette recorder. Although attention was paid to the functioning of the recorder at each interview, I failed to note the life of the batteries, and therefore, one interview was entirely lost. I transcribed the interviews into a word processing program and saved them in a plain text file. They were imported into the QSR-N5 software for coding and analysis. A notebook kept the informed consents, demographic data, and some field notes. Field notes were dictated after each interview. Field notes were also transcribed and a copy kept with each interview.

Credibility, Dependability and Confirmability

Credibility is concerned with the compatibility of the data and of the findings for the participants (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). The substance of the women's stories, once transcribed and read, must resonate with them as being true. Several strategies helped to assure credibility. The first strategy had each participant read the typed transcript of the interview and correct or confirm the information as written. A copy of the interview transcript was mailed to each participant with a self-addressed stamped envelope to facilitate the return of the transcript if necessary. Each woman confirmed, either in writing or by phone contact, that the information in her transcript was accurate and as complete as she felt it should be to tell about the meaningful events in her life.

The second strategy established the credibility of the single question used to elicit the stories of the women's long lives. The question asked for the meaningful events of a woman's life. Four women from the sample were contacted and asked why they felt the stories they related had meaning. Each woman's reply was consistent with the comment made by the first women I asked and she said, "Because the events happened to me. I lived them".

Credibility also depends on the researcher's analytical and intuitive perceptions of the data after being immersed in it during the process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A synopsis of the women's stories was written to add depth and richness to the study findings. Quotes from the interviews are used to provide substance to the categories and patterns that emerged from the data, thus further adding to the credibility

of the study. The interviews were examined in detail to compare experiences and to search for contrasts. A search was made of each interview for events that might be considered as outside the experience of other women. The findings of the detailed examinations of the transcripts were incorporated into the analysis of data.

Dependability is concerned with establishing whether another researcher could replicate the study. Transcripts of each interview, coding sheets, coding memos, field notes, and emerging categories and themes are kept in two large notebooks that form an audit trail. The data is also kept in a project file within the QSR-N5 software. The final analysis of the data and the written, detailed manuscript provides the information necessary to establish both the credibility and the dependability of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). All the information needed for this audit trail is maintained in a locked cabinet in my home office. This audit trail, in combination with the final manuscript, will permit an outside person to evaluate the trustworthiness of the study process and confirm the study findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Confirmabilty establishes whether the study findings actually are a result of the focus of the inquiry and not a bias of the researcher. I believe that patterns of women's lives exist and that they can be found within the stories of their lives. I have deliberately not focused on what I thought those patterns would be, and have tried throughout the study process to keep an open mind. I have listened to the thoughts and ideas of others and continuously searched the literature for studies about older women that may have to do with patterns and pattern recognition. Several of the typed transcripts were given to colleagues to read and share their thoughts regarding the coding of the data. From them I

received a collective nod that the coding was reflective of the information found in the interviews.

Summary

Grounded theory is based on the premise that theory is derived from multiple stages of data collection in which the interrelationships of categories is refined and meaning is extrapolated. Examining the meaningful events of a woman's long life in search of patterns utilized this methodology as the optimal choice. Emerging data was coded into major categories and themes. Theoretical coding was used to systematically search for patterns and a single core variable. Categories of data that coalesced into patterns of a woman's long life evolved from the coding. The categories and patterns were finally examined for relationships to nursing and related literature and implications for nursing and further research were identified.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARTICIPANTS

Writing up the study would be an incomplete exercise without sharing something about each woman who willingly participated. The stories of their lives broken down into bits and pieces in the final two chapters would reduce this to a study of their parts, incomplete and unfinished. I left every interview in awe of the power of their stories and yet all but one of the women demurred and, at least once, claimed that her life was uninteresting, even boring. As I listened to their stories and later transcribed them I was struck over and over by the richness and depth of their lives.

Demographic Data

The women lived in three separate areas of the United States, in both urban and rural areas. Three women live in Colorado, one woman resides in Texas, and eight women live in Oregon. As with any qualitative study the number of participants is not enormous. Although I interviewed 13 women for this study, I lost one interview because of equipment failure. I remember her story, but have nothing in writing to draw from, so her story is not included and I have chosen not to offer her profile. The demographics that I felt were important to collect include: age, religious affiliation, race/ethnicity, marital status, former occupation, and income status. I was quickly disabused of the idea of gathering data on their income status. Without exception the women refused to share that information. However, their income status can be inferred as above poverty level and probably middle class. All of them lived in their own homes or apartments except for one who resided in a nursing home on a private pay basis. There is, unfortunately, no

diversity in either their race or their religion, so the findings are limited to white women who are Protestant. The rest of the demographic data is found in Table 2. The names of the women have been eliminated from the discussion. However, in order to be able to speak of them in a manner that does not reduce them to numbers I have assigned a letter code to each woman in sequence from A to L and used the acceptable abbreviation of Mrs. as a title of respect.

Table 2

Demographic Data of the Women

Participant	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Religious Affiliation	Marital Status	Former Occupation
Mrs. A.	83	Caucasian	Community Christian	Widowed	Teacher
Mrs. B.	90	Caucasian	Presbyterian	Divorced	Librarian
Mrs. C.	83	Caucasian	Community Church	Widowed	Teacher
Mrs. D.	83	Caucasian	Presbyterian	Widowed	Business Owner/Artist
Mrs. E.	83	Caucasian	Presbyterian	Widowed	Ranch Wife
Mrs. F.	84	Caucasian	Community Church	Married	Homemaker
Mrs. G.	81	Caucasian	Disciples of Christ	Widowed	Sales Clerk
Mrs. H.	81	Caucasian	Presbyterian	Widowed	Homemaker
Mrs. I.	87	Caucasian	Presbyterian	Single	Speech Therapist
Mrs. J.	86	Caucasian	Mennonite	Widowed	Teacher
Mrs. K.	86	Caucasian	Lutheran	Widowed	Bookkeeper
Mrs. L.	95	Caucasian	Baptist	Widowed	Assistant Principal

The Women

Mrs. A.

This lady is 83 years old and lives alone in a mobile home park for seniors in Oregon. She also keeps a residence in Arizona for her use in the winter. The interview was conducted in the living room of her home in early fall. Her home was immaculate and filled with a treasury of antiques. Though she was a bit reserved at first, she quickly warmed to the telling of her life story.

As a child her parents were divorced and she grew up with a loving and devoted stepfather. She said he was an inventor and loved to play practical jokes. Her memories allowed her to integrate her childhood into the tapestry of her life as a good period. She had brothers and sisters and they grew up in eastern Oregon. Mrs. A. worked as a schoolteacher in a small town north of where she grew up. After she married she gave up working for a while and returned to teaching when her children were old enough to attend school.

Before she had children she and her husband moved to central Oregon and settled in a mid-size community. She taught school there and her husband worked as a salesman. After the children were born her husband bought a part-ownership in a restaurant that was to be opened in a smaller community south of where they had settled. They moved to South-central Oregon and she has remained in the community for many years. When the restaurant opened she left teaching and joined her husband in the business. They ran it for many years and sold it twice. 2 Both attempts at selling it to

outside parties failed and they finally passed it on to their oldest son who continues to operate the business.

When they finally retired they sold their home and bought a motor home to travel around America. They did that for two years and finally sold it when he got tired of driving and returned home. At that time they moved into the mobile home park where she currently resides. He died shortly after their return. After his death she decided that she wanted to spend her winters in a warmer climate so she purchased another mobile home in a park in Arizona associated with a golf course so she can play golf. Her play has been limited this year because of a flare up in her osteoarthritis, but she has rested all summer and is eager to resume play this winter when she returns to Arizona.

Her story is filled with events that reveal an active life style. Besides playing golf, she learned to fly just prior to her husband's death and while on vacation in Mexico went para-sailing. Most of her traveling has been done in the United States with her husband, but after his death she made a trip to Australia with friends. She is planning a trip to Russia next year and still wants to learn to jump out of airplanes.

Mrs. A lives in the same town with her oldest son and her other son lives in Northern Oregon. Her grandchildren are near, but as she says, they live lives of their own. Her identity is strong and is not dependent on her relationship with her family or her friends. When asked to share a life lesson she said, "just go do things". She qualified that by saying "don't do anything bad, of course, but do things". While para-sailing in Mexico she watched as a young girl refused to try it even with the encouragement of her boyfriend. Although Mrs. A. tried to help the boyfriend bolster her confidence the girl

simply refused to take the risk. Mrs. A. said she feels that "people think they shouldn't try something because they think they're going to look ridiculous. I suppose at one point in my life I was that way too, but now I don't care if people think I look silly. It's just too bad. You know the ones that are the worst about that are the teenagers. That is the time when they should be having fun and doing things. My granddaughters have learned that from me, but my grandsons are still struggling". Of all the women I interviewed she epitomized the phrase 'carpe diem'. She seized every day and lived it to its fullest.

Mrs. B.

I contacted this 90 year-old lady through a mutual friend and arranged to meet her at her home. She met me at the door with a hot cup of coffee and a smile. Before we sat down to talk she went to the kitchen and came back with a plate of fresh cookies she had been baking in preparation for the holidays. I was struck by how organized she was because our interview took place in September.

Mrs. B. spent a good number of her childhood years in Alaska when it was still a United States Territory. When she returned to the United States after 9 ½ years in Alaska she said she was most struck with dirt roads and corn-on-the-cob. The streets in the village where she lived were made of pilings to stay above the water and the mud. Fresh vegetables were rare in Alaska because of the short growing season and the long distance they had to be shipped.

When she was fifteen her mother died and she was left to take care of two younger sisters. Her parents were both teachers and were adamant that their daughters receive a college education. She started teacher's college as a finishing program to her

high school and by the time she was sixteen she was a certified teacher. Unfortunately, she was not old enough to teach in a public school, so her first teaching job was in an Indian school on a reservation in Arizona. When she returned to college to get more education she took a beginning course in library science and fell in love with the subject. After her mother died the rest of her family thought she should stay home and help her father care for her sisters, but he insisted that she go on and finish he3r degree so she could help him put the other girls through school. While she was in graduate school the Great Depression struck, and the thought of sending two girls to college was almost more than her Dad could bear. She accepted a librarian's job at a university in Idaho and used her faculty status to reduce the tuition for her sister. Times were hard, but they both finished school and helped send the youngest sister to nursing school.

She met her husband in Idaho, but he was a graduate student and she was a teacher, so any relationship between them was strictly taboo. During his last year of school they sneaked over to Montana and got married and managed to keep it a secret until he graduated. The day he received his degree she quit teaching and returned to school a third time to study home economics. He ultimately accepted a job in California and they moved there prior to the birth of their children. She had three children close together, feeling that her "biological clock" was running out, and then had a fourth child ten years later. During the time her first two were small they also took care of a niece for a while and she said, "I was so busy working I didn't have time to worry about home, and I was so busy at home I didn't have time to worry about work".

As with many women, her husband had a mid-life crisis and left her for another woman. She divorced him, finished raising her youngest son, cared for her father until he died, and then decided to retire back to the Northwest. She said she thought she wanted to live somewhere she didn't have to water her lawn. After she moved to a small town in coastal Oregon she joined whatever group she could think of to make new friends. She also decided she wanted to learn to play the violin by ear, something she could not do as a college musician. Searching the area she found an Old Time Fiddlers group and has been playing with them for almost thirty years. She said they used to play thirteen or fourteen places a month, but now it has dwindled down to two or three because so many of the original group have died now, and no one seems interested in taking their places.

When I asked her about a life lesson she thought for a moment and then responded, "I think women need to continue to take advantages of the opportunities open to them". She felt that men are able to do that very well, but it has only been recently that women have had many opportunities. Mrs. B. said that when she went to college, women were expected to be teachers, or secretaries, or nurses. I shared with her that when I went to school that attitude had not changed very much. So she told me how she encouraged her daughter to be anything she wanted to be and helped her look up in the library the myriad of occupations open to men. While her daughter was an undergraduate student she studied geology under a fascinating teacher and is now a mining engineer.

Mrs. C.

I had the longest, and most enjoyable, interview with Mrs. C. She is 83 years old and also lives in a mobile home park for seniors. We talked for more than three hours and

I was laughing when I left her home. She lives in a moderate sized double wide home in a mid-sized town in Oregon. Her home was bright and full of light, which is hard to achieve in the Northwest. Mrs. C.'s story begins when she was four and her family held a birthday party with lots of decorations just for her. She tells of a happy childhood growing up in New Hampshire. Although her family was not wealthy, she said they always had food on the table and clothes to wear.0

Mrs. C. and her husband met in the small town where she was raised. They both went to college and then married. He wanted to go to California so they loaded up an old Model T and went west. Upon arrival in southern California he found a job as a ranch hand for three old women. They moved into a house on the ranch and started their family. They have three daughters, and the oldest one earned her nickname from the oldest of the three sisters that owned the ranch. The woman was partly deaf and every time she heard the baby cry she though she was hearing a pigeon. According to Mrs. C. she is still known as "Pidg".

After World War II they decided they wanted to live in a smaller town and raise their children in a less stressful environment than California had become. They moved to Oregon and settled in a town near Crater Lake. She returned to teaching and pushed her school board to allow the boys to participate in her home economics class. The boys were more eager to join, probably because of the girls she said, than their parents were to let them participate. Eventually the course became a life skills course and served as a model course for other schools in Oregon.

She became a master gardener and her yard was the highlight of the town. Mrs. C. also took courses at the community center in painting and metal crafts. For a while she and her husband ran the lodge at a nearby resort. She said she always loved people and this was apparent in the stories she chose to tell. During the later part of the interview she shared several delightful stories of living near Hollywood and meeting Bing Crosby and Pat O'Brien in a local tavern frequented by some of the stars.

When I first met Mrs. C. she was doubled over with arthritis pain in her hip and could barely get around her living room. She, too, met me with a plate of fresh bread and coffee. I returned to visit with her later to ask why the events she chose to share were meaningful to her. Her response was similar to the responses of Mrs. B. and Mrs. H. when she replied simply, "because they happened to me". This time she met me at the door standing upright, without a walker, and took me on a tour of her home and the neighborhood. She had recently had her hip replaced. Two years ago she underwent a hip and knee replacement on the other leg. I marveled at her courage and resilience.

The lesson she chose to share with me was to be a good neighbor and live by example. She felt strongly that the lessons children learn are the ones they see, not the ones they are taught. When we walked through her neighborhood it was obvious that she practiced what she believed. We talked with every person who was visible in a four-block area. Whether they were inside the house, on the porch or in their yards, they all had a friendly word to say and a cheerful smile to extend.

Mrs. D.

At 83 this lady had recently had a small stroke and was still recovering from a major stroke two years ago. Her speech was slightly slurred and she occasionally struggled to find the words she wanted to use. Like the other women, her house was immaculate. I noticed from the entryway that her living areas were filled with landscapes and paintings of animals. Later I learned that she was the artist.

Mrs. D. told of growing up in Los Angeles during the 1920's and 30's. Her family lived south of the downtown area and gave her plenty of freedom to explore. She rode the bus and the trolley to the library downtown and spent her time reading and learning. Some of the stories she told of that time are quite harrowing. Apparently traveling in downtown Los Angeles even at that time was not without risks. She said there were several occasions where strange men accosted her and one time a man forced her to the ground behind a large bush. For no apparent reason she could explain, except that she felt an angel with her, he got up and ran off leaving her on the ground unmolested. After an earlier incident she tried telling her father what had happened but he became so enraged, she was shocked and thought he was angry with her so she never told him of any of the later episodes.

Her husband was a man who thought the grass was always greener somewhere else so they moved around a lot. Early in their marriage they moved to central Oregon, but it rained too much for him and he wanted to return to his roots in Phoenix. They spent two years in Phoenix before she told him she could not stand any more of the climate and she was leaving whether he came along or not. Then they moved around the

Los Angeles area several times before finally coming to coastal Oregon just prior to retirement. She said, "I gave in one more time, but told him I was never moving again, and I've been here 35 years".

Mrs. D.'s life was filled with sorrow, yet she maintains one of the brightest attitudes of any of the women I interviewed. She lost her first child when he was a baby, and her youngest child committed suicide in his early twenties. Her husband's father had Alzheimer's Disease and she cared for him while working and raising a family. Later her husband developed Alzheimer's also. He died prior to her stroke. She pointed out with great delight that now she only had to take care of herself.

When she was fifty a physician she worked for wanted her to frame some paintings he had brought back from Europe. He told her he knew she could do it because she had such a flair for color as noted in the clothes she wore and the decorations she helped with in his medical practice office. She tried her hand at a few of them and found she had a flair for working with color so he helped her start her own framing business. During her first year in business a young artist came into the shop and offered to teach her to paint in exchange for framing some of his work. She agreed and discovered she was also an artist. The landscapes in her house were beautiful and the animals were delicate renditions of their real life counterparts.

Mrs. D. offered this lesson. Keep getting up, no matter what the world deals you, and keep your faith in God. She said she knows that God is in her life every day and that he sent a guardian angel to be with her through her trials. Given what this woman has endured I am inclined to believe that He did, indeed, send her a special angel.

Mrs. E.

Mrs. E. is also 83 years old and lives alone in an apartment in a senior complex in coastal Oregon. She was born and raised in a small town about 90 miles north and has never moved far from the area. Her father was a logger and, with her mother, raised eight children. Some of her earliest memories were of survival. They lived along a river and one spring the creeks above the river became over full with spring run off and a deluge of rain. She remembers watching the black water come in under the back door and, as a six year old, grabbing her infant brother from his cradle and running up the stairs. They stayed in the house without fresh water and with limited food for almost a week. She said the neighbor would bring milk in every day for the baby. Later in life she often wondered how her mother had managed that week with seven small children, worried about whether the foundation would give way and they would all drown.

During high school they moved to a town down the coast from where she grew up and she went to work in a local café. One night sparks from a forest fire on land south of town blew in and caught in the rooftops of the buildings in town. The entire town burned down in one night. She lived with her parents on the bluff over looking the town and they lost their house in the fire as well. The café she was working in was the first building rebuilt after the fire, and the owners had a food line going within twenty-four hours of the fire. She said the café fed the townspeople and the fire fighters for almost a week as they worked to salvage what they could and begin the process of rebuilding.

Mrs. E. was restrained about some memories and either could not or would not share with me how she met her husband. According to her he was just a boy she knew.

She did not share any memories of their courtship nor did she share any memories of their life together. During a later part of the interview she told me that while he ranched the land, he also logged and fished and did whatever work he could to raise his family. She felt her family was "just ordinary" and her children turned out to be ok. Her comment was that they had no big winners, but they had no big losers either. When I asked if she had any favorite memories of raising her children, she said, "No. They were just farm boys. They went to school and worked in the fields with their father and played with toy tractors when they were little. They were just good boys". One of her sons owns the cranberry bog that she and her husband bought when they retired. The bog has been in the family for over forty years now and has one of the oldest co-operative contracts with Ocean Spray.

As a rancher's wife she worked harder than any of the men. Up before dawn to make breakfast and help with the early chores and still up long after sunset to finish the business of the day, Mrs. E. epitomized the working agricultural wife of this century. She sewed clothes for her boys, but did not engage in any creative arts until she quit working in the bogs. She was 80 years old when she completed her last cranberry harvest.

Mrs. E. was the most reserved and self-effacing of the women I interviewed. She did not feel that she had lived a very interesting life, although she did state that she felt it had been a good life. After her husband died she joined the local chapter of Eastern Star and worked with the library board to raise funds for a new library. The lesson she shared

involved was consistent with her life. She said, "just work hard and mind your own business".

Mrs. F.

Raised in Minnesota, transplanted to California as the fiancée of a soon to be naval officer in World War II, and moved to Iowa to survive the war, Mrs. F. lives now in central Oregon and is 84 years old. She lives with her husband in a modest home in the hills above a mid-size city. Her lawn is dotted with shrubs and trees in the shapes of mushrooms, rabbits, birds and deer. The lawn sculptures are her own creation.

When she was a small child her parents divorced and her mother moved to Minnesota with her new husband. There is a certain regret, and a fair amount of palpable resentment in her tone of voice, when she speaks of her mother taking her away from her father and his ancestral home in coastal California. Although she did not spend much time with her father when she was growing up, she returned to visit him as an adolescent and has many pictures of his home and her time there. She speaks of him with great affection and commented frequently, "see what my life should have been like".

Her story rambled from childhood to retirement and back through raising her children. Along the way her husband inserted his own thoughts, and more than once she turned to him to complete sentence or verify a memory. The strong bond they have together was visible, and I wondered how long one would live when the other one died. Their favorite story was about their courtship in Los Angeles in the years immediately preceding World War II. She said they were walking along Hollywood and Vine, the stuff that movies are made of, when they heard the paperboy's yelling out the news about

Pearl Harbor. Her husband was working at Lockheed at the time and decided to give up his job to join the Navy. She said it made her feel "just numb". After he left boot camp and was on his way to the South Pacific she left California and returned to Iowa to sit out the war with his parents. They told of his first shore leave, and, giggling as she shared it, said when he returned to sea she was pregnant.

When her husband left active duty he returned to work as an engineer with Lockheed. They remained in California until after they retired, raising two sons and enjoying life. She did work as a secretary before they were married, but after they married and had children she declined to return to work. As she laughingly said, "I joined the country club and learned to play golf". From the way they tell about the events in their life together it is obvious she could do what she wanted whenever she wanted as long as she kept the home fires burning.

The lesson Mrs. F. shared was resonant with the way she lived her life. She said that she would tell the next generation to just go out and have fun because life is too short to live it angry. I would say that she took her lesson to heart. During the interview she and her husband laughed, held hands, and showed me her creations with a sense of joy and shared happiness.

Mrs. G.

I interviewed Mrs. G. in her home located in a mobile home park for seniors in Colorado. Currently 81 years old she has lived there since her husband died and her children talked her into moving out of the mountains and somewhere accessible for them to come and visit. All three of her children lived in different towns or states, but they

stayed in close touch and she said they loved to come and visit. The town where she now lives is where they lived when her boys were in high school.

She briefly shared a story from her childhood and then launched into a detailed and vivid account of her travels. It was from her that I was first struck with how many risks these women have taken in their lives. Most of her travels occurred after her husband had died and she was in her early sixties. She has traveled throughout the world, including a trip to Communist China. Her stories of her travels were laced with little tidbits of learning and with large tidbits of adventure. When she was telling me about her trip to China I learned something I had not known. Before this I had never heard of the Terra Cotta, or Underground Army, discovered in China earlier in the century. The army was built by an Emperor of China to follow him into the afterworld and protect him from evil. According to Mrs. G. the rows of soldiers stretched farther than her eye could see. After our interview I saw several television specials featuring this archeological wonder and an article in a national arts magazine.

Mrs. G. describes herself as being the typical Boy Scout mom. Her boys loved to hunt and fish and campout along the river. One of her worst experiences as a mom happened during a campout her sons went on with some of their friends. Apparently one of the boys who went with them did not know how to light a camp stove and pumped up the propane tank too far and then left it set before her son tried to light it. When he struck the match the tank blew up and burned his face. The boys were not far from town, but still had to walk about six miles to get home. She applied Vaseline to his face and took him to the doctor the next morning and cried all night while sitting next to his bed.

To illustrate the lesson she shared with me she told me of a boy that she and her husband took in and helped raise with her sons. Although they did not adopt him, more a matter of timing than desire, she said she feels as close to him as if he were her own. The lesson she wants to pass on, is to give to others knowing it will come back to you tenfold. When this young man left to join the Army he stayed in touch with her family, joined them for weddings and celebrations and shared his own family with them as he grew through manhood. Mrs. G. said it was like having more children without the pain of childbirth.

Mrs. H.

Mrs. H. is 81 years old and lives in a nursing home in a small community in Oregon. She and her husband retired here after almost fifty years in California. Like Mrs. F. she was a transplant from the Midwest. About a year ago she got up one morning and went to see her cardiologist. He told her he was concerned about her and did not think it was wise that she continue to live alone. According to Mrs. H. he was afraid she would have a heart attack and perhaps not be found for a few days. When she arrived home that day she called the nursing home, made arrangements to be admitted, packed a suitcase, called a taxi and has been a resident in the home for more than a year. Periodically she asks the social worker to take her to her house to pick up something she wants, or just to look around, but she refuses to return to her home, now afraid to be alone. She was advised that a caregiver could be found to stay with her at night, but she refused to have a stranger in her home when she was not awake.

This is the other woman who presents a picture of identity formation based on her relationships with others. She was the second to the youngest in a family of seven and says she was spoiled. Her mother dressed her in velvets and lace in the days prior to the Great Depression and she says she always felt like she was special. She said her parents emphasized reading and good manners and "it was kind of tough when you were a kid and wanted to play". Now, however, she says she has an eye for good "breeding" and prefers to be around people who have good manners.

As did all of the other women, she held a job between high school and marriage. Her favorite job was at the creamery in town where she "fell in love" with the butter maker. While telling this story her eyes twinkled and she giggled as though she were still eighteen. She says she did not like working much and was glad when she found a man with a good education who she trusted to support her and make her life comfortable. When she was seventeen she and her girlfriends took her mother's car and drove up to Minneapolis to the University of Michigan to check it out. Her friends though they might like to go to college but she freely admits that she went to see what the boys were like. She says they met three boys sitting under a tree in the main part of the campus and they struck up a conversation and idled away the afternoon. On the way home that evening she told her friends, "I'm going to marry that guy", and she did.

After her husband finished school they moved to New Mexico and her husband started his own electronic firm. She helped him with that business until he was recruited to work for Bell Labs in California just prior to the Korean War. They moved to California and remained there until they retired. She and her husband did not have

children of their own, but were involved in the raising of two nephews. The boy's mother was a favorite of Mrs. H. and lived in the neighborhood. Their father left them when the boys were very young and their mother asked them to adopt them, but they refused. Mrs. H. said she was adamant that the boys understand that they could always stay with them but they had a mother and that Mrs. H. and her husband would never take them away from their mother. According to her they have remained close to both her and their mother over the years.

Upon retirement they moved to Oregon and retired in a coastal community. Not long after they retired her husband had a heart attack and then developed Alzheimer's Disease. She remained at home providing him with care and refusing to place him in a nursing home. When I asked her how she coped she said she would just leave him in front of the television and go to her room. She said, "I couldn't let him see that I was upset. He wouldn't have understood". When he slept I read a lot and I took him with me everywhere I went. He died several years ago and she stayed busy in local organizations and in volunteer work until her recent admission to the nursing home.

The lesson Mrs. H. would share with future generations is to earn people's respect and to be well mannered. This is very consistent with her early upbringing and her consideration for other people. She is unfailingly polite to strangers, but the staff say she demonstrates many needy and dependent behaviors. Given the story she tells about her upbringing and the life she led with her husband I would expect no less.

Miss I.

I found Miss I. to be a delightful 87 year-old lady who provided me with laughter and material to use in my own teaching. She lives in an apartment she had built and attached to the back of the home of one of her nieces. The apartment is quite private with its own entrance and a full kitchen. Miss I. is the only woman I interviewed who remained single. She never gave me a reason for not getting married and I did not ask.

Raised as an only child in a small town in North Texas, Miss I. knew from the time she was small that she wanted to go to college. Her parents reinforced her desire for learning and encouraged her to pursue a professional career. As a college student she was one of the first to study speech pathology in the university's communications department.

Miss I. was intrigued with the impact that the Great Depression and World War II had on her generation. She started her story with these ideas and tied them to the events in her life as they unfolded. Even though she was an only child her parents were not wealthy, and she also had to work to contribute financially towards her education. After she received her Bachelor's degree she spent some time as a teacher in East Texas during the war. Her descriptions of holding pictures of Japanese and German warplanes up for the students to identify were riveting.

After the war she attended graduate school in Chicago and returned to Texas. While in school she made several friends who went on to pursue their own professional careers. Part of the group she belonged to was instrumental in forming one of the first

centers for the treatment of neuromuscular impaired children. She commented frequently on how exciting it was to be a part of that endeavor.

Although she did not marry she did raise children. After she was in practice and settled in her home a married cousin lost his wife and was left to raise six children, two of them twins. She was quick to inform me that she came from a family that took care of their own, so when tragedy struck she "pitched in" to do her share. The older three children were sent to live with a relative of the mother's and she was asked to care for the youngest three children. Ultimately, all six children lived with her and she called upon all her friends in the medical, education, and professional community to help. She is very proud of "her" children and feels they are a product of the lesson she learned in life.

Her lesson is attached to her very real concern that as a society we are tying the hands of our educators when we disallow them to set limits on our children's behavior. She feels that is one of the critical reasons why violence has exploded in our schools. The lesson she would leave is to have everyone teach the children of the world that there are consequences for their behavior and their choices. I found this lesson to ring true and knew that it was the one lesson I wanted my own children to learn.

Mrs. J.

As a child of missionary parents, Mrs. J. had a unique and fascinating childhood. When she was six years old her family sailed for Argentina to start a mission school for the Mennonite Church. She remembers the ship zigzagging through the ocean and having to cover all the portholes at night with black out curtains. One night a couple forgot to cover their porthole and she said the crew watched them very close after that

worrying that they might be German spies. Her younger brother and she quickly became the favorites of the crew and they were allowed to play in areas of the ship that she believes were off limits to the other passengers.

Once settled in Argentina her parents enrolled in her in a local public school until they could begin their school. Very quickly she learned Spanish and began translating for her parents. She told a delightful story of learning to trill her r's and how much fun she had teaching her brother Spanish words and how to trill r's. Mrs. J. related stories of a happy childhood even though she was thrust early into the role of caregiver to her younger brother. According to her, he had asthma and that was in the days when the only treatment known was rest. She said, "I got to fetch and carry for him a lot, but I didn't mind because I had a lot of compassion for him, being sick and all". As he grew older they spent more time playing together and he finally got to attend school with her. When she returned to the United States to attend college she waited a year for him to finish high school and they came together. She was very proud of him and told several stories of his work as an engineer.

Mrs. C. was a world traveler at an age when most young women were barely aware of the world outside their hometowns. Being the daughter of missionary parents she was raised with strong religious and moral values and an early knowledge of the kind of contribution she could make, both to the church and to society. Although limited by the options of a society that discouraged female education and a church that limited it to teaching or nursing only, Mrs. C. formed a sense of her own identity separate from others when she was an adolescent. Her family had returned to the United States when she was

a teenager for a leave from their mission work. When they prepared to go back to Argentina they decided to leave Mrs. C. behind with an Aunt and Uncle to help care for the Aunt who was ill at the time. She remained behind for two years and told me that the experience changed her. She remembers becoming more private and self-contained during those years. She said, "I knew I had to take my place within the structure of the society in which I was raised, and I was all right with that knowledge, but I was determined to do it the way I wanted to and not in the traditional ways". When she completed college she had no thoughts of getting married although she had met and felt friendly toward her future husband. Her intent was to return to Argentina and take over the school from her parents. She related a deep love for the country and the people.

Mrs. J.'s husband had different ideas, though. He arranged for the mission board to return her to the United States and they were married soon after her return. Not long afterwards he was sent to Texas to pastor a church and then asked to start a church in a rural area of eastern Colorado. They came to the town in which they now live before World War II and lived and worked for the balance of their lives in, or near, this community. She taught school in local grade schools, and for a time during the war, in a school on a nearby Army base. One of the most interesting story she tells is working with her husband to stop the practice of segregating Spanish speaking children from their English speaking friends while in elementary school. She said, "they called them opportunity rooms, but they were just another place where the community said the children didn't fit". She spoke with vehemence and a quick flare of outrage that such a practice ever existed at all.

The lesson Mrs. J. wants to pass along came from her mother. Whenever someone else treated her wrong her mother would look at her and say, "did you like that, or did you think that was right"? She remembers telling her mother emphatically, "No". Her mother would then say, "then don't do it to anybody else". Mrs. J. said she passed that on to her daughter and to the children she taught in school. I loved this lesson as a personal variation on the Golden Rule. By teaching it in this manner it offers the other person a chance to think and to process what is wrong, not just live by a set of strict rules without understanding.

Mrs. K.

When I met Mrs. K. she had just returned from the funeral of a friend and was elegantly dressed in a navy blue suit and with her silver hair recently styled. Like several of the other women she lived in a mobile home park for seniors and also lived in a mid-sized community in Oregon. She spoke with a slight accent and quickly shared with me that she was first generation German-American. Her parents had come to this country from Germany in the late part of the 19th century. They settled in North Dakota and she was raised on a farm.

As a child she attended the local school in a community primarily inhabited by German speaking people. The first rule for teaching in her school was that the teacher must speak German but be able to teach English. She said she did not speak a word of English until she started school, but it was easy to learn as a child. Like Mrs. J., she quickly learned to translate for her parents when they traveled to other towns for shopping or to visit family in other parts of North Dakota.

She went to business school after high school and learned to be a bookkeeper. After she married and had children she stayed at home until her children were old enough to start school. Her youngest daughter, however, was developmentally delayed and she spent a lot of her younger years working as a teacher's assistant in her school. The daughter was mainstreamed into the school system once she was older and at that time Mrs. K. returned to work. They lived for many years in a larger city so the services she needed for her daughter would be available. When their daughter was grown, Mrs. K. and her husband retired to a smaller town and left their daughter to live in a group home in the city where the daughter currently resides. She and her oldest daughter are very close and she speaks about her with deep love and respect. Although she did not elaborate on the care and emotional strength necessary to raise the youngest daughter I received a distinct impression that her oldest daughter was her chief helper and collaborator.

Mrs. K. did not speak much about her husband. She said they met when she was young and he had a hard time with her younger daughter. Apparently he died young but I received the impression that they were not close and she did not deeply grieve his passing. Her favorite stories were of working on the farm when she was a girl. Mrs. K. also liked to work beside her father and considered herself his helper. She relates having to work hard and because of the Great Depression not always having enough to eat, although she quickly said, "I never really remember going hungry, just eating the same thing every night for a week or two".

She has grandchildren by her oldest daughter and offers them this lesson. Work hard and do your chores. Never let anyone do what you can do for yourself. Also, be kind

to other people because you never know when their troubles are worse than your own. I found these to be good words to live by and consistent with the events that were meaningful in her life.

Mrs. L.

Mrs. L. was so excited when I arrived at her home she spent the first ten minutes of our interview telling me what an interesting life she had led and how much she was looking forward to sharing it with me. At 95, she still lives alone in a large two-story brick home in a small eastern Colorado town. There was an oxygen tank in the room where she spent most of her time and she walked with a definite gait imbalance. Her eyesight was poor and her hearing was limited, but I never met anyone as excited about her own life as she was. When she was sixteen she was hired to work in a bacteriology lab in the State University. Because of that position she also held faculty status and was able to attend school with reduced tuition. She tells an enchanting story of being taken under the wing of one of the women art teachers who insisted on improving her image. Apparently she had very mousy hair that was turning prematurely gray and left her looking dowdy. The art teacher told her she needed some color and her hair was too thin to wear long. One day the teacher arranged for a barber to come to the school to fix her hair. Those were the days, prior to 1920, when a girl could not go to a barber and there were no women beauticians. They met in the basement of the science building so they would not be caught and he cut her hair and asked her to pick out a color that he could use for a dye. She said she loved the color of her brother's hair, which was a deep auburn, so she had him dye it red and said she kept it dyed that color most of her life.

Her joy in this story was contagious and I found myself laughing at her delight. I could picture this clandestine meeting and her flair for flaunting the standards of society at the time.

Mrs. L. did not just work during her life, she made a crusade of working at as many different jobs as she could either find or create. She had to leave school for a couple of years because her funds had run low so she went to Wyoming to teach school in a mining community. She lived in a hotel with miners and "loose women" and shared a room with a woman she despised but tolerated. I got the impression that Mrs. L. would suffer fools with difficulty and she felt this woman was an utter fool. After she completed college she found a job as a Home Demonstration Agent for the State Department Bureau of County Extensions. However, the job was delayed so she taught for another two years in a small high school in a rural farming community. Once she started the job as a demonstration agent she stayed with it until after the Great Depression was over. She told the most fascinating stories of teaching women to can foods using a pressure cooker so they would not poison their families and teaching men how to make mattresses out of straw that would not attract lice and fleas. Mrs. L. was a strident voice in campaigning for the improvement of women's lives in farming communities. She helped get a government grant to build toilets that would replace the outhouses and chicken yards.

After the Great Depression she decided to settle in the community where she lives now. During her travels in the rural areas she needed a car one year and that's how she met her husband. She said, "He sold me a car and I sold him me". They were married

very happily for 54 years and lived semi-separate lives for much of that time. He left car sales to buy his father's ranch and then bought another ranch in the mountains. She said he spent his time working between the two ranches in order to make ends meet, and because he loved the work. When she first moved to town she was approached by a local organization to run a home for "wayward" girls. She did that during World War II and until after her oldest daughter was born. She lost her first born to stillbirth and blamed the nurse for the child's death, but she was unable to tell me exactly what happened.

She and her husband had two daughters and one son and as soon as they were able to attend school she returned to teaching. Her daughters live in different states but her son remained in the area and is an attorney. Not long after she started teaching they advanced her to the role of assistant principal. A young man came along later that she mentored in the art of teaching and he later went on to become the school principal. I asked her if she wanted the job for herself but she denied the ambition saying she just did not want that much responsibility while she was raising her children and when they were grown she had other things she wanted to do with her life.

By the side of her chair in the living area were stacks of political pamphlets, Federal Registers, and campaign material. She is fascinated with politics and writes letters and helps with the correspondence for the campaign of a local county commissioner. When she was 70 she was invited to contribute a short article to a book about distinguished women in Colorado. Primarily housebound now, she continues to be active in the affairs of the community.

Mrs. L.'s excitement and enthusiasm for living is reflected in the life lesson she chose to share with future generations. She told her children and every young person she met along the way, "whenever you go into a group, gravitate to the top, don't gravitate to the bottom". There are people who make things happen and there are people who allow things to happen to them. You go be one of the people who make things happen. Each of her children went to college and contributes to the communities in which they live. Many of the girls who lived in the home she ran during World War II went on to be active in their communities and to successful professional women. Her life is a living testament to this lesson.

Summary

I felt enriched and empowered by the stories of these twelve women. Their stories give me hope for my own aging and strength to support the aging process of other women. I have tried to be faithful to the substance and the joy I found in the themes that made up the pattern of their long lives.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the study are presented. The study data were analyzed using the constant comparison method in which paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words of each interview were compared for similarities, differences, and patterns. A second level of analysis was made to identify the "major idea", or the basic social psychological process.

The basic social psychological process was growing throughout life into an integration of that life. The data suggested that life integration involves the following interrelated patterns: (a) caring for family, (b) maintaining health, (c) learning throughout a lifetime, and (d) experiencing employment. The process is multidirectional and the patterns are deeply embedded in their relationships. Figure 1 illustrates this process. Figures 2-5 display the complexity of the process of growing into life integration. Each figure shows participant statements quoted directly, and three levels of coding used to move the data to a more abstract level.

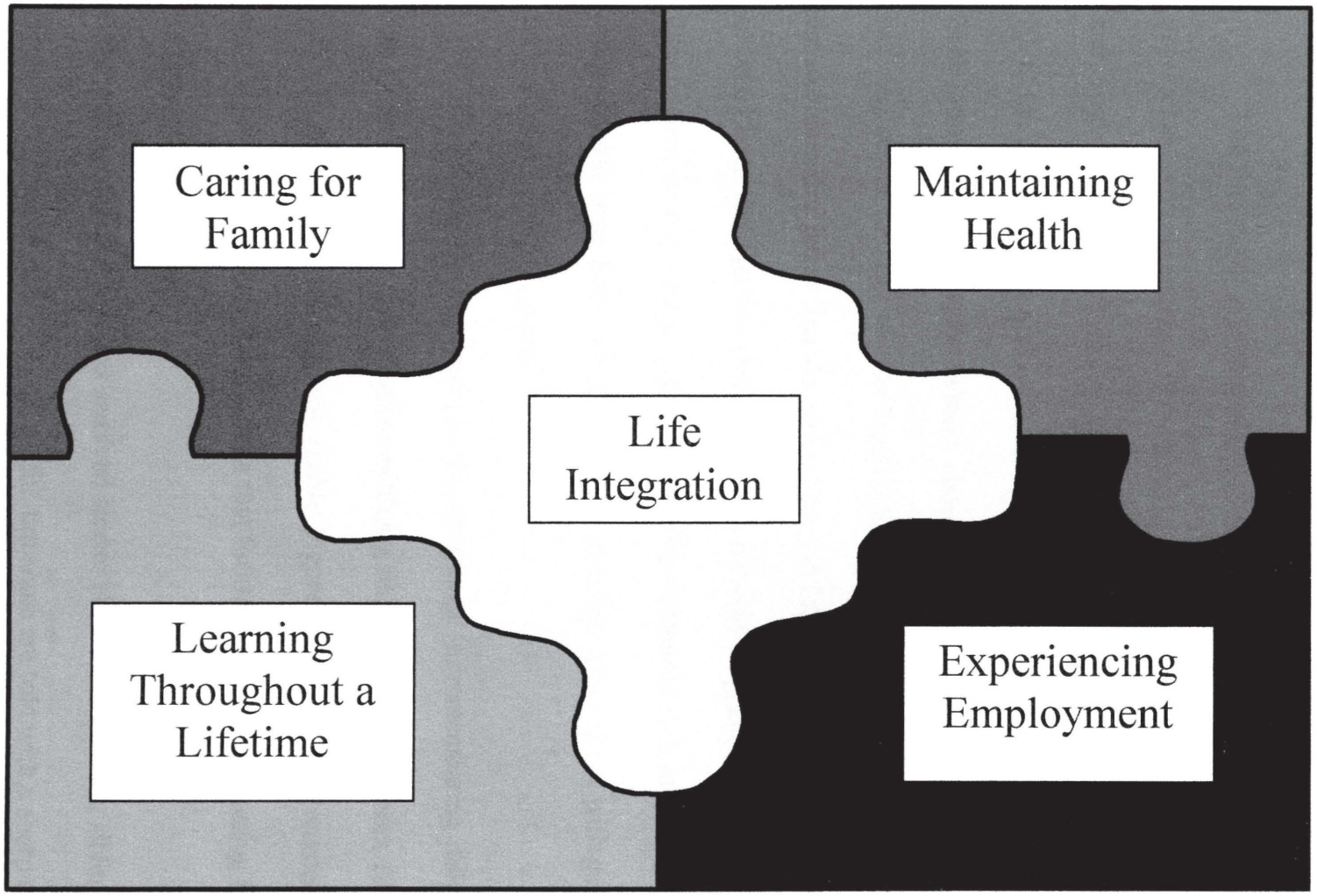

Figure 1. Patterns and Life Integration

Caring for Family

The first major area that emerged from the data was caring for family. Families are imperative. No one arrives in this world in a vacuum so whether the stories are good or bad, tragic or poignant, joyful or sad, every woman shared events that involved her family. All of the participants described in detail their families, and how important the family is. Each interview started with the story about her family of origin. A couple of the women had stepfathers, and one woman brushed by the stories of her childhood and focused on the stories of her father that she learned later in life. The most interesting observation that emerged from the data was that the women all had strong and positive relationships with their fathers, or stepfathers. All of the women mentioned their mothers, most with respect and some with awe, but it was their fathers that they spoke about with genuine affection and a sense of companionship.

Five categories comprised caring for family: (a) remembering childhood, (b) reviewing adult family life, (c) acknowledging responsibility for others, (d) researching family history, and (e) making faith visible. Figure 2 represents the women's comments and the subsequent levels of categories that formed the pattern of caring for family.

Remembering Childhood

Descriptions of their childhood involved stories about their parents, siblings and extended family. Most of the stories are delightful, but some are told with a sharp sense of ache and fierce pride in their parents. Mrs. G. started her life story with an event that happened when she was in elementary school. She was left-handed and her first grade teacher was

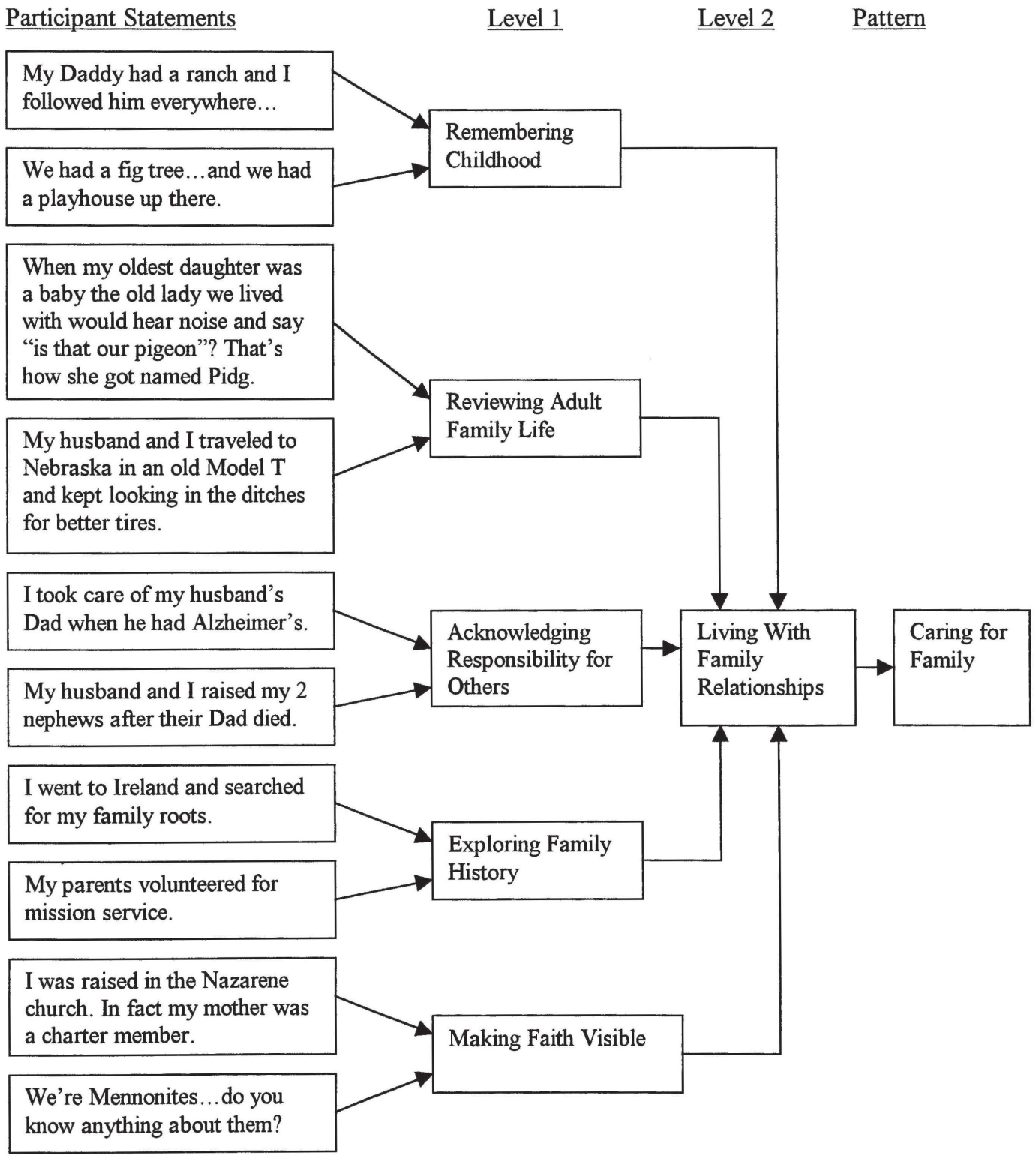

Figure 2. Participant statements, category levels, and the pattern of caring for family.

determined, as many were in those days, to ensure that she would be right-handed. Mrs. G. told this story.

> She was going to make me right handed, so she took hold of my fingers and hit me with a ruler until I had blisters. I was my father's helper and when I got home I went to milk the cow and I only got a little bit of milk. I went in and sat the bucket on the table and later when my father came in from the fields asked me why I didn't get more milk. I said, well, I just couldn't, and he said I think there's more. We'd better go out and see. So he took the bucket and we went out again and I sat down on the stool and we were milking and he asked me what was wrong with my hand. He saw that I was favoring it, and he asked me what was wrong and I said nothing. He said, 'let me see', and he looked at it and by then the blisters were really red and had water under them. Of course then he wanted to know what was wrong and I told him. The next morning he went to school and went to see the teacher and she didn't give him any satisfaction so he went to the school board. She never taught again in that school again.

She shared this event with visible pride in her father and his ability to protect her and help her feel safe.

Mrs. A. speaks about her stepfather, "When I was about 9 or 10 years old she married a railroader and that, I think, was the most important thing that happened to us when we were that age because he was a great person. And from then on my childhood was happy". She went on to describe him in glowing terms as someone who had a sense of humor, who loved them deeply and who invented things. According to her story he was a teaser and loved to play practical jokes. Her birth father had left them when she was about 5 and they experienced several very tough and difficult years before her mother remarried. She was very clear, though, that "he was there for us and it was a very good childhood I would say"

Miss I. tells how her Dad enjoyed the kids in the neighborhood and adored her as a child. "My Daddy had a ranch and I followed him all over the ranch. And he usually gathered up 3 or 4 kids to take with him and they'd be sitting in his lap and driving the Model T at the ranch. You see, my Dad was 46 when I was born and he died thinking I was perfect. Now Mother was not misguided". All the women reflected this special feeling toward Dad and made various comments made about Mom as being more realistic. Taylor (1997) refers to this as the "Daddy's Little Girl" syndrome. Most of the women felt they had a special relationship with their father and the relationship was important and influential to their development.

Childhood stories were also told involving siblings and extended family members. Ms J. tells of playing in the trees with her oldest brother. "We had a fig tree, a big old fig tree that was, fig trees had nice smooth bark like an aspen, but they branch out and we had a playhouse up in the tree. We were monkeys". Mrs. H. went hunting with her brothers and "when we were younger, real young, we would go down to the Superintendent of School's pasture, where he kept sheep...and we used to climb the trees. The buck sheep got us cornered up a tree and we couldn't get down in time to go home for dinner. My Dad came looking for us and found us and got us down". Only one woman was an only child and she tells of playing with her cousins. Interestingly, many of the stories the women told about their siblings involved their brothers and not their sisters.

Reviewing Adult Family Life

Every woman, of course, had stories about her adult family. Miss I. never married but raised the children of her cousin. Mrs. H. married, had no children of her own, but raised the children of a niece. They are the only women who did not have children of their own. Mrs. B. divorced after 40 years of marriage and has lived the rest of her life without being remarried. Mrs. F. is still married to her husband and preparing to celebrate their 60th anniversary. The remaining women are now widowed. One of the most interesting observations I made, starting from the first interview, is that the women did not start their stories immediately with tales of their adult families. Their stories started with events that happened to them as children and only later, and in some cases only after I asked, did they share stories about their families.

The majority of the events in the women's adult lives involving her family concerned either her children or her husband. When I asked Mrs. D. what her husband did for work she said, "He worked with IBM. He was a data processor. They were new at that time and he always had a good job". She went on to tell me a little about their married life. "We were married in 1936 and we had a couple of kids by the time the war came. So my husband went to work for Lockheed because he didn't want to go to war and I was glad of that. We lived in Burbank and he did the IBM and Lockheed for a long time. I always did my own thing".

Mrs. C. tells of living on a ranch with three elderly sisters during her early married life. While living there she became pregnant with their first child who earned her nickname

from the eldest sister. "When we brought the first baby home…she would hear something and she didn't know what she was hearing. She'd say, is that our pigeon? There were a lot of pigeons outside, but she was asking is that our pigeon, meaning the baby. So our daughter goes by the name of "Pidg" today".

As a rancher's wife Mrs. E. was determined to retire as the oldest living cranberry harvester in America. She shared this brief synopsis of her adult family life. "After I as married about two years, we moved to a ranch above Two-Mile, you know where that is? (uh huh) And we lived there for 25 years. I have three boys and they grew up there. My husband was self-employed. We had the ranch and he logged and then he started the cranberry bogs". Mrs. D. spent most of her adult life in California raising three boys. She said, "My husband and I were active. Every two years he'd start to think of a bigger pasture out there and we moved around a lot. But we had a good life".

Whereas most of the women's stories of adult families revolved around their own husbands and children, Miss I. shared her adult life with the children of a cousin. Her cousin had six children and lost his wife when the youngest three were all age four years and under. He asked Miss I. if she would help and she told him that their family had always taken care of their own and it wouldn't stop with her, "so, of course, I'll help out". Mrs. F. was still living with her husband and together they told many stories of their life together and how much fun they had raising their boys. They spent a lot of time camping and hiking when their children were younger. Once they got a little older she learned to play golf and helped one of her son's occasionally with his landscaping business. While she

was sharing the story about how she sculpted a neighbor's bushes into a figure of a Gibson girl her husband kept looking at her with a look of pride on his face. At one point in the story he said, "he (the neighbor) couldn't believe that she did that in one day, probably half a day".

Acknowledging Responsibility for Others

Taking care of others involved codes that were spread across a lifetime. Primarily, however, the women told stories about taking care of family members. Mrs. E. rescued her baby brother from a flood and Mrs. B. put her younger sister through college. Only one woman spoke of taking care of people outside the family. A trio of elderly sisters had taken in MRS. C.'s husband when he came west to California. When she moved out to join him they lived in a guesthouse on the sister's ranch for a few years before he joined the Navy. She told a moving story of how the women were injured in a fire.

He went into town to help them and one day their house burned...and one of them was slightly burned, but not critically. One was 103 and she was scared to death. An elderly Negro man working nearby heard this explosion, which we think was the gas tank....well, she was an Irish girl that remembered the horrible times in Ireland when people were hauled off and girls were just carried off. She thought she was back in Ireland and the explosion was a bomb. She died not too long after they took her to the hospital. All the women told stories about care giving and nurturing, but Mrs. C. was the only one who shared a story about how involved her husband was in the experience.

Besides the two women who raised other people's children, four of the women also told stories about caring for the children of others. Mrs. G. acquired a young man who was a friend of one of her son's when he was a teenager and helped guide him until he was grown. Her story involves being able to thumb her nose at other people in town who did not think the boy would amount to too much.

> My middle son got acquainted with a kid whose father ran a beer joint and whose mother just left. Well my son began to run around with him and I just really did like the kid. We all did. And we included him whenever the boys would go, my boys were all in scouts, and they'd go on camping trips. On some Saturday's I worked, and on the Saturday's I was off I would make a big batch of doughnuts and have them help me. That kid acted like that was the only love he ever had. My husband and I talked about it a lot and we came very near adopting him. We didn't follow through on it, because by that time, we talked about it and then decided we would, he went into the service. He joined the paratroopers and was sent to Louisiana. Course we, I did, bonded with him and he wrote letters telling me what he was doing. I would send him a box of candy just like I did my own kids. He wrote a letter one time saying what he was doing and he was driving the captain around in a Jeep. And that just really did make that kid. He really straightened out. And when I got that letter from him I took it down to the police chief. He's the one that would to search the streets for this kind if anything going wrong he would arrest him. And he would just fine him and let him go. It just seemed like he had it in for the boy. I took the letter down and made him read and he said, well, I guess he did turn out all right. I said you darned right he did, no thanks to you.

The women were willing to care for others that often extended beyond their own immediate families. These women exhibited the eagerness of many women to consider the needs of others in addition to their own families and friends.

Several of the women spoke of caring for their husband's during their illnesses. Two of the women cared for husbands who suffered from Alzheimer's disease, and one of them cared for both her husband and his father. Mrs. D. said, "So I took care of him (her

father-in-law) as much as I could. He would get lost a lot and it got to the point where we had to have him put into a home. He was very easy to care for. He never made a fuss or a problem. He wasn't like my husband. He was just the opposite". Mrs. H. spoke of how she had to take her husband with her everywhere.

> I took him shopping with me and I lost him, of course, in the mall. The girls were going to watch him while I was trying on things and they evidently got busy. They turned to me and said, "Where is your husband?" And, I said, "I don't know. Where is he?" They said we don't know, but they called the manager, S. and he came over. He said, "I told all the girls to go out in the hall and look for him", and I said, "Oh, S. you didn't need to do that". I could go out and I could find him, and he said, no, I've got them all out looking and someone will come back with him, I'm sure. They knew him because he was always with me, and they came back with him. He was trying to find a restroom and couldn't find it.

Like Mrs. D. she laughed at the situation, but the laughter came after the grief.

Exploring Family History

Family history was mostly shared in the form of anecdotes. These vignettes shared the importance of their family history in shaping their personal history. Mrs. E. shares an extensive history of her ancestors, as noted in the section on story telling. Mrs. G. tells of finding her family roots on a trip to Ireland. "They were all, the Welch's were all from Wexford County and the McCrury's were all from Cork County. It was quite interesting to go see, especially the graveyards". Mrs. J. relates the saga of how her parents met and why they became Mennonite missionaries. This was an important story for her to tell because it formed the foundation for her entire life. "My parents, when they were in college, both volunteered for the mission service. They lived at church college, and had the mission there, so when they were married, the mission board wanted to use them

somehow". She went on to marry a preacher in the church and to be a part of the stateside mission service with her adult family.

The origins of their families were important to all the women and were shared in each story, if only briefly. Miss I. tells of how her father was raised in Tennessee and how being there helped him discover his life work and the influence it had on her development.

> He ran away from his home when he was fourteen years old and then he worked one year for his brother and got nothing, and he said that was the best thing that ever happened to him because then he learned that he had to be on his own. He got into the barber business because he didn't have to have any capital and then with the business together he bought his ranch land. He was just an absolute optimist, you know, and that sort of thing. He helped me with my math all the way through the high school, but he thinks he only went to school 3 years, he's not sure.

Miss I. is a college graduate with a professional degree. Her mother was ill from the time she was quite young, but was very supportive of her drive to find a career and be independent.

Making Faith Visible

Religion was an important thread that was apparent as the meaningful events they shared merged into their life story. Mrs. J. was born to parents who were already in the mission field and she grew up, went to college, and married a preacher also destined for the missions. Even the stories of her only child are replete with references to church. She tells an entertaining and amusing story about her daughter and how she interpreted an Easter sermon when she was about four.

> I think perhaps my favorite story of when she was about, almost 4, at Easter time. ___ was the minister at the church her in ___. He was preaching that Sunday about Barrabas, the one that Pilate offered to be crucified but they chose Christ. He made it quite dramatic and I noticed that Sunday she just sat there and listened

> to the whole sermon. Usually she was drawing or writing or something. Then the next day I was at the sink working and she was at the kitchen table working and I heard her say, "and this is the cross, and this is Brer Rabbit, and Brer Rabbit said I should be carrying that cross, but Jesus is carrying it". Then, afterwards she said, "Brer Rabbit said I should be hanging on that cross, but Jesus is hanging there." And, I said, "what are you saying". She said, well it was what Brother H. was preaching yesterday. I explained it to her that it wasn't Brer Rabbit, it was Barrabas. It was a child's mind, and in her mind she associated it with what she knew. I explained it to her that it was a man named Barrabas and he was a wicked man and he was the one who deserved to die and that's why he said he should be hanging on the cross. "Oh", she said. She was kind of disappointed and pretty soon, she was just sitting there, and she said "Mommy, please don't tell Brother H. I thought he was preaching about a rabbit".

Being married to a preacher, and a graduate of a Mennonite Bible College, Mrs. J.'s life story was rich with stories that were associated with her religion.

Most of the women, however, gloss over their religious heritage and none of them spoke in depth of their beliefs. When recounting the meaningful events in their lives, not one mentioned their baptisms or confirmations, or even those of their children. Yet each felt that she had lived a life that was made stronger by her religious faith. When asked if her faith played an important part in her life M. G. stated, "Oh yes. It certainly has. I was raised in the Nazarene church, and in fact my mother was one of the charter members of the Nazarene church here in town". All the women were of the Protestant faith but in various denominations. I thought it was most intriguing that their relationship with the church was not a central topic in their stories.

Although their association with church emerged as the strongest code in this category, faith was also coded. Mrs. D. tells of going to downtown Los Angeles as a

young girl to check books out of the library. One time she went to town and tells about the following incident.

> One time a guy got me on the ground and I was afraid he was, well I remember his arms were just like iron and I couldn't move. But God has always taken care of me. He had me down and nobody with any prayer around and suddenly the man jumped up and said if you don't tell I'll let you go and he disappeared.

Her faith sustained her and she told me she just knew she had a guardian angel that had kept watch over her during her entire life.

Maintaining Health

The pattern of maintaining health emerged from the categories of remembering childhood illnesses, reviewing adult health and illness, coping with accidents and injuries, and accepting the illnesses of aging. Figure 3 represents the comments of the women from which the categories that formed the pattern of maintaining health were derived.

Remembering Childhood Illnesses

Most of the women glossed over any childhood illnesses they experienced such as Mrs. B's comment that "my sister and I had the measles when she was a year and a half old and I was 7 and she lost her hearing at that time. She was almost completely deaf for years". She went on to say that her sister's experience with being deaf is what caused her mother to become interested in the Christian Science religion. After many years her sisters hearing partially returned and her mother credited it to her faith in Christian Science. When I asked Mrs. B. if it changed her religious outlook she just grinned and said, "no, I'll die a Presbyterian".

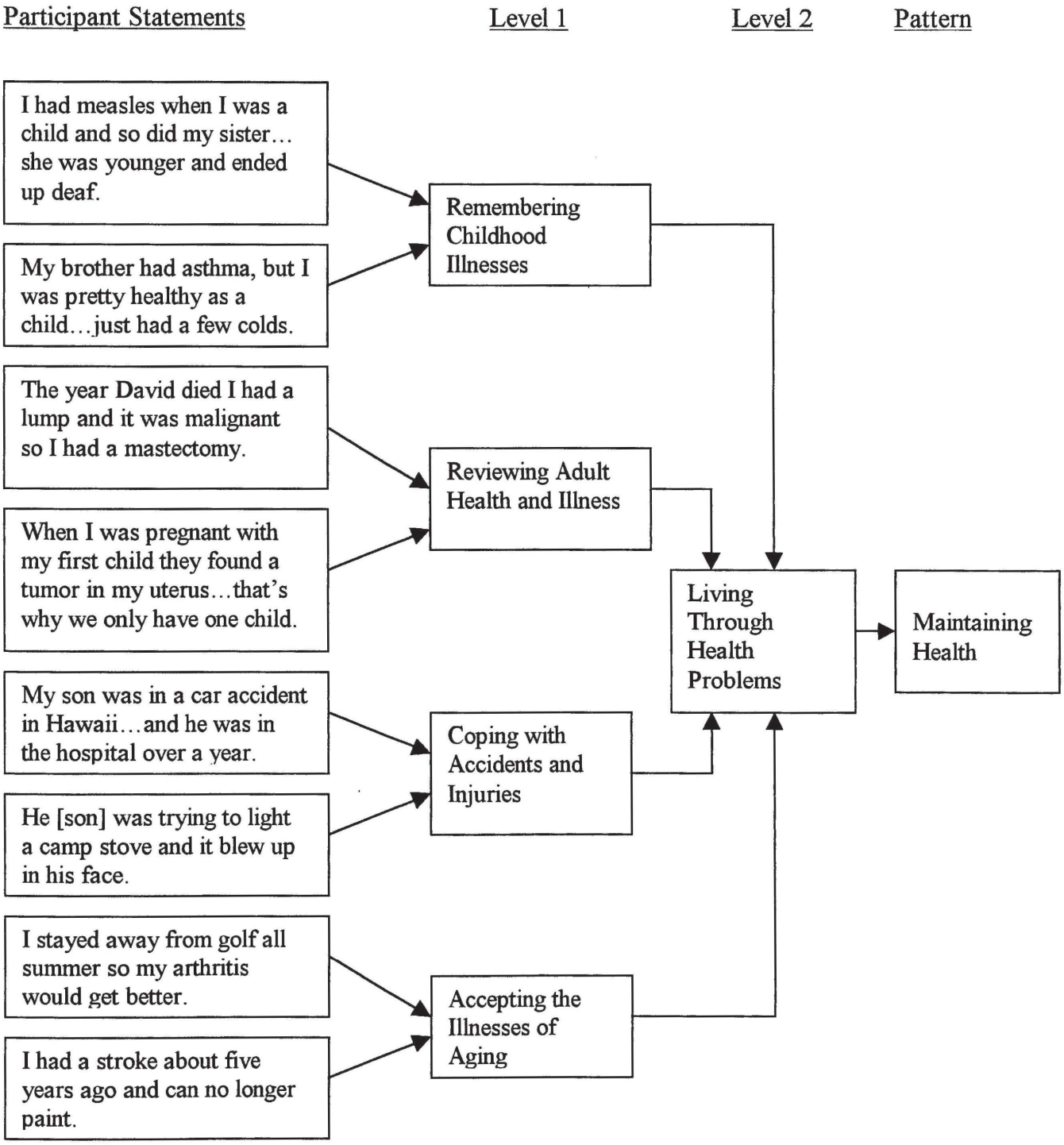

Figure 3. Participant statements, category levels, and the pattern of maintaining health.

Mrs. J. also shared a story about her brother having asthma as a child. "His asthma, when he had an attack he had to be, well, in those days they kept them in bed. I never was sick and I had compassion on him and I did cater to him in most things". Mrs. C. related that she had an uneventful childhood, "...not even marred by a bad case of the mumps". Most of the women did not mention any personal childhood illnesses unless they related to someone else who was ill, such as a sibling or a parent. Mrs. I said she was always well as a child and "it was a good thing, too, because my mother came down with rheumatoid arthritis when I was 14 and I had to take care of her until I left for college".

Reviewing Adult Health and Illness

Most of the women maintained relatively good health as adults. They shared a few stories of their own health and illness status, but mostly they shared stories of health and illness that involved their siblings, children, and husbands. Mrs. J. shared a story of having a fibroid tumor of the uterus removed after her daughter was born by Caesarian section. "Then I never was in the hospital or sick or anything, oh I had a sore throat once in a while, but I never even really had the flu either, until 1986, the year David died. That year I had a lump and it was malignant and I had mastectomy and a year of chemotherapy. But now since then I've been ok". Her story is reflective of all of the women's comments that they never had any real health problems.

When asked directly, however, about their health several of the women revealed life long health problems. Mrs. L. said, "I've always had trouble with my heart. I've had heart trouble all my life". She went on to share that she had only recently, however, had to

take medications for her heart. Mrs. C. told of a problem she had as an adult with a blood disease, which she was unable to name. She said, "Anyway, my doctor explained that my body isn't using iron so my blood tests are always too much of something and not enough of something else so he referred me to an oncologist and he was my primary doctor most of my life". She went on to share that although she had this disease, she felt very healthy and had only recently began to suffer from health problems with the onset of arthritis.

Most of the women shared stories about having hysterectomies or their gall bladders removed. Mrs. F. said, "Before we left California, a San Jose doctor said you are really ready...for a hysterectomy. I just had hectic problems for the last two months. So he said let's make up our mind and he gave me a month to decide. Well a week or two later or something like that, I had a hysterectomy and have not had any problems with my health since then". Mrs. B., Mrs. E., and Mrs. J. all said they had their gall bladders removed, but had no chronic problems associated with gall bladder disease.

Coping With Accidents and Injuries

Mrs. C. reports a healthy adult life. She stated, "I've had my share of accidents. Some just dumb foolishness like when I cut my thumb when I was cutting a piece of fruit out of a dish with a serrated knife. Things like that and sledding on a grassy aqueduct instead of snow I got hurt in the arm, and things like that. But you know I haven't had any serious illnesses". Most of the women told of events that involved accidents and injuries primarily concerning their children. One woman lost her daughter to cancer after the daughter's children were born. Another told of having been devastated by an accident to

her son. Mrs. G. tells the story of when her son was in an auto accident while he was stationed in Hawaii. It well represents the stories the other women told of the accidents that befell their children.

> One time I was really knocked in the knees, knock down I guess. My oldest son was in the Navy and they were getting ready to ship out. There was a boy on base that had a car and they were going to take a drive, up on Skyland Drive in Hawaii and I don't know what happened, whether the boy went to sleep or what, but he flipped that car. My son was sitting in the car with his knee up by his chin and he went through the windshield and instead of pulling the glass away from him he pushed himself out. It broke his leg about 4 inches above the knee and they took him into the hospital, to Trippler Army hospital in Hawaii, to fix them. The driver of the car didn't even get scratch. Well, he got a few bruises and small cuts but my son was in the hospital the better part of the year.

All of the mother's, and those who raised other's children, told these stories with more distress than they told of the events surrounding their own health.

Accepting the Illnesses of Aging

Mrs. D. made an observation about her own health as she aged when she talked about having a frame shop and then having to give it up after a stroke. "Then I had my stroke about five years ago and I can no longer paint or do that part, but I just remember that I could at one time and enjoyed it". When I commented that it must be frustrating she said, "No it isn't because, for instance, I used to like to do animals and people and such when I was drawing and in my mind I'm still doing that stuff. When I look at you I understand your eyes and all of that". She had accepted her limitations, but still took great joy in her prior abilities.

Though health is of interest to nurses, the women noted it only as a subject of distress involving others. Their own health status, mentioned generally in passing, appeared to be considered as simply a part of who they are. Two women had survived a stroke, one had experienced a heart attack, two of them had breast cancer with subsequent mastectomies, two of them had hip replacements and one had a hip and knee replacement. Most of them suffered from chronic arthritis, half had cataracts removed and the oldest one had glaucoma. Their current health status did not get in the way of their living their lives the way they wanted, historically and currently. Mrs. L. told me about the medication she has to take for her heart and then with a twinkle in her eye she said,

> Right now I'm taking two heart medications that I don't want to take and every time I go to my doctor I say I know that I shouldn't be taking these because they are heart medicines. I know that I shouldn't but he says that if you're going to be my patient then you're going to take them. So I cut them into two. And sometimes, I don't even take the half.

Her grin was impish and I knew it would be a waste of my breath to encourage her to take her medicines as they were prescribed. After all, she's already lived to be 95.

Learning Throughout a Lifetime

The pattern that impressed me the most was that of learning throughout a lifetime. This pattern emerged from the stories the women told of formal schooling, continuing education, life experiences, including change and survival, and creativity. The categories that formed the pattern of learning throughout a lifetime are: (a) remembering life as a student, (b) reviewing learning as a continual process, (c) experiencing learning in life, and (d) manifesting the creative. Figure 4 contains the comments of the women and the

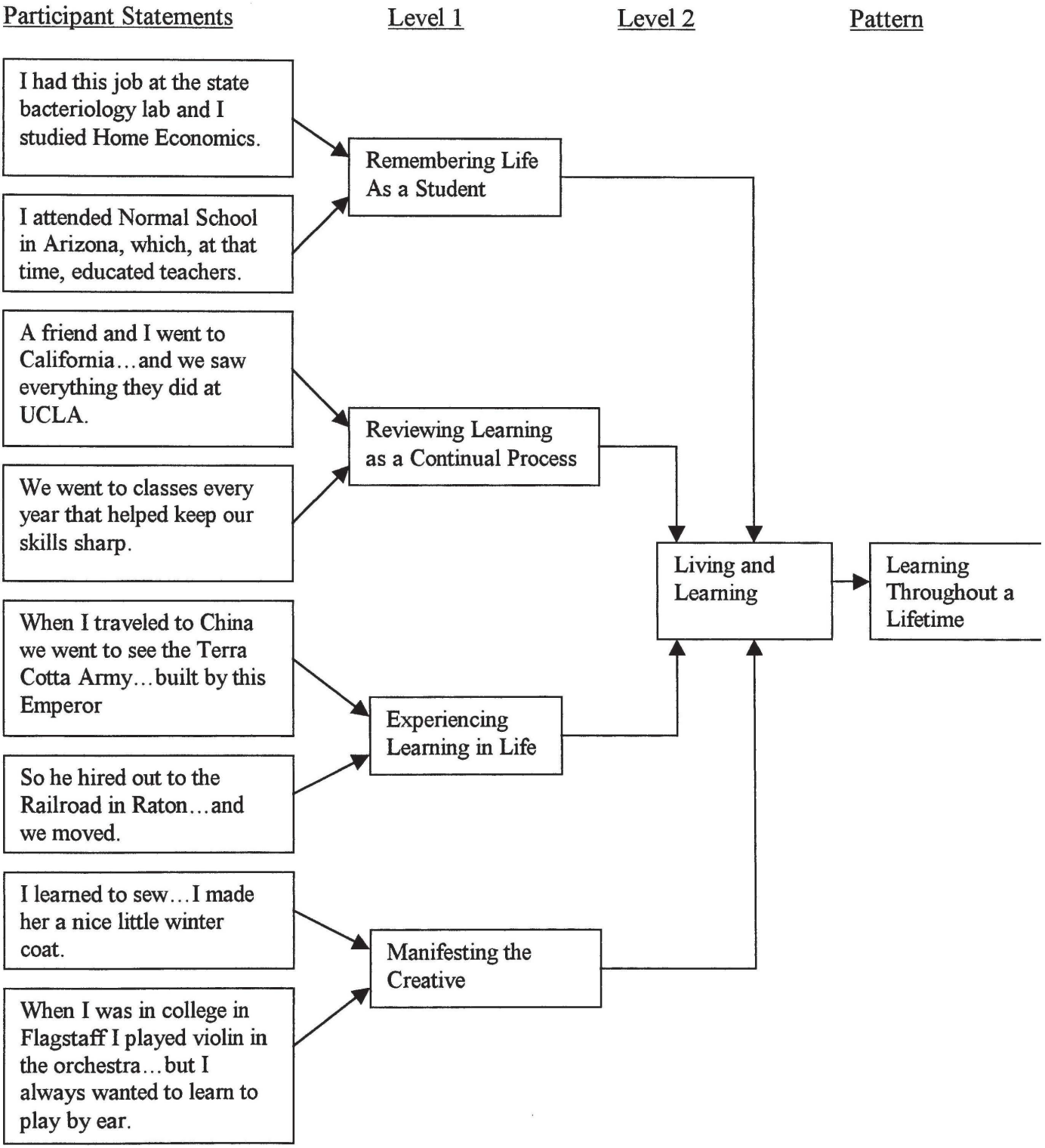

Figure 4. Participant statements, category levels, and the pattern of learning throughout a lifetime.

categories that formed the pattern of learning. Even though this pattern might be expected in women's lives, I was struck by their attitude of having a lifelong love affair with learning. Every woman was a high school graduate. Five went on to obtain college degrees and I found this to be very inspiring primarily because they went to school when college was discouraged for women.

Remembering Life as a Student

The majority of the women started telling about the meaningful events in their lives with a story from their childhood school years. Mrs. J. related a story about her first year in a Spanish speaking school in Argentina. She was learning to speak Spanish by listening to the stories that the teacher told to the class. "I don't remember anything else but this one. This one was about a cat and it said "coro, coro gato lindo", "run, run pretty cat". And I came home and I could trill my 'r's all right and my father and mother would say it (here she demonstrated it without trilling her 'r's) and I would say "No, coro coro gato lindo". (while trilling her 'r's). My little brother was 3 ½ at the time and he loved to say that and he could trill his 'r's". Mrs. J. started giggling while she told this story and it was obvious that it was meaningful in her life.

Mrs. B. told of going to school in Alaska for nine years and then returning the United States. At that time Alaska was still a territory. She said, "The two things I remember most was not having boardwalk streets and corn-on-the-cob. In Alaska fresh vegetables were hard to come by and when we came back to Seattle I had never seen corn-on-the-cob before. I was surprised that nobody taught us about that in school".

Mrs. G. shared the story of how her first grade teacher tried to get her to learn to write right-handed by hitting her with a ruler. Her memories of the blisters and her father's anger are vivid. As a high school student Mrs. D. was an avid reader. She said, "I used to go to the library at night after school. I think I read every book they had down there".

The five women who attended college all did so in varied ways. Mrs. L. was hired into the bacteriology laboratory at the State University when she was sixteen. As part of her job she was provided reduced tuition to attend college. She shared the following event in her life

> I had this job working at the state bacteriologist laboratory. I took Home Economics. My sister had been there and belonged to a sorority so I had a place to go. I was a member of the faculty because I worked for the state bacteriologist. He took me to all the faculty meetings right along with another woman who worked there as a faculty person. I not only entered college, but I was a faculty member, so you see I entered college differently than anybody else.

After two years of working and going to school she ran out of money, so she left college and went to a mining town in Wyoming to teach for two years. Then she returned to college and completed a degree in Home Economics and Education. She shared story after story of the jobs she held as a result of her college education. Ultimately, she retired as the Assistant Principal of a local high school.

When Mrs. J. left Argentina to attend college she had to wait a year and return with her brother so she would have a chaperone on the voyage back to the United States. I asked if she enjoyed that time and she said, "Oh, yes. We had a lot of fun. I remember and I worked in the kitchen. They gave us jobs to help pay for our tuition, and I worked in the kitchen there. I had a lot of fun serving tables. I got to laugh and joke with my fellow

students and we loved to poke fun of the boys, especially since we were so segregated at a Mennonite school". Mrs. J. related another story about how challenging it was to equate English learned in a Spanish speaking school with English learned in an English speaking school. She said, "For instance, one day, it was in physics class. The professor asked for the formula of a circle, and I said "2pi r". And they laughed at me. I didn't know we said it pi (as in pie). In Spanish it's pronounced as if it were the letter e. They laughed a lot, but it didn't take me long to learn".

Miss I. was an only child but because of the Great Depression and could not attend college without some financial assistance. She shares vivid accounts of working her way through school and getting one of the first degrees offered in communications, or what later came to be know as Speech Therapy. While she was in college she met several other young women who, together with a group of physicians, went on to start one of the first programs for children with cerebral palsy. Between her undergraduate work and graduate school, Miss I. worked as a teacher. She went on the graduate school and tells of being in Chicago at the end of World War II. "I was up at Northwestern on VJ day, and that was an entirely different situation. I ate peanut butter for 3 days because everything in Evanston closed. I did have the good sense not to go down to the Loop". The experiences the women shared of the events that happened to them as students were amusing, sad, and enlightening, and were meaningful for each woman.

Reviewing Learning as a Continual Process

Continual learning was not exclusive to the women who had professional careers. Although more often discovered as a part of professional continuing education, all of the women shared events that demonstrated ongoing learning in their various fields and creative endeavors. Miss I. worked as a speech therapist, primarily with children with development disabilities. She not only provided therapy to the children but also functioned as a clinical faculty member for the nearby School of Medicine. Her story was woven with the opportunities she took to advance her learning in her field. This event occurred while she was working with a team to develop a new program for the center she worked at and is one example of her search for continuing knowledge. "A friend and I had gone out to California because B. J. was on the staff at UCLA and we stayed with her. We saw everything that the UCLA people had and then we came home and built it. We had 30 years of a terrific center". She went on to tell of a visiting therapist who worked with neuromuscular impairments and who came to teach at the center. The center director was a friend of Miss I.'s and felt strongly that everyone on staff should have the opportunity to attend an annual conference that was held in the area every year. When they were unable to attend the conference she said,

> We would manage the money somehow to bring somebody in hearing from Northwestern or to bring R. who's head of children's neurology from Chicago. We'd bring M. J. from the West Coast. We'd bring the speech pathologist from out there, from Palo Alto. And we'd concentrate it here and it was so much fun to be a part of it.

Her excitement was palpable in the room as she told of her years at the center and her commitment to continuing education as a way of learning everything she could in order to take better care of the children.

Mrs. D. waited until after her children were grown and left home and then pursued her own interests, including taking the time to learn how to paint. Mrs. J. went back to work as a schoolteacher when her daughter was very young and continued to teach until she retired about 25 years later. She said, "I taught 3 years with a temporary certificate. After 3 years, then I got a life certificate. Now they won't give life certificates. I had a life certificate so I didn't need to go to school anymore or anything. But I did take classes when they were offered around that I thought would help me". When Mrs. B. worked as a librarian she said "we attended classes every summer bringing us up to date on the latest technologies that were impacting library science". Mrs. H.'s husband started an electronic business during the early years of their marriage. He wanted her to work with him so she went back to school and took a few bookkeeping classes so she could handle the "business end of his company". She said, "he was the engineer, but he didn't know anything about keeping records. So I learned and we worked together". Whether expanding their knowledge in pursuit of their own careers, to enhance another's business, or to pursue their own dreams all of the women demonstrated the willingness to engage in continuing learning.

Experiencing Learning in Life

Mrs. G. did not go on to college but worked as a sales clerk prior to her marriage and after her children were in school. Very quickly after the interview started, however, she was telling me about her adventures in traveling. She has traveled through most of the world and told riveting tales about what she learned in each country. Her stories about her visit to China were fascinating.

> We went to see the Terra Cotta Army. This farmer many years ago was digging a well, or started to dig a well, and he when he had dug it about halfway down he dug into these stone figures. He continued digging and the more he dug the more he found. So he ran in to the officials and they came out and I don't know how they worked it out with him whether he donated it, or what, I don't know, but they took his land. That's how they found this Terra Cotta Army. They had a big hut, like a Quonset hut over the area. There were 14 isles, and we stood on a ramp and looked over. They wouldn't let us go down in it but there's a pathway around it so you can look down in it. The isles were as long as you could see to the end of them. It was buried years ago…this king, or emperor, had it carved and had 'em made for his burial. In his afterlife he had all these soldiers. He had all this army to guard him and some of them were bigger than life.

Mrs. G. spoke about this with such enthusiasm it was easy to get as excited about this new knowledge as she had been. She embraced learning in her life experiences. I had never heard of the Terra Cotta Army before so I was fascinated. Since then I have seen books about it, a PBS special, and been to the Asian Exhibit in San Francisco where there is a miniature of the army on display. Her love for learning new things was apparent and contagious.

Mrs. C., while sharing the experiences she had with rationing during World War II, also shared how excited she was to learn new techniques for gardening and for canning food. As a child middle class parents, even during the Great Depression, adequately took

care of her needs. During the war, though, she was a young bride living across the country from her family and responsible for their care and well being. While they lived near three old women and helped with their care, she spent time with the woman who did the cooking at the ranch and learned many new skills for canning and preserving food. She shared some of her learning with me, particularly a new recipe for canning smoked tuna.

Change and survival as part of their life experiences also provided a format for learning. Since change is endemic in modern life it would be notable only by its absence. The codes that indicated change included moving and relocation, risk taking, travel, the Great Depression, the impact of society and culture. Survival emerged out of codes that include hardship, environmental hazards, and loss.

The Great Depression was an event of such magnitude and lasted for so many years that it had an influence on all the women's lives, even greater than that of either of the two World Wars. As a result of living through this devastating time in history much learning was acquired by each woman. Miss I. stated it best when she said,

> The thing about it is I think these are the things that happen to all of us because of circumstances beyond our control. That is I'm talking about the people of my generation, my friends. The one's that were in college right in the middle of the depression. Nobody had wheels, nobody had money, and everybody was having to defer to the financial.

The Great Depression placed women in the position of having to work that may otherwise have been spared the necessity. Some were robbed of an education and others felt the impact only as it was mirrored in the price of goods, but all felt the weight of having limited resources. Mrs. E. commented, "Then of course, the big depression came along

just as we moved and things were pretty rough for a long time. The price of cattle went down and the price of everything else did too, but who had any money". Lives that were stable and productive and happy were changed almost overnight into lives bent on surviving and trying to plan for a future against the stark background of a world that held no apparent future.

Mrs. B. impressed the actual financial impact of the depression on me when she was telling me about her salary as a librarian. "I had gone in at $100. After a couple of years of the depression they dropped our salaries so that I was getting $83.12, I think. But every other month or so there was an extra penny". Periodically, she said, the state treasury was out of money so they might not receive a check for several weeks. She was working as a librarian and supporting a younger sister in college at the same time. The impact of the depression on their lives was considerable since the original plan was for her parents to provide for the education of all their daughters.

The changes in society also made changes in personal lives. A few of the women recounted having an experience of World War I, but more of them told stories of World War II. Everyone, of course, had a story about where they were when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, just as my generation knows exactly where they were when President Kennedy was shot. The war, however, left some women single who were destined for marriage and left others widowed in the blush of young motherhood. They told of husbands who left for war and the changes that decision made in their lives. Mrs. F. said, "He quit that beautiful job and said, I can't, I've got to do my part. And that was

kind of numbing to me". During his leave after boot camp she became pregnant and decided to move in with his parents in Iowa while he was gone. A common story during the war, but the change in her life was tremendous at the time.

Mrs. C. shared many riveting experiences about her life. During the war she and her husband left New England and moved to California where he worked in the war effort at home. While they were coming across the country she told me of having to look in the ditches for tires that had better tread than the ones on their car because of the shortage of rubber. She also said, "It was very hard to get by on our rations. We tried many ways of preserving foods, many I'd never learned in school or at home". Mrs. J. was heading to Argentina when she was six, a child of missionary parents, and undergoing significant change by such a major move. Just before they left America, however, World War I began and she tells of having to cover their portholes at night to reduce the risk of being found by German U-boats. The impact of society, including the Great Depression and both World War's changed the outlook for many of the women's lives. They dealt with the change with fortitude, strength and courage.

Moving, or relocation, occurred at least once in every woman's life. Change is a part of the moving experience. Relocation to a new town, finding a new job, buying another house all result in change and learning. Several women spoke of moving to new towns with their nuclear families while they were in school. Others told of moves after they were married, and still others shared moves that occurred after they retired. Every

woman, however, had experienced the change and learning that comes with a move or relocation at least once in her life.

Mrs. G., early in her interview, told me of having to move to accommodate her husband's work. "So he hired out to the railroad from ___ first district, as an engineer. So we moved to ____, and that's where my daughter was born. We lived there five years, then we transferred to ____". Mrs. C., Mrs. F., Mrs. H. and Mrs. J. also moved because of their husband's work. Several of the women didn't just move towns, they moved across the country from their nuclear families. They experienced significant change and, for most of them, when they were young and newly married. World War II, as noted by Mrs. C, precipitated several of the moves. "It was Pearl Harbor and we were in San Diego. We went back to New Hampshire and I hardly gave him time to say hello to his family...and we headed west again". Mrs. F followed her boyfriend out and lived with a friend while he worked in an aerospace plant before joining the Air Force.

Mrs. J. tells of moving when she was six, "but then finally, it was during the war in 1917, another family with two children and my family with two children, myself and my younger brother, in 1917 sailed for Argentina". Besides moving to a new country, her family had to learn a new language and a new culture. Her parents placed her in the local public school, rather than the American Girls School, so she learned the art of flexibility in the face of change at a young age. When she and her parents returned to America for a respite visit several years later she was not able to return immediately and had to remain with friends for another year. The change she experienced with these moves left an

indelible impression on her as noted when she told me about agreeing to marry her husband. "I didn't say anything to anybody, I hadn't confided in my folks, or anybody. I really think that those years that I was alone with my uncle and aunt kept me from confiding in anyone". Moving is a change that may be accepted or endured, but does not occur without leaving a mark.

Risk taking is a code that is important to change. The idea of risk is associated with the possibility of loss or danger. Any time a change is made there is the possibility, in fact the probability, of loss. These women dared loss and many times they dared the likelihood of danger as well. The Great Depression was filled with loss and the changes brought by the wars also held the potential for danger, both to themselves and to those they loved. When Mrs. J. told of crossing the Atlantic to reach Argentina she said, "It took us 28 days on the ocean because of the fear of German submarines, we went zigzagging all around and I remember especially how we didn't dare open the portholes until the lights were all out".

Several of the women told stories about change and risk taking that obviously still gave them a thrill. Mrs. B retired from school teaching and decided to return to her roots in the Northwest. She tells of driving up to Oregon to look for a place to live and feeling exposed because she was a single, elderly woman trying to negotiate the buying of a house. "I set a price fairly low and I went to most all the real estate offices in town. There was one office that I went to, and I was just getting ready to pack up and go back home,

and this man psyched me out perfectly". She went on to tell the story of buying the house which illustrated risk-taking behavior.

> He said well, I can show you some houses and he showed me a couple that were not acceptable at all. One was beyond Price and Pride here, it was an older house, and wasn't in the location I wanted. Tried looking at another one and showed me one and I said, well, I thought I'd like to be close to the ocean. He showed me one out there but I didn't like it either. He said, well, I have one that I think you would like. It's one that you would be happy to invite your friends to. It's a new house that the high school has just built. It's a little more in price than you had limited it to, but he said I think its more what you want. So he brought me and showed me this and I knew this was it right away.

Mrs. B. accepted the risk of trusting someone not to take advantage of her in order to achieve the change in her life that she desired and learned a lot about buying a house.

Risk taking also was present when the ideas of society towards women were challenged. Mrs. L. gave the most vivid account of starting college when she was sixteen and having an art teacher take her in hand and change her appearance.

> At that time I had very mouse colored light blonde hair with a lot of gray in it, at sixteen years of age. And this woman said that you're not going to enter college with that hair. Nobody would think that you were sixteen with that gray hair. So she took me down to the barbershop and at that time, in 1922 girls didn't go to the barbershop, so she made an appointment after hours for the barber to come and meet us there. In the first place, I had long hair, long so you could sit on it, long blonde straggly hair. So, I had my hair cut and the barber dyed my hair. He asked me what color I wanted it. Well, I wanted it to be exactly the color of my brother's hair. He had the most beautiful auburn hair. So, I picked out the color, it was a rue color. I don't know what, that was just the brand of the dye. I took the same number off the dye box and used it for years and years and years, and dyed my hair. The risks she took in changing her hair were not common in the 1920's. She accepted the challenge to be different, took the risk to change, and learned something about herself into the bargain.

Although travel is not necessarily consistent with the idea of change as leaving something old and taking on something new, it still represents a departure from everyday

behavior and contains an element of risk taking. Traveling offered many new opportunities for learning. Several of the women told tales of traveling, some throughout America and others throughout the world. Mrs. G. traveled widely after her husband's death and demonstrated knowledge about some of the places that she had seen, such as the Underground Army in China. She also shares stories about her adventures riding down the Yangtse River, climbing the Great Wall of China, and struggling through customs after her wallet had been stolen. Mrs. A. very briefly commented on the fact that she learned to fly and while on a trip to Mexico went para-sailing. Her sense of adventure is still intact as noted in this comment about traveling, "next year I'm going to Russia", and her comment on being active, "I wanted to jump out of a plane, too, but I haven't done that yet. She's 83 years old and obviously undaunted by her age. Risk taking is a thread that is woven throughout the stories of these women's lives. Sometimes it is associated with change, sometimes with adventure, sometimes with survival, but always it presents the face of courage.

Webster's (1988) defines survival as living or existing in spite of struggles or negative experiences or to outlive others of the same species. This definition fits most appropriately some of the experiences of these women. They survived the hardships brought about by the Great Depression and the two World Wars. As children and grown women they survived natural disasters. Throughout their lives they survived the death of loved ones and the loss of their health and their homes. They demonstrated great strength, courage, tenacity, resilience, and learning as they coped and survived.

The Great Depression produced a tremendous hardship on most families, even when major changes did not occur. Families in cities depended on the farmers for their food and the farmers often produced only enough to feed their own families. People left the Midwest and the dust bowl in droves searching for jobs and homes. Cities grew and rural areas shrunk and still people struggled for enough food and clothing and shelter.

Mrs. L. went to college in the 1920's and by the time the Great Depression was in full swing she was working in a rural area trying to teach women how to can food so that it wouldn't poison there families. She also taught men how to make mattresses out of straw that didn't attract lice and fleas. Her own words bring intensity to her experiences. "In these counties, the terrible farm condition, the poverty. For instance, very few of them had toilets. If they had to go to the bathroom, they had to go out in the chicken house". Mrs. L. experienced these conditions with these women and, from the education she received in college, worked hard to help change them for everyone.

Mrs. K. grew up on a farm and worked along side her mother as they struggled to put food on the table for their family. She states, "It was hard work. I worked on the farm and a lot of time we didn't have all the food we wanted…I said to mother what are we going to cook for dinner? She said, we had noodles and cabbage last night so we're going to have cabbage and noodles this night". Mrs. K also tells of how the environment worked against them ensuring they would have to struggle harder to survive. "The wind blew and blew and all the crops, there was nothing. We couldn't even get hay out there in

the field". Crops that didn't grow couldn't be traded for staples that meant food on the table for the winter.

Families depended on each other not only to survive, but also to find a way to endure and be ready for better times. Mrs. B. tells of supporting her sister while she went to college because her parents didn't have the money and both girls knew they had to work to make ends meet.

> The idea was that I was to get my education, get a job, and send my next sister to school, to college, then she would send the youngest one to college. It didn't cost very much to go to college in those days, which was fortunate because they wouldn't have had any money. Right after she came over there my father lost his job, so here I was supporting a family of four on $83 a month. Things were pretty tough. By the time we paid for rent and my sisters tuition and books and things, there were some months, several months, when we had under $10 left for food and clothing. But we survived.

Strength, courage, persistence and tenacity marked these women. All of them had stories to tell about the Great Depression and surviving hard times, but these were the most moving.

M. E. started the story of the meaningful events in her life with a stark account of surviving a flood when she was a young child. She had several brothers and sisters and they were home alone with their mother when the water started rising in a nearby river. Her story started with "When I was maybe eight years old, there was a terrific flood". She went on to describe the flood and how they survived.

> There was my mother and seven of us kids. The youngest one, my brother, was about six months old. We were in the house and in the night my mother woke up my brothers and, of course, I had to get in on it. The water was coming up. She had them move wood up on the porch. We didn't have electricity then, and the porch was maybe four feet up off the ground and she had them stack the wood on

> the porch so it wouldn't wash away. Well, it washed away eventually anyway. The she had them move stuff up out of the way of the water coming in. We were setting in the living room by the stove and I saw this water coming in under the living room door. It just looked black. I'll never forget seeing that black water come on the floor of the living room under the door. I grabbed my little brother out of the crib and flew up the stairs. And it came up maybe three feet in our house. We were stuck upstairs with no heat or anything. A neighbor came down in a rowboat, the front of the rowboat came in the back door, and he brought us some milk. It was just a horrible mess and I often wonder what my mother went through stuck upstairs with seven kids.

Survival from natural disasters did not affect every woman, but it illustrates the strength, resilience, courage, and learning acquired by these women, even as children, in the face of events they could not control.

The thought of losing something one hold's dear is not often associated with the idea of survival. Most women will quickly tell you, though, how they survived the loss of the husband, or the loss of a child, or the loss of a parent. Loss stimulates a grief response that must be endured, survived, and mastered, in order for the activity of living to resume. The growth that comes from the mastery of these stressful events involves learning. (Younger, 1991). All of the women experienced losses, of one degree or another. Many told of the death of children, all of them spoke of the death of their parents, and most of them shared the death of their husband.

Mrs. L told the most poignant account of loss by death when she shared with me how she lost her first child. "I had a little boy but that was another sad thing, I went through. My first child was a boy. My husband wanted me to come home, to have our baby. Well, the doctor was off playing bridge and he was there a while, and the things that the nurse did, caused the death of my baby". She was still quite angry about what the

nurse did, although when questioned she could not remember what it was that actually happened. When I asked her how she coped with the death of her baby, she shrugged and said, "You just move on, that's all. I don't know how".

Mrs. D. tells a distressing story about the death of her first child and then the later loss of her third child by suicide. During her entire story I never saw Mrs. D. flinch or withdraw from telling of events that were obviously still painful for her to bear. Of all the women I interviewed she was resplendent with courage and dignity. She said, "My first baby died when he was just six weeks old. The first one, you know, is very difficult, but I had three more after that. The youngest one came up here a time or two after we came up here and then he committed suicide and that was hard and sad". While telling me this story she drew her shoulders back and brought her chin up as if daring me to feel sorry for her or assault her dignity. I simply acknowledged her loss and she relaxed as she continued telling me about her children. Her husband and his father both had Alzheimer's Disease and she took care of both of them during their illnesses, although fortunately not at the same time. Mrs. D. told of having to learn about the disease in order to provide the best care she could to both men. She describes her father-in-law as being a pleasantly confused man who was very little trouble to care for, but she said her husband was quite difficult. After many years of care giving she said, "He died about two years ago and he's been gone for a long time. I've already done my weeping there, because it seems like he's been gone longer, but now he's gone and I'm still here". She survived.

After being a widow for almost 40 years, Mrs. L. speaks poignantly of the loss of her husband. She describes the events leading up to his death with such lucidity that I feel as though I lived them with her and was as shocked as she was at the ending. She told me that he was a very superstitious man and did not believe that they should have a party for their 50th wedding anniversary. He told her that of every couple they knew who had celebrated their anniversary one of them died within the year. She remembered him being quite adamant about not having a party. Unfortunately, he failed to stress his determination to his children. They planned a party for them and, with an invitation in the local paper, invited everybody in the small town where they lived. She related the following:

> We had been through ____to see ____. She was just married. Her husband was in the Navy and they were stationed in ____so we went back and spent some time with them. Then we went on to_____. ____was from, um, I mean on to____. ____was from____. We visited all of his family in____. We had a wonderful trip, and then we came home, and I will never forget it. He said, "you know we've had such good time why don't we just go on up and tell ____ about it so we don't have to tell her over the phone". So we did, and we had some things to take to her from our trip. We just slept that night, and the next morning we got up and went to ____and stayed there two or three days. We took a picture of ___and ___ on the porch just as we left there. We came home and the same thing happened. He said "You know what? I'm going to call my sister over at____." He said, "I just don't know why we just don't go over there too and tell everybody about our trip so we don't have to write it all." I said, "Well, it's up to you." So we went to bed that evening, and got up and decided that was fine. So he got on the phone and sat there on the phone and talked to ___for a long time. ___is his sister and they planned, they always planned what we did. Her husband and I did the driving and let them plan where, and what we did. So they planned out this big trip. We got up and came in the den, and sat down, and I will never forget He put his hands up, something like this and said, "There's something wrong with my fingers. They're dead. My fingers are, are gone, they just fell asleep." I don't know why, it's just one of those premonitions but I said, "That's it, I'm going to take you up to the hospital." I'd never got the car out of the garage. He always drove it out because

> it's a very tight squeeze. It's hard to get out. I grabbed the keys, went and got the car out of the garage, got him and got him in the car, and got him to the hospital. Then I called the doctor. He said, "would you call___. I think she would like to know that I'm sick". I said that I don't know her telephone number, and he said, "Well, you go on down to the house and call her and just tell her that I'm sick". So I got up from the hospital and came down here and looked up her telephone number and called____. I told her, that Daddy is sick and he just wanted her to know it. I got back up there, and he had died, while I was gone.

I was very impressed with the intensity of this story. Mrs. L. is 95 years old and tells this story as if it had happened yesterday. Survival means you learn how to cope and to live on in spite of your experiences. It does not mean you forget.

Manifesting the Creative

The majority of the women also shared learning experiences that were associated with creativity. They engaged in the fiber arts, painting, music, and theater. Three of the women took home economics courses in college and had learned to sew while still children. One learned to make coats and skirts for her daughter out of her brother's worn out suits.

> My brother, the one that was the electrical engineer and worked in the labs, and he liked tweed suits. In those days they wore suits to work (right)., and the sleeves would get frayed and the seats would wear out(laughter). So he sent me some of his suits, I guess there for a while he sent me all of them, and I could, from the pant legs make skirts and things. I made her a nice little winter coat when she was about 10 years old. I could piece it then, and it was kind of a flared coat, and I pieced a little belt in the back.

When her daughter went to college she made her a suit out of rose flannel. Her daughter told her "I don't have as many clothes as the others, but my clothes fit better". Mrs. J.'s eyes just danced as she told this story.

Mrs. L. became a dress designer and model. She tells of a woman who was married to a physician who used to come to Colorado for the summer.

> They made wonderful dresses for very rich people. She found out I could sew, and I could make anything so she hired me. They would pick out a piece of material that they wanted a dress made out of and she would look at them and tell them what she thought would be nice for them. Then I would go make the dress and we would sew the thing in the back of the neck that said 'designed and created by' and that was me.

This was a talented woman who had studied home economics in college and told of so many life experiences where her creativity was used and valued.

Mrs. A. likes to crochet and knit and said, "I made three children's sweaters and gave them to my daughter-in-law. She belongs to the weaver's club and they make sweaters and caps and socks for kids at the women's shelter, so I made three sweaters". Even their creativity is often associated with care giving.

Music and art are other forms of creativity that engaged these women. Mrs. B. learned to play the violin as a child and when she retired she joined the Old Time Fiddler's group where she lives. She laughingly told me "when I was in college in Flagstaff I played in the college orchestra. But I always sort of wanted to play by ear, and, of course, violinists look down on you if you do that but this was more fun". Mrs. B. is over 90 and still plays with the group 2-3 times a month. When she was younger, in her 70's and 80's she would travel with the group around the state and play at different locations 2-3 times per week. She feels like her age is finally catching up with her and slowing her down a little.

Mrs. D. learned to paint when she was over 50. Before that she was raising a family and caring for her husband's father who was ill with Alzheimer's Disease. Like many women she did not think she was creative. "I didn't think I could do it until I started my frame shop for a reason and then an artist I knew started me right at the beginning on my perspective and all of that. That's why I wouldn't draw because I didn't have any perspective. Within two months I was doing anything I wanted to do". Her home contained several of her paintings and they were quite good. She preferred to paint landscapes and she had captured many of the scenes along coastal California and Oregon just as I had seen them while traveling. This story is similar to the stories of the other women who waited until their families were grown to learn something new. They never let go of their love and need for learning.

Their creative talents extended beyond the traditional arts. Mrs. F. spent her time after she turned 50 learning landscape sculpture. She and her husband related an amusing tale of her first project.

> We lived next door and our neighbor came home from work one night and found he had a Gibson girl at the corner of his house. She had a big hat and everything. That worked out so well and she had a skinny little paper waistline. I made it taller than myself and oh, facing, I don't remember whether it was facing the house or the back yard, or whatever, however, one had limbs so I could sculpt a little opening there and, of course she had a big bosom. She also had kind of a bouffant on her skirt.

She claimed that she acquired the talent from her father, but her son ran a landscape business and her husband shared how many hours she spent at the nursery learning how to

use the various tools. The women were readers and travelers, knitters and weavers, artists and musicians engaged in a life long quest for learning.

Experiencing Employment

The single most intriguing pattern that emerged, starting with the very first interview, was the fact that these women worked outside the home. Of course one might expect that many women of this cohort held jobs during World War II, but these women tell of having jobs when they were in high school, before they were married, while going to college, and, significantly, while they were raising children. This is not a group, given the history of the times, which one would think of as working women. Each of them, however, held a job at some point in their lives, even the two women who were full-time homemakers. The categories that merged into the pattern of experiencing employment are (a) working outside the home, (b) pride in a professional career, and (c) working for oneself. Figure 5 represents the categories that form the pattern of experiencing employment.

Working Outside the Home

One woman had a job in a café before she got married and then married a rancher. I consider Mrs. E. to have had one of the most difficult and challenging jobs of all the women. After she and her husband retired from ranching they bought a cranberry bog. They built a retirement house at the bogs but her husband died when he was 54. Mrs. E. decided to sell the ranch and keep the bogs. When I asked what she did and how long she worked with the cranberries she stunned me with the following comment:

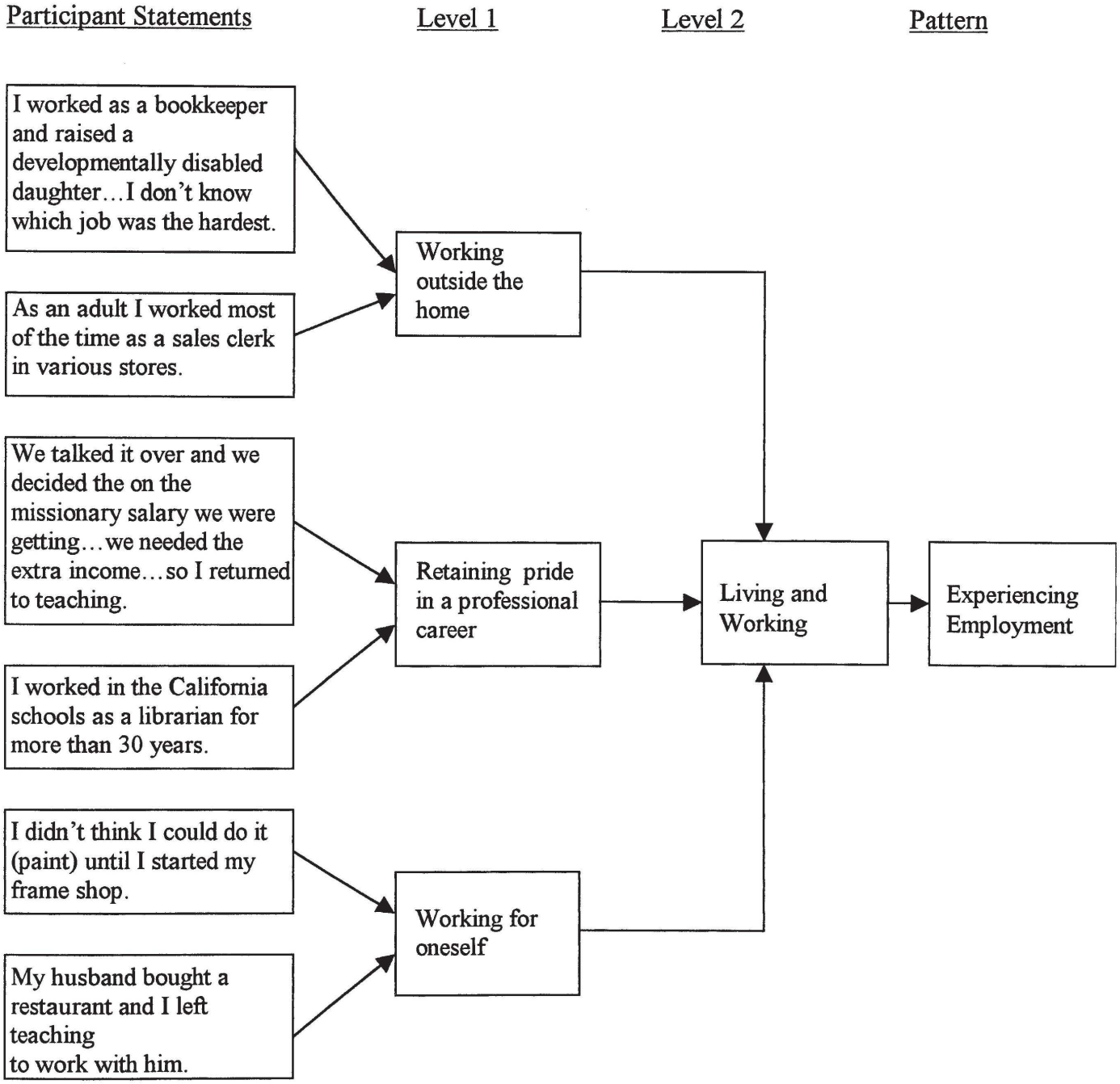

Figure 5. Participant statements, category levels, and the pattern of experiencing employment.

> I dug ditches, I fertilized, I did spaying, I irrigated, I did everything you have to do with cranberry bogs besides help harvest. I helped harvest until I was 80. I thought I'd set a record for being the oldest female cranberry harvester in the country.

Harvesting work is difficult with the best of crops, but it is wet and back breaking work in the bogs. I was suitably impressed.

Mrs. F. worked as a secretary while she was in high school and then took a few courses in bookkeeping. Once she married she never held a job again. This is the picture of women over 80 that I expected to find. The only other woman whose life formed a similar picture also held a job in high school and, later, helped her husband run his own business. It was interesting to note that both women worked in business. Mrs. H. did spend a few years working as her husband's bookkeeper once he started his own business. When he sold the business, though, she never again worked outside the home.

Mrs. K. worked as a bookkeeper for several businesses as did Mrs. G. In addition to working as a bookkeeper in a physician's office, she also raised a developmentally disabled daughter.

> I don't know which job was hardest. I would work all day and come home to find that my husband had not helped with anything in the house, so I would work all evening too. When I wasn't cleaning house I was trying to teach my daughter how to read. She didn't attend school, and I refused to place her in an institution. It's a good thing I was born to good German stock.

Mrs. G. worked as both a bookkeeper and a sales clerk for a hardware store. She waited to go to work until her children were in school and then, like many women, returned to work to supplement her husband's income and found herself working until she retired.

Pride in a Professional Career

I found it to be exceptionally interesting, and rather unexpected, that five of the women over 80 had careers built on a college education. Their work was an outgrowth of their education and, when left for children, was returned to once the children were in school. Two teachers, one assistant principal, one librarian and one speech therapist were found in this sample. Their roles were often selected because society expected women to fit into a narrow mold of being a teacher, a secretary or a nurse, however, I did not interview one nurse. Miss I.'s decision to be a speech therapist was unusual, but still led later to work as a teacher, as did Mrs. B.'s career as a librarian in a school system. Mrs. B. started college at 14 in a special high school program associated with Northern Arizona Teacher's College. During her last year of school she spoke of how she decided to study library science. "That year the college put in a class without credit on library usage. I had never realized that being a librarian was a profession…I was fascinated by it, so I decided that was what I was going to do". She found a calling and used it to help her put a younger sister through college and to raise her youngest child as a single parent.

Mrs. J. felt she should study teaching because that was the role society proscribed for women and it was a needed role for missionaries. When her parents sent her to school they sent her with her brother to the Bible College they had attended. Education was an important part of their life and they encouraged it in their children, although her choice of careers appeared to be limited by their expectations.

> I wanted to go back to Argentina to live. That was home, and I had, well, I'd helped in my teen years and done a lot and I knew what was what. And to tell you

> the truth, as I look back, I think I felt that was the only thing I knew how to do. So in college I took Bible and education, principles of education and childhood psychology and all that stuff figuring that would help, because a woman works with children pretty much.

As if being a preacher's wife was not demanding enough, she returned to teaching when their daughter entered school. Preaching and making a living sufficient to raise a family then, as now, were not very compatible as she noted in this comment, "we talked it over and we decided that on the missionary salary we were getting, which wasn't very much in those days, we needed the extra income". Once she returned to teaching she did not leave it again until she retired.

Miss I. was one of the first students in speech therapy at the university she attended. She did not share with me why she became interested in speech, but she shared many wonderful experiences that happened to her during her career. After graduation from college she went out to be a teacher first. She was teaching near an oil field in East Texas during World War II and shares this story. "We stood in front of the classroom and held up little outlines, 3 dimensional outlines, of the warplanes. The children were taught that if they saw anything like this, to report it. We had fire drills, always as you do, but we also had bomb drills because we were part of that oil field". The friends she made while in college finally got her a position as one of the first speech pathologists in central Texas. One of her friends was a physician who became interested in working with neuromuscular impaired children. She decided she wanted to start a center to treat and study these children so she approached a wealthy uncle for support. Miss I. tells of how "he got with Easter Seals and they got me out of bed one night and said, we are starting a treatment

center for cerebral palsy, the neuromuscular impaired, and we want to start a speech division. We want you head up the department". She worked at the center until she retired. They collected data and did research and became a teaching center for the medical school. Most of the meaningful events that she shared with me were about her time at this center.

Working for Oneself

Three of the women either owned their own business or worked with their husbands in their businesses. Mrs. A. was also a teacher and left teaching to help her husband run a restaurant. Mrs. H. helped her husband start an electronic firm in New Mexico and kept it until the war created an urgent need for engineers in California. Mrs. D., though, started her own business. She worked as a bookkeeper for several businesses and then was encouraged to start her own business by a doctor in the medical practice where she worked. She said, "One doctor had, well I can't remember just how it happened, but he thought that I could frame. He had a gallery and he'd go to Europe and bring a painting in and he had to have somebody frame it. He told me I could do it, so I did".

Mrs. A. retired from teaching to work with her husband in a restaurant he bought after desiring to go into his own business for many years.

> He got acquainted with this man and this man had a restaurant in Bend. He and his wife divorced and he wanted to start a chain. Ours was the first one. He was going to start one in Roseburg and one in The Dalles and we were going to start the first one and it was this one. He didn't have the money to do it, really, and he tried to expand to fast and he ran out of money. He wasn't living up to his agreement so we bought him out in '62.

After they had owned and worked in the restaurant a while they sold it, first to one man and then to another. She said, "The problem was with the people we sold it to, both parties thought they were going to walk in and get rich immediately and they didn't have to work at it. That was a stupid supposition. You have to work at it and you have to be there". They finally sold it to their son who still owns and operates the restaurant.

I think growing up in the fifties and sixties in American left me with the illusion that women did not work, even though my own mother worked most of the time I was a child. Influenced by television and radio and friends who had mothers that stayed home, I did not expect to find so many women of this age group that had held jobs outside the home. The fact that they did appears to be important to the basic social psychological process that emerged from the data.

Summary

Four major patterns were extrapolated from the meaningful events in these women's lives. Caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment are necessary components of life integration in women over the age of 80. The four patterns are composed of sub-concepts as identified in each section and that are derived directly from the comments of the women. Each of the patterns are meshed with the others into a whole pattern of life integration.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The final chapter presents an interpretation and discussion in the context of classic and current professional literature. Strengths and limitations of the inquiry are discussed, along with implications for nursing practice education, theory development and research. Recommendations for future research are submitted.

Interpretation of Findings

The domain of the study is the examination of a woman's entire life for patterns of meaningful events that may have promoted health and a long life. The research question formulated was: What are the patterns that emerge from the stories of a woman's long life? Participants responded to the following question: What have been the most meaningful events in your life? The basic social psychological process identified was life integration and was comprised of the following patterns: (a) caring for the family, (b) maintaining health, (c) learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment.

The Basic Social Psychological Process - Life Integration

The basic social psychological process of life integration was made up of the events that formed the four patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment. The patterns that emerged from the

stories were made up of the meaningful events of their lives. It was these events that were assimilated using the process of life integration.

Life review and story telling were instrumental in identifying life integration as the basic social psychological process. Butler (1982) considered life review to be the progressive return to consciousness of past experiences. By asking the women to relate the meaningful events in their lives I was asking them to consciously return to their past experiences and tell me stories about those experiences. All of the women were gifted with the ability to tell vivid and descriptive stories about the meaningful events in their lives.

Coleman (1999) posited four dimensions of a good life story. A good story must hang together as a whole, or have coherence, and that is the first dimension. The stories the women told about the meaningful events in their lives hung together into an account of their lives. The second dimension a good story must have is the interpretation, or assimilation, of the events into a meaningful whole. All of their stories offered evidence of assimilation of the events into a picture of their life. Containing a convincing structure is the third dimension of a good story. By starting with their childhood memories and moving through to the recent events in their lives, the women's stories contained a beginning, middle, and an end, giving the meaningful events in their lives a convincing structure. The last dimension of a good story is its truth value. When asked why the events they shared had meaning for them, four of the women replied in essence, because the events happened to them. Each woman's story of the events in her life contained a truth value for her because she was reconstructing the events as she remembered living

the events. The meaningful events in a woman's life formed a picture of her life and created a story that contained the dimensions of coherence, assimilation, structure, and truth.

The ability to tell stories is important to women because they are embedded with the instructions that guide us through life (Estés, 1992). Many were amusing, some tragic, all clear and lucid. The women told stories of world events, of history, of survival and change, of loss and resilience, and of duty and responsibility. The stories of the meaningful events in their lives, through a process of life review and in accordance with Coleman's (1999) four dimensions, merged into the four patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment that were woven together into an integrated and whole life picture.

Ms. E. told the story of her great-grandparents and how they came to this country and settled in Oregon. Representing the dimension of coherence, or a story that hangs together is best shared it is in her words.

> My ancestors on both sides were pioneers. My great-grandfather had polio when he was a child and both legs were crippled. But he married and had twelve kids and supported them and raised his family. They came across this country in a covered wagon, he and his bride. Then my Mother's ancestors, well they were here. My sister figured it out that it was our 17th great-grandfather that was the first governor of the colonies. So they've been in this country a long time. And at one time a great-grandfather had a plantation back in Tennessee, I think it was. He had slaves during the war, but he was apparently good to them because they stayed after they were freed. He came around the horn to southern California and bought a big area around San Jose. It was grant land and he bought a bunch of government grants. Then he went back overland and sold his place back wherever it was and brought his family back to southern California. Then in that area they declared that the grants were not valid, so he lost all but a small area that he had bought. The one of his sons moved up the Elkton area. Then my grandfather married a Spanish girl which was against her families wishes. They

> were Catholic and he wasn't. Anyway, they had two children and she had TB, so he brought her to Oregon. He thought the climate would be better for her here. They had my mother and Uncle D. when they moved up there. Then J., who was younger than my mother, got TB too and she died(oh). They're buried in the old Elkton cemetery. So my great-grandmother took care of my mother and Uncle Dave and an aunt took care of Uncle W. because he was just a baby then. They were up in that area for years and years. I come from pioneer people that demonstrated survival of the fittest, I guess you'd say.

Her story demonstrates how attitudes and values are passed on through families that leave instructions for how life is to be lived. Represented in her story are all four of the patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment. In her case, survival and taking care of one's own people were important lessons imparted through this story. This story helped her to integrate her life as seen when she shared the following lesson: "Well, I've just worked hard and minded my own business. I don't feel I'm a shining example of anything". However, her knowledge of having worked hard resonated with the story she told of her ancestors being pioneers and survivors. Her knowledge of her own strengths, even though she did not feel they were anything special, helped her to integrate her experiences into a life that had meaning and purpose because it was consistent with what she knew and believed.

Ms. B. describes her childhood in Alaska and in this review of her life I can discern that she was able to integrate the experience into the rest of her life and feel good about the outcome. Her story represents the dimension of assimilation.

> He loved Alaska. My mother hated everything about it. During that time my mother and I were in the States, 3 times I guess. Alaska in those days was quite different from what it is now. It was a territory, of course, and Ketchikan was, still is, the first town you get to there, and at that time it was one of the largest one. My father fished for a while and made a good deal of money. Then he lost it because fishing in those days the same as it is now. Sometimes there'd be a good

> run of salmon and sometimes there wouldn't. They had fish traps in those days, which have been illegal now for years and years. We spent our summers usually out on a fish trap, watching. Of course, I had never been anywhere else. Two things that I thought were strangest when I came to the States were dirt roads, because the streets in Ketchikan were all planks on pilings. There was only one car in Southeastern Alaska and that was the Star delivery truck. If you wanted to go from one end of town to another you got a rowboat or else walked. Or, if you didn't want to row you'd have an Evinrude engine. The other thing that I couldn't quite believe was corn-on-the-cob. All the corn I'd seen came in cans. We had no fresh vegetables except potatoes. It was a 3 to 5 day trip from Seattle to Ketchikan and no refrigeration. We lived on salmon and venison. We had very little other fresh foods. They're saying now that you should eat a lot of fish to live to a great age, but I don't know if the people lived any longer than in other places.

This event in Ms. B.'s story reflects the patterns of caring for family and learning throughout a lifetime. She said later in the interview that it was these early experiences and the fact that both parents were also teachers that led her to her choice of career and learning to eat fish at an early age has probably been beneficial to her longevity. At the time of the interview she was 90 years old.

While listening to these incredible stories I often wished I had a small coin for every time one of the women said she had lived an interesting life. Mrs. L. felt her life was so interesting, or she had met so many interesting people, or particular events were interesting that I went back and counted and she had mentioned it 38 times. What passion, fire and excitement filled her life! At one point in the interview she stated, "Oh, I don't know, my life has been so interesting. Going through this package of stuff there are things in here I had even forgotten about". She used scrap books, pictures, and bits and pieces of memorabilia to jog her memory as she reviewed her life for me that day. These personal artifacts gave truth value to her story. Ms. B. said, "As it turns out I've

been lucky all my life. I've got all the breaks I think and it has been an interesting life". She started the meaningful events in her life by telling me about her childhood in Alaska, then went on to tell of working as librarian and putting her sister through school, getting married and having children, retiring and taking up new interests, and her current activities of each day. Using the meaningful events in her life she wove a story that demonstrated a convincing structure.

Ms. I. told me about a program that she helped start in Texas for children with cerebral palsy. She commented that she was "so lucky in the things I got to be a part of...it was such fun to be a part of all that we did 50 years ago". Ms. L. told about being a model, a teacher, a home extension agent, a rancher's wife and how important she felt it was to continue to learn throughout life. Although her husband died while they were in their sixties, she herself has remained in relatively good health. Her comment about her cardiac medications and not wanting to take them resonated with the hardiness she displayed in all of the events that were important to her. Both women's stories reflected each of the dimensions of a good story and reflected the process of life integration.

Every woman mentioned that she had lived an interesting life, enjoyed her life, or had a fun life. Each woman shared a sense of life integration via the meaningful events that they shared and the lessons that they learned. This ability to recognize that life has a positive outcome is central to the completion of Erickson's (1963) task of ego integration. Throughout their stories it is evident that the events they spoke of were meaningful according to Trice's (1990) characteristics of concern for others, helpfulness, action, and positiveness.

At the end of the first interview I decided to ask the first woman what lesson she had learned in life that she would like to pass on to her grandchildren, or to the next generation. Her answer was so interesting that I decided to ask every woman I interviewed the same question. The lessons the women shared with me reflect the integration of a life made up of the patterns of family, health, learning, and work. When I asked Ms. G., the first participant, what lesson she would like to pass on she looked at me a little funny, thought for a moment and then stated, "I know you get what you give. You get back what you give. In other words if you are a friend, and kind to other people...I've found that most everybody, they will do anything for you". This lesson summed up the story she told me of her life, of helping and volunteering, of raising children and working in the church, of traveling with companions and friends, and of taking care of her own and others' health needs.

The lessons that the other women shared were just as revealing of their ability to integrate their lives via the four patterns. Ms. I. raised the children of her cousin. His wife had passed away and she was the only family available to help. As a single woman, she undertook the task with great fortitude and with the help of many of her professional friends. In addition, she worked at a specialty center for developmentally disabled children. Her life lesson reflects her intense and personal knowledge of children throughout a lifetime of work and care. She summed it all up in one word – consequences. "I think we should teach that in some way, the consequences, that there are consequences for any decision". She went on to tell of a time she was teaching

students in the center classroom and made the following observation about a student who had made a mistake:

> That's why we need to stand by our children and say life is problem solving and did you know it was stupid? If you didn't know it was stupid than we learned a lesson, and if you knew it was stupid than consider it stupid and don't do it again. That's my psychology and that it the truth and what is wrong with telling kids the truth.

This lesson was an obvious guiding factor in her life. Ms. I. was the first woman I heard make a strong statement about her feelings toward people and it was based on this lesson. When she said it I almost choked trying not to laugh. Although I kept my composure during the interview, I laughed loud and long while I was transcribing the tape. Ms. I. was commenting on a concern she had with society and with the way she saw some children being raised today without limits. She very firmly stated that

> ...we can't keep giving up structure, without having chaos. You just go with whatever's there and you cope with whatever you have to cope with. And I still can't go along with the psychologists that you have to sit and wallow in it for the rest of your life, excusing you for every stupid decision you make.

Her vehemence and the strength with which she made this comment were powerful to witness and to listen to again and the power was strengthened by the laughter that accompanied it.

Ms. A's lesson was short and to the point. She said, "go out and do things". This statement reflected the story she told me about learning to fly when she was 75. She felt if she could go do things at her great age than the younger generation should embrace every experience they can find, as long as it's "nothing bad". She related the story of her granddaughter who was afraid to learn to ski because she might fall. While telling this

story she kept shaking her head. The she told of how "... when I was in Mexico they have those kind of kite things you get into them and they pull you in the air, so I did that...it was fun. And there was a young girl there and her boyfriend wanted her to do it and she wouldn't do it. I had just gotten off the darn thing and there she was and wouldn't do it". Her events in her life were full of experiences that reflected this lesson as she dealt with the patterns of family, health, learning, and work. At the end of the interview she commented very quietly, but with passion that "my life has been good".

Life integration is reflected in the patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment. Threaded through these patterns, like a weaver's weft, are the meaningful events that make up the tapestry of their lives. The resultant picture is one of wholeness, like a completed work of art.

Review of Professional Literature

The results of the study were interpreted within the context of the studies on pattern and classic lifespan theories. A secondary literature review was conducted on current material on older women and life integration.

Pattern Recognition

Schorr, Farnham, and Ervin (1991) studied powerlessness and aging women in relation to their changing interactions with the environment. Of all the studies completed on patterns and pattern recognition, this study was the only one that dealt primarily with aging women. Schorr, et. al. found that although aging women were vulnerable to a loss of power because of their changing interactions with the environment, the women actually felt healthy, strong, empowered and hopeful. Ms. D. exemplifies this conclusion

when she relates her attitude toward lost skills as she recovered from a stroke. She said, "Then I had my stroke about five years ago and I can no longer paint or do that part (picture framing), but I just remember that I could at one time and enjoyed it". When I commented that it must be frustrating she replied, "No it isn't, because, for instance, I used to like to do animals and people and such when I was drawing and in my mind I'm still doing that stuff. When I look at you I understand your eyes and all of that. I've learned to do other things that I enjoy". Although the study expected to find an increase in powerlessness among older women, the results actually pointed out that women exhibited an expansion of consciousness when faced with restrictions of movement, diminished social support, and loss of control. The findings of this study are supportive of Schorr et al.'s conclusions.

Classic Lifespan Literature

Three classic theories on lifespan development are pertinent to the findings of the study. Erickson's (1963) human development theory, Peck's (1968) expansion on Erickson's theory, and Butler's work on life review.

Erickson (1963), in his seminal work on human development, proposed eight stages that human beings had to go through as they evolved through life. Each stage built on the successful completion of the previous stage in a fluid and dynamic process. Even though Erickson's stages are linear in progression, the completion of each stage is necessarily a fluid process, moving back and forth from one stage to the next until the task of the previous stage is successfully accomplished.

The task he assigned to the elderly was one of ego integration in conflict with despair. He postulated that the elderly would either look back on their life and find it to be meaningful and productive, or find it to be disappointing and full of unfulfilled desires. The ability to view one's life as having meaning and purpose is also essential to survival, according to Frankl (1963). This task is an important one for the elderly to achieve.

Every woman who participated in the study stated unequivocally "it's been a good life". Each one expressed a sense of contentment with this point in their life and made the statement in various ways that their life had been full of meaning and purpose. The stories they told expressed their ability to integrate their experiences into a meaningful whole. At the end of each interview each woman shared a life lesson that demonstrated her ego integrity, and the patterns discerned from the meaningful events in their lives supported the process of life integration. I did not meet one woman who dwelled in the land of "poor me" or wasted her energy in blaming outside forces for her current situation in life.

Peck (1968) was concerned with the fact that Erickson's theory lumped all the psychological crisis of the last forty or fifty years of life into one age group. He proposed that the task of ego integration be broken up into three tasks, not necessarily undertaken in chronological order. Breaking up the task of ego integration into three tasks, albeit tasks of the ego provided a more substantial framework to understand the four patterns of family, health, learning, and work as they support life integration. The first task he identified is that of ego differentiation versus work-role preoccupation. Considered from

the perspective of our history as a society he was primarily concerned with the ability of men leaving the work force to successfully let go of their work roles. As society has evolved this is now a task for both genders. What was interesting about the women who participated in this study is that they also had to engage in letting go of their work roles. For many this was an essentially simple task, but for Ms. E. this was a difficult task. She was determined to be the "oldest cranberry harvester who ever worked" before she retired at the age of 80. Ms. B. demonstrated ego differentiation when she planned to move to a new location after her retirement, bought a new home and engaged in making new friends and joining community organizations.

The second task that Peck proposed is that of body transcendence versus body preoccupation. Limitations, losses and declines that often accompany the aging process leave one vulnerable to becoming preoccupied with how one's body functions. People who set great store by how their body looks and functions are particularly prone to being unable to transcend bodily restrictions. Other people are able to find comfort in their continuing intellectual abilities or their relationships with others and consequently are able to enjoy life in spite of the physical decline of their bodies. Peck stated that this process probably starts in young adulthood, but reaches it's climax as the values one places on bodily functions versus mental and social abilities are tested with the declines associated with aging. This task posited by Peck is also one of the sentinel concepts of Reed's (1991) theory of self-transcendence, that of body transcendence. Ms. C. provided an excellent example of this ability to transcend one's body. When I met her she was so crippled up with painful arthritis of her hip that it took her five minutes to answer my ring

at her door. Once the door was opened it took her almost another five minutes to return to her couch and make herself comfortable. This was the longest interview I conducted and during the time I spent with her I was enchanted with the stories of the meaningful events in her life. She was a gifted storyteller and I laughed and cried and was left in awe of some of the things that had happened to her in her life. Only once during the interview did she refer to her hip and that was simply to tell me that she had decided to go ahead with a hip replacement on the recommendation of her doctor. This was after she informed me that she had also had her other hip and both knees replaced. Her endurance of pain and her ability to transcend the state of her limited physical abilities was truly a gift. I left hoping I could approach my own aging with such grace.

Peck's third task is that of ego transcendence versus ego preoccupation. In this task Peck posited that approaching death requires the ego to fade into the background so that persons can see that they have made a difference and that difference will transcend their death. Through contributions to the culture, through their children and their friendships, people can extend their own existence. According to Peck (1968) this requires deep introspection and effort, and is measured by the degree of internal contentment or stress. Achievement of this task is defined by Peck in this way: "To live life so generously and unselfishly that the prospect of personal death...looks and feels less important than the secure knowledge that one has built for a broader, longer future than any one ego ever could encompass".

The task of ego transcendence is similar to Reed's (1991) task of generativity. Focusing on the needs of others is an essential component of self-transcendence and is

evidenced in many of the meaningful events related by the participants. Ms. I. tells of raising her cousin's children, all of whom went to college and are making their difference in the world. Ms. L tells of helping rural men and women survive the Great Depression with enough food and sanitation to minimize their risk of ill health. M. G. shared a story of a young boy who spent a lot of time with her sons and who still stays in touch and lets her know what a difference she made I his life. Living on in the lives of others is seen in the meaningful events that form the patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment. Making a difference in others lives was considered by all the women to be a significant factor in their interpretation of their life as having had meaning and purpose. The three tasks that are proposed by Peck offer more substantive material for the review of ego integration than does the broad task offered by Erickson.

An early proponent of looking at the entire picture of a person's life, Robert Butler introduced the idea of reminiscence in the early 1980's. Reminiscence is a therapeutic technique in which the elderly review their lives and share their memories with others. The technique is often used in nursing homes as a way of stimulating memory. Butler (1982) theorized that reminiscence is an adaptive process that allows people to develop an acceptance of their place in the life cycle. Reminiscence, or remembering the events of one's life, gives people the opportunity to prepare themselves, to plan and order their lives in more meaningful ways, and to be assured that they are not alone in their experiences. As a therapeutic technique it was also used to help professionals understand the aging process and to provide the elderly with a way of

integrating their life experiences into a meaningful whole. Each woman demonstrated the ability to use the meaningful events that she remembered to integrate her life into a whole picture. Ms. L. was particularly gifted in her ability to recognize how the events in her life contributed to a whole picture that was interesting and had meaning. She knew her life had been interesting and was eager to share it with someone who cared. This is an example of pattern recognition according to Newman (1986).

Recent Lifespan Literature

Unlike the classic literature on human development, lifespan development theorist's view life as a dynamic process that ebbs and flows in a continual movement, rather than proceeding in a linear and orderly fashion through various stages. Cohler (1998) considered lifespan development as a function of an individual's life history that is an attempt to create order and predictability out of one's life story. As a psychoanalyst, Cohler studied narratives of individual life stories in a search for therapeutic meaning. He posited that the adult personality does not develop on a given trajectory but reflects the individual's attempts to maintain a sense of continuity throughout the lifespan. Cohler considered this need to maintain a sense of order and continuity to be fundamental to all chronological ages, thus his view of lifespan development as a dynamic process.

He stated that people "strive to maintain a coherent account that fosters a sense of well-being...from earliest childhood through oldest age". (1998, p. 257). Although the telling of one's life story occurs at any age, Cohler said that it had different functions at different ages. During the middle years the telling of one's life story serves the purpose of searching the past for what worked and what did not work in order to plan for the future.

As one ages the telling of a life story serves the purpose of finding meaning in one's life as one prepares for death. The stories told by the women about the meaningful events in their lives certainly offered insight into what was meaningful for them. It was interesting to note, however, that no one spoke directly about preparing for death and only one woman alluded to the idea. Ms. J. mentioned that her father lived to the age of 86 and since she would soon be 86 she expected to outlive him and in her words, "but probably not by much".

Ms. J. exemplified the dynamic process of lifespan development when she told me about coming back to the United States from Argentina on furlough and then not being able to return to Argentina with her family but having to wait two years to go home.

> Well, I wanted to go back to Argentina to live. That was home, and I had, well, I'd helped in my teen years I'd helped and done a lot and I knew what was what. And to tell you the truth, as I look back, I think I felt that was the only thing I new how to do (be a teacher) So in college I took Bible and education, principles of education and childhood psychology and all that stuff figuring that would help, because a woman works with children pretty much. Talking about the important things in my life, I think those two years that I stayed here in the states had a lot to do with my formative years, some of my ways.

Her story exemplified Cohler's idea that from the earliest years people have a need to maintain a sense of continuity. Although he viewed this process as one that is threaded throughout life, it is not inconsistent with Erickson's task of integration as essential to a successful old age.

Schroots and Yates (1999) also considered lifespan development to be a dynamic process. In classic theory, development and aging were considered successive processes

with the apex being somewhere around adult maturity, depending on the society or culture. The traditional metaphor for this process is the hill, with development going up the hill and aging going over and then down the hill. This idea has been rampant in our society for more than two decades with the dramaturgy on the t-shirt of being "over the hill" the most common sign. The more recent theories on lifespan development, however, do not consider the psychological processes of change as paralleling those of the biological processes of change. Schroots and Yates subscribe to the theory of dynamic systems viewing humans as a specialized and complex living system. Development is, therefore, an inherent process occurring throughout the lifespan rather than in sequential stages as are the biological processes. Consistent with Cohler's (1998) view, Schroots and Yates considered the telling of one's life story as an ongoing process that occurs throughout one's life.

Schroots (1998) proposed three alternative approaches to aging theory. He stated the new paradigm of lifespan development pertinent to aging consists of gerodynamics, gerotranscendence and branching theory. Gerodynamics is built upon his views that lifespan development is a dynamic process involving open living systems during the time of aging. His concept of gerotranscendence is quite similar to Reed's (1991) work on self-transcendence, again specific to the time period of aging. Gerotranscendence involves a decrease in self-centeredness and interest in material things, and an increase in other directed interests including the spiritual. Schroots idea of branching theory stated that as one grows older in a linear progression one either evolves to a higher level of consciousness or to a lower level of consciousness. I find this idea quite consistent with

Erickson's (1963) concept of ego integration versus despair. The integration of one's life into a coherent whole lends itself to increasing awareness of oneself and how one fits into the environment, or the expansion of consciousness. Despair, however, especially as it breeds depression, lowers one's awareness of self and one's relation to the surrounding environment.

The women interviewed for this study evidenced increasing awareness of themselves and their relationship to the world around them. Their stories supported both the classic and recent theories and literature about human and lifespan development and the importance of being able to integrate the events of one's life into a meaningful whole. Perhaps this process of life integration is best described by May Sarton when she wrote, "The past has been slowly absorbed (though we never get to the end of that!) and understood, and the future looms with less pressure...what I am getting at is that in old age we have greater freedom than ever before to be our true selves" (1997, p. 231.). Each woman I spoke with exemplified an integrated life that allowed her to live each moment with passion and hope.

Limitations of the Study

In any research undertaken there are always limitations and strengths to the study. Design flaws, researcher bias, threats to validity, and sampling techniques are just a few. The single most significant limitation to most qualitative studies is the sample size and this is certainly true of this study. Although I believe the data was saturated with the sample size used, it remains a small sampling of women over the age of 80. A second limitation to the study was the homogeneity of the sample. All of the women were white

and of the Protestant faith. However, there was variability in their marital status, former occupations, and age. Finally, unconscious researcher bias is a recognized limitation to most studies. Having worked with aging women for many years I am not aware of what unconscious bias I might have brought to the analysis of the data. This certainly has a potential effect on the rigor of the study.

Strengths of the Study

The strengths of the study involve several areas. I believe the most important strength was that the participants were involved in the same developmental stage of life. Although there is considerable difference between the age of 80 and 95, according to Peck (1968) all of the women were facing their impending death and were engaged in the task of ego transcendence.

The interview technique is the strongest method of getting information from people, particularly of a personal nature (Kerlinger, 1990). Using this technique brought some of the meaningful events of their lives back to their conscious awareness. The interview process helped some of the women focus on how the meaningful events they experienced formed a whole, or integrated, picture of their lives. Finding hope in the aging process was helpful to me by helping me allay some of my fears of aging. I am optimistic that it will provide the same hope for other women in their middle years. A final strength of the study is that I had no knowledge of any of the women prior to the interview. Therefore, the analysis of the data was not biased by previous knowledge of their lives.

Implications for Nursing

Examining the stories of women's long lives for a pattern of the whole reinforces my clinical observations that we are more than the sum of our parts. The patterns that emerged from their stories are complex and unique, yet central to every life. Their experiences differ, but the pattern is coherent. Depending on the clinical specialty of nurses, these patterns may or may not be present in current clinical assessment instruments. I believe the most significant implications of the outcome of this study are directly related to nursing practice.

Practice Implications

The patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment are derived from the meaningful events in a woman's life. In order for her to successfully achieve a sense of integration she must bring these events back to consciousness and assimilate them into a whole picture of her life that enables her to feel that her life has had purpose. Being knowledgeable of what patterns are important helps nurses and other health care providers structure assessment and intervention tools that bring those patterns to the conscious awareness of their clients. Life review, or reminiscence therapy, that is unstructured and unfocused might miss some of the events that a woman needs to integrate into a whole picture of her life.

Nurses in gerontology have been using reminiscence therapy for many years as a technique for focusing the thoughts and memories of the aging on the events in their lives. The technique opens the doors on memories shut away, and in the case of those with dementia, locked away in the recesses of their minds. Brief glimpses of who they

were and what events their life contained frequently diminish anxiety and stems wandering behavior in people with dementia. Traveling down memory lane helps people in nursing homes let their caretakers know who they were before their need for long-term care. As clinicians we frequently forget to remind them that who they were is who they still are inside. Knowledge of the patterns that are meaningful for elderly women allows the nurse to help them focus on who they were, who they are now, and what their life has meant. This knowledge also allows nurses to remember that they are caring for people who are more than the sum of the parts they see every day in their rounds. Knowledge of the whole picture of a woman's life increases awareness on both sides of the care relationship and strengthens the bond between nurses and those for whom they care.

Although the primary clinical implications of the study are in gerontology nursing, there are implications for mental health practice as well. Mental health nurses should focus on helping people to continually look at their life for meaning. The current lifespan development theories underscore the importance of telling one's life story and searching it for meaning during all phases of life. Care and treatment can be developed that will enhance a person's ability to make decisions that will enable them to live a meaningful and productive life, even within the limitations of their illness.

Education Implications

When new information becomes important to clinical practice it also becomes important to nursing education. Teaching students what patterns are important to aging women will help them focus their interview skills and therapy techniques. Understanding the patterns that support the social psychological process of life integration allows

nursing students at all levels to develop a deeper understanding of the concept of wholeness. Students need to understand the therapeutic value of the interview technique used in the pattern recognition process. Understanding why life integration is essential to the mental health of aging people is important. Graduate students must be taught the implications of using several theories to substantiate practice. This knowledge will help them guide their own practice as well as the practice of others.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical formulation of life integration in women over the age of 80 is comprised of four major concepts: (a) caring for family, (b) maintaining health, (c) learning throughout a lifetime, and (d) experiencing employment. The sub-concepts of caring for family are: remembering childhood, reviewing adult family life, acknowledging responsibility for others, and making faith visible. Maintaining health has four sub-concepts as follows: remembering childhood illnesses, reviewing adult health and illness, coping with accidents and injuries, and accepting the illnesses of aging. Learning throughout a lifetime is also comprised of four sub-concepts: remembering life as a student, reviewing learning as a continual process, experiencing learning in life, and manifesting the creative. The fourth major concept is composed of three sub-concepts that are: working outside the home, retaining pride in a professional career, and working for oneself.

The definitions of the concepts are derived directly from the sub-concepts that originate in the statements of the participant women. The definitions are described throughout the narrative of the chapters in the dissertation. Similarly, the relationships of

the concepts are explained and form the links of the concepts and sub-concepts. All four of the major concepts are related to each other and can provide clues for further development of the theory. The extent of the relationship of the concepts may be predictive of satisfactory or unsatisfactory life integration.

The structure of the theory is overlapping and has common areas among the concepts. Family, health, learning, and employment are viewed as meshed. While each concept is comprised of sub-concepts and perhaps some separate components, there is sharing among the four major concepts and sub-concepts. This may suggest equality in importance of the concepts.

The theoretical formulation is built on the three assumptions stated in Chapter One of the dissertation and relies heavily on Rogers (1970) and Newman (1986). The assumptions reflect philosophic values and factual statements.

There are two purposes of the emerging theory. For women over the age of 80, the theoretical formulation explains four components of a satisfactory lfie integration. The four concepts are necessary, but may not be sufficient. Further research may elicit additional concepts or may validate the present ones. For the nurse, the theory emphasizes the wholeness of the person. Additionally, the theory could be useful in generating appropriate nurse actions if weaknesses are located in the patterns of a woman's life.

Research Implications

The research implications of the study focus on three areas: the interview question recommended by Newman, use of Newman's research protocol, and use of the QSR/N5

program to analyze data. Newman recommended, in personal correspondence in April, 1996, the interview question: "What have been the most meaningful events in your life". She maintained that the question is helpful in identifying pattern.

The question has been used by other researchers, including Endo (1998), and Lamendola and Newman (1994), who found satisfactory results. In the present study the women reacted in the same manner as participants in Endo's and Lamendola and Newman's studies by giving their life stories. Endo stated, "The question focuses the responses on a narrative of a whole experience rather than segmented abstraction" (1998, p. 53). Lamendola and Newman's comment was: "What evolved was a pattern of the whole made up of chronologic, sequential segments of the participants' story" (1994, p. 15).

Thus, the question elicits a chronology, rather than specific events. It is the task of the researcher to recognize the pattern(s). In the present study it is interesting to speculate as to whether asking the participants to relate their life stories would have resulted in locating the patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment. A replication of the study asking for life stories could be considered for comparison.

The interpretation of the findings was guided by Newman's proposed research protocol (Newman, 1990). The four steps of her protocol as elaborated by Endo (1998) are:

1. Establish the mutuality of the process of inquiry.
2. Focus the interview on the most meaningful persons and events in the participant's life.

3. Share the researcher's depiction of the participant's life pattern which has been transmuted from the interview data into a diagram as sequential patterns over time.
4. Identify evidence of pattern recognition and resulting insight into the meanings of the client's life pattern (p. 52-53).

This study utilized the first two steps in Newman's process. Establishing the mutuality of the process of inquiry involved more than just obtaining permission to conduct the interview. Mutuality of the process was established when a woman and I, during the course of her interview, became aware that we were both involved in the story through an interactive process of telling and listening and acknowledging understanding of the essential truth value of the event for the woman. The single question used to begin the interview focused it on the meaningful events of each woman's life that would most probably also involve the most meaningful people in her life.

I did not pursue the second two steps of Newman's research process because I was not looking for specific patterns to use in an intervention strategy nor was I interested in a specific disease state. The focus of the study was on identifying patterns from each woman's life that would offer evidence of a global, or whole, pattern that was reflective of all of the women's lives. Therefore, the last two steps of Newman's process were considered unnecessary for this study, although mapping the patterns of caring for others, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment would be a logical extension of this study.

Use of the QSR/N5 program to analyze the data for the study was challenging and enlightening. The program is designed to assist the researcher at each stage of a qualitative study, from coding to report writing. I found the program to be most helpful

during the process of data coding. In order to utilize the program time needs to be given to the reading and interpretation of the reference texts written for the program. (Richards, 2000). After reading the text the ease of coding the data into the program is fairly simple. From that point on, however, moving between data points, manipulating the data for extraction, and preparing to write reports would have been helped by taking a class to enhance one's familiarity with all of the intricacies of the program.

In order to move between data points to refine codes almost required a separate journal listing all the data points as they referred to each interview. Moving between sections of the program was also cumbersome because there were several sections of workable data in four different windows to be viewed on a single screen. I found the working screen too busy and I felt it was awkward to try to work with the data in such a small window. Each window could be enlarged, but would then have to be closed in order to return to the original screen. Occasionally this would result in a closing of the current data as well as the window. Although the QSR/N5 offered much potential for the qualitative researcher its usefulness was limited by the required learning curve necessary to understand the program sufficiently to obtain maximum effectiveness. I would recommend the program for experienced researchers, or for those who have access to a computer specialist that can assist in maximizing the program's usefulness.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of the study offer inference about the potential for replicating it with older women, older men, and a more diverse group. Although there were two women in the study who were 90 and 95, the majority of the women were in their 80's. The two

oldest women spent more time sharing with me how the events of their lives had brought them to where they are and seemed to have more insight into the need for life integration. However, since I only interviewed two women in this age group it would be interesting to ascertain if the patterns identified held true with a larger sample of women over 90.

Although fewer men than women live into their 80's more are achieving this great age every year. An interesting replication of the study would be to examine men in this age group to determine if the life patterns identified from the meaningful events in their lives were similar to, or significantly different from, women. Of special interest would be whether the pattern of caring for others emerged from the stories of men's lives.

The similarity in culture, race, and religion of the sample was most likely a factor of the geographical regions in which the study was conducted. However, it minimized the breadth of diversity from which to evaluate the study findings. The four patterns of caring for family, maintaining health, learning throughout a lifetime, and experiencing employment may be primarily associated with women who are Caucasian and living in America. Searching for life patterns in aging women that represent wholeness is incomplete without replication of the study using a more widely diverse sample.

According to Peck (1968) life integration occurs throughout a lifetime, but with a different focus at different ages. The focus of integration in the middle years is to learn from mistakes in order to plan for the future. Aging, however, changes the focus of life integration to a preparation for death. Replicating the study with younger women may help identify an age range in which the focus changes and whether that change has an impact on the patterns of a woman's life.

Concluding Statements

The women who participated in this study offered up the trust of the meaningful events in their lives for my examination. They shared those events to help advance the base of knowledge that exists in nursing today about aging women. I hope I have remained faithful to their stories and worthy of their trust.

While listening to their stories, and transcribing them later, I learned of my own fears about aging. Frequently I approached an interview tired from the day and then left each interview energized and eager to approach my next task of the day. I found I had been dreading the slowdown in function that comes with aging, but these ladies showed me that I do not have to slow down, except fractionally, and then maybe only after reaching the years past 80. They learned to fly, went to China, began painting, started their own businesses, and drove around America alone. Age has not kept them in one spot or diminished their capacity to enjoy every day.

I discovered my own subtle fear of stagnating and rooting in one place. As one woman said after a recent trip to Australia, "no worries about me getting bored, I'm going to Russia next year". None of the women dwell in the past or dread the future. They live each day as it comes and anticipate a future, even if it's only tomorrow. While transcribing the interviews I realized that I had learned much more from these women than what is discussed in the findings. I learned about enthusiasm and joy, suffering and sorrow, resilience and strength, hardiness and mastery, and, like a beacon of light, hope for tomorrow. After spending just a few hours with these marvelously succulent women,

I have hope that I will grow old wearing purple with a red hat that doesn't go and doesn't suit me.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Each interview began with a single question:

> What have been the most important events in your life?

The interview was guided by the supporting and guiding phrases and questions such as:

> Tell me more
>
> What happened next?
>
> Would you share your memories of that event?
>
> Can you expand on that?

Each interview ended with a question about life lesson?

> If you had a lesson you could share with your grandchildren or with the generation to follow, what would it be?

APPENDIX B

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE APPROVAL

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DENTON / DALLAS / HOUSTON

HUMAN SUBJECTS
REVIEW COMMITTEE
P.O. Box 425619
Denton, TX 76204-5619
Phone: 940/898-3377
Fax: 940/898-3416

March 13, 2000

Ms. Vivian Dawkins
1504 Ridge Rd.
Rockwall, TX 75087

Dear Ms. Dawkins:

Re: Toward a Theory of Pattern Recognition in Aging Women: Implications for Nursing

The above referenced study has been reviewed by a committee of the Human Subjects Review Committee and appears to meet our requirements in regard to protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters obtained should be submitted to the HSRC upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. The signed consent forms and an annual/final report are to be filed with the Human Subjects Review Committee at the completion of the study. A copy of your newly approved consent form has been stamped as approved by the HSRC and is attached to this letter. Please use this form which has the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your subjects.

This approval is valid one year from the date of this letter. Furthermore, according to HHS regulations, another review by the Committee is required if your project changes. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the Human Subjects Review Committee at the phone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Dr. Linda Rubin, Chair
Human Subjects Review Committee - Denton

enc.

cc. Dr. Carolyn Gunning, College of Nursing
Dr. Deborah Garrison, College of Nursing
Graduate School

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
P.O. Box 425619
Denton, TX 76204-5619
Phone: (940) 898-3377
Fax: (940) 898-3416
e-mail: HSRC@twu.edu

February 19, 2001

Ms. Vivian Dawkins
P.O. Box 1241
Bandon, OR 97411

Dear Ms. Dawkins:

Re: Toward a Theory of Pattern Recognition in Aging Women: Implications for Nursing

The request for an extension for the above referenced study has been reviewed by a committee of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and appears to meet our requirements in regard to protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters obtained should be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. The signed consent forms and an annual/final report are to be filed with the Institutional Review Board at the completion of the study. A copy of your newly approved consent form has been stamped as approved by the IRB and is attached to this letter. Please use this form which has the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your subjects.

This extension is valid one year from March 13, 2001. Furthermore, according to HHS regulations, another review by the Committee is required if your project changes. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the Institutional Review Board at the phone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Dr. Linda Rubin, Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

cc Dr. Carolyn Gunning, College of Nursing
Dr. Maisie Kashka, College of Nursing
Graduate School

APPENDIX C

SUBJECT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
SUBJECT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of the Study: Toward a Theory of Pattern Recognition in Aging Women: Implications for Nursing

Investigator's Name and Phone:
Vivian Dawkins RN, MSN, CNAA
Doctoral Candidate in Nursing
541-347-4402 (work)
541-347-6717 (home)

Research Advisor's Name and Phone:
Maisie Kashka RN, Ph.D.
940-898-2433

Study Description:

The purpose of this research study is to obtain information about the meaningful events and life patterns of women over the age of 80.

I understand that I will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher that will be audiotaped. I will be asked by the researcher to share the most meaningful events in my life and I may share any or all memories that are important to me. I understand that participation in the study will involve no more than 6 hours of my time and will be scheduled at my convenience. I have been informed that I may choose to participate in more than short interview session, rather than one long session.

I have been informed that the purpose for audiotaping the interview is to capture my own story in my words. The audiotapes will be transcribed into a written form and I will be allowed to read the transcript and add or delete any information I choose before it

_____
Participant Initials.

becomes part of the study. I have been informed that only the researcher will hear the audiotape and that it will remain in the possession of the researcher. I understand that transcript and the audiotape will be destroyed after ten years by shredding.

I understand that in any study remaining anonymous may not always be possible, even though my name is not associated with the transcription, because my words or events that I describe may be revealing. Therefore, if I have concerns I should not participate or should not tell the researcher information that I do not want others to know.

Risks: I may get tired during the interview and, if I do, I have the right to postpone the interview and complete it at a later time. I may recall information that is private in nature, and I have the right to refuse to share any information that I consider too personal or private. I understand that while memories may make me feel happy, certain memories may make me sad or unhappy. I further understand that my story will involve other people that may be identified by the events of the story and I have a right to refuse to share those events. I have been informed that any names mentioned by me will be deleted from the written transcript of the interview. I understand that I can terminate the interview at any time.

The researcher will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this study. I should let the researcher know at once if there is a problem and she will help me. I understand, however, that TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because I am taking part in this study.

Benefits: The benefits that I can expect from this study include the availability of an abstract of the research findings. I will receive a $10.00 honorarium whether I complete the interview or not and a

Participant Initials.

complete copy of the transcript of my interview. I will be allowed to read the transcript and make any additions or corrections before the interview becomes a final part of the study.

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law.

If I have any questions about the research study I should ask the researchers: their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If I have any questions about my rights as a subject or the way this study has been conducted, I may call Ms. Tracy Lindsay in the Office of Research & Grants Administration at 940-898-3377.

Voluntary Participation: I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I have the right to refuse to participate at any time without any loss of benefits as described above. The interview process will be terminated immediately upon my request. I will not be pressured to continue the interview or to reschedule the interview if I should choose to end my participation.

Questions: I have been offered the right to ask questions of the researcher and have any concerns addressed. I have been given a copy of this informed consent, dated and signed, for my records.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

The above consent form was read, discussed, and signed in my presence. In my opinion, the person signing said consent form did so freely and with full knowledge and understanding of its contents.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher **Date**

_____

Participant Initials.